

ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND POLITICS  
IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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ABSTRACT. In the present work I examine the rational relationship that exists among the ontology, the epistemology, and the politics in Plato's *Republic*, and to what degree these three theories support each other with rational foundations. In particular, this study examines to what degree the platonic ontology and epistemology support rationally and sufficiently the platonic political theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* in the *Republic*.

KEYWORDS: Plato, *Republic*, ontology, epistemology, politics, *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*.

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Introduction

In his *Republic* Plato presents simultaneously, among all others, three of his theories: his ontology, regarding the sensible world of *τὰ αἰσθητὰ ὄντα* and the intelligible world of the *ιδέαι/εἶδη*; his epistemology, regarding the epistemological states of *γνώσις/ἐπιστήμη* and *δόξα*; and his politics, regarding the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*. In the present work I examine the rational relationship that exists among the ontology, the epistemology, and the politics in Plato's *Republic*, and to what degree these three theories support each other with rational foundations. In particular, this study examines to what degree the platonic ontology and epistemology support rationally and sufficiently the platonic political theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* in the *Republic*: firstly, through the general difference of the natural identity between the philosopher and the non-philosopher; secondly, through the first platonic ontological and epistemological scheme, which distinguishes the three ontological states of the absolute Being of the *ιδέαι/εἶδη*, of the sensible world of becoming, birth and decay of *τὰ αἰσθητὰ ὄντα*, and of non-Being, which correspond to the three epistemological states of *γνώσις*,

δόξα and ἄγνοια; and thirdly, through the second and more complete platonic ontological and epistemological scheme of the allegoric images of the sun (ἥλιος), the line (γραμμή) and the cave (σπήλαιον). Fourthly, all major scholars' critiques and interpretations on this subject from the antiquity up to our days are critically examined in a chronological order. My conclusion is that Plato's ontological and epistemological argument founds rightly and rationally his political argument regarding the φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς of the ἀρίστη πολιτεία, and thus I show that in the *Republic* the platonic ontology, epistemology and politics support each other with rational foundation.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Republic* Plato sets as his higher political goal the realization of an ἀγαθή και ἀρίστη πολιτεία, that is, the most excellent, good, just and eudaimonic state of citizens. However, the only key-presupposition for the realization of the ἀρίστη πολιτεία is the φιλόσοφος-βασιλεύς, who is for that reason the coronet of Plato's political philosophy in the *Republic*. This theory asserts that if there is no complete coincidence between philosophy and politics and if the φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς do not rule, the evils of mankind will never cease nor will the cities and the citizens live the eudaimonic life of an ἀρίστη πολιτεία.<sup>2</sup> In order though for Plato to support his political theory he resorts to his ontology and his epistemology.

Plato's ontological and epistemological argument in the *Republic* could be divided into three parts: (I) the part concerning the general difference of the natural identity of the philosopher and the non-philosopher (474b3-476b2), (II) the part referring to their specific difference within the first ontological and epistemological scheme of Plato (476b3-484d10), and (III) the part which refers to their specific difference within Plato's second and more complete ontological and epistemological scheme (506b2-518b5).

### I. Plato's Politics and the Different Natural Identity of the Philosopher and the Non-philosopher

In the effort to prove the theory of the φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς of the ἀρίστη πολιτεία as correct, the first step in the *Republic* is considered to be the clear definition of 'what is a philosopher' (474b4-6), in order to be revealed the reason why it is proper only for the philosophers to be engaged in the political authority and why all other citizens should be governed only by them (474b3-c3). So, the foundation of Plato's initial ontological-epistemological argumentation lies in the etymologi-

<sup>1</sup> See also my book, Y. Maniatis (2005) 63-99.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Republic* 473c11-e5. For the platonic theory of the 'philosopher-king', cf. also *Republic* 499b1-c5, 501e2-5, 503b4-5, 540d1-e3. In addition, cf. *Epistle* VII 326a6-b5 and 327e-328c. Furthermore, cf. *Laws* 711d, 712a.

cal analysis of the word *φιλόσοφος*: *φιλεῖν* + *σοφία*. The word *φιλεῖν* means that whoever loves something, anything, loves the whole of it and not some part of it (474c9-11, 475b4-7). Presenting thus as examples the three cases, first, of the men who erotically love all youths, second, those who love all wines, and third, those who love all honors and take delight in being appreciated by everybody, important and unimportant ones (474d3-475b3), Plato concludes that also in the particular case the philosopher (wisdom-lover) is the one who loves the whole of wisdom and not partially the one or the other kind of knowledge/aspect of it (475b8-9), for whoever loves something, loves the whole of it and not part of it (474c4-475b10).

Being therefore defined in this way the meaning of the *φιλόσοφος*, it is attempted next the distinction between the true philosophers and the non-philosophers. Since the philosopher is the one who loves all wisdom without any exception, he has to be an apt studious scholar of *πάντων μαθημάτων* and to avidly desire any kind of knowledge and learning (475c6-8), which means that whoever does not do that is not a philosopher. Thus, the true philosopher is the one who loves and beholds the truth (475e3-4), and not the one who loves only the sensible spectacles and sounds (475d2-e1). The philosopher is defined here by Plato as the par excellence erotic human being, and philosophy as the par excellence erotic science, for, since it belongs to the essence of love to embrace the whole of its object, the philosopher, being defined as *ὁ φιλοθεάμων τῆς ἀληθείας*, is the sole human being that loves the entire authentic reality, becoming thus the lover of *ἀλήθεια*,<sup>3</sup> and for this reason, the most erotic of all human beings.

Thus, Plato arrives at the following distinction of citizens: (a) on the one hand, he places the ‘non-philosophers’, comprising in them all those who love the spectacles, the sounds, the arts, as well as all the practical people, in the sense that all these citizens are unable to be occupied with higher theoretical contemplation and thought, caring only for the practical matters of life and its sensible pleasures; and (b) on the other hand, he places separately only the ‘true philosophers’, who are the only citizens who love the vision of truth (476a9-b2). Therefore, the distinctive ontological characteristic of the philosophers is that they love and desire all wisdom and truth, while the non-philosophers love and desire only part of it, that which relates to the sensible spectacles, sounds, arts and the practical matters of life (475b11-476b2).

Consequently, the platonic view that the philosophers should rule the cities is very rational, since only they, due to their natural constitution, love and desire the whole of wisdom, and not only some part of it. As a result, only they are able

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. P. Friedländer (1958-1969) 97. Cf. also Plato, *Republic* 402d1-403e7.

to govern more competently and better than the non-philosopher citizens, since they can better establish more complete and right constitutions in the city than the latter, for they possess more knowledge in a more rational and wiser way than anyone else, and so they can apply it to the state. The proof therefore of the platonic theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* is rationally founded - on this first level - upon the excellence and the supremacy of the natural identity of the *φιλόσοφοι* against all other citizens, which makes them more competent than anybody else to rule the states.

## II. Plato's Politics Within his First Ontological and Epistemological Scheme

However, in order for the difference between the philosopher and the non-philosopher citizen to be more fortified, and conclusively to be shown why only the philosopher must rule the state, Plato enters further into a more specific ontological and epistemological foundation of his theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*.

At this point of the *Republic* (476b3-484d10) Plato makes a first presentation of his ontological and epistemological theory, distinguishing the three epistemological states of knowledge, opinion and ignorance, which correspond to the three ontological states of the absolute Being, the sensible world of becoming, birth and decay, and non-Being. This is the first scheme of the distinction between the epistemological and ontological states, according to Plato, which he presents at this point on a first stage, in order to correlate the philosopher with knowledge and absolute Being, and thus to show why it suits the philosopher more than any other citizen to rule the state. Later, in books VI and VII of the *Republic* (506b2-518b5), this scheme of the ontological and epistemological distinction will be replaced by a second more complete one through the allegoric images of the sun, the line and the cave.

The notion of the platonic distinction of the citizens (a) into *φιλοθεάμονες*, *φιλήχοι*, *φιλότεχνοι* και *πρακτικοί*, and (b) into *φιλόσοφοι*, lies in that the former perceive, admire and love only the beautiful things and creations (voices, colors, figures, etc.), being though unable to see deeper into the nature of beauty itself (476b6-8), while, on the contrary, the philosophers have the power to see, apart from the sensible beautiful things, beauty itself as well, forming thus the sole and rare kind of citizens that beholds things at their ultimate depth (476b3-c1).

Plato makes here a first presentation of his ontological theory of Ideas or Forms and the sensible beings.<sup>4</sup> The *ιδέαι* or *εἶδη* form the high level of reality, the absolute Being of beings, *τὰ ὄντως ὄντα*, while the *αἰσθητὰ ὄντα* form the low level of reality, the sensible world of becoming, birth and decay. Plato, who focuses here specifically on the example of beauty, holds that the beautiful in itself exists as well as the many sensible beautiful things, which he calls respectively *ιδέα* or *εἶδος τοῦ καλοῦ* and the *καλὰ πράγματα* (479a1-3). In the platonic ontology beauty itself is one, eternal, indestructible, unchangeable, stable, while the sensible beautiful things are many, perishable, changeable, and they participate through *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις* into the essence of beauty itself. Thus, Plato distinguishes the Idea of *αὐτὸ τὸ καλὸν* from *τὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα καλά* (476c9-d2).

The Athenian philosopher is based here on his ontological theory, focusing it on the example of beauty, because he tries to found his theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασίλεις* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* on more rational arguments. So, the non-philosophers are considered to be living in a dream even when awake, *ὄναρ... ζῆν*, for they perceive and see only the low level of reality, only the sensible beautiful things, being totally unable to see also the second high level of beauty itself, which, according to Plato, is the essential authentic reality. What is defined as a dream is the state of the non-philosophers, where they falsely consider the many sensible beautiful things as identical, and not just as similar, as they should, to beauty itself. On the contrary, the true philosophers are considered to live in the authentic reality, *ὑπαρ... ζῆν*, for they perceive and see adequately and properly both levels of reality, both the high level of beauty itself and the low level of the many sensible beautiful things (476c2-d4).

Therefore, only with the ontological foundation given so far, it is already apparent the rational reason why only the philosophers, among all citizens, are capable of ruling the states in the best possible way, since it is only they who see in depth the whole of reality and, thus, are the only ones in position to rule better than the non-philosophers who do not perceive it, since the former have a better and more complete perception and judgment for all things than the latter, seeing both levels of reality, being thus more able to make better political judgments and make better decisions for the political reality.

Nevertheless, Plato extends further his argumentation founding it next also on his epistemological theory, which he presents here in his *Republic* for the first time. Now the Athenian philosopher enters into a new distinction of the epistemological states of knowledge and opinion, which he respectively corresponds to

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<sup>4</sup> It is noteworthy that at this point of the *Republic* Plato presents for the first time his theory of Ideas, without however to advance it yet into a 'concrete argument' and without the audience to ask him for any clarification about it.

the ontological states of the absolute Being and the sensible world of becoming, birth and decay, and furthermore, to the two kinds of citizens that he examines, the philosophers and the non-philosophers. So, he bases his epistemology on his ontology. His aim is to prove that because only the philosopher knows the whole realm of reality, while the non-philosopher has merely opinions only for the sensible reality, for this reason the philosopher is the only competent one with supremacy to rule the state more rightly and with an overall knowledge.

The intellectual activity of the philosopher is considered to be knowledge, *γνώσις*, while that of the non-philosopher opinion, *δόξα*; for the philosopher knows a thing, while the non-philosopher has just an opinion (476d5-6) for the same thing, since the former sees the complete reality in both of its levels, while the latter sees only the one lower level of reality. In particular, it is pointed out that the non-philosopher as mere *δοξάζων* is not really healthy (476e2), which means that the philosopher as the only *γιγνώσκων* is the only truly healthy one (476d5-e3). So, the reason why the philosopher must rule the state becomes obvious here once more, since he is the only healthy and mentally accomplished citizen for such a big task.

By basing his epistemology on his ontology Plato considers that the whole being, the one that has complete existence, can be captured and be completely known, while the non-being, that which has no existence, is totally unknown; for what does not exist cannot be known, while what exists can be known (477a1-4). Between these two extreme ontological states, a third one intervenes, that of the being that has and does not have existence (477a6-7), meaning the world of becoming, birth and decay. Thus, it is asserted that knowledge-*γνώσις* relates to being, ignorance-*ἄγνοια* to non-being, and opinion-*δόξα* to the in-between of being and non-being, that is, to the sensible world of becoming (476e4-477b4).

In this way, the two powers of knowledge and opinion are completely differentiated (477e8), since knowledge by its nature concerns the being and has as its aim to know how the being is (477b10-11, 478a6), whereas opinion has as its aim to opine and to merely form a view about something (478a8, 477e2-3). Therefore, the objects of knowledge and opinion are totally differentiated (478b1-2). Since the object of knowledge is the being and the object of ignorance is the non-being, opinion as the intermediate epistemological state between knowledge and ignorance - being more vague than knowledge and clearer than ignorance (478c13-14) - should have its object between the two extreme ontological states of being and non-being, that is, in something that participates in both, in Being and in non-Being, without being either Being or non-Being (477b5-478e6).

Therefore, according to Plato's ontological theory, because the many sensible things<sup>5</sup> are and are not only one thing, as they include within them their opposites as well - like, the beautiful things are at the same time ugly, the just ones are unjust as well, the holy ones are unholy, being all these opposites ambiguous (479b8) - they finally are and are not only one stable thing, nor at the same time both of them or neither of them (479c3-5). The sensible beings, therefore, are both real and unreal; they are real, because they *are* resemblances-imitations of the Ideas, and they are not real because they are *resemblances-imitations* of the Ideas, making thus "the copy theory of participation and the theory of degrees of reality" not two but one and the same theory in Plato.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the place of all those many sensible beings is, according to Plato, between essence and non-Being (479c7), forming thus the many *δοξαστά* objects of that epistemological power which is between knowledge and ignorance, of opinion-*δόξα* (478e7-479d10).

As a result, *φιλόσοφοι* (480a11-12), namely friends of wisdom, are only those who also see the real beings in themselves, which always remain the same (479e7-8), for they love and admire only the objects of knowledge (479e10-480a1). On the contrary, those who see only the many sensible things but do not see also the beings themselves behind them, and they cannot see them even if someone leads them towards them (479e1-5), they are called *φιλόδοξοι* (480a6), that is, friends of opinion, for they love and admire only the objects of opinion (479e1-480a13).

After the definition in the aforementioned way of the distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers, which was based on the platonic ontology and epistemology, finally the important question under demonstration is raised:

*ποτέρους δὴ δεῖ πόλεως ἡγεμόνας εἶναι;... Ὅπότεροι ἂν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δυνατοὶ φαίνωνται φυλάξαι νόμους τε καὶ ἐπιτηδεύματα πόλεων, τούτους καθιστάναι φύλακας. (484b6-c1)*

The platonic answer to the question 'which of the two have to be the rulers of the state?', namely, the third class of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*, the *guardians-φύλακες*, is 'whoever of the two is capable of safeguarding the laws and the institutions of the states'. A further ability of the *guardians* is added at that, that they must have an acute vision and not to be blind (484c3-4).

The first category, therefore, of the non-philosopher citizens, who are also called epistemologically by Plato *φιλόδοξοι*, for they love only the objects of opin-

<sup>5</sup> For the ontological problem of the many sensible things and their meaning, see R.C. Cross - A.D. Woozley (1964) 143-165; J.C. Gosling (1960) 116-128; F.C. White (1977) 291-306.

<sup>6</sup> See R.E. Allen (1961) 325-335, who studies further the problem of the platonic ontological argument of the opposites presented in book V of the *Republic*.

ion-δόξα because they only have opinions for the multiple sensible world of becoming, birth and decay, are people who are wandering aimlessly in this unstable world of multiplicity, since they cannot perceive the authentic unchangeable reality as well (484b5-6). In addition, they do not differ at all from the blind, for they have been deprived of the knowledge of every real being (484c6-7). Finally, they do not have in their souls any *exemplar-παράδειγμα*,<sup>7</sup> neither do they see the truth of the beings so as to take a pattern in order to institute in the state the beautiful, the just and the good, and thus to keep and maintain the state's established laws (484c7-d3).

Consequently, and for all these reasons, Plato arrives at the rational conclusion that the non-philosophers are not capable of keeping and establishing the proper institutions for the state, for they are blind against the universal reality and its knowledge. On the contrary, the second class of the true philosophers is able to maintain and institute rightly and sufficiently the state, for the philosophers excel in the most important and utmost (484d9-10) of all things: they have acute intellectual vision, they are capable of comprehending the authentic unchangeable reality (484b3-5), the absolute Being, they can conceive the knowledge of each real being and, furthermore, they do not lack experience or virtue (484d5-7).

Therefore, it is now obvious and rational the reason why Plato arrives at the final conclusion that it is 'irrational' not to choose as rulers of the state the philosophers, since only they excel greatly and significantly from all the rest non-philosopher citizens, being the only really capable ones of maintaining and establishing the best institutions in the state in the most proper way than all the rest of the citizens (484a1-d10):

Ἄτοπον μὲν τᾶν, ἔφη, εἴη ἄλλους αἰρεῖσθαι... τούτῳ γὰρ αὐτῶ... τῷ μεγίστῳ ἂν προέχοιεν.  
(484d8-10)

### III. Plato's Politics Within his Second Ontological and Epistemological Scheme

This rational conclusion regarding the philosophers as the only competent rulers of the political reality, due to the higher knowledge that only they have of the whole of the ontological reality, is founded and supported even further by Plato's second and more complete ontological and epistemological scheme in books VI and VII of the *Republic* (506b2-518b5), through the allegoric images of the sun (*ἥλιος*), the line (*γραμμὴ*) and the cave (*σπήλαιον*).

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<sup>7</sup> The world of Ideas, according to Plato, constitutes the *παράδειγματα* of beings, while the world of the sensibles is the world of *ὁμοιώματα* and *μιμήματα* of the Ideas-paradigms; see Plato, *Parmenides* 132d1 sq.



Firstly, in the image of the *sun-ἥλιος* (506b2-509d5) Plato contrasts the visible world, where the sun reigns, with the intelligible world, where the *ιδέα του αγαθοῦ* reigns (509d2-3) comparing the *ἥλιος* and its relation with the *φῶς-light* (*δρώμενα*) and the vision (*ὄψεις*), to the *ἀγαθόν-good* and its relation with *ἀλήθεια-truth* (*νοούμενα, γιγνωσκόμενα*) and knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*). We see and sense with the five senses all the sensible things that form the *ὄρατός τόπος-visible region*, while we only think and reason all their Ideas, which form the *νοητός τόπος-intelligible region*, and which are the real essences of the beings (507b6-c4). According to Plato, the sun, which is the reason of vision, is considered to be the offspring of the good, begot by the good in a proportion with itself. Thus, as the good is related in the intelligible region with the intellect and the intelligible, so is the sun proportionately related in the visible region with the vision and the visible (508b9-c2). And as the eyes see clearly when they see objects upon which the sun shines, while they see dimly when they see obscure objects, so does the soul possess reason when it apprehends anything upon which truth and essence shine, while it has merely changeable opinions when it apprehends all things that are altered into birth and decay, and thus they are dark and not distinct (508d4-9). Hence, as the sun is related with light and vision without though being identified with them, so is the good related with truth and knowledge without being identified with them, being their reason (508e2-4). All the more so, as the sun provides the visible objects not only with vision but also with generation, growth and nurture, so does the good provide the knowable and intelligible objects not only with knowledge but also with Being and their essence, being itself something superior and beyond essence (509b2-10).

Through all this *περι τὸν ἥλιον ὁμοιότητα* (509c5-6), Plato arrives at the conclusion that in the state the only guardians who know the correlation of all things with the good, which like the sun provides substance to all sensible and intellectual reality, are the philosophers (505d11-506a3). And therefore, his inference that only the philosophers can be the best rulers of the state and that only they can realize the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* (506a9-b2) is reasonable, for they know not only the sensible but also the intellectual reality, being the only ones who know the good, which like the sun nourishes and lights everything, and which, as Plato notes further, must be known by anyone who is to act wisely either privately or publicly (517b8-c5).

In the next image of the *line-γραμμή* (506d6-511e5) Plato gives the second and more complete scheme of his ontological and epistemological theory, juxtaposing the four ontological degrees of being and reality to the four epistemological degrees of the soul. He divides thus a line into two unequal sections, the ontological section of the *visible-ὄρατὸν γένος* and the ontological section of the *intelligible-*

νοητόν γένος, and each of these sections into two other proportionately unequal ontological sections (509d6-8). At the section of the *visible-δρατόν*, the lower ontological part corresponds to the *εἰκόνες-images*, that is, the shadows, the reflections of things and everything of that kind, while the higher ontological part corresponds to all living animals, plants and beings, to everything natural and to all human artifacts (ζῶα κ.τ.λ.) (509d9-510a6). At the other section of the *intelligible-νοητόν*, the lower ontological part corresponds to *mathematics-μαθηματικά*, which presuppose the mathematical figures and axiomatic principles, which are the images of the visible beings, they base their proofs upon them as if they were evident, and with these as starting hypotheses they arrive at the final mathematical proofs of their investigation through a purely logical sequence, exclusively through the epistemological way of *understanding-διάνοια* (510b2-511a1). At this intelligible mathematical part, the soul is compelled to use only mathematical hypotheses, as images based on the previous part of the visible things, without though being directed to an ontological first principle, since it is unable to come out from and rise above the hypotheses (511a3-6). Finally, the second and highest ontological part of the intelligible world corresponds to the *forms-εἶδη* or *ideas-ιδέαι*, which the reason touches only with the power of dialectic, and the hypotheses are used as starting points in order to arrive at the non-hypothetical, that is, at the first principles of everything, the *εἶδη* or *ιδέαι*, without the use of any sensible thing, but in a purely deductive way using only *εἶδη* and ending up only to them (511b3-c2).

So, Plato concludes that to these four parts of the ontological reality correspond four epistemological states that exist inside the soul: (a) the *reason-νόησις*, which corresponds to the highest first part of the *forms/ideas-εἶδη/ιδέαι*, (b) the *understanding-διάνοια*, which corresponds to the next lower second part of the concepts of *mathematics-μαθηματικά*, (c) the *belief-πίστις*, which corresponds to the third part of the visible, sensible living and natural beings (ζῶα κ.τ.λ.), and (d) the *conjecture-εἰκασία*, which corresponds to the last fourth part of the *images-εἰκόνες* (511d6-e2). The degree of these four epistemological states corresponds to and agrees with the degree in which their ontological objects participate in the *ἀλήθεια* and the *ὄν* (511e2-4). Thus, the two higher epistemological parts compose the higher and true knowledge of the *ὄντως ὄντα (ιδέαι/εἶδη)*, the *knowledge-ἐπιστήμη*, while the two lower parts compose the lower and changeable knowledge of the *αἰσθητὰ ὄντα*, the *opinion-δόξα*.

The only ones however who know well all four epistemological and ontological degrees, knowing thus completely the whole realm of reality, are only the *philosophers*. The rest of the citizens, in their majority (*δημιουργοί*) know only the sensible visible reality having only beliefs (*δόξαι*) about it, while a minority

(*ἐπίκουροι*) knows up to a certain degree also the mathematical concepts of the lower intelligible reality, having just an understanding of it (*διάνοια*). Therefore, the platonic claim that from all the citizens only the philosophers are capable of ruling in the most excellent and best way the state is very rational, since only they know the whole realm of reality in its complete form, and for this reason they know better the political reality as well, being thus capable of establishing and applying the best and most excellent institutions and universal principles, which only they know among all other citizens.

Finally, in the image of the *cave-σπήλαιον* (514a1-518b5) Plato depicts the human nature regarding its education and its lack of education (514a1-2), presenting once again both his ontological and epistemological theories through images. The Athenian philosopher gives us the image of a subterranean cave whose entrance is open to the light and at its dark depth dwell men that are chained at their legs and necks, just like prisoners, being immobilized and unable to see anything but the wall-bottom of the cave in front of them (514a2-b1). Further behind them and higher in the cave a fire is burning all the time, shedding the only light within the cave. Between the fire and the prisoners above them there is also a path with a low wall built, just like the ones the exhibitors of puppet shows use, where people pass along carrying various implements and images of visible things, and some of them are talking while others are silent (514b2-c1). In this dark cave, with the fire as the only light source, the prisoners cannot see anything else but the shadows of themselves, of the other prisoners, as well as of the objects that are carried above the wall behind them, from the reflections that the fire casts upon the wall-bottom of the cave (515a5-b2). Thus, the prisoners believe as real only the shadows they see across them on the wall, and they believe that even their own voices as well as the voices of the men that pass behind them come out of the shadows (515b4-c2).

If now, every time that someone of the prisoners was released, liberated and healed from the bonds and the illusion, he would be forced to turn around the head, to walk and see what really happens, he would see the light higher above the cave with weakness and pain due to the dazzle and the glitter of the light, and for the first time he would see all those things that only their shadows he could discern until now, seeing now more clearly and being closer to reality (515c4-d4). And if he looked at the light itself he would be blinded and would not know what he sees. If finally someone dragged him out of the cave by force until he sees the light of the sun, he would be pained even more by its blinding light and he would need some time to adjust in order to see the things above. At first, he would discern the shadows, after the idols of all things and later the things themselves, while he could see all the heavenly objects more easily at night with the light of

the stars and the moon, and finally he would see the sun itself and its light during daytime (515e6-516b7). Thus, he would perceive that the sun is the cause of all things in the visible realm. Having seen all these things and realized the truth and reality, the liberated one would not wish for any reason to live back in the dark cave, even if he had honors, recognition and power down there, but on the contrary he would prefer to die (516e1-2). If now a liberated person returned again to the cave, until his eyes get readjusted to the darkness, they would be considered ruined by the prisoners down there, and he himself would be the laughing-stock, and they would say that it is not worthwhile even to attempt the ascent up there. And if they could, they would kill whoever would try to release and liberate them from their bonds and lead them up (516e3-517a7). Here Plato obviously makes an acrimonious mention of the unjust death of his teacher and friend Socrates, who while he attempted to intellectually enlighten and liberate the Athenians, showing to them the higher philosophical truths, they killed him.

So, in this image of the *σπήλαιον*, which should be connected to the previous images of the *ἥλιος* and *γραμμή*, the cave and its prison are compared to the ontological sphere of the visible beings, the sensible visible world, the fire and its light to the sun and its power, the ascent upwards and the seeing of the world above to the epistemological ascent of the soul to the ontological intelligible realm (517a8-b5), and the prisoners to all us humans (515a4-5). The soul's ontological and epistemological ascent, thus, commences first from the inferior knowledge that the man-prisoner has of the *shadows-εἰκόνες*, having merely *conjecture-εἰκασία*; after that the man-prisoner gets liberated and sees with the light of the natural sun-fire the visible beings (*ζῶα, κ.τ.λ.*) having now *faith-πίστις*; next he comes out of the cave-visible realm to the intelligible realm and conceives at first the concepts of *mathematics/μαθηματικά*, having *understanding-διάνοια*; and finally, he ascends to the highest part of the intelligible realm, where he sees there the *ideas/forms-ιδέαι/εἶδη* in themselves, the *ὄντως ὄντα*, having the supreme knowledge of *reason-νόησις*. At the first two stages within the cave, which concern the visible sensible world of beings, man has *opinion-δόξα* of the sensible reality, while at the final two stages out of the cave he has *knowledge-ἐπιστήμη* of the higher intelligible reality. In the sphere of knowledge, thus, the *ιδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ* becomes visible last and with great difficulty, being the cause of all beings and donating truth and mind to everything (517b8-c4), as does the sun to the natural things. At that, Plato makes the important statement that whoever is to act with wisdom either in his private or in his public life, he has to have knowledge of the idea of the good (517b8-c5). It is also mentioned that, for obvious reasons and as it is expected, those who arrived at the high level of seeing the good do not want to be occupied with the usual

human affairs and things anymore, but crave only to stay up there at the supreme realm of the real being and its knowledge (517c8-9).

Nevertheless, a little further down in the *Republic* (519c8-521b11) Plato emphatically asserts that the work of the founder of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* has to be the coercion of the naturally gifted philosophers to see and know the most supreme of all lessons, which is the *ἀγαθόν*, to ascend to the ontological and epistemological ladder of being and its knowledge until its end, which is the scientific *νόσις* of the *ἀγαθόν*, and after learning it well enough, not to be allowed to them to remain there, as it happens until today with all the philosophers, but to descend again down to the city-cave of the citizens-prisoners in order to enlighten and share everything with all people. For if the philosophers do not act likewise, they will do injustice to all people making them worse, when they could live their lives better and more prosperously (519c8-d9). Plato, therefore, rightly arrives at the conclusion that it is in no case unjust for the *philosophers* to become *kings-βασιλείς* of the state, but on the contrary, to make them guardians and assign to them the taking care of all the citizens of the state is the only right thing to do (520a6-9). For that reason, the philosophers have to descend one by one down to the darkness of the city-cave, where their fellow human beings live like prisoners, to get adjusted once again to the shadows that are there, to see again the idols of the beautiful, the just and the good beings, of which they also know now their eternal truth, to enlighten all the citizens with their truths and their scientific knowledge, and thus the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* to become a reality and not a dream as it is until today, where men fight one another in vain and in delusion for shadows-conjectures and authority (520c1-d1). Therefore, Plato arrives at the right and rational conclusion that only the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* must rule and guard the *polis*, for they are the only ones that have contemplated and sufficiently known, more than anyone else, through their complete and proper education, the appropriate means to rule a *πολιτεία* in the best possible way so as to become *ἀρίστη*, having tasted other superior honors as well and a better way of life than that of the simple politicians:

*Τίνας οὖν ἄλλους ἀναγκάσεις ἰέναι ἐπὶ φυλακὴν τῆς πόλεως ἢ οἱ περὶ τούτων τε φρονιμώτατοι δι' ὧν ἄριστα πόλις οἰκεῖται, ἔχουσι τε τιμὰς ἄλλας καὶ βίον ἀμείνω τοῦ πολιτικοῦ; Οὐδένας ἄλλους.*  
(521b7-11)

At this rational conclusion, that the *philosophers* are the only competent to rule the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία* and become its *βασιλείς*, Plato arrives by founding it on his ontological and epistemological theory.<sup>8</sup> For the *philosophers* excel ontologically

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<sup>8</sup> For a more exhaustive criticism of Plato's ontological and epistemological theory and the problem of the two degrees of reality and the two degrees of knowledge-opinion,

and epistemologically against all other citizens who are not philosophers, in that only they see the authentic reality in its supreme depth, and only they love it, seek it and know it, and for that reason they are the only ones who are capable of applying it also to the political reality, maintaining, instituting and ruling thus the state in the best possible way: excellently. The proof therefore of the platonic theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*, is rationally founded upon the ontological and epistemological excellence and supremacy of the *philosophers* against all other citizens, making them thus the most competent of all to rule the cities as best as they can. For this reason, in the *Republic* Plato's ontology and epistemology support and found rationally his politics.

#### IV. The Major Scholars' Critiques and Interpretations

The ontological and epistemological foundation of the platonic political theory of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*, which in my view, as I tried to show, is in its line of arguments correct and rational, has raised problems and has received various critiques, interpretations and comments on the part of the scholars.

Since the antiquity already, Aristotle<sup>9</sup> was the first one to call to attention two problems related to the Idea of *ἀγαθόν*, in the general problem of how the knowledge of the good on the part of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* makes them more capable of practically ruling the state. (a) Firstly, the 'vagueness' of such knowledge of the good is pointed out. For, it is difficult to isolate a specific notion of the good which will be common to all its uses in the visible things. In other words, the connections between the good and the sensible beings are considered vague, and for this reason it is difficult to find the exact value of knowing such an Idea for purely practical reasons. Aristotle mentions that those people who are occupied with practical activities cannot discern the value of knowing the Idea of the good in relation to these activities. The various artisans are not interested in the knowledge of the good itself, but only in the special knowledge of the good for their art (1097a6-14). (b) Secondly, the obvious 'uselessness' of such a knowledge for practical life is pointed out. It may be considered that 'having the ideal good as example we can know better which things are good for us, and by knowing them, we can acquire them' (1096b35-1097a4), but, still the practical aspect of this knowledge in relation to the practical life is not apparent. The artisans acquire

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see R.C. Cross - A.D. Woozley (1964) 166-195, 201-230; N. Cooper (1986) 229-242; G. Fine (1978) 121-139 and (1990) 85-115; J.C. Gosling (1968) 119-130; J.M.E. Moravcsik (1978) 53-69; C. Ritter (1933) 105-109, 123-133; G. Vlastos (1973); F.C. White (1984) 339-354; N.P. White (1992) 277-310, 277-310.

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 6.

the excellent knowledge of their arts only through many years of practice and experience in their arts, and not through the study of ontology. Furthermore, Aristotle in book VI, 7-8 doubts even more the practical usefulness of the knowledge of the good by examining *φρόνησις*, that is, practical wisdom. While theoretical wisdom, *σοφία*, is related to the universal, unchangeable abstract concepts, on the contrary, practical wisdom, *φρόνησις*, is related to men's specific matters and the specific circumstances in which they appear, and the *φρόνιμος* man has to know and value the particular situations of man's action and behavior. Therefore, such a practice, and particularly such a political knowledge, is considered not to be acquired through the study of ontology, because the knowledge of the sensible things is acquired by experience. At that, it is noted that many have theoretical knowledge but are incapable in matters of practical knowledge, such as Thales of Miletus, who had excellent super-human knowledge but fell in a well while watching and philosophizing about the heavenly objects (1141b6-8).

Aristotle, of course, forgets the story that he himself preserved, that when Thales was accused by the Milesians as a theoretical dreamer, he proved to them through the incident of the olive plantations and the oil-mills, that he was able, if he wanted, to have practical excellence and supremacy in his life, however, he was not interested in all these practical things but only in the cosmic wisdom that is above all those earthly matters.<sup>10</sup> In addition, as Herodotus<sup>11</sup> informs us, who restores the internal relationship between abstract philosophical thought and politics, the Greek cities of Asia Minor in view of the danger of war by the Persians invited all the significant theoreticians of their era to give them beneficial advices for their salvation. So, the first philosopher, Thales, being very competent as it was proved in matters of practical political knowledge as well, proposed all the Ionian cities to be rallied in a political unity under one government, abolishing the many and different governments.

Apart from that, however, it may be true that there is some 'vagueness' regarding the practical application of the theoretical philosophical knowledge, such as that of the good, but nevertheless, a man who knows the universal being better, more thoroughly and in depth, can apply with more *σοφία* but also with *φρόνησις* this knowledge of his to the political reality, establishing institutions and ruling them much better than someone without the universal knowledge of the *καθόλου*. In addition, it is odd how Aristotle, who considered the philosopher's theoretical life – the only possessor of *σοφία*, *φρόνησις*, and all the other moral and intellectual virtues – as the most eudaimonic and complete life of all (book X), could not accept that the philosopher would also be the most competent and proper politi-

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<sup>10</sup> H. Diels - W. Kranz (1952) 11A10.

<sup>11</sup> Herodotus, *Histories* I, 170.

cian of all, due to his universal knowledge, being thus the only one who would lead the state to public eudaimonia.

On the contrary, Nettleship<sup>12</sup> makes a correct interpretation by considering that Plato, in his comparison between the waking and dreaming vision of things, compares the clear perception of truth, which is the perception of the Forms, with its confused perception. The philosophical nature has an “indiscriminate appetite” for the knowledge of all things, and this quest for knowledge differs from all others, in that it always tries to find the underlying principles or Forms, whose world of change and experience is the superficial appearance. The philosophical nature, which loves truth, always looks for unity behind the multiple world of experience and for principles behind the multiple phenomena. Plato’s Forms are considered as the ‘principles’ of morality and aesthetics, as well as the ‘laws’ of physical science. “The world as it is for science, the world of what Plato calls forms, is not a second, shadowy, unreal world, it is the same world better understood.” Every Form in the *κοινωνία* of the Forms is something *κοινόν* in which the things and the actions partake, and it remains always one and the same within them. In the question, therefore, what a good politician must have, the right answer is knowledge of the Forms and experience-*ἐμπειρία*. For, the good politician knows when the order of the state functions rightly and in what way he has to reform it, only when he knows some certain principle according to which he will act analogously. Therefore, the knowledge of the Forms or principles is totally important for the political ruler. If now he also has *ἐμπειρία*, that is, knowledge derived from practice and experience, which is ‘the necessary filling up of knowledge of the principles’, then that combination makes the right and proper elements of the good government. “True knowledge of principles involves *a fortiori* the knowledge of details” of practical life. Plato is excited with that truth, and for this reason he considers necessary the practical training in philosophical education for fifteen years, from the age of thirty-five to fifty, for the acquirement of this necessary experience for those who will become *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*. The emphasis however for the politician is mostly put on the possession of the principles-Forms in his mind, since without them his experience is nothing.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Nettleship rightly considers the combination of the ontological knowledge and practical experience that the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* acquire during their long-lasting education, as a necessary element for the good and proper political ruling, with chief among them always however the ontological knowledge of the principles, according to which the good politician acts analogously.

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<sup>12</sup> R.L. Nettleship (1937), 188-199.

<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Republic* 409, 493b, 520c, 539b.



Correct is also the interpretation that is given by Barker,<sup>14</sup> who claims that ‘the ultimate test of the true ruler has to be the intellectual test of his philosophical power’. Instead of discovering by using moral tests the ones who care most for the city, we must discover through the intellectual test those few who are able to rule the state best in the light of their deep wisdom. Therefore, the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* have to know all the Ideas, and most of all the Idea of the good-*ἀγαθόν*, as well as to know the mysteries of existence and the solutions to the meanings of life, so as to act accordingly, guiding the citizens wisely with the right ontological meanings that they ought to have in their lives. Furthermore, Grube,<sup>15</sup> talking about the philosopher’s knowledge which is the knowledge of the eternal Ideas and the knowledge and comprehension of the values and principles that rule the world, he considers correctly that such a perfect knowledge may be unattainable after all, something that also Plato himself was continually doubting, but that this nevertheless must not prevent the politician from seeking it. A correct interpretation is also given by Koyré,<sup>16</sup> who asserts that the hierarchy of Plato’s excellent city is structured on the base of the degree of knowledge. For, the ruling *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* are obliged to rule because they have the knowledge, the *νόησις*, the *νοῦς*, and this is what gives them their special value, their knowledge of the good and universal being. And this knowledge of theirs radiates so much that it illumines the entire city and all the citizens with whom they share it. Only the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* possess the transcendental and supreme knowledge, the *νόησις*. The rest, the *ἐπικούροι*, possess a lower degree of knowledge, the *διάνοια*, while the *δημιουργοί* possess the lowest degree, the *ἀληθῆς δόξα*, the true belief. Consequently, only the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* possess the truth, while the rest of the citizens possess only part of it, which is connected with fantasy and the forms of symbol and myth. Therefore, is it not for that reason very rational for the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* to be the rulers of the state?

An interesting interpretation is given by Murphy,<sup>17</sup> who points out some epistemological difficulties in Plato, since in the *Meno*<sup>18</sup> the difference between *γνώσις-δόξα* is easier and apparent. There, the *γνώσις* based on the teaching of virtue provides security and rest from the evils, *κακῶν παύλα*, and is *αἰτίας λογισμός*, that is, understanding of the principles. The *ἀληθῆς δόξα* is the true belief or information, and it is not despised by Plato, because not only it is better than nothing, but often it is sufficient for practical reasons. On the contrary, in the *Republic*

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<sup>14</sup> E. Barker (1964) 196-198.

<sup>15</sup> G.M.A. Grube (1980) 272-273.

<sup>16</sup> A. Koyré (1945).

<sup>17</sup> N.R. Murphy (1960) 97-129.

<sup>18</sup> Plato, *Meno* 97b, 98a.

the correct interpretation of the difference between *γνώσις-δόξα* is difficult since Plato obviously despises the second one. It is considered that *γνώσις* means ‘knowledge with understanding’ rather than ‘knowledge’, the insight into an object, and that there are degrees of *γνώσις*. *Δόξα*, on the other hand, is the ‘unreflective acquaintance with’ the objects without the understanding of their nature, and not exactly ‘belief’ or ‘opinion’. Plato uses *δόξα* “as a sort of general label for unphilosophical intelligence in various fields and uses” always associating it with ‘the many’, while he associates *γνώσις* only with ‘the one’. Furthermore, Murphy correctly asserts that the comparison between *φιλόσοφοι* and *φιλόδοξοι* is the comparison between philosophy and the general intellectual, aesthetic, and practical cultivation. The *φιλόδοξοι*, who comprise the *φιλοθεάμονες*, the *φιλότεχνοι* and the *πρακτικοί*, are not the uneducated ones but the educated ‘humanists’, such as Isocrates, who have received the traditional Hellenic education and culture, having general knowledge from travels, studies, different languages and people, literary texts, experience of the world, but who however produce only *δόξα*. They are deprived of the purely scientific knowledge, which only the real scientists, the *φιλόσοφοι*, possess, who in Plato have received a distinctively higher and supreme education, since they also know the mathematical sciences and the dialectic, possessing thus *γνώσις*. The *φιλόδοξοι*, therefore, are the non-philosophical ‘intellectuals’, those who are generally called ‘men of information’, the well-informed and educated people who nevertheless lack the contemplative understanding of the *φιλόσοφοι*.

Murphy also calls to attention two problems of interpretation here. (a) Firstly, he points out the interpretation of the many ‘between being and non-being’. *Τὰ πολλά*, which are all the things of nature, that is, plants, animals, colors, sounds, facts, actions and persons, and which are represented here by six examples of opposites with relational characteristics, are not fully real. He thinks that they are ‘half-real’, not in the sense that they have an intermediate kind or degree of reality, such as the color grey has between the white and black, but in the sense that in one relation those objects exist or are real, while in another relation they are not, as is for example the color piebald between the white and the black, looking white in one patch and black in another. (b) Secondly, he points out the interpretation of ‘the difference of objects’ epistemologically, as Plato differentiates the objects of *γνώσις* and *δόξα*. It is therefore correctly pointed out the problem that “if there cannot be *δόξα* and *γνώσις* about the same thing, even successively, learning and discussion might seem impossible, and indeed also the processes of dialectic itself,” for there is a successive continuity through a series of steps in order to reach the objective knowledge of the objects. In other words, “there must be *δόξα*

of the objects of *γνώσις*.” Indeed, Plato is vague regarding the full distinction between the objects of *γνώσις* and *δόξα*, which cannot be different.

Furthermore, Murphy notes that, firstly, the *γνώσις* that the philosophers must possess in order to rule must not be like the knowledge that Socrates possesses in the dialogues, and secondly and mainly, that its possession, in comparison to *δόξα*, cannot logically render anyone capable for the duty of ruling. The knowledge of mathematics and dialectic cannot prove anyone to be competent for the political leadership of a state. Therefore, he asserts, and I would agree, that the “philosophical is the critical and reflective understanding that in the practical sphere would prevent politicians from going on to execute a policy before they have examined its presuppositions.” Nevertheless, Isocrates<sup>19</sup> in his *Helen* regards the *ἐπεικῶς δοξάζειν*, that is, to have correct information for useful things, to be better than the *ἀκριβῶς ἐπίστασθαι*, that is, the deep scientific understanding for useless abstract things. This is exactly what Plato fights against. In politics, the contemplative examination of principles is useful, what Isocrates calls *ἀκριβολογία*, and that must be cultivated through the study of mathematical and dialectical abstract things. Therefore, he rightly asserts that there is an analogy between the work of the politician and that of the mathematician scientist in books VI and VII. The mathematician scientist does not reach the highest degrees of intellect, for he accepts the *ὑποθέσεις* without reflecting upon them, and directly arrives to the conclusions, *διεξίτων ἐπὶ τελευτάς*. So do the politicians also accept some political *ὑπόθεσις*, without contemplating its supreme value regarding eudaimonia, and they are interested only in discovering the means to it, *αἱ τελευταί*. Intellectually, their duties are parallel. However, every use of the average politicians’ intellect is merely a *δόξα*. For that reason, Plato considered that the famous politicians of Greece did more harm than good with their dangerous thinking, which was not due to lack of mind, but due to the direction in which they turned it, using their abilities only for performing their political actions than for critically examining them. For this reason, it is right that the merely capable people should not rule, but only the philosophers who examine critically and contemplatively with knowledge the policies before applying them. Thus, Murphy recognizes, despite the epistemological difficulties that he points out, the supremacy and excellence of the philosophers in politics against the merely capable people, because only they critically contemplate with *γνώσις*, and not with mere *δόξα*, before they politically act.

One other correct interpretation is given by Crombie,<sup>20</sup> who claims that *δόξα* is sufficient only for all those who are under supervision, while the supervisors, that is, the rulers, need the knowledge of the principles which govern the beings in

<sup>19</sup> Isocrates, *Helen* 209a.

<sup>20</sup> I.M. Crombie (1962) 103-110.

order to rule. The distinction, thus, between *γνώσις* and *δόξα* is being made in order to call to attention that the philosophers who possess *γνώσις* can rule, while the ordinary learned people are content by having mere *δόξαι* of common sense. The *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*, therefore, have to rule because only they have the insight, the standard or exemplar of how things ought to be done, the intuition of perfection, which they can apply to practical life. Nevertheless, Crombie asserts that the *φιλόσοφος-βασιλεύς* remains also a paradox, since Plato gives an extremely obscure explanation in the central books V-VII of the *Republic*, which are considered in an overestimated way that they contain and reflect the essence of the platonic thought, while they equally include incomplete ambitions of the philosopher's thought. The apt problem that Crombie poses is, what relationship do the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* have with ruling, which is a practical activity, when they are occupied with the things and the knowledge outside the sensible, empirical world of observation. The philosophers are experts only in the abstract thinking of the Ideas, and not in the specific practical circumstances that demand the use of the senses. Therefore, they are out of place in practical life and, thus, how could they rule? As Socrates says in the *Philebus*,<sup>21</sup> whoever knows about the divine spheres and circles, but does not know about their human copies, cannot build a house. The main problem, therefore, of the *Republic's* central books is how the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* will apply the theoretical and abstract knowledge of the Ideas to the empirical, sensible, practical world. Even though Crombie rightly asserts that Plato does not pose this question, and for this reason he does not give an explicit answer, he finally infers an answer drawn from the enigmatic platonic texts: he considers that the solution lies in the positive relationship between the two worlds. The concepts we form through empirical thought, even though they are not identified with the Ideas, are their imitations. This is mostly true for the mathematical concepts that are an abstraction out of empirical concepts. That is the bridge between the abstract Ideas and the specific concrete things that the philosophers come to comprehend. Thus, the knowledge we acquire when we grasp the Ideas 'as they are in themselves', is more useful to us than any other knowledge, in order to comprehend sufficiently the order that is hidden in the physical world, and to create this order in our lives and in society. This knowledge, therefore, explains for Crombie the reason why philosophical knowledge is useful in the practical matters of life. Regarding so the correlation between philosophical knowledge and government, Crombie is right about the positive relationship between the Ideas and the sensible world, which only the philosophers comprehend and know in depth, and thus they are able to apply it

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<sup>21</sup> Plato, *Philebus* 62a.

in a useful way in practical life as well. However, in addition, an important element that he overlooks must be pointed out and added here: that the philosophers receive also a fifteen-year practical education, besides their philosophical theoretical knowledge and education, that surely makes them even more competent and relevant to the practical matters of governing the state.

On the other hand, the ontological foundation of Plato's political theory receives also an attack, as Bambrough<sup>22</sup> mentions, who claims that Plato's friends have a difficulty in defending Plato against the attack from his enemies, which comes from modern and contemporary empiricism, and which expresses an intense skepticism for all metaphysical systems. Plato's enemies discard the platonic views and foundations, namely, that in order to know how to live we must know the universal metaphysical truth of the world, from which the moral and political goodness of man must derive. This skeptical attack is already included in Hume, who asserts that no amount of *is* can infer an *ought*, meaning that no moral or political conclusion can be derived from syllogisms that are not moral or political, separating thus completely ethics and politics from ontology. So, it is regarded that Plato is weak in his argument, thinking that because the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* are the experts who know the good and the right, they are those who always have to be preferred, for there are no standards of spiritual health, as there are of physical health. Therefore, the appeal of this platonic theory is thought to be derived from the obviously self-evident principle that the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*, who know what is right and wrong, have all the unique qualifications to rule people's lives. "But this principle is vacuous until we are told who are the qualified experts, and what is the content of their knowledge, and as soon as it is given a particular interpretation the principle loses its self-evidence as well as its emptiness." The attack therefore of Plato's enemies is addressed to the metaphysics of morals upon which Plato founds his political institutions. However, Bambrough's view is that both Plato and his enemies err, because Plato correctly says that there is moral knowledge, but incorrectly concludes that for this reason a totalitarian state is the best, while his enemies rightly reject the totalitarian state as being the best, but wrongly conclude that there is no moral knowledge.

I agree only with one part of Bambrough's view, that of universal, and not exactly moral knowledge, while I completely disagree with Plato's enemies in both their rejection of metaphysics and in their interpretation of Plato as totalitarian. I disagree with the interpretation of the platonic *polis* as totalitarian, as it is unfairly, frivolously, carelessly and with full malignancy misinterpreted. For, on the contrary, it is an *ἀρίστη καὶ ἀγαθὴ πολιτεία* which is founded upon humanitarian,

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<sup>22</sup> J.R. Bambrough (1967) 3-19 and (1962) 97-113.

rational, scientific, philosophical, and moral supreme terms, which constitute a highly civilized political theory for mankind. Regarding knowledge, now, Plato does not think of it only as moral, but as universal, without limiting its universal character. Also, I think that in reality no one can seriously doubt the universal knowledge of things, which indeed πάντες ἄνθρωποι τοῦ εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει, as Aristotle<sup>23</sup> have so well said. The universal ontological truths exist along with the universe, whether we doubt them or not, being the eternal objects of science, and surely their knowledge leads to better actions, for when we know something better we act accordingly better, too. It is therefore totally irrational to challenge the view that the more knowledge a politician possesses the better he will act in the political reality. Besides, even today do we not consider that there are certain established weights and measures of institutions and values in politics, and that the more knowledge a politician has the more qualified he is for the supreme political post of the state? Why not apply this also to the case of the philosophers, who are indeed the possessors of the greatest amount of knowledge?

According to the interpretation given by Cross and Woosley,<sup>24</sup> who agree both with Cornford,<sup>25</sup> that in his translation correlates δόξα with seeming, with everything that seems to exist, the sensible phenomena, or with whatever seems true, the beliefs, and with Murphy,<sup>26</sup> who claims that δόξα is not exactly 'belief' or 'opinion', but "an unreflective intellectual condition not so much of acquaintance with objects as of uncritical belief about them," the δόξα is finally translated by them as 'belief' and is considered to be a state of mind that is concerned with immediate apprehension and awareness. What is clear about δόξα is that Plato considers it inferior, for its objects are mere appearances or copies of the Ideas, which are the objects of knowledge, and for that reason it is a state of dream, while on the contrary the man of knowledge is truly awake. Furthermore, Cross and Woosley claim that Plato's argument which differentiates the two powers/faculties of γνώσις and δόξα is vague, bad, and unsatisfactory, for it does not determine his exact argumentation. Plato differentiates power/faculty based on two criteria: (a) by its objects, and (b) by its effects, whether it produces knowledge or belief. Even though it is acceptable by criterion (b) that the two powers/faculties of γνώσις and δόξα are different because they produce different effects, it is not inferred from criterion (a) that they must also have different objects, that is, that the Ideas and the sensible beings must be different. Criterion (a) thus is rightly considered that it is not sufficiently supported by Plato. The difference must lie in

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<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A, 980a.

<sup>24</sup> R.C. Cross - A.D. Woosley (1964) 143-165.

<sup>25</sup> F.M. Cornford (1941) 176.

<sup>26</sup> N.R. Murphy (1960) 103.

the way we perceive the objects, without a necessary difference to exist in the objects that are perceived. So, Plato considered that his *ἐπίκουροι* had true beliefs for the same things or objects for which his *φύλακες* had knowledge, namely, the maintenance of the ideal *polis*. Therefore, Cross and Woosley rightly point out, on the one hand, that the platonic argument is vague, and on the other hand, that the Ideas and the sensible beings must not be different, but that they are just perceived in different ways by the philosophers and all the other non-philosophers within the *polis*.

Guthrie<sup>27</sup> also poses in his interpretation the main epistemological question about whether Plato maintains a steady relationship between *γνώσις* and *δόξα* and their respective objects. It is mentioned that in the *Meno* *δόξα* is a dim perception of the same objects, of the Ideas, the *γνώσις* of which is a clear and complete understanding. However, in the *Republic* Plato totally differentiates the objects of *γνώσις* and *δόξα*, regarding the world of Ideas as the object of knowledge and the sensible world as the object of opinion. For this reason, Gulley<sup>28</sup> thinks that the *Republic* 'excludes the possibility of converting' *δόξα* into *γνώσις*, something that does not stand though, for otherwise how the *ἐπίκουροι*, who still possess only *δόξα*, would become *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* in their educational ascent in book VII, and how would anyone come out of the cave ascending to the higher degrees of the 'line'? Indeed, Plato seems to have changed entirely his view from the *Meno* to the *Republic*. At that, in the *Symposium*, a dialogue nearer in time to the *Republic*, it is repeated the same position of the *Meno* in the terms of the *Republic*, regarding *δόξα* standing in the middle between knowledge and ignorance, for 'it hits on reality', *τοῦ ὄντος τυγχάνων*. In the *Timaeus*, the differentiation with the *Republic* is even more obvious, for Plato differentiates the truly existent and real that is comprehensible with reason, from the becoming of birth and decay that is perceptible by *δόξα* through the senses. In spite of that, Guthrie rightly considers that there is no real contradiction in Plato. For, if we look at the 'line' of the cognitive comprehension, we will see that it is continuous, with its parts differing only regarding the degree of clarity or obscurity, and the objects of *δόξα* to be 'resemblances' of the objects of *γνώσις* (509d, 510a). Thus, the solution lies in the 'resemblance' between the objects of *δόξα* and *γνώσις*, which Plato gives in the analogy of the dream/waking and the blind/keen-sighted. The objects of *δόξα* 'participate in', they are *εἰδῶλα*, *εἰκόνες* of the Ideas. Therefore, it is rightly said that "there is no contradiction because the unstable objects of *doxa* (*τὰ γιγνόμενα*) contain the semblance of the stable realities (*ὄντα*)." This likeness between the two cognitive objects is also repeated in the dialogues *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, and

<sup>27</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie (1975) 487-498.

<sup>28</sup> N. Gulley (1964) 191.

particularly in the latter two the philosopher comprehends beauty itself through the appreciation of the many earthly beauties. Therefore, it is rightly asserted that it is improbable that Plato denies this likeness in the *Republic*, when he refers to the many beautiful things and to beauty itself, and furthermore, that he denies that δόξα cannot be converted into γνώσις. Plato was obviously influenced by Parmenides, who was the first one that totally differentiated δόξα from γνώσις considering that knowledge is real and belongs to Being, while δόξα is false belonging both to Being and non-Being, but without an intermediate degree.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, Plato adopted only the first part of Parmenides' epistemology, for he thought that δόξα may also be correct, being between Being and non-Being, as an intermediate degree between knowledge and ignorance. Therefore, the epistemological contradiction in Plato is rightly removed, as it is pointed out the likeness between the two cognitive objects of the sensible things and Ideas, and furthermore it is shown that δόξα can be converted into γνώσις by the φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς.

A correct interpretation is also given by White,<sup>30</sup> who regards this argument to be the first one with which Plato tries to prove that the philosophers are those who should rule, based on the Principle of the Natural Division of Labor, which he started in 369e-370c. The philosophers have the natural ability to rule, because they are capable of comprehending the Forms, namely the paradigms or models, according to which the state has to be patterned so that it becomes as good as possible. Plato asserts that the ability of philosophizing and the ability of governing, which are differentiated in our world, can by nature co-exist as the unified duty of the φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς. That is, if we let a philosopher without interference to follow his natural inclination, then by nature he will want to become a ruler, and likewise, if we let a ruler to follow his natural inclination without interference, he will want by nature to become a philosopher. However, White very rightly points out that if someone accepts large parts of the platonic politics and ethics as correct, which are included in the *Republic*, is not obliged to accept necessarily as right the platonic metaphysics and epistemology.<sup>31</sup> This happens because Plato has a continuous problem with his metaphysical theory in saying clearly and distinctly which is the exact relationship between the Forms and the sensible beings. The words μετέχειν and παράδειγμα, which Plato uses, do not express the exact nature of the relationship between Ideas and sensible beings, and finally the Athenian philosopher does not seem to succeed in defining it exactly, not even in his further attempts in the first part of the *Parmenides*. Furthermore, problems are detected on the powers of both knowledge and opinion, which are differentiated

<sup>29</sup> H. Diels – W. Kranz (1952) 28B6.8 and 28B1.30: βροτῶν δόξας, ταῖς οὐκ ἐν πίστις ἀληθῆς.

<sup>30</sup> N.P. White (1979) 153-164.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. P. Shorey (1933) 226, 234.



by Plato, because they do not have the same effect, one being infallible and the other not, and for this reason he concludes that they are not related to the same objects. This conclusion however is false, for it is not given any further explanation why not to have two powers, knowledge and opinion, which are different because they have different effects, but which have to do with the same things. Also, dubious and in need of further explanation seems to be the word *μεταξύ*, which refers to opinion as an intermediate state between knowledge and ignorance, which then justifies its objects to be between being and non-being. Nevertheless, this is not regarded as a contradiction, that the many sensible things are and are not beautiful, etc., while the Form is purely beautiful, etc.; for they can be beautiful in certain occasions, relations and times, and ugly in certain other occasions, relations and times, without this to imply any contradiction in their Being, which is considered as true and existential. The state's rulers use specific Forms, such as the Form of the good, as *παρδείγματα*, according to which they try to pattern the city making it resemble the Form as much as possible. "In general, for Plato, the effort to improve something in the sensible world is an effort to make it resemble more closely some Form." Thus, White, even though he points out - and not at all wrongly - some continuous problems in Plato's ontology and epistemology, finally he rightly accepts that the philosophers have the natural ability to rule, because they are capable of comprehending the Forms, namely the paradigms or models, according to which the state has to be patterned so that it will be as good as possible.

On the other hand, Annas<sup>32</sup> is wondering about the point of the philosophers' high theoretical knowledge and how it will be applied in practice, regarding that Plato is vague in this question and that the answer that he gives is not always coherent. She points out that the knowledge which the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* ought to have is the 'practical' knowledge. Plato thus compares the *φιλόσοφος-βασιλεύς* to be the skilled pilot (488a-489a) or the doctor (489b-c, 382c-d, 389b-d), in contrast with the incompetent rulers that are just like the animal owners, who have learned by experience the moods of their animals (493a-e). Since the pilots and the doctors, who even though they are intelligent and possess reason, develop mainly their practical abilities through experience, these platonic analogies must logically imply that the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* will possess practical wisdom and experience. Annas, thus, says that when we finally see what their knowledge is, according to Plato, a surprise awaits us because their knowledge is the theoretical ontological knowledge of the Ideas. It is the ontological knowledge that distinguishes the philosophers from the non-philosophers and equips them better in

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<sup>32</sup> J. Annas (1981) 5, 187, 190-216.

order to rule. But what is this ontological knowledge? It is something more than being right or having a true belief, but what exactly? It is considered that the ontological knowledge is the knowledge of what 'is', giving to the word 'is' neither the 'existential' nor the 'veridical' use of the notion, but the 'predicative' use, namely that something is if 'it is F for some F', where F is some predicate.<sup>33</sup> Also, it is explained by 'the Argument from Opposites' why in Plato's ontology the Idea *is*, while the sensible objects *are and are not*, something that makes them respectively objects of knowledge and opinion: the sensible beings are and are not beautiful, because in some way and from a certain perspective they can be seen as ugly as well, namely as their opposites, while the Idea is only completely beautiful and nothing else – that is, it does not contain its opposite, as do the sensible beings. For this reason, the Ideas *are* while the sensible beings *are and are not*.

In book V Plato contends that the objects of knowledge are different from those of true opinion. The problem therefore that arises from this platonic view is that, if the objects of knowledge can never be objects of opinion, and vice versa, then the philosopher will live in a totally different cognitive world from the rest of the people. This is the known problem of the 'two worlds', in which "those who have knowledge are not in a better state than the rest of us about the world we share, but have moved on to something different, and the world of people and actions that we experience can never be *known*." The guardians are those who possess knowledge and are able to lead the others who lack knowledge of what is right and better for them. Annas, therefore, is rightly wondering "how can the Guardians' knowledge be relevant to doing this, if its objects belong to a different world from the world of objects of belief?" Plato's epistemology, thus, is considered to be in conflict with his ethics, for "if the just person's search for knowledge is to lead to a different cognitive world from that inhabited by the likes of us, then that search becomes an exercise in glorious self-frustration; knowledge turns out to be irrelevant to the problems that inspired the search for knowledge in the first place." Nevertheless, Annas thinks that with the proper interpretation the platonic view which differentiates the objects of knowledge from those of opinion, does not necessarily exclude that there may finally be some kind of knowledge, besides only opinion, of humans and actions. From what Plato has said, it is not excluded that we may have knowledge of the things of experience which are not Ideas, nor does Plato seem to exclude the knowledge of the sensible particular things and actions, just because they are sensible and particular. So, Annas arrives at the

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<sup>33</sup> For the problems regarding the platonic use of 'be', see C. Kahn (1966) 245-265. For an 'existential' use of 'be', see R.C. Cross – A.D. Woozley (1964) ch. 8. For a 'veridical' use of 'be', see G. Fine (1978) 121-139. For a 'predicative' use of 'be', see G. Vlastos (1973). Cf. also W.K.C. Guthrie (1975) 488-498.

conclusion that Plato may have differentiated the two worlds of knowledge and opinion, with their different objects, Ideas and sensible beings, but this does not mean that only the Ideas are the objects of knowledge, or that the sensible beings and actions cannot be known. Thus, if something is to be known 'what is', if it is a man, then we can get answers from our experience which will say to us 'what is', but if it is about whether an action is just, then we cannot, and in these cases the thing we want to know 'what is' has to be an Idea, not a sensible particular being. Finally, Annas points out that Plato urges us to accept to be governed by the philosophers who have knowledge in areas of which we have only opinions, but instead of limiting our lack of knowledge only in the matter of justice, which is the subject of the *Republic*, he claims that we lack knowledge in everything, even in the smallest matters of facts.

Even though the problems that Annas raises regarding Plato's ontology and epistemology seem right, since Plato indeed seems to provide quite vague arguments regarding the differentiation of the two worlds and the objects of knowledge and opinion, she nevertheless overlooks that for Plato the knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* is not confined only to the higher knowledge of the Ideas. Their knowledge also enters into the knowledge of the sensible beings of the sensible reality, and at that the philosophers are obliged throughout their long-term education, which only they receive, to be trained for fifteen more years in the practical matters of politics as well, from the age of thirty-five to fifty. Therefore, their knowledge is both theoretical and practical, a fact that indisputably makes them the most appropriate rulers of the state, from a complete ontological and epistemological point of view.

On the other hand, Klosko<sup>34</sup> offers a correct interpretation. Firstly, he rightly observes that Plato seems to have been influenced in his ontological theory of the 'two-worlds', the sensible world of the sensible objects which does not fully exist, and the world of Ideas which is the only truly real that fully exists, by two significant Presocratic philosophers: Heraclitus and Parmenides. His Heraclitean influence lies in the Heraclitean view that the sensible world is in everlasting flux and change, something though that Plato takes as a sign of inferiority: just because the sensible beings continually change, are born and die, they are less real than the eternal and immutable Ideas. The problem of change seems also to be connected with the argument of the opposites that Plato presents here: because of change, the tree is now large, but in the future, due to its decay, it will not be large any more. On the other hand, his Parmenidean influence lies in the Parmenidean view that what is, is absolutely: the *εἶναι* or Being is immutable, timeless, eternal,

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<sup>34</sup> G. Klosko (1986) 85-86, 159-165.

and totally out of the world of the senses. Plato obviously adopted this view of Being and applied it to his Ideas, which are the only entities that truly are.

Next, Klosko also points out the known problem that, while Plato gives an enormous emphasis on the knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*, he does not analyze how this ontological knowledge of theirs will make them competent to rule, neither he says why such a knowledge is necessary to them in order to rule the state. Plato does not explain why and how the philosophical ontological knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* is beneficial to the state. In order to become able to rule the state, the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* are required to possess a large amount of practical knowledge and to possess many practical abilities and talents as well. As molders of souls they have to know: the human psychology, the proper proportions of spiritual and physical training for all kinds of personalities, the effects of various kinds of art, poetry, music and all the plastic and visual fine arts and how to turn the dangerous ones into beneficial, the critical tests that all classes will have to pass from, as well as the criteria for their correct evaluation so that the future *φύλακες* to be promoted and all the citizens to be justly placed in their right classes, the proper mixing of the citizens for their proper reproduction and the proper birth control, the proper placement of the *ἐπίκουροι* in war, as well as the proper distribution of wealth in order to avoid the excesses in wealth and poverty. But instead of all these, Plato talks about the knowledge of the *ἀγαθόν* and all the other Ideas on the part of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*, without further explaining how this theoretical ontological knowledge will make them competent to rule, which is the main problem that most scholars point out.

Klosko, however, gives a right answer to this problem by pointing out that Plato knows that the knowledge of the *good* alone is not sufficient. Plato insists that the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* must excel in both moral knowledge and practical experience. This part of the practical training of the *φύλακες* escapes notice to most scholars and needs to be more emphasized. The clearest proof that Plato gives emphasis on the practical training of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* is their fifteen-year training in state affairs after the completion of their theoretical studies, from the age of thirty-five to fifty (539e). This time is equal in duration with the one they spend on the higher theoretical part of mathematics and dialectic, from the age of twenty to thirty-five. In addition, the mathematical training of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* also aims at its practical application in the field of war, where they are required to know how to command the troops, how to camp and lead them to battle (525b-c, 526c-d, 527c-d). War is a professional concern for both the *φύλακες* and the *ἐπίκουροι* (466e-467d). Therefore, Plato knows that the knowledge of the *good* alone is not sufficient for ruling the state, however, his political thought has a gap at this point, for he does not explain exactly how this ontological

knowledge of the good is related to the governing of the state. In spite of that, his approach is correct, because the knowledge of the good seems to have more ethical than cognitive effects. "Philosophers must rule, not because of the practical value of their absolute knowledge, but because absolute knowledge insures proper values." The supremacy of the philosophers lies in their superior values (484c-d, 520c-521b). "For Plato in the *Republic*, intellectual superiority is moral superiority, and regardless of Plato's failure to explain the importance of the former, the philosophers cannot succeed at their appointed tasks without the latter." Thus, Klosko gives a correct interpretation pointing out the double character of both the theoretical and the practical knowledge which the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* possess, as well as the importance of their intellectual knowledge, which insures to them the supreme values, in connection with their ethical knowledge and practical experience, which make them sufficiently competent for politics.

In the interpretation of Reeve,<sup>35</sup> too, it is correctly considered that Plato's ontological and epistemological argument, which shows that only the *φιλόσοφοι* have knowledge while the *φιλόδοξοι* have opinion, is not a failed attempt "to prove that particulars have contradictory properties and are too unstable to be known, or that forms are the only things that can be known," as some have claimed. For, if Plato proved indeed one of these two, then he would end up his whole *Republic* to absurdity. If the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* did not know the state they rule and its citizens, then they would lack the credential needed to make them legal rulers, namely, that only they know how well to rule. Nevertheless, it is correctly pointed out that the philosophers are superior to the others, because of their vision and knowledge of the Forms, but only intellectually, since they may be inferior in matters of experience and other virtues. And such inferiority certainly degrades their superior knowledge. In order therefore for the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* to be truly the proper ones for ruling, they should be competent by nature in both knowledge and virtue, something that Reeve claims that Plato shows in the next part of the philosopher's moral foundation, showing clearly that the philosophers are the only proper ones for political authority. Therefore, Reeve is right to consider that the knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* concerns both the Ideas and the sensible beings, and he discerns correctly that their political ability to rule is an interrelation of their ontological-epistemological supremacy as well as their moral supremacy.

On the other side, Pappas<sup>36</sup> claims that Plato's argument here justifies, through the excellence of the philosophers, their dominance for ruling. He thinks that if this argument works rightly, then Plato's political theory will be defended, turn-

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<sup>35</sup> C.D.C. Reeve (1988) 71, 192.

<sup>36</sup> N. Pappas (1995) 111-113.

ing finally politics into an intellectual quest, instead of the practical one to which we are accustomed. The exclusion of the non-philosophers from governance, because they do not love all kinds of knowledge as the philosophers do, is regarded to concern the imitators of philosophers – such as Alcibiades, who aided to the defeat of Athens with the Sicilian Expedition in the Peloponnesian War, as well as Critias and Charmides, who practiced after the war antidemocratic excesses with the Thirty tyrants, - namely, “the dictators who seize power armed only with false confidence in their own superior wisdom.” For this reason, Plato fully differentiates the philosopher from his competitor in politics non-philosopher. Nevertheless, Pappas does not find anywhere in the argument, at least up to this point, something that shows how Plato relates the ontological knowledge of the philosophers to political authority. So far, Plato has not shown how the philosopher’s theoretical knowledge can promise practical knowledge as well, which the ruler needs. If the argument is to justify the philosophers as the best rulers, then it must demonstrate how this knowledge of theirs makes them better rulers. The incompatibility between theoretical and practical knowledge, therefore, is according to him the biggest problem of the *Republic*. In spite of this, Pappas finally claims that Plato’s ontological and epistemological argument so far does not found the *φιλόσοφος-βασιλεύς* yet, but that it is founded next by Plato’s moral argument, which shows that philosophy comprises and entails moral knowledge, namely the knowledge of those moral practical things that the politician needs in order to lead a city. Thus, Pappas, even though at first expresses a hesitation regarding the sufficiency of the platonic ontological-epistemological argument, he too finally rightly sees, as Reeve does, that the theoretical and practical knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*, which comes from their ontological, epistemological as well as their moral capability, makes them able to rule. All the more so, if we want to be even more exact, the governmental capability of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* is, in addition, an interrelation of their educational supremacy as well.

Finally, Rice,<sup>37</sup> who gives an extreme interpretation, is opposed to Plato’s political theory that the philosophers are the only capable of ruling the cities, for she claims that Plato does not persuade us that he indeed knows the truth about reality and the nature of beings, and he cannot show us how philosophy indeed allows him to know that he knows. Particularly, she goes to extremes by claiming that Plato’s ontological and epistemological theory itself is responsible and provides evidence why the philosophers should not rule. This theory asserts that there are degrees of reality. However, it does not sound rational to say that one

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<sup>37</sup> D.H. Rice (1998) 63-91.

thing is more real than another, namely, that the chair we see, touch, and sit on is less real than the Form of the chair. We cannot divide into degrees of reality the dreaming life from the waking life, saying that the former is less real than the latter, but we only have to keep in mind that they are just different kinds of reality. Thus, she thinks that Plato has invented an irrational and upside-down ontological theory of the world, when he asserts that the chair we see, touch, and sit on is less real than the Form of the chair. And at that, through the education that Plato has planned for the philosophers to receive in order to become politicians, he demands from them to deny such common misinterpretations and misconceptions, such as that the chair they sit on is less real than the Form of the chair. She also mentions that, fortunately, today in the twentieth century, we can triumphantly announce that everything is relative, something that Plato on the contrary sees as a problem. Despite that, even though Rice is partially right in her critique on Plato's ontology regarding the relative reality, since Plato has indeed a serious problem with his two worlds' view and their separation, she overlooks that the education that the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* receive is not confined only to the knowledge of the Ideas, but is a universal knowledge, which embraces, besides the Ideas, all the sensible particular beings of the sensible reality as well, including also the knowledge and the experience of all the practical matters of society. Therefore, the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* possess both the theoretical and the practical knowledge through their long-term education, and for this reason they are the most competent political leaders of all citizens at the mature age of fifty years.

### Conclusion

So, as we have seen, in the field of research most scholars accept Plato's ontological and epistemological argument as correct, according to which the philosophers are the most able of all citizens to rule the state. Even though certain vagueness is rightly pointed out in Plato's ontology and epistemology, regarding the *χωρισμός* of the *ιδέαι* from *τὰ αἰσθητὰ ὄντα* and the problems that also arise from the differentiation of the objects of *γνώσις* and *δόξα*, these are problems that concern mostly Plato's ontology and epistemology in itself, without falsifying his political argument here that concerns the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*. Furthermore, regarding the main problem that is raised here on how the ontological knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς*, which is a theoretical knowledge, makes them competent politicians, for which practical knowledge is needed, we saw that it is not a real problem. Because, on the one hand, the theoretical knowledge of the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* is not only the knowledge of the Ideas – which however is extremely important, since it is the knowledge of the universal principles ac-

ording to which one has to act analogously in practical life and apply them to politics, – but also the knowledge of all sensible beings of all sensible reality. And on the other hand, the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* receive in their long-term education until they become fifty years old also a fifteen-year practical training in the state's political affairs. Therefore, the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* receive a complete education, which is both theoretical and practical, and for this reason they are the most competent of all citizens for ruling the state in the best possible way. Consequently, the ontological and epistemological argument in Plato's *Republic*, which as we saw is correct and sound, founds rationally his political argument concerning the *φιλόσοφοι-βασιλείς* of the *ἀρίστη πολιτεία*, and thus it is shown that the platonic ontology, epistemology and politics support each other with a rational foundation in the *Republic*. Nevertheless, if we want to be more precise, the full foundation of this political theory is finally completed not only by the ontological and epistemological excellence and supremacy of the philosophers, but also by the interrelation of their ethical and pedagogical supremacy and excellence against all other citizens, as it is additionally shown by Plato in his *Republic* through the further interrelation of his ethical and pedagogical arguments.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For more on this subject see my book, Y. Maniatis (2005) 100-137.



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