

History of Western Philosophy

Kookmin University

Peter Lee, Spring 2019

L05

- I. Plato's Life | Theory of Ideas (Forms)
- II. Plato: *The Republic*

Plato: Introduction

Alfred North Whitehead: “The safest ... characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.”



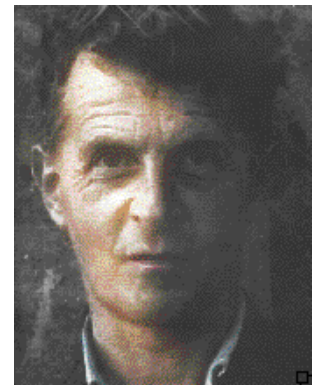
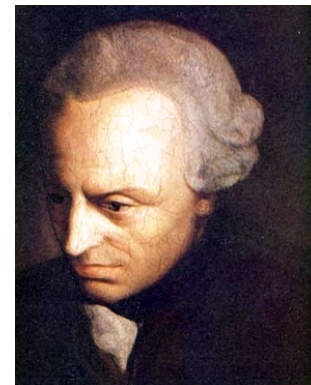
Plato: Introduction

The 20 "Most Important" Philosophers of All Time

<http://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2009/05/the-20-most-important-philosophers-of-all-time.html>

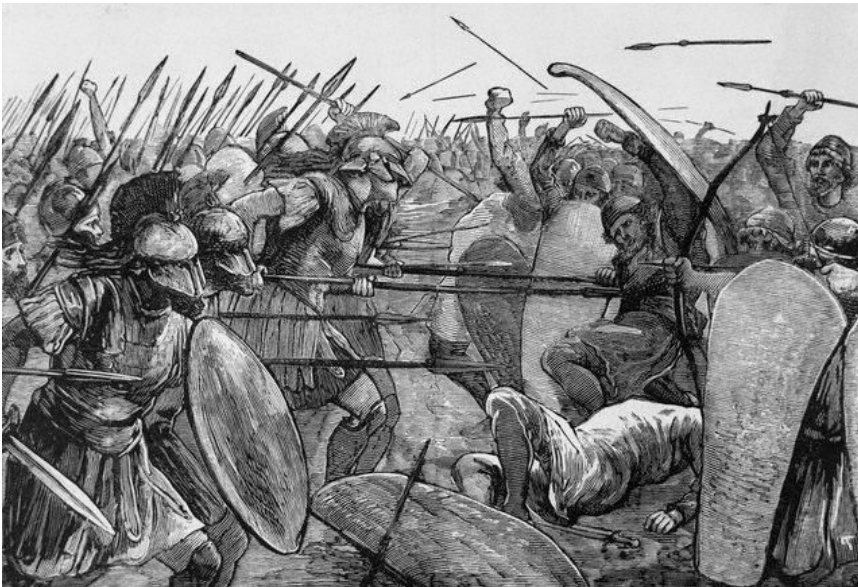
“With nearly 900 votes cast, we now know:”

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Plato | 11. Hegel |
| 2. Aristotle | 12. Leibniz |
| 3. Kant | 13. Spinoza |
| 4. Hume | 14. J.S. Mill |
| 5. Descartes | 15. Hobbes |
| 6. Socrates | 16. Augustine |
| 7. Wittgenstein | 17. Marx |
| 8. Locke | 18. Nietzsche |
| 9. Frege | 19. Kierkegaard |
| 10. Aquinas | 20. Rousseau |



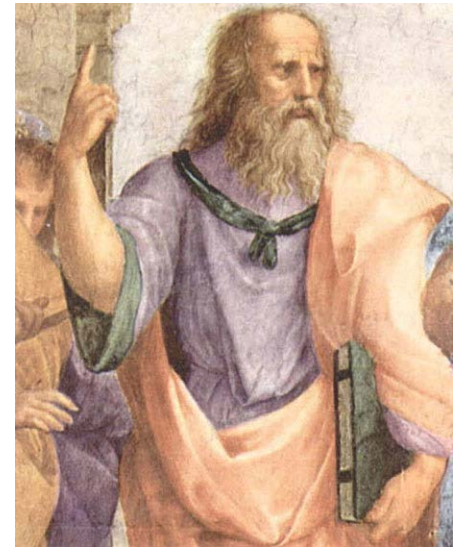
Plato: Life

- From a wealth family in Athens (~428-347 BC)
- Old enough to have fought in the Peloponnesian War against Sparta, like Socrates.
- Founded his school, **the Academy** later on in life.
- Unmarried, died at a wedding feast when 81 (347)



Plato: Works

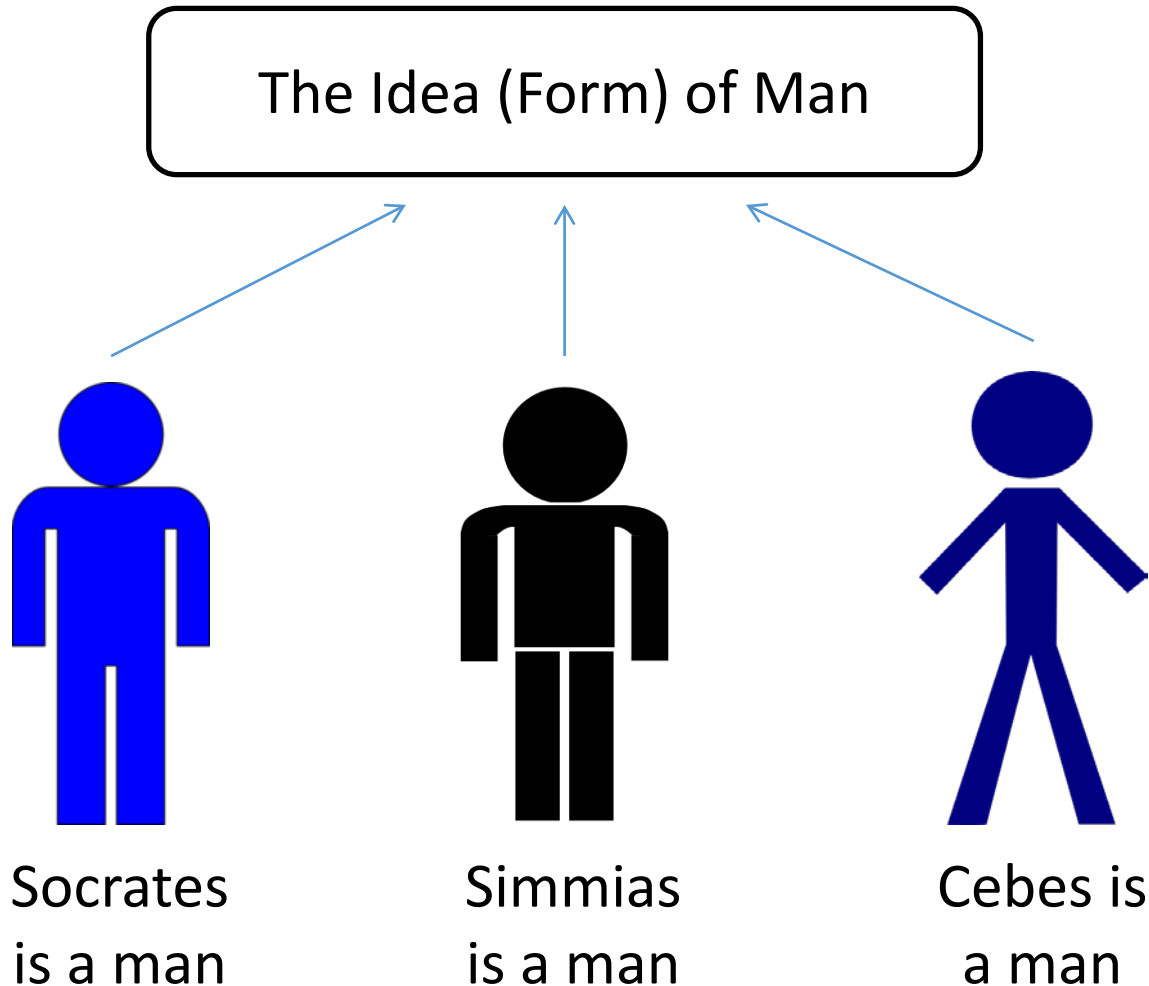
- Wrote many dialogues (25~36) but never appears as a speaker; not always easy to discern his own position:
- Texts considered literary (dramatic).
 - Early: 'Socratic' dialogues
Apology, Crito, Euthyphro ...
Mainly defends Socrates
 - Middle: Socrates as teacher (mouthpiece for Plato? *)
Phaedo, The Republic, Parmenides, Symposium ...
Mainly about Forms, more mature views
 - Late: Socrates less prominent (sometimes wrong)
Sophist, Timaeus, Laws ...
Critical of his own earlier view?



* In *Phaedrus*, Socrates criticizes writing [but *Phaedrus* is a text!]

Plato: Theory of Forms / Ideas

- The problem of universals



Plato: Theory of Forms / Ideas

1. Strong Realism

- Plato
- St. Augustine
- B. Russell

Does it exist
separately by itself?

Plato's
Conclusion

The Idea (Form) of Man



Does it exist in
Socrates?



Does it exist
in me?

2. Moderate Realism

- Aristotle; St. Aquinas
- D. M. Armstrong

3. Nominalism [conceptualism]

- William of Ockham
- Berkeley; Hume

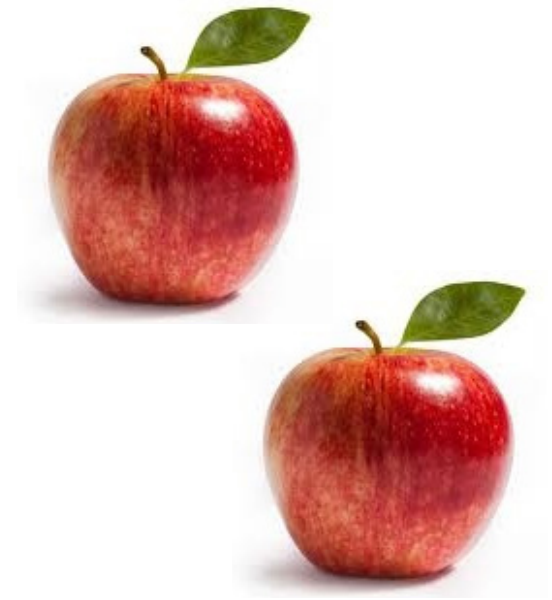
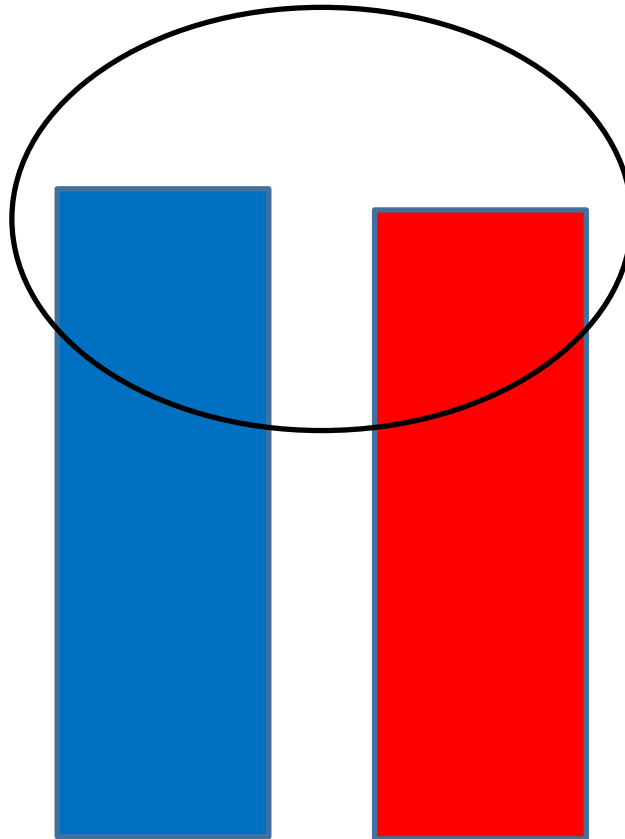
Plato: Theory of Forms / Ideas

The Idea of Equality



The two bars
seem equal in
length.

But up close,
they are not.



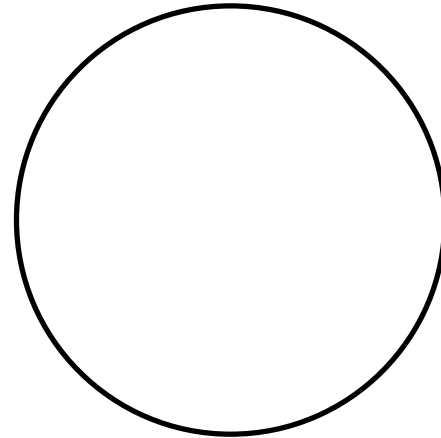
Plato: Theory of Forms / Ideas

Circles in the World



- Imperfect, changeable
- Temporal, perishable
- Seen with our eyes

The Idea of the Circle

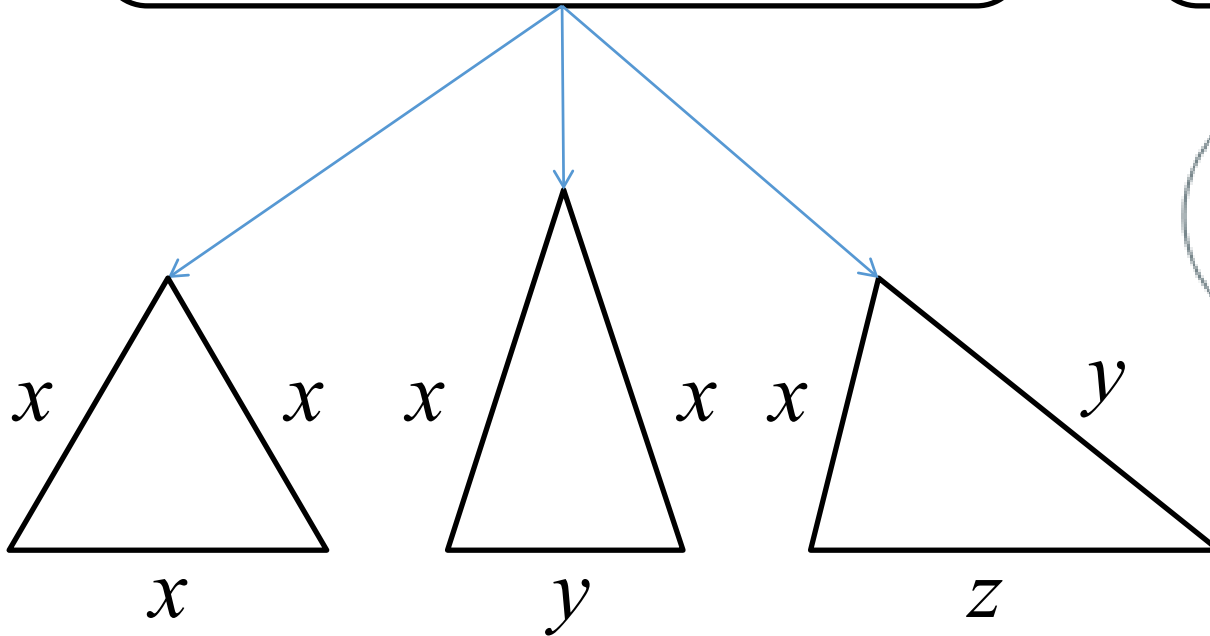


- Perfect, changeless
- Timeless, imperishable
- Seen with the mind's eye

Plato: Theory of Forms / Ideas

The Idea of Triangle (*Abstraction*)
??

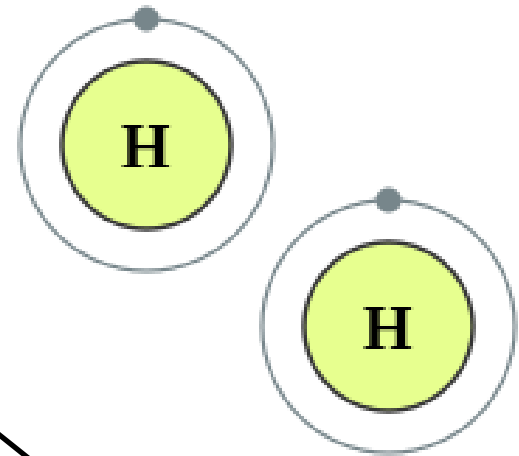
Q: Are hydrogens exactly the same?



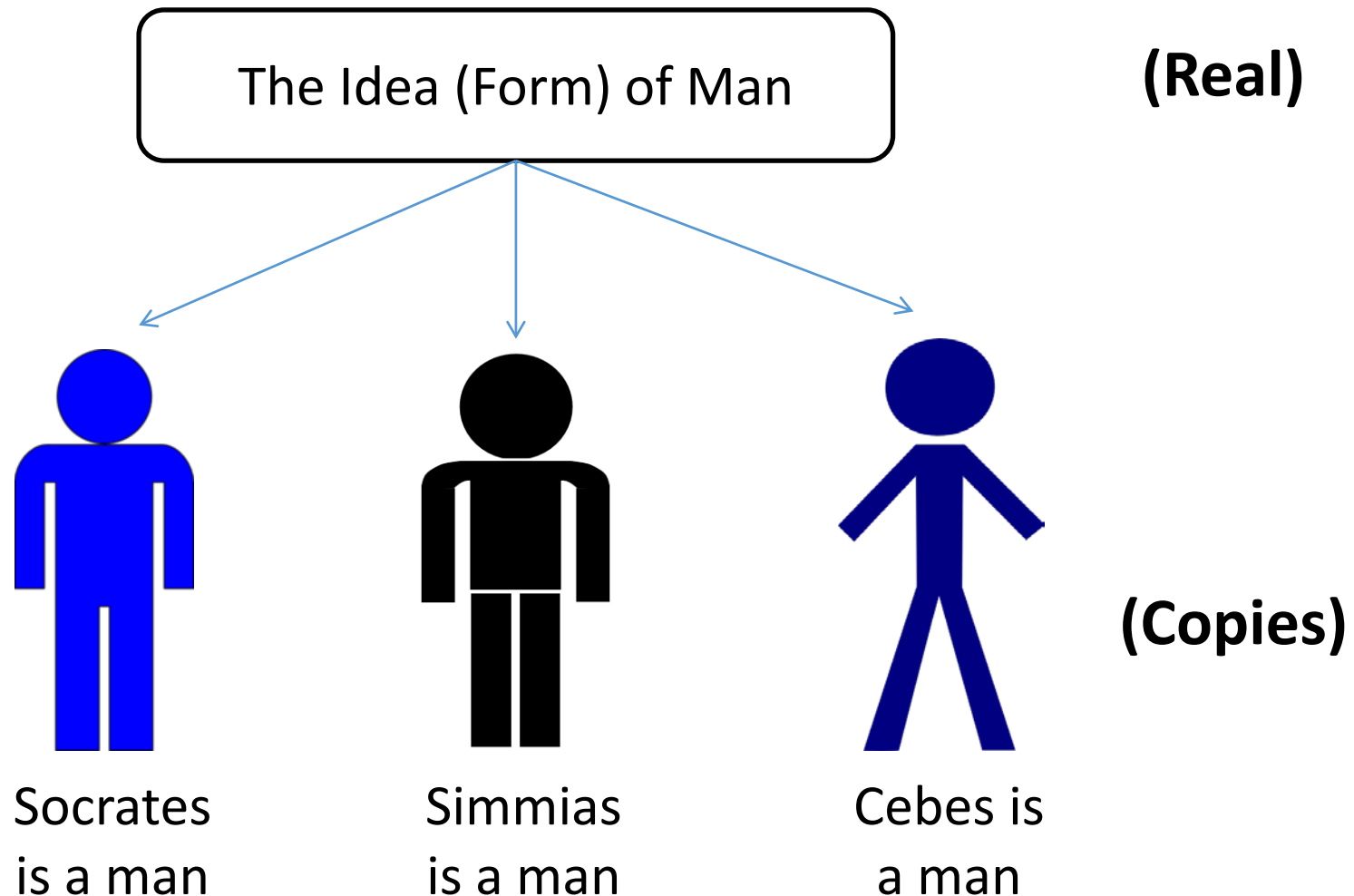
Equilateral
Triangle

Isosceles
Triangle

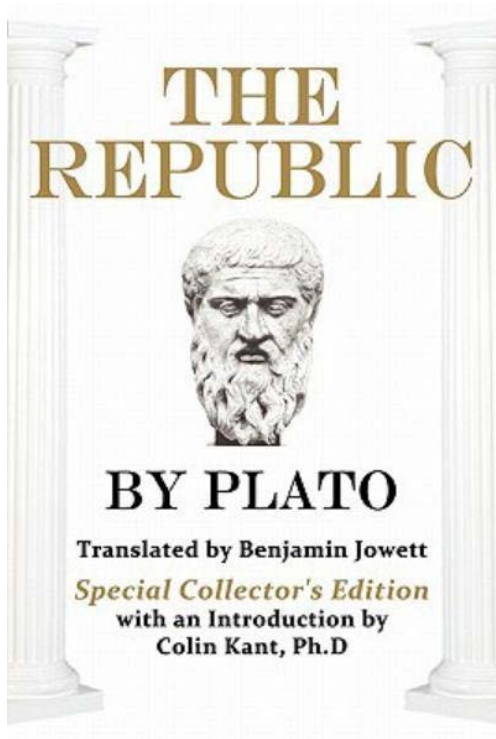
Scalene
Triangle



Plato: Theory of Forms / Ideas



Plato: *The Republic* – Intro.



- Plato's most famous dialogue (?)
- Book-length: has ten chapters or "books."
- Complex structure & content
- Core Topic: **What is justice?**
- Also deals with other wide ranging issues, such as psychology, morality, politics, education, aesthetics, knowledge and metaphysics.

Plato: *The Republic* – Book 1

- Book I has the structure of a “Socratic Dialogue.”
- **Cephalus** (the host, an old man): Justice means living up to your legal obligations and being honest.
- **Polemarchus** (son of Cephalus): Justice means helping friends and harming enemies.
“Justice is the giving to each man what is proper to him.”
[CR 29]
- **Thrasymachus** (Sophist): “Justice is nothing else than the interest of the stronger.” [CR 30]
 - invokes different governments and laws (relative)

Plato: *The Republic* – Gyges' Ring

- **Glaucon:** Most consider justice a necessary evil.
“Justice ... is tolerated not as a good, but as the lesser evil.” [CR 31]
- Justice is social contract based on fear.
- The **Legend of Gyges** (video clip)
- Rewards of seeming to be just and actually being just are the same (cf. Machiavelli, *The Prince*):
 - Unjust man succeeds: “The highest reach of injustice is, to be deemed just when you are not.”
 - Just man seeks no reward: “Let him be the best of men, and ... thought the worst.” [CR 32]

Plato: *The Republic* – Gyges' Ring

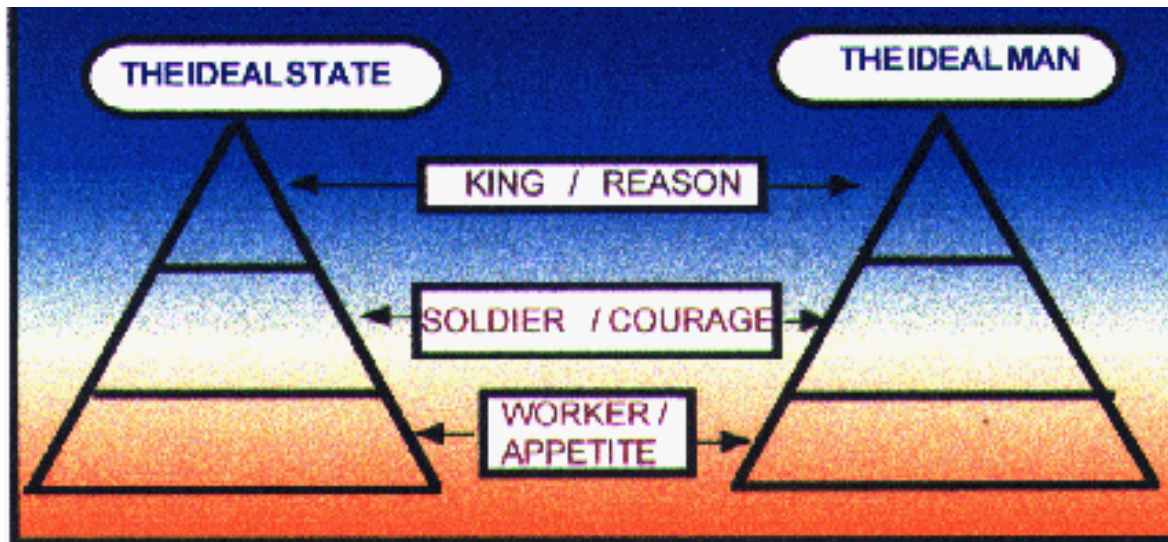
- “If Socrates is really to defeat Thrasymachus, he must show that quite apart from reputation ... justice is in itself as much preferable to injustice as sight is to blindness and health is to sickness.” [from Kenny p.45]
- **Socrates:** We must seek justice as an end, as a way to “save our soul”; **Justice is its own reward; it is a virtue of the soul, the health of the soul.**
- Connects individual to a State: Justice in a State can be seen more easily than in an individual
- Discussion then moves to State, hence *The Republic*.

Plato: *The Republic* – Perfect City

- *The Republic*: specialization necessary for society
 - **Rulers**: the Guardians
 - **Warriors**: soldiers called Auxiliaries
 - **Producers**: carpenters, farmers, doctors, etc.
- Propaganda of “Noble Falsehood” (3 classes):
different metals in souls: men of Gold, Silver, Bronze.
- State justice **is harmony between the classes**:
Soc: Where, then, is **justice**, and where is injustice,
and in what part of the State did they spring up?
Glaucon: Probably in the dealings of these citizens
with one another. [CR 35]

Plato: *The Republic* – Tripartite

- **Tripartite Theory of the Soul**
- Justice in a human being is harmony between three parts or aspects of his soul: Reason, Temper, Appetite
- Harmony (balance) is “well-being”(?)



Chariot allegory
from *Phaedrus*

Plato: *The Republic* – Phil. King

There are some “shocking” aspects to this perfect city:

- Equal opportunities for women to be rulers.
- Communism: wives and children are shared.
- Sex (procreation) only during designated festivals.
- Poets are banished from the city [why?]
- Socrates: is such society (no wealth/family) possible?
- “Utopia” possible when ruled by **the Philosopher King**
 - Not a “lover of sights and sounds,” not greedy
 - Wise because he possesses “true knowledge”
 - Apprehends eternal Forms.

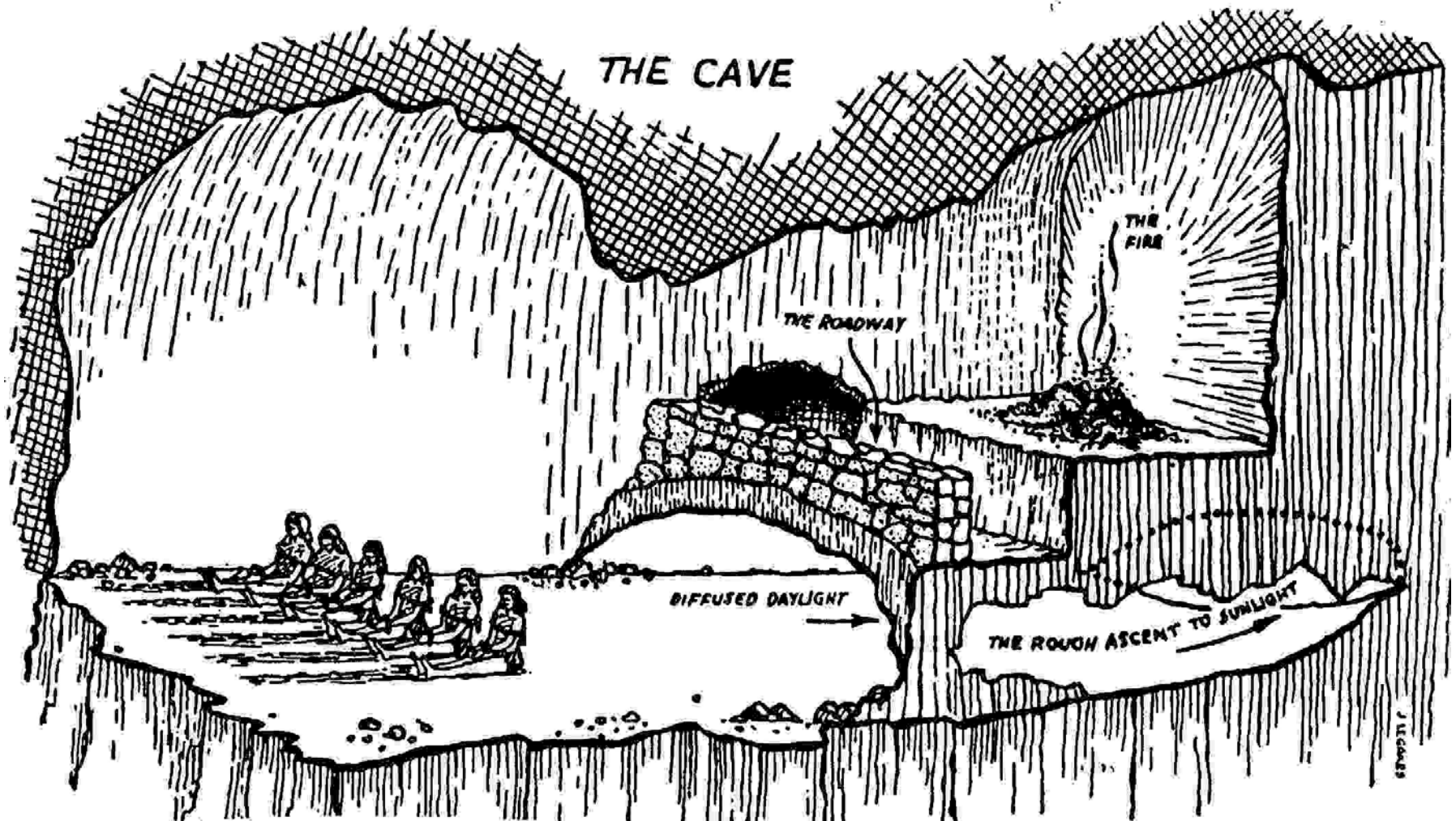
Plato: *The Republic* – The Cave

- To illustrate how a philosopher king could live such a lifestyle, Socrates tells the allegory of the cave (one of the most famous allegories in philosophy):

The Cave [CR 35-37] (see video)

“Imagine a group of prisoners chained in a cave with their backs to its entrance, facing shadows of puppets thrown by a fire against the cave’s inner wall. Education releases the prisoners from their chains, and to lead them, past the puppets and the fire in the shadow-world of becoming, into the open sunlight of the world of being ...” [from Kenny p.50]

Plato: *The Republic* – The Cave



Plato: *The Republic* – The Cave

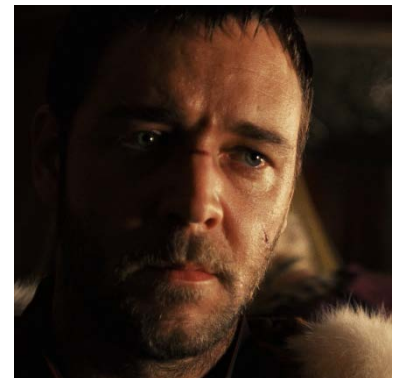
- Philosopher King is like the prisoner who has seen the sun. He does not want to return to the cave, but comes back only to save others.
- This is why he can / should rule.

- *Gladiator* (2000 film):

Marcus Aurelius: Won't you accept this great honor that I have offered you?

Maximus: With all my heart, no.

Marcus Aurelius: Maximus, that is why it must be you.



Plato: Criticisms of Forms

- *Parmenides*:

Young Socrates learns from an old Parmenides, wise teacher.

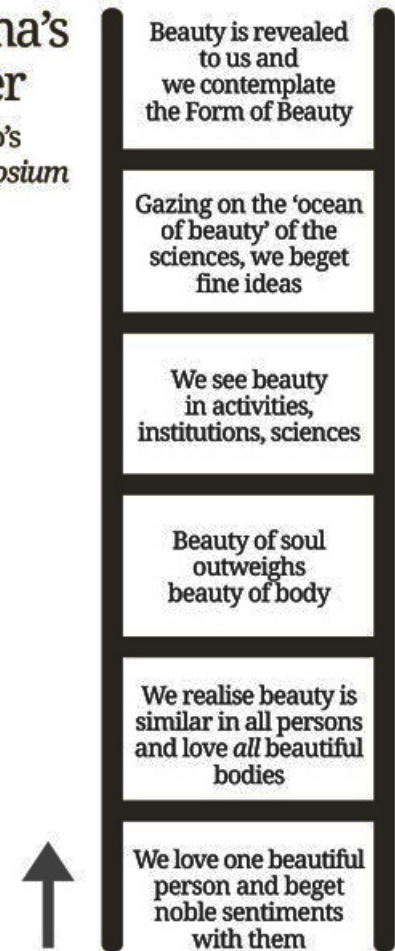
- criticizes the “one-over-many” or universal nature of forms.

- *Symposium*:

“a Greek drinking party after a banquet; a friendly discussion.”

- Speeches by friends on what love is; Socrates’s take: **Diotima’s Ladder of Love.**
- Alcibiades (Dionysus) then sarcastically praises Socrates. Socrates loves no man.

Diotima’s
Ladder
from Plato’s
The Symposium



Plato: Closing Remarks

- Plato's view of democracy is negative (philosopher king is still "King").
- His view may stem from his wealthy family background, but also because of what he saw happen to Socrates.
- *The Republic* not meant to be serious exploration of perfect society (Utopia).
- Philosophy comes through tragic events, loss of faith:
 - Peloponnesian War (Athenians lost)
 - Execution of Socrates (mentor).

