

PLATO AND THE EDUCATION OF CITIZENS

By

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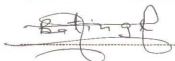


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of the requirements for the award of **Mphil Philosophy** degree

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Declaration

I hereby declare that except for reference to works which I have duly cited and acknowledged, this thesis is my own work and that no part of it was taken from materials and works that have been accepted as part of the requirement for the award of any degree in any university.



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Abstract

This thesis is primarily an exegetical examination of Plato's views on education in the *Republic* and *Laws*. It examines what Plato thinks of the general purpose of education; the means that should be employed in educating citizens to be relevant to their society. However, in addition to the knowledge and intellectual amusement derived from examining what Plato thought about education in his ancient Greek society emerges a subsidiary focus: the implication of Platonic conception of education in the contemporary Ghanaian society. This second aim, which is not given extensive attention as the main aim, nonetheless, argues why philosophy is relevant to national development.

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Notes on Translations, Citations and Abbreviations

Translations

There are various translations of Plato's dialogues in the English language. These translations "vary greatly in their quality." In current Platonic scholarship, most of the best commentators endorse the translation collected by John Cooper. Hence except where indicated otherwise, translations are from John Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997).

Citations

The method of citation of Plato's dialogues used in this work is in accord with the style recommended in 1578 by the French scholar of Plato, Henri Estienne, who published under Stephanus, his Latin name. Stephanus' citation divides a dialogue into page numbers, dividing each page into five sections that is marked a, b, c, d, and e with both numbers and letters placed in the margin of the page. This method is expedient for two reasons: one, it is the widely used method in contemporary scholarship on Plato; and two, it allows a reader to refer to a passage of a dialogue and convert it into a different translation of the same dialogue, thus, allowing readers to compare different translations.

Dialogues and Letters Cited and their Abbreviations

Below are the abbreviations of the dialogues and letters of Plato cited in this work:

Ap. *Apology*

<i>Cri.</i>	<i>Crito</i>
<i>Lys.</i>	<i>Lysis</i>
<i>Lac.</i>	<i>Laches</i>
<i>Euthd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
<i>Men.</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Gorg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>
<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Prot.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Sym.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>St.</i>	<i>Statesman</i>
<i>Thi.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Laws</i>	<i>Laws</i>
<i>Letter VII</i>	<i>Seventh Letter</i>

Chapter One – Overview of the Thesis

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is primarily an exegetical examination of Plato's views on education in the *Republic* and *Laws*. It examines what Plato thinks of the general purpose of education; the means that should be employed in educating citizens to be relevant to their society. However, in addition to the knowledge and intellectual amusement derived from examining what Plato thought about education in his ancient Greek society and its surroundings, this thesis will further attempt to suggest, even if minimally, the implication of Platonic conception of education in the contemporary Ghanaian society. In fact, never before in Ghana has education generated such intense public debates and deliberations than now. Perhaps, the key to understanding Plato's views on education is to review some aspect of the educational debate in Ghana today.

Formal education has been receiving significant attention from governments, civil society groups, religious groups and the general public in Ghana in recent decades. The consensual focus of this attention has been suggestions for the provision of the finest education for citizens; for education is believed to be the key to the development of the nation. To this end, efforts have been directed towards providing adequate material and financial resources for the educational sector. In spite of these efforts, in the most recent years one concern has arguably dominated the nation's discourse on education: the failure of our current educational arrangement, especially tertiary education, to meet its intended purpose – to produce qualified graduates for job placement. It has been argued that our

educational institutions have largely failed to equip graduates with the skills needed for the various jobs on offer in the job market.

This current concern – that the Ghanaian graduate is unequal to the skill demands of the job market – points to the prevailing understanding of the primary purpose of education. The ultimate end of education according to this understanding seems to be the provision of skills for the various economic industries of the nation. Hence, a successful educational arrangement is one that will churn out qualified doctors, engineers, lawyers, bankers, farmers, teachers and any kind of skilled professional that one can think of for the various industries helpful to national development. Where an education fails to produce people who can perform the task expected of these skilled professions and many others, such an educational system is a failure and ultimately of no benefit to the nation. Hence, there is ongoing pressure on the managers of our educational institutions to rethink their training strategies in order to achieve this primary educational goal.

Truly, such an understanding of the primary goal of education is understandable in a nation such as Ghana. Ghana has its own share of the poverty and challenges of a poor African continent: many citizens live far below the national minimum wage; many walk for miles before they can fetch potable water; many live in make-shift shelters while a number of our citizens are homeless; some of our students attend classes under deplorable conditions; health facilities are miles away from most rural communities; maternal mortality and other avoidable deaths are commonplace; the drainage systems in our cities are so poor that the least downpour results in the loss of lives and valuable properties; we are stuck in traffic for hours daily in our effort to get to or from work; our

rivers are drying up; and the average temperature in the country keeps increasing because of climate change. Indeed, we are a nation of many problems that beg for solutions.

Therefore, if education is the key to our overall development as a nation, its end should properly be the overcoming of our various challenges as a nation. Consequently, the critic of our current educational system argues that an education that produces a graduate who, as a technician, a technocrat, a planner, a strategist, or any other professional, cannot bring the skills that he should have acquired in the course of his education to bear on improving our national and private lives by solving some of these problems is no education at all.

Proponents of an educational reform that see a direct correlation between education and economic and infrastructural development have often pointed to our vast national resources that wait to be tapped for national development. Ghana is rich in arable land that is suitable for cultivating diverse crops; the nation is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world; our forest is thick with high quality timber and other useful trees; we have within our borders sizeable bodies of water; beneath our land is deposited some of the valuable minerals the world esteems, including gold, diamonds and bauxite; and we discovered oil in large quantity recently that we are exporting to other countries. In spite of these resources, we beg and borrow from the first world and the international financial institutions. The best and sure way out of this lamentable state as a people, the proponents of "pro-development" education argue, is to equip an overwhelming majority of citizens with technical education that can be used to harness our resources for development.

Such a call on our education to redesign its strategy to be relevant to national development has seen two closely related but distinct attitudes toward education in Ghana: one from individuals and the other from policy makers. The former, the individual, sees a directly proportional correlation between a “good education” and a better life (often interpreted as a wealthy life). In their choice of courses of study in our schools, parents and students are inclined towards subjects that they believe in the end have the promise of putting delicious food on their dinner tables, putting up breathtaking houses in the best part of the city, buying them the latest car (and possibly a private jet), swelling their bank accounts, and providing them with the best of this world. There is a quest for an education that will make their material lives more comfortable and totally devoid of suffering. That is, they desire an education that they believe will promote their material wellbeing.

The government, like the individual but with a broader focus, expects education to provide the best infrastructures for the nation. A good education from the point of view of policy makers should produce graduates who in turn will produce excellent highways, good drainage systems, enough food to consume and export, clean drinking water, stable power supply, quality but affordable housing for the citizens, gold-winning athletes, a malaria free society, and even find a cure for AIDS and the other presently incurable diseases. That is, the government desires an education that will promote the material well-being of the entire nation. Therefore, governments are more supportive of disciplines in our educational curriculum that are perceived capable of influencing a positive drive towards national development as understood in these terms.

Hence, the call to shape our educational system to produce wealthy citizens and a wealthy nation is increasingly deafening. In our effort to achieve this prosperity, certain disciplines are seen as more useful and relevant to the task of developing our nation than others. One discipline perceived to be “unproductive” and “not directly relevant” to national development is philosophy. This perceived irrelevance of philosophy, and some of its “cousins” in the Arts, to national development is manifested in many ways. For instance, government has put in place special scholarship packages for science students and teachers. The government, through the Ghana Educational Trust Fund (GETfund), offers scholarships to study overseas for students mainly in the sciences. Policy makers are firm in their resolve that science holds the entrance key to the heavenly gates of our development. Philosophy, Classics and some other courses mostly in the Humanities, perceived to be practically irrelevant, are continually pushed to the periphery of our educational funding and attention.

Due largely to its perceived irrelevance to national development, philosophy as a discipline is struggling to survive in academia. Out of the five or so public universities in Ghana, only two offer philosophy as a major discipline. None of the private universities so far deems philosophy important enough to be studied as a major discipline in their programmes. These are evidence supporting the view that philosophy is irrelevant to a flourishing national life. However, this perceived irrelevance of philosophy as a solution to national problems is grounded in superficial observations.

1.2 The Perceived Irrelevance of Philosophy to Development¹

¹ I was drawn to issues of the relevance of philosophical education when I began graduate studies in Philosophy. Being the only one in my class, I wondered why very few people are interested in

Many, mostly outsiders to philosophy, are skeptical of the relevance of philosophy to practical human problems and affairs. They see philosophy as an abstract theoretical discipline that concerns itself with issues that have no bearing on the concrete and real issues of life. A person who holds this view about philosophy may not be totally negative and dismissive of philosophical practice. He may respect the intellectual prowess of thinkers, philosophers included. He may even be delighted and entertained at philosophical debates even if he does not understand them. The skeptic may even strive to pattern his life according to certain philosophical maxims he holds as true and meaningful. He may have as the motto of his life Socrates' (*Apology*, 38a6) admonition that "The unexamined life is not worth living." However, he argues that the utility of philosophy stops here. He accuses philosophers of their (apparent) inability "to climb over their intellectually cloistering walls and venture into the extramural world of real life" (Gyekye, 1997, 4). Thus, the skeptic is ever doubtful of the contribution of philosophy to practical affairs of life.

The skeptic arrives at his conclusion about the irrelevance of philosophy after comparing philosophy with other disciplines: unlike the agriculturalist whose knowledge and skill is used in the cultivation of a piece of land, ensuring that food is put on the dining table for the hungry, the philosopher is ever wondering whether a piece of land is real or unreal; unlike a medical doctor whose profession ensures that malaria does not annihilate an entire community, the philosopher is ever persistent in his quest to know

philosophical studies at advance levels. Also, when people learnt that I was studying Philosophy, they wanted to know what its relevance was. Nobody will ask a business or science student the relevance of his discipline. I realized that I did not have ready answers for people who wanted to know the usefulness of Philosophy in very practical terms. This propelled me to questions about the relevance of Philosophy to important national issues such as development.

whether illness is a necessary evil leading to a greater good or an evil in itself; unlike the building engineer who ensures that solid houses are erected for the homeless, the philosopher keeps wondering what it entails to live in a community of human beings; unlike a lawyer whose legal knowledge and skill assist in procuring justice for the weak in society (or at least, pretends to be trying to ensure justice for victims), the philosopher is unrelenting in his quest for a new and better definition of justice. With these and many other observations, the skeptic is quick and firm in his conclusion that philosophy is abstract and serves only as a theoretical amusement.

The skeptic is not very wrong in some of these observations. Some philosophers have at times exercised their vocation in a manner that suggests wrongly that the philosophical calling is limited only to the theoretical realm. These philosophers delight in articulating their ideas in "complex language" which sounds esoteric to non-philosophers. They see verbosity, long and complicated sentences as an end rather than a means to communicate important and real issues of human existence. These philosophers would like the outsider to philosophy to believe that the discipline of philosophy is very difficult, hence, comprehensible and accessible only to the philosophical guru. It is not uncommon for the professor of philosophy to admit in front of his befuddled students that the metaphysics of Descartes or Kant, the idealism of Hegel, the attack on linguistics by Derrida, or the hermeneutics of Gadamar are either obscure or just difficult to grasp.

The skeptic is not unaware of a similar abundance of jargon and obscure language in other disciplines like law, medicine, and engineering. However, he maintains that while the lawyer engages in a vocabulary foreign to the "unlearned" with his "learned" peers before the "Solomonic" "Lordships" in the courts, he is our sure bet to getting

justice done. Similarly, the skeptic maintains that while he cannot read the exaggerated "fine hand-writing" or understand the scientific vocabulary of most doctors, without doctors the human community could be heading for total extinction. And similarly, our skeptic accepts his ignorance of the theories and complex measures of the engineer; however, he argues that he cannot deny the enormous benefits the engineer brings to society. The same according to our skeptic cannot be said of the philosopher who wallows and babbles in strange verbosity but offers no practical benefits to society. Hence, the philosopher should be left on the periphery of any human endeavor that entails serious practicality such as development. For the skeptic, the fewer philosophers a developing nation has, the better for its citizens.

In support of his stance that philosophy and philosophers have no direct bearing on practicality, the skeptic points to the (apparent) abnormal lives of prominent philosophers in history. He is somehow aware of the ancient Greek philosopher, Thales, who is reported to have fallen into a deep well while gazing at the "starry heavens." The skeptic remembers Diogenes the Cynic who showed up in the market square in broad day light with a lit lantern looking for a single honest person in his community. Our skeptic also remembers Kant who failed to marry because he could not waste his precious little time to undergo the rituals required for marriage. Frederick Nietzsche will be recalled for showing up like a madman in the street and announcing the death of God. Forgetting the numerous other prominent "normal" philosophers, the skeptic insists that philosophers are generally not normal human beings. Worse still, nothing of practical benefit is gained from their "madness." This argument about the apparently weird lives of philosophers

even appeals to the student of philosophy who is most likely to be puzzled and entertained by the weird behaviors of one or more of his philosophy professors.

Therefore, a developing country such as Ghana that is in so much need of clean water, adequate food, decent housing, good roads, constant power, good medical care, decent classrooms, transparent judiciary, and honest and competent political leaders among others has very little use of philosophy at this stage. For the skeptic, philosophy and philosophical education is a luxury of the rich which a poor nation such as Ghana cannot afford to allocate significant resources to. This is where our skeptic is very wrong; and demonstrating the importance of philosophical education to a flourishing life in a flourishing nation is the thrust of this thesis.

1.3 Plato and Human Wellbeing

The argument that education should be instrumental to social, economic and infrastructural development is basically an argument that education should contribute to human wellbeing. What constitutes human wellbeing is of course a matter of no intellectual consensus. However, many tend to identify human wellbeing with a flourishing life, that is, a life properly disposed and equipped to perform its functions excellently. Others identify human wellbeing with happiness, the ultimate end to which all human decisions and actions aim. Development is understood as a means to a flourishing life or happiness. In the Ghanaian society, the ultimate end that all other actions and activities seek to attain is commonly understood in terms of material prosperity – a life of wealth devoid of pain and suffering. In this vein, we are totally different from some of the great ancient thinkers on the ultimate end of our actions. Plato,

like the other Hellenistic philosophers before him and after him, thinks of happiness as the goal to which all actions aim. But Plato differs distinctly and most compellingly regarding what happiness is, and the means to happiness.

Plato's conception of happiness as the ultimate end of our actions has its roots in Socrates. At *Lysis* 219c-d, in a conversation with Menexenus, Socrates notes that we pursue medicine for the sake of health, and health for the sake of something else. Socrates reasons that the various means to an end cannot continue *ad infinitum*; we must arrive at the end of the chain where everything is pursued to attain this ultimate end. In the *Meno* (77e-78b) Socrates thinks of this ultimate end as happiness. He challenges Meno's view that sometimes people desire and choose bad things, that is, things that will cause them unhappiness. Socrates argues that bad things harm those who possess them, and those who are harmed are miserable and unhappy, and since nobody wants to be miserable and unhappy, therefore, nobody wants bad things. This suggests that the goal at which Socrates believes all action is directed is happiness. Brickhouse and Smith (2000, 128) calls this view the *Socratic Principle of Eudaimonism* according to which "Happiness is everyone's ultimate goal, and anything that is good is good only insofar as it contributes to this goal." In the *Symposium*, Plato contends that every choice is made with the belief that it results in happiness: "Happiness is the ultimate, indeed the only, criterion of choice-worthiness in lives" (205a2-3).

The ordinary Greek citizen during the time of Plato, like the ordinary Ghanaian (and perhaps not a few Ghanaians), believed that wealth was the sure path to happiness. It is because of this belief that many think an education is useful if it produces wealth. Plato does not have that much confidence in wealth as a means to happiness. He largely agrees

with Socrates that it is virtue that guarantees happiness; “For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul, as I say to you: ‘Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence brings about wealth and all other public and private blessings for men, both individually and collectively’” (*Apology* 30a-b). The Greek word for “excellence” is *arête* which is sometimes translated as virtue. In fact, Socrates seems to be suggesting that virtue is more apt to promote happiness (“blessings”) than wealth is.

Plato understands a human being to have a *psuche* (soul). Plato understands the *psuche* to be an essential component of a person. The *psuche* in Greek thought is what animates or moves the body. Plato thinks that the *psuche* has the capacity to direct the human being in living a good or happy life. The *psuche* according to Plato, “deliberates,” and “rules.” Plato believes that for the *psuche* to “deliberate” and “rule” in a manner that results in happiness, it needs virtue: “Now, we agreed that justice is a soul’s virtue, and injustice its vice...Then, it follows that a just soul and a just man will live well, and an unjust one badly...And surely anyone who lives well is blessed and happy, and anyone who doesn’t is the opposite” (*Rep.* 353d-354a). Here, Plato argues that a just soul by “deliberating” and “ruling” in accordance with justice, thus, with virtue, attains happiness whilst an unjust soul does not.

The cardinal virtues for Plato are justice, self-control, courage, piety, and wisdom. The virtue of wisdom is so essential and paramount among the virtues that Plato thinks of it as the most important of the virtues because it is required for the other virtues. For example, he thinks that courage may be foolhardy when it is exercised in the absence of

wisdom. Likewise, self-control or moderation is properly a virtue when guided by wisdom and so on for other virtues. In fact, wisdom is so important for Plato that he is sometimes willing to speak of wisdom as synonymous with virtue. A passage from the *Euthydemus* (297a-c) makes this point clearer. In this passage, Plato lists the following goods: wealth, health, good-looks, noble birth, power, and honor. Plato distinguishes these goods from the virtues such as piety, self-control, justice, and courage. However, it is wisdom that transforms all of these goods into things that are advantageous for their possessors according to Plato. He states the point succinctly at *Euthydemus* 281a-e:

It seems likely that with regard to all of the things we called good in the beginning, the correct account is not that in themselves they are good by nature, but rather as follows: if ignorance controls them, they are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are capable of complying with a bad master; but if good sense and wisdom are in control, they are greater goods...of the other things, no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad.

What is of relevance to us today is that Plato challenges the proponents of “pro-development” education that social-economic development is the most viable means of ensuring human wellbeing or happiness. Wisdom and the virtues are for Plato fundamental to human wellbeing. The presence or attainment of wealth does not necessarily mean the presence of wise citizenry. While Plato does not disagree with the common understanding that our actions should aim at our wellbeing or happiness –

though his understanding of what constitutes happiness is broader than material good - he does disagree with the common understanding of the ultimate means to attaining such a wellbeing or happiness. Therefore, the question for Plato is, how should an individual's life and society be structured as a means to happiness? Education (*παιδεία*) for Plato is the institution with the proper task of structuring both the individual and the society in a manner that will promote his wellbeing and the wellbeing of the society, by first promoting wisdom which will empower virtue which in turn will ensure happiness.

1.4 Plato, Education and Wellbeing

Plato of Collytus, son of Ariston, certainly deserves our consideration when debating the ends of education and the possible relevance of philosophy to education because he is arguably the father of both philosophy² and education. Plato arguably set up the first institution of higher learning in the west, the Academy; therefore, he is arguably the father of formal education. Without doubt, his *Republic* is "the most conspicuous masterpiece of ... educational theory in antiquity" (Curren, 2000, 1). Therefore in discussing the purpose of education for a nation it is proper that Plato's ideas on the subject be considered. Examining the thoughts of Plato in his vast and varied corpus, but concentrating especially on the *Republic* and the *Laws*, this thesis seeks to outline the central and primary goal of any true education (*paideia*), especially, higher education as

² In his entry on Plato in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Richard Kraut argues that Plato is the founder of Philosophy in these words: "He [Plato] was not the first thinker or writer to whom the word "philosopher" should be applied. But he was so self-conscious about how philosophy should be conceived, and what its scope and ambitions properly are, and he so transformed the intellectual currents with which he grappled, that the subject of philosophy, as it is often conceived—a rigorous and systematic examination of ethical, political, metaphysical, and epistemological issues, armed with a distinctive method—can be called his invention. Few other authors in the history of philosophy approximate him in depth and range: perhaps only Aristotle (who studied with him), Aquinas, and Kant would be generally agreed to be of the same rank."

Plato conceives of it - the acquisition of knowledge or wisdom by citizenry and how this knowledge contributes to their flourishing lives in a flourishing society.

We are used to thinking of education as training in some profitable skill. But it is interesting to note that Plato does not consider the acquisition of industrial skills as central to a person's education. In the *Laws*, Plato is even very critical of thinking of the mere acquisition of skills as the main end of education as the proponents of "pro-education" suggest: "any training (τρεφῆ) which aims at wealth and strength or any other accomplishment unattended by wisdom and justice is vulgar, illiberal, and utterly unworthy to be called education" (644a). Modern societies have embraced Plato's conception that the end of education should be the training of virtuous citizens:

Although we are accustomed to thinking of the purposes of modern schooling as pertaining most of all to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that contribute to economic productivity, the American public school movement was built on rather different concerns. During the early years of the republic, these grew directly out of classical political theory...The American Founding Fathers were well versed in classical political theory, and they concluded ...that pure democracy would be as unstable in America as the ancient moralists had maintained it was everywhere, unless sound education could be relied upon to reconcile democratic freedoms with the need for good order and excellence in government. They understood the aim of education to be virtue, by which they meant most

generally such traits as 'discipline, sacrifice, simplicity, and intelligence'
(Curren, 2000, 6).

In the *Republic*, one of the striking images Plato uses to summarize what he thinks is the aim of education is when Socrates says that:

Then education is the craft concerned with doing this very thing, this turning around, and with how the soul can most easily and effectively be made to do it. It isn't the craft of putting sight into the soul. Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn't turned the right way or looking where it ought to look, and it [education] tries to redirect it appropriately (518d3-7).

When the soul (sometimes identified with our reasoning faculty) is turned in the appropriate direction via education, the divine aspect in the human person (reason) is empowered to "deliberate," and "rule." Such a person is disposed to be directed by reason. Thus the aim of education for Plato is largely to train the student to be responsive to reason and develop the disposition to depend on reason for the decisions and actions of his life. Plato's conception of education involves the strengthening of the rational part and the training of the irrational parts to be responsive to reason. This emphasis on developing our reasoning faculty so as to depend on it for our decisions and actions is what Curren calls the *principle of fidelity to reason* (2000, 22-24).

Thus, contrary to popular belief that education is the inculcation of some skill or knowledge in a person, Plato thinks of education more as the rational moderation of a student's unhealthy desires, passions or emotions. "As unnecessary desires are moderated through appropriate training and education, intelligence is turned like the shadow on a sundial from furthering appetitive ends to furthering rational ones" (Reeve, 1988, 50).

Education for Plato is therefore primarily both the cultivation of reason and virtue in a person. When the unhealthy passions are rationally tamed, and reason prevails over the passions, a person is truly free and does what a morally upright and knowledgeable person will do. Consequently, such a "Platonic graduate" is more apt to live a supremely happy life since he is both wise and virtuous.

In the *Republic*, Plato is however skeptical about the rational potential of every citizen to benefit from higher education. The *Republic* divides citizens into the ruling, guarding, and producing classes. The first two classes of people constitute the guardian class. Plato thinks the guardian class has the requisite rational potential for an education that will enable them to be responsive or faithful to reason. Plato does not think so highly about the rational potential of the producing class, hence, he does not think of any educational progress for them beyond primary education in the *Republic*.

Since Plato does not think of technical and economic skills as the primary focus of education, in the *Republic* he terminates the education of the producing class after basic education so that they can concentrate and excel in the various crafts that they are apt for. Plato sees a direct relationship between education and our reasoning faculty. In the *Republic*, those citizens with a high rational aptitude have access to higher education whose focus is to properly orient their reason to seek knowledge and truth. The task of

education is to empower reason to know and “deliberate,” and from this deliberation guide us to decisions and actions. It is this crucial understanding of the purpose of education that is eroding gradually from our educational discourse.

In addition to the *Republic*, the *Laws* is another dialogue where Plato clearly states what the purpose of education should be – grooming the virtues of citizens so that they can live well together. In the opening pages of the *Laws*, Plato’s Athenian Stranger, one of the interlocutors of the dialogue, criticizes Cretan and Spartan legislators for failing to understand the true goal of any legislation. Clinias and Migillus, the other two interlocutors in the *Laws*, explain that the laws of their various states are enacted with a view to winning victory at war. Such an end of legislation is inadequate because it aims at a partial attainment of virtue, the Athenian Stranger argues. Now, if legislation has the inculcation of virtue as its ultimate end and education aims at guiding citizens to knowing and living a good and virtuous life, certainly, legislation and education intersect in their ultimate ends. Herein lies Plato’s argument that the laws of a nation are educative by appealing to the reason of citizens that they (the laws) are a means to the happiness of citizens.

Thus, the *Laws* defends a conception of an educational programme that is similar to the one found in the *Republic*. At *Laws* 643e4-644a1-3, Plato defines education as “a training which produces a keen desire to become a perfect citizen who knows how to rule and how to be ruled as justice demands.” Plato thinks of the laws of any city as educative in as far as they communicate truths about how human beings can live well together. “Thus defined, education becomes a matter of prime importance for the legislator; for if it is properly conducted it is an invaluable means of bringing about εὐνομία [good order],

by weaving the substance of the laws into the very fabric of the citizens' character" (Morrow, 1960, 297).

Citizens, if they are properly educated, in the Platonic sense, do not perceive the laws of the city as imposed on them, if these laws are indeed good. During the course of their training, they are rationally persuaded to understand why the various laws are important and why these laws should be obeyed. And the educated citizen with a honed reason is even capable of contributing to removing, revising and amending the laws of the state to better position these laws to facilitate their wellbeing.

Education, then, if properly conducted, will not only produce an accord between the citizen's opinions and what the law prescribes; it will also produce an accord between these opinions and the feelings of pleasure and pain, of love and dislike, which are the chief determinations of action (653a-c, 659d). The rightly educated man loves what he ought to love (i.e. what the law prescribes) and hates what he ought to hate (i.e. what the law forbids) (Morrow, 1960, 301).

Education for Plato has the development of the individual and the state (development) in view; however, it is not the infrastructural or technological development of a people, but their rational development. This is not to imply that Plato sees the improvement and acquisition of skills of the various crafts as trivial. In fact, in the *Republic* and the *Laws*, Plato recommends ways in which the guardians (the ruling class) should create a conducive environment for the craftsmen (producing class) to flourish. However, for Plato, the defining mark of a developed state is not in its

infrastructure, but in the wisdom of its citizens. Hence, education must strive to produce wise citizens first rather than wealthy citizens.

Plato's stance on education is strongly informed by his belief that everybody seeks happiness as the ultimate end to which his actions are aimed. Like Socrates, his mentor, he also believes that the road to such a happy or flourishing life is less in the acquisition of material things but more in a virtuous life. One is virtuous, or exhibits the cardinal virtues of courage, moderation and justice by been faithful to the "deliberations" and guidance of wisdom. And education seeks wisdom for the citizens. Therefore, if education is to contribute its part to the attainment of the happiness we seek, it must aim at achieving wisdom first.

In coming to the end of this section on why education should focus on producing the virtuous citizen (who is also wise) and why virtue and wisdom are paramount for happiness, an exchange between Cephalus and Socrates in *Republic I* might be instructive. Socrates is prevailed upon to visit a family in the Piraeus after attending a festival there. Cephalus, the head of this family, is in "the threshold of his old age" and Socrates wants to find out from him how he feels about old age; whether he dislikes old age as many old people do. The old man replies thus;

A number of us, who are more or less the same age, often get together...When we meet, the majority complain about the lost pleasures they remember from their youth...they get angry as if they had been deprived of important things and had lived well then but are now hardly living at all... They repeat over and over that old age is the cause of many

evils. But I don't think they blame the real cause, Socrates, for if old age were really the cause, I should have suffered in the same way and so should everyone else of my age (329a-b).

Socrates challenges Cephalus' claim by suggesting that Cephalus perhaps finds old age agreeable because he is a man of means. Cephalus replies that "a good person wouldn't easily bear old age if he were poor, but a bad one wouldn't be at peace with himself even if he were wealthy" (330a4-6).

The central point of this exchange is that wealth does not necessarily lead to happiness as "pro-development" education proponents will like us to believe. But a wise life is the surest and the only way to a flourishing life for both an individual and the state. Plato will therefore argue that the loudest voice in the ongoing Ghanaian educational discourse that is strongly asking that the education of citizens be tailored towards increasing economic productivity is a call in a narrow direction. Plato argues that the primary focus of education, which this thesis highlights, is guiding citizens towards valuing wisdom beyond its role in securing economic gains and allowing wisdom to guide them in living according to good judgment.

It is against this understanding of the purpose of education that the value of philosophical education can be appreciated. When one understands the aim of education as developing the love for wisdom, one realizes the mistake in suggesting the irrelevance of philosophy to practical human wellbeing. If the task of education is to develop a person's reason so that his beliefs and actions are formed and guided by wisdom, which discipline is more apt to perform this task better than *philosophy* – the practice of the love

of wisdom? The place of economic growth in national development is undoubted. But economic growth alone is not enough for human wellbeing. In fact, it is not the pivot of human well being. A wise and reflective citizen, which philosophical studies seek to produce, complements economic growth and contributes to human wellbeing. It is only in the wise decisions and actions of its knowledgeable citizens that a nation is truly capable of developing in its economic and social endeavours.

1.5 Outline of the Thesis

To fully execute its main agenda of examining Plato's views on education, and the related aim of the role of education in national development, the rest of the thesis is structured in four remaining chapters. The next chapter focuses on the "Background to the Study of Plato." To study Plato is to engage in hermeneutics. Understanding Plato is not very straightforward. Hence, chapter two clarifies some of the themes that facilitate an easy understanding of Plato. For example, to mention Plato is to recall Socrates; the ideas unique to each of them are not often so clear. Therefore, in making a big claim such as the purpose of education according to Plato, it is important to first attempt to show the differences between the thoughts of Socrates the master and Plato the student turned master on a range of issues including education.

Chapter two further provides an outline to understanding the numerous Platonic dialogues in their groupings, themes, and authorship of ideas. It examines the "Socratic Problem." It demonstrates the Socratic method of philosophizing, the elenchus, and how Socrates thinks of it as a tool for examining our lives, which he believes makes us epistemically better or at least, reveals our epistemic deficiencies. This chapter also

outlines the various methods of interpreting Plato and argues why the “developmentalist method” is considered the best way of interpreting and understanding Plato.

Plato’s conception of the “soul” is the focus of chapter three. Since it is human beings who are educated, a glance into the nature of the human person may contribute to our understanding of what education can and should seek to achieve. This chapter examines Plato’s conception of the nature of a person, especially the “soul” in one of his early dialogues, *Phaedo*, and re-examines the changes that this understanding undergoes in one of his later dialogues, *Republic*. In the *Republic*, which is considered Plato’s further reflection on the nature of a person, Plato thinks of the soul as composed of three parts, the appetitive, spirited and the rational parts. This tripartite division of the soul corresponds to Plato’s classification of citizens into the producing, warrior, and ruling classes in a society. This chapter explores how education is intended to affect each of these parts of the soul. Most importantly, this chapter looks at the end in view in educating these three classes of people and the implication of these insights for a nation such as Ghana.

“Plato’s Conception of Education,” the centerpiece of this thesis, is the penultimate chapter. It outlines Plato’s conception of education especially in the *Republic* and the *Laws* but also identifies traces of it in other parts of the Platonic corpus. In the *Republic*, the education proper to the three classes of citizens is given a detailed analysis. The recommendation that music, gymnastics, mathematics, geometry, astronomy, harmonics, among others should constitute the core subjects of educating citizens is examined with a focus on how these subjects facilitate the grooming of a rational and virtuous citizen that Plato envisages the end of education to be. The *Republic* stays

faithful to the Socratic ideal that education should make students receptive to the promptings of reason. This chapter further notes that the *Laws* stays essentially faithful to Plato's understanding of the purpose of education in the *Republic*.

Finally, this thesis demonstrates the importance of Plato's insistence on fidelity to reason as the task of education in a democratic nation such as Ghana. Adherence to the *principle of fidelity to reason* in our educational setup is a sure guide to ensuring that our democratic discourses are up to scratch and are headed in the direction of minimizing ignorance and promoting sound policy decisions that are the fruits of public deliberations. Plato's lack of confidence in democracy as a form of government that will enhance the wellbeing of citizens emanates from his belief that the masses are largely ignorant of the pertinent issues relevant to the task of governing. This final chapter will cite contemporary endorsement by some scholars that many a nation is full of ignorant people who lack the epistemic competence to participate well in collective governance; yet, democracy grants them the right of expression and decision making. Policy decisions resulting from the deliberations of ignorant discussants are likely to prove detrimental to human wellbeing. The reasons for the ignorance of citizens may be numerous. But one thing is clear: such ignorance points to a defect in a nation's educational arrangements.

This final chapter also emphasizes that philosophy – the practice of the love of wisdom – is a potent cure for the ignorance of the masses. Philosophy, when it is properly done, orients a person to seek knowledge irrespective of its economic gain. This is at odds with the orientation that “pro-development” education proffers; it encourages only the search for knowledge that has immediate and obvious economic gain. This introductory chapter has argued in part that wealth needs to be guided by wisdom in order

to contribute to human wellbeing. Thus, knowledge of economic growth only cannot guarantee human wellbeing. Philosophical knowledge compliments economy growth by purifying the values and beliefs that guide our acquisition and use of the world's resources.

1.6 Conclusion

Surely, there are challenges facing education in Ghana. The observation that our current educational system is failing in equipping graduates with skills needed for national development may be true. Technical knowledge is indispensable for the creation of comfortable lives. However, the proposal that in fact, the primary purpose of education is to boost the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), reduce inflation, strengthen the national currency to match the dollar and the pound in value, and enhance other economic indicators towards creating a wealthy nation through skills that are supposed to be acquired in the course of one's education is not only incorrect but also dangerous. For a people and a nation of vast wealth without a disposition to depend on values and beliefs that have been shaped by reason is a threat both to themselves and to the rest of the world. For this reason, it might be of national interest to revisit the ancient thinkers and learn the noble objectives they had in mind when they started what has been modified in so many ways to be education today. Herein, lies, the rationale of the primary focus of this thesis (the examination of Plato's conception of education), and its subsidiary aim, the possible relevance of Plato's views on education to our era.

Chapter Two – Background to the Study of Plato

2.1 Introduction

“The job of interpreting almost any other philosopher, ancient or modern, is easier than interpreting Plato. The chief reason for this...is that he always addresses his reader in an indirect way: constructing dialogues, i.e dramatized conversations, in which he never appears as a character himself” (Rowe, 2006, 13). Plato does not communicate his philosophical views directly to his reader in the dialogues, but allows his interlocutors to propose philosophical puzzles and their solutions. How then do we know his mind? And when Plato does not reveal his views plainly in the dialogues, is it fair to attribute a philosophical stance to him? For the purpose of this thesis, is it not misleading to claim a stance for Plato on the purpose of education when his most enlightened readers over the years sharply disagree on what his views are on the various themes that he addresses in his numerous dialogues?

These questions become even more challenging with the realization that the lead interlocutor in most of Plato’s dialogues – Socrates – is not a fictional creation of Plato but a philosopher in his own right; “he [Socrates] is not an invention of Plato: there really was a Socrates” (Kraut, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011). Socrates actually existed in ancient Athens and actively interrogated people in a manner similar to the Socrates in the Platonic dialogues. In fact, scholars attribute certain ideas in Plato’s dialogues to Socrates. There is internal evidence within the dialogues that Plato is trying to perfect the views of Socrates. “It was with Socrates, then, that our Plato began”

(Reeve, 2003, 10). In addition to struggling to perfect the philosophical limitations of Socrates, Plato has philosophical views of his own on some of the pertinent issues of any society including education. Hence, where is the dividing line between the philosophical ideas of Socrates and those of Plato in Plato's dialogues?

This chapter gives an outline of scholarly responses to these questions. Finding answers to them is indispensable to a full understanding of Plato's position on what education should aim at and its possible implication for our time. Only in extracting what the ideas of Plato are in his dialogues and how his own ideas relate to and differ from those of his master, Socrates (whom he makes the lead speaker in most of his dialogues), will an espousal of the views of Plato on education be fully comprehensible. Perhaps, a better way of identifying the ideas of Plato in the dialogues is to first map out the ideas of Socrates. This is, of course, also challenging, since most of what we know about Socrates is through Plato's dialogues. However, there are scholars who have attempted to delineate the philosophical landscape of Socrates from that of Plato; to these scholars, we look to, for guidance, in the task at hand in this chapter.

2.2 The Socratic Problem

Writing about four centuries after the death of Socrates, Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman philosopher and orator, had this to say about the contribution of Socrates to philosophy: Socrates "first called philosophy down from heaven, set her into the cities, introduced her into men's homes, and compelled her to investigate life and customs, good and evil" (*Tusculan Disputations* 5, 4. 10-11). The encomium of the unique role of Socrates to the progress of philosophy by various scholars has not decreased even in our

times: "Socrates is the mythic father and patron saint of philosophy" (Morrison, 2006, 101). But paradoxically, there are sharp disagreements among scholars regarding who Socrates was and especially what his philosophical ideas are, if there are any. "The attempt to discover the historical individual behind the ancient account of Socrates and his philosophy" is known as "The Socratic Problem" (Prior, 2006, 25). An effective way of resolving this Socratic puzzle for most scholars is to start with an examination of the sources of our evidence on Socrates.

2.2.1 Sources on Socrates

Brickhouse and Smith, identify four grades of sources of evidence on the ancient world in general (2000, 11-12), which are relevant to the resolution of the Socratic problem:

1. Grade A – original sources
2. Grade B – reliable ancient testimony
3. Grade C – unreliable ancient testimony
4. Grade D – later scholarly opinions

The first grade, Grade A, original sources, will be texts written by the figure himself, that is, texts written by Socrates himself. Unfortunately, in the case of Socrates, we are not in possession of anything that he might have written himself. The second grade, Grade B, reliable ancient testimony, will be reliable ancient accounts of the figure or the issue under investigation, that is, texts that people who knew Socrates or who knew about him and who lived closer to his time wrote about Socrates. The third grade are also ancient accounts of the figure or the issue under discussion, but unlike the second grade, these sources are deemed corrupted and hence unreliable. And finally, there are later

scholarly opinions on the figure or the issue; these are Grade D material. There are grades B, C, and D testimonies on Socrates. However, these sources do not inspire a near perfect resolution of the Socratic Problem:

It is probably safe to say that only a small fraction of what was written in Socrates' time and shortly after, and only a small fraction of what was written about Socrates himself, has survived the nearly 2,400 years since his death. And what has survived provides historians and philosophers with problematic information. In some cases, the ways in which the ancient texts have come down to us suggest that the texts themselves may have been modified in imperceptible ways...For those of us who want to know the whole truth and nothing but the truth, dealing with ancient sources can sometimes be quite frustrating. As a result, at its best a most 'scientific,' historical reconstruction is to some degree speculative, interpretive, even subjective (Brickhouse and Smith, 2000, 11).

Scholars agree generally on four important sources on Socrates: Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Plato's dialogues (especially the early dialogues), the Socratic Writings of Xenophon, and fragments about Socrates in the corpus of Aristotle. The four sources appear to agree only on the historical Socrates: Socrates was born in Athens in about 469 BCE, his father was a stonecutter, and his mother a midwife. He married Xanthippe and had three sons by her. He served the Athenian army, fighting in the Peloponnesian war

(431-404); he might have come from a wealthy family because in the army he was a hoplite, "a heavily armed infantryman," a position that only the wealthy could afford.

The historical Socrates is also noted for his courage. His courage was exhibited in two instances – when as a member of the Athenian Council, he alone refused to put to vote the motion that the ten generals who abandoned both the dead and wounded Athenian soldiers during the battle of Arginusae should be executed, and later, when he refused to obey the orders of the Thirty Tyrants who ruled Athens between 403-402 to arrest Leon of Salamis. Added to these will be his refusal to cease practising philosophy rather than face death during his infamous trial where he was charged with irreligiosity and immorality. Most of this information is found in both Plato and Xenophon which none of the other sources contradict. Apart from these general agreements, the ancient sources on Socrates are not collectively helpful when they are used to reconstruct the philosophical ideas of Socrates.

The earliest of our sources on Socrates is Aristophanes' comedy, *Clouds*. It is perhaps the only work written in Socrates' own life time. The play was written, and then revised about five times; it is the revised version that is in our possession. In the *Clouds*, Socrates is portrayed as the head of a school, the "Thinkery." His students look like Socrates whom traditional portraitists depict as ugly, pale, unwashed, barefoot and penniless. The subjects that Socrates teaches in his academy include astronomy, meteorology, natural history, geometry, and grammar. But what animates the plot of the play is the wish of a chronic debtor, Strepsiades, to master the art of making unjust arguments sound just. Strepsiades fails in his studies but sends his son to the school who masters the art of defending unjust views. The *Clouds* also presents a Socrates who

rejects the gods of Greece. He explains natural events by corporeal necessity rather than by divine action. For example, Socrates explains that thunder is caused by the collision of clouds rather than by the anger of Zeus (Morrison, 2006, 103-04, see also, Brickhouse and Smith, 2003, 56).

The portrayal of Socrates as a natural philosopher in Aristophanes' *Clouds* sharply contrasts the other sources. Xenophon and Plato present a Socrates who has shifted the philosophical quest of the Pre-Socratic philosophers from questions of the natural world to a philosophical quest concerned with issues of human life: "What is justice?" And "What is most valuable in human life?" Besides, the picture of Socrates running a school and collecting fees in the *Clouds* is a prototypical Sophist. In his defense in the *Apology* (31b5-6), Socrates maintains that he does not collect any fees for teaching, if he even teaches at all. If it is true that Socrates charges fees from his students, as argued in the *Clouds*, this claim cannot be reasonably reconciled with his abject poverty. Thus, Aristophanes' *Clouds* has been dismissed by many (See for example, Brickhouse and Smith, 2003, 11-52) scholars as unreliable about the character of Socrates.

Even though the *Clouds* is not reliable as an accurate source of information on the philosophical views of Socrates, it nonetheless provides important information about Socrates as a public figure in Athens. Aristophanes presents him as an intellectual whose views were not distinct from the sophists of the time. "Plato has Socrates cite this play in the *Apology* (18d 1-2, 19c2-5) as a major source of prejudice against him. In Plato's eyes, the *Clouds* is ... an important source for the popular understanding [misunderstanding] of Socrates in the late fifth century" (Prior, 2006, 26). This helps in our understanding of why Socrates aroused the ire of his fellow Athenians and why he was executed.

Another source of evidence on Socrates, largely considered unreliable, is Xenophon. He was a companion of Socrates and wrote four books in defense of Socrates: *Apology*, *Memorabilia*, *Oeconomicus*, and *Symposium*. In the first chapter of the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon defends Socrates against the charges of impiety and corrupting the youth. He argues that Socrates was pious and believes in the traditional gods. He labours in this book to paint a picture of a Socrates who is beneficial to people who encounter him. Socrates benefits people in the practical moral advice that he dispenses to whomever he meets and also in the morally upright life that he lives. Xenophon's Socrates is different in several respects from the Socrates of Plato: Xenophon does not present a Socrates who antagonistically confronts his interlocutors in arguments; Xenophon's Socrates does not think of himself as ignorant or one who points out the ignorance of his interlocutors in a manner that will offend them. This uncontroversial picture of Xenophon's Socrates leaves scholars puzzled as to why Socrates would have been tried and executed at all (Prior, 2006, 27; Brickhouse and Smith, 2003, 57; and Morrison, 2006, 114-16). Like Aristophanes' Socrates, Xenophon's Socrates has been largely regarded by scholars as unreliable.

In our quest to discover who Socrates was and what his philosophical views are, it is Plato's account of Socrates that is our most reliable source. It is neither too negative, as the account of Aristophanes is, nor too defensive and apologetic, as the account of Xenophon is. Perhaps, Plato presents Socrates as he was and his philosophical views as Socrates articulated them. Plato's Socrates explains why Socrates attracted the ire of his fellow citizens and why he was executed. However, the central question for

understanding Socrates and Plato remains: where in the dialogues of Plato, do we find the views of Socrates and where do we find those of Plato?

Some scholars see a tripartite division of Plato's dialogues as a viable solution to the Socratic Problem. According to this group of scholars, most notably Gregory Vlastos, certain styles, methods, and doctrines allow for the division of the Platonic corpus into three major groups – an early, a middle, and a late groups of dialogues. Even though this solution to the Socratic Problem has been criticized, most of the recent scholars on Plato agree that the early dialogues of Plato depict the philosophical method and doctrines (if there are any) of Socrates, while the middle dialogues convey the philosophical views of Plato, and the late dialogues are a further development and revision of the ideas of Plato. However, these divisions are not strict or perfect for there are dialogues in one group that may share features of the dialogues in other groups (Kraut, *SEP*, 2011).

The dialogues that contain the philosophical method and ideas of Socrates and that are counted as chronologically belonging to Plato's earliest writings are *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthydemus*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Major*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Menexenus*, *Protagoras*, and the *Republic* Book I (in alphabetical order). Most scholars also suppose that the *Meno* contains many of the elements common to the early period even though it is grouped in the middle period (Brickhouse and Smith, 2003, 59). What is distinctive about these dialogues as representative of the philosophy of Socrates is not so much the philosophical doctrines that they depict as the philosophical method that they employ - the elenchus. A close examination of the elenchus reveals its influence on Plato's later philosophical positions, especially as these positions relate to education, which is the focus of this work.

2.2.2 The Socratic Elenchus

In Plato's *Apology* (21-22), during his defense against the charges of disbelieving in the gods of the city, believing in new gods, and corrupting the Athenian youth, Socrates tells the court about the genesis of his mission to interrogate people. A friend of Socrates, Chaerephon, visited the Delphic Oracle with a question. Chaerephon wanted to know from Apollo whether there was anybody living then who was wiser than Socrates. The oracle answered in the negative and his answer was carried to Socrates. Socrates saw a riddle in the answer of the oracle to his friend's question: Socrates knew that he was not wise; yet the oracle said that he was the wisest among men; but the gods do not deceive people. Hence, the god's answer must be a riddle.

Socrates therefore took it upon himself to unravel the riddle of the god. So, he visited Athenians who were reputed to be wise – the politicians, poets and craftsmen. When he questioned the politicians, he found them to be slow-witted. The poets, according to Socrates, said a lot of beautiful things but they could not explain what they said; hence Socrates concluded that the poets wrote under divine inspiration or natural talent and hence were not wise because they could not explain what they wrote. The craftsmen were promising initially; he found them wise in their particular crafts of carpentry, shoemaking and others. However, they wrongly thought that their wisdom in these particular crafts extended to knowledge in other disciplines such as ethics and politics. But when Socrates cross-examined the craftsmen on these other disciplines he found them equally uninspiring as the politicians and the poets.

From the results of his examination of the supposed wise citizens of Athens, Socrates found his answer to the riddle; “I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know” (*Apology* 21d). Eventually, Socrates took it as a mission from the god to expose the ignorance of people who think they are wise. The method that he uses in exposing ignorance in the dialogues is the *elenchus*.

Etymologically, “*elenchus*,” has its roots in “shame,” or “disgrace;” the type of “shame” or “disgrace” that is associated with losing a competition. Later on, “*elenchus*” shifted its meaning from “shame” or “disgrace” to the contest or test itself during which that “shame” or “disgrace” is incurred or avoided. Later again, “*elenchus*” transformed its meaning to the practice of finding out the true nature of a person or a thing by critical examination. Socrates used “*elenchus*” as a way of finding out whether a person is able to defend the consistency of his assertions with the hope that such a cross examination of the claims of others may lead to the truth (Young, 2006, 56).

In several of the early Platonic dialogues, Socrates alludes to his use of the *elenchus* in his discourse with others. During his defense, Socrates tells the court that he will employ the same sort of arguments that he uses in the marketplace (*Apology*, 17a1-18a6). In the *Crito*, Socrates says that he makes decisions based on his reflective arguments or principles (46b4-6); in fact, the personified Laws of Athens in the *Crito* argue that they are cross-examining Socrates because he cross-examines others (50c8-9). And in the *Gorgias*, Socrates says that his way of arguing (*tropos elenkou*) is different

from the sophistic orators (472c2-4). Clearly, the elenchus is a distinctive Socratic philosophical method.

According to Gregory Vlastos, the “Socratic elenchus is a search for moral truth by adversary argument in which a thesis is debated only if asserted as the answerer’s own belief, who is regarded as refuted if and only if the negation of his thesis is deduced from his own beliefs.” Vlastos adds that “Elenchus is first and last search. The adversary procedure which is suggested, but not entailed, by the Greek word – which may be used to mean ‘refutation,’ but also ‘testing,’ or still more broadly ‘censure, reproach’ – is not an end in itself” (1999, “The Socratic Elenchus,” 39). The object of the elenchus is to assist in the search for the truth. Socrates confines his search, at least in these early dialogues, to the search for moral truth: “What is virtue?” and “Can virtue be taught?”

The elenchus is simple in outline: It starts with one of Socrates’ “wise” interlocutors claiming to have knowledge on a topic. Socrates asks the interlocutor to define what he claims to know, say, virtue. With confidence, the “sage” asserts a claim, say, α . Socrates leads the interlocutor on to assert further claims related to α , say, β , γ , δ , and ϵ . Socrates then demonstrates to his interlocutor that one or more of these related claims contradict his main claim. His interlocutor is often left confused, embarrassed and infuriated. However, if the interlocutor does continue with Socrates in their search (which is often not the case), the original claim is modified in a form that may defy contradiction by the related claims (Vlastos, “The Socratic Elenchus,” 1999, 46; Young, 2006, 57).

The elenchus depends on the sincere stance of the interlocutors to succeed. Socrates, in discussing a topic with his interlocutors, invites them to assert only what they believe: “My good man, don’t answer contrary to your real opinion, so we may get

somewhere" (*Rep.* Book I, 346a). "When he is talking with you he wants to know your answer. If you quote some wise man's answer – as Polemarchus does in *Republic* I – he will discuss it as your own answer, expecting you to defend it as yours. That you do not yourself have high credentials will not trouble him" (Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus," 1999, 42). In his search for the truth, Socrates welcomes anybody, "young or old, citizen or foreigner" (*Apology* 30a).

One other thing should be pointed out before we bring this section on the Socratic elenchus to a close; that is Socrates' motive for insisting that his interlocutors state their own beliefs. [This motive is especially instrumental to fully grasping the purpose of education for Plato, who is deeply influenced by what Socrates intended the elenchus to do in the lives of people]. In arguments where the ultimate aim is to win, a debater may employ whatever strategy, whether sincere or insincere, that will give him the edge over other debaters. In the elenchus, one of the prime aims is not to win the argument but to attain the truth. Hence, this end – search for the truth – is better served if interlocutors state what they sincerely believe.

Furthermore, for Socrates, the elenchus does not just examine propositions but human lives. It is a challenge to his interlocutors to change their lives if need be, when they realize the inconsistencies in their beliefs, and start caring for the most important things in life; that is, the elenchus serves to improve their lives:

Thus elenchus has a double objective: to discover how every human being ought to live and to test that single human being that is doing the answering – to find out if he is living as one ought to live. This is a two-in-

one operation. Socrates does not provide for two types of elenchus – a philosophical one, searching for truth about the good life, and a therapeutic one, searching out the answerer's own life in the hope of bringing him to the truth. There is one elenchus and it must do both jobs (Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus," 1999, 45).

While Plato agrees with Socrates that a central focus of education should be the facilitation of the examination of one's life to make it worth living, he however disagrees with Socrates about the ability of the elenchus to achieve this crucial purpose. Therefore, in the middle and late dialogues, Plato abandons the elenchus which was so conspicuous in the early dialogues. Randall Curren (2000, 38-43) lists four limitations of the elenchus that might have compelled Plato to abandon it: (1) the elenchus can be ignored or blunted by resistance to its ground rules; (2) it is not clear how it would morally improve a person who already firmly holds true moral beliefs; (3) it is more likely to corrupt than improve a person whose moral convictions are not firm; (4) it presupposes a respondent whose moral beliefs are already largely correct.

For our purpose in this chapter it will not be necessary to discuss each of these limitations in detail except to this extent. If a set of propositions are inconsistent, on the one hand, it may be difficult if not impossible to determine which proposition is false; if the propositions are consistent, on the other hand, it may well be that all the propositions are falsely consistent. In either of these two possibilities the elenchus still leaves us far from knowing the truth. The elenchus is able to demonstrate whether our beliefs are consistent or not (Vlastos, "The Socratic Elenchus," 1999, 55).

In any case, the elenchus is a clear example of the difference between Socrates and Plato in philosophical method. While they both agree that life should be examined to make it worthy of living, they disagree as to the method more apt to achieving this. In the early dialogues especially, Plato is struggling with the limitations of Socrates. The elenchus is a case in point where Plato both projects and attempts to perfect the views of Socrates.

2.2.3 Socrates' Philosophical Views

While attributing the elenchus to Socrates, scholars sharply disagree on the substance of Socrates' philosophical views. In one extreme position are scholars who maintain that in the early Platonic dialogues there was not so much an articulation of philosophical views as there was a philosophical method – the elenchus or the Socratic Method. This group of scholars indicates as a support for their stance that Socrates himself constantly reminded people that he had no knowledge:

When I heard this [that Socrates is the wisest man] I kept thinking: "What on earth does the god mean? What is he hinting at? For I am aware of being wise in nothing, great or small. What then could he mean by saying that I am wise?" ...As I was going away from this man I reasoned to myself that I am indeed wiser than he. It is unlikely that either of us knows anything noble or good. But he, having no knowledge, thinks he knows

something, while I, having none, don't think I have any (*Apology*, 21b2-d6).

Apart from Socrates' disavowal of knowledge in the *Apology* and the other dialogues, it is also argued that in the early dialogues, Socrates' refutations of his interlocutors often end in an impasse; hence no positive doctrines are given and therefore Socrates has no philosophical views of his own. Scholars who argue that Socrates has no philosophical doctrines of his own attribute whatever doctrines that are found in the early dialogues to Plato:

The elenctic method of the early dialogues is the contribution of Socrates, but the positive philosophical doctrines that may be found there, as well as in later dialogues, are the contribution of Plato. It is Plato, not Socrates, who is responsible for the account of the nature and immortality of the soul found in the *Gorgias* and *Meno*, for the theory that virtue is knowledge, for the doctrine of (unseparated) Forms that appears in the *Euthyphro* and *Meno*, and for the theory of moral and political obligation found in the *Crito* (Prior, 2006, 33).

On the other hand, the position that "virtue is knowledge," and "the theory of moral and political obligation found in the *Crito*," are Socrates', is argued by many commentators, especially Vlastos and Kraut.

Platonic scholars such as Richard Kraut contend that Socrates did indeed have views on certain issues, especially in the moral domain, and did indeed advance his opinions in his interactions with Athenians. Kraut further asserts that the doctrines that Socrates professed sharply contradicted some of the commonly held views of his time: Socrates preached that riches, power and fame do not promote human well-being but virtue does; he proclaimed that a good person cannot be harmed; he was convinced that knowledge is virtue and with virtue comes happiness; he saw a search into what the virtues are as the path to acquiring knowledge; and he calls on everybody to examine these moral matters, for their lives are not worth living without such an examination (1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 5). To this list may be added Socrates' claim that no one does wrong willingly.

In this tug of war between proponents of "Socratic disavowal of knowledge" and proponents of his avowal of knowledge, Gregory Vlastos offers an interesting opinion; "Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is a paradox. He makes it frequently, explicitly, emphatically, and its sincerity cannot be doubted." However, Vlastos continues, "when we go through our texts dispassionately, ...we see... that Socrates is himself convinced that he has found what he has been looking for, knowledge of moral truth he avows openly" (1999, "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge," 72-73). Vlastos explains this apparent paradox by alluding to the claim that Socrates uses the word "knowledge" in two senses. In the one sense, when Socrates says that he does not have any "knowledge," any moral knowledge for that matter, he is making use of the word "knowledge" understood as a claim which is certain and cannot be false. In the other sense, when he says that he does have "knowledge," for example, that virtue is knowledge, he is using

the term understood as a less certain or a fallibilistic claim that is the product of his philosophical inquiry, the *elenchus*.

The former sense of the term, knowledge, Vlastos designates as *knowledge_c* and the latter, as *knowledge_f*. Therefore, "When he says he knows something he is referring to *knowledge_c*; when he says he knows nothing – absolutely nothing, 'great or small' – he is referring to *knowledge_f*." Consequently, "when he says he has no knowledge of a particular topic he may mean either that in this case as in all others, he has no *knowledge_c* and does not look for any or that what he lacks on that topic is *knowledge_f* (1999, "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge," 82). Vlastos thus accounts for why Socrates will claim that he does have *knowledge_c* and he does not have *knowledge_c* at the same time. For the *knowledge_f*, he claims he has is a fallibilistic *knowledge_f*, which is the outcome of the *elenchus* and the *knowledge_c* that he confesses to lack is certain knowledge. In this reading of Socrates, it is justifiable to attribute the moral views in the early dialogues to Socrates.

Gail Fine disagrees with Vlastos' analysis that Socrates uses the word knowledge in two different senses. According to Fine's analysis, Socrates "uses two *different* words, *suneidenai* and *sophia*, in two different senses. My [Fine's] suggestion is not that Socrates uses a single word in two different senses. Rather, he uses two different words non-synonymously. These are very different claims" (2008, 65). The thrust of Fine's argument is that Socrates uses two different words, *suneidenai* and *sophia*, which are "*different cognitive words for different cognitive conditions*." So, for Fine, when Socrates appears to say that he knows nothing, he means that he is *aware* that he lacks wisdom.

The issue in this section is not whether Socrates has knowledge, whatever level of knowledge this might be. The question is whether Socrates affirms some doctrines, that is, whether he holds philosophical views of his own. Both Vlastos and Fine agree that Socrates asserts his own philosophical doctrines, especially, on moral questions.

2.3. The Philosophical Views of Plato

Having delineated the Socratic domain in the Platonic corpus, even if imperfectly, it is easier to demarcate the philosophical borders of Plato in the dialogues, one might say. However, it is not as easy as it appears. Some scholars question the legitimacy of attributing any philosophical positions in the dialogues to Plato. How do we conclude what the beliefs of Plato are based on what the interlocutors in his dialogues have said? The objection runs further:

After all, when we read a play of Sophocles or Euripides, we all recognize that what the characters say need not represent the beliefs of the author. And so it is reasonable to ask why we should make a different assumption when we read a Platonic dialogue. Why assume that some one figure in these works presents the convictions of Plato himself? Some scholars, using this analogy between a dramatic work and a Platonic dialogue, hold that Plato's thought is no more contained in the words of any one interlocutor than the beliefs of dramatists are revealed by the words of any of their characters (Kraut, 1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 25).

Kraut refutes the above claim. He contends that this comparison of Plato's dialogues with other plays or dramas is misleading because the end of dramatists in composing their works is different from what Plato seeks to achieve in the dialogues. The aim of Plato, according to Kraut, is the creation of an instrument that will guide philosophical seekers to the path of truth and their well-being. "The point is that, if Plato's aims differ from those of a dramatist, then he will have a reason that the dramatist lacks for using his main speakers as a mouthpiece for his own convictions" (1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 25). Hence, it serves the purpose of Plato to have his sincere convictions voiced by his lead interlocutors.

Also, especially in the middle and the late dialogues, the interlocutors exhibit a high spirit of collaboration in their search. The adversarial mood in the early dialogues gives way to a combined friendlier search in these later dialogues. The interlocutors jointly develop and refute some philosophical theories while maintaining others (Kraut, 1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 26). In the *Republic* (from Books II onwards), Socrates for example welcomes questions and challenges from Glaucon and Adeimantus and they reach a common conclusion.

Kraut finishes his refutation of the view that Plato's dialogues should be read like other dramas with the observation that the dialogues of Plato are not a mere dramatization of conflict between opposing interlocutors and their competing philosophical positions. Nor did Plato compose his dialogues as an intellectual acrobatics for his reading audience; for if Plato has such intent, he would have written many opposing arguments on the same question. But in many of the middle and later dialogues, consensual philosophical positions are expressed at the end of the dialogues. "When the dialogues

are read in their entirety, they take on the shape that we would expect of works that record the intellectual development of a single individual who is struggling to express and argue for the truth as he best understands it. There is development and perhaps there are even reversals, but there is at the same time the kind of continuity that indicates that Plato is using his main speaker to express his own views" (1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 26).

But what are these main ideas of Plato that his main speakers express? Plato's main views and concerns are so immensely vast, this thesis will outline what scholars believe are the main ideas that Plato propounds differently from Socrates, especially as they relate to the question of education (at least, as far as I can see). Scholars generally agree that a deciding departure of Plato from Socrates is to be seen in the subjects of inquiry of the two philosophers. Socrates, they argue, limits his philosophical interest to moral questions while Plato expands that horizon to include a deep interest in mathematics, metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, geometry, harmonics, astronomy, and politics. But Plato "retained Socrates as the main interlocutor of his dialogues, even though the doctrines of this more ambitious 'Socrates' go well beyond anything dreamt of by that philosopher" (Kraut, 1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 3-4).

That the early dialogues display the philosophical method and ideas of Socrates, we have pointed out already. The philosophical methods, interest and views of Plato are argued to be generally found in the middle and late dialogues. The dialogues commonly agreed to belong in the middle period are *Phaedo*, *Cratylus*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*. In these dialogues, Plato begins to formulate his own ideas. In the late dialogues, Plato revises and clarifies his ideas that he propounded in the middle

dialogues. Dialogues that are generally agreed to belong in this late period are *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus* and *Laws* (Kraut, 2011, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*”).

Apart from Plato's expansion of the Socratic philosophical field from its narrow moral zone in the early dialogues to a vast horizon involving numerous other topics in the middle and late dialogues, Plato is uniquely different from the philosophical positions of Socrates in his metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, politics, aesthetics and even ethics. Some of his views in these major philosophical areas will be discussed in subsequent chapters as they are relevant to his conception of education. But it may well be in order to note a distinct concept in Plato's metaphysics and epistemology – the theory of Forms. The theory of Forms is almost identifiable with the name Plato. Even though the theory of Forms is almost inseparable from most of the philosophical views of Plato, it will not be given detailed coverage in this chapter or thesis. This is because the theory of Forms is not directly relevant to the aspects of Plato's conception of education that are important to this work.

The one major philosophical view of Plato relevant to our purpose is his concept of the nature of the human person. Plato's concept of the human person, especially his notion of the “soul” is paramount to an understanding of his conception of the purpose of education. Hence, a whole chapter (three) of this thesis has the soul as its focus. Related to his notion of the nature of the human being is his view, which he inherits from Socrates, that all actions aim at achieving happiness; and that a life of virtue is the proper path to happiness. These views (that human actions aim at happiness and that virtue is the

path to happiness), which are mentioned in the introduction, will be given a comprehensive treatment in our next chapter.

2.4 Interpreting Plato

Before we embark on an exposition of Plato's conception of the aims of education, we will do well to clarify further how the dialogues should be interpreted. This is crucial because scholars are far from agreeing on any particular method of interpreting Plato. Hence, it may be enlightening to outline the various methods of interpreting the dialogues, examine these different methods of interpreting Plato, and finally argue why our chosen method of interpreting Plato is the most fruitful.

We have almost as many methods of interpreting Plato as we have readers of Plato willing to give an interpretation of his dialogues. Some of these methods, such as the "esoteric" method, have faded away over time. The esoteric method was developed by Konrad Gaiser and Hans-Joachim-Kramer (Gill, 2006, 138). The distinctive approach of this method is the claim that Plato's true philosophical views are not found in the dialogues but were orally taught to Plato's students in his Academy. Plato therefore meant the dialogues to serve as a preview to a more thorough systematic oral teaching. To support their stance, practitioners of this method cite the fact that certain doctrines are incomplete in some of the dialogues. This method of understanding the dialogues has few adherents today.

The particularist approach to understanding the dialogues argues that individual dialogues should be understood to be advancing unique philosophical positions, and hence, should be interpreted individually and not in relation to the other dialogues

(Miller, 2006, 279). However, the references in dialogues to other dialogues, and the similarity of themes across various dialogues limit the appeal of the particularist interpretation of the dialogues.

Some scholars adopt a unitarian interpretation and argue that the dialogues should be read as expressing a single set of ideas. Thus, the dialogues should be read as conveyers of the Socratic-Platonic philosophy forming a linked system of ideas which are articulated in individual dialogues. Aristotle read the dialogues in this way; and so did the Academy of Plato "from the late fourth century BCE until the end of antiquity" (Gill, 2006, 137). One problem with this method of interpretation is the manner in which its practitioners handle conflicting ideas or doctrines in the dialogues: they simply ignore the parts that appear to conflict with what they consider to be the main idea (Rowe, 2006, 15), treating such contradictions as only apparent. This manner of reading the dialogue does not give room for Plato to change his mind or modify his stance in his long career of writing. But a close reading of the dialogues by some of the best minds on Plato indicates that he keeps modifying and changing his views on certain topics.

Another method of interpreting the dialogues takes as its guiding principles the midwife analogy (*Theaetetus* 149-151), and criticism of writing as a vehicle of conveying philosophical doctrines found in (*Phaedrus*, 275-278) and the *Seventh Letter* (340-344). Practitioners of this method argue that the dialogues seek to assist its readers in reflecting and reaching their own philosophical conclusions. Hence, the dialogues should be read as pedagogical aids and not with the aim of identifying Plato's philosophical views.

Also, in some passages in the *Phaedrus* and the *Seventh Letter*, writing is frowned upon for it gives the false impression of readers acquiring knowledge through reading the

works of others rather than through self-inquiry. Hence, for proponents of this method, the dialogues do not offer “fully worked-out, authoritative conclusions. It is for the reader to take the argument further, either by responsive interpretation or by independent philosophical enquiry” (Gill, 2006, 138).

The argument that Plato conceals his doctrines in the dialogues so that readers would not take him as an authority, and hence, will dialectically search for the truth themselves does not concur with the intellectual pluralism of Plato’s time. Aristotle tells us that the Academy was internally divided intellectually during Plato’s time. There were opponents of the theory of Forms for example. As Richard Kraut rightly observes; “In the midst of all this controversy, Plato could hardly have believed that his writings would be treated by many as authoritative pronouncement to be accepted without question” (1992, “Introduction to the Study of Plato,” 28). Therefore, this method of understanding Plato does not look promising, given this defect.

The method of interpreting Plato which most current scholars find most rewarding and which we propose to use in our reading of the *Republic* and the *Laws* is the developmentalist reading of the dialogues. It is a method that some of the best commentators of our time, such as Vlastos and Kraut have employed in their reading of Plato. The thrust of the developmentalist reading of the dialogues is twofold: first, it traces Plato’s depiction of the philosophy of Socrates from the early dialogues to an emerging Plato in the transitional dialogues (that is, *Meno*, *Protagoras*, *Republic I*, and *Gorgias*) through a Plato asserting his own ideas in the middle dialogues, ending with a Plato revising his own ideas in the late dialogues; and second, it assumes that the

philosophical ideas of Plato reside in the views of the lead interlocutors in the dialogues (Kraut, 1992, "Introduction to the Study of Plato," 29).

The purpose of the early dialogues (*listed in section 2.2.1*) according to the developmentalist understanding of Plato is to depict the personality, themes and mode of argument of the historical Socrates. In the middle dialogues (*Cratylus, Phaedrus, Parmenides, Theaetetus, Phaedo, Symposium, and Republic*), Plato continues to perpetuate the Socratic agenda, demonstrating his master's tough stand on death (*Phaedo*), on love (*Symposium*) and a continuation of his moral philosophy - that virtue is more beneficial than vice (*Republic*). In doing this Plato seems to correct and supplement the ideas of Socrates. For instance, Socrates believes in moral objectivity, but offers no theory; Plato shares this belief and provides a theory – the Theory of Forms. But in addition, Plato introduces his own ideas more constructively and explicitly. Notable among the ideas of Plato in the middle dialogues is his attribution of irrationality to the human soul. In the late dialogues (*Laws, Philebus, Sophist, Statesman, and Timaeus-Critias*), it is argued that Plato is a philosopher of his own and even revises some of the ideas he began with in the middle dialogues; for example, the theory of Forms as presented in the middle dialogues is criticized in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Also, the late dialogues are distinct for being more monologues than the early and middle dialogues (Gill, 2006, 140-41).

One important objection against the developmentalist approach is that it overlooks significant similarities among the three (or four) groups of the dialogues. The objection states that the stylometric evidence that is used in classifying the dialogues into their various groups shows some similarities in dialogues of different groups. For example, it

is noted that even though the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* are listed as early dialogues, they may belong in the late dialogues because they are more lengthy and more complex philosophically. Also, in the middle and the late dialogues, Plato continues to write in a “Socratic” and “negative” manner; for example, in the *Theaetetus*, Socrates professes his ignorance as much as he does in the early dialogues; likewise in the *Parmenides*, Plato does not propose any doctrine, but puzzles his reader as he does in the early dialogues (Kraut, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011).

Kraut’s response to these observations is that the distinction between Socrates and Plato in the dialogues is not absolutely strict. He argues, for example, that even in the early dialogues, which are supposed to depict the philosophical method and ideas of Socrates, one finds Plato introducing his own ideas at this early stage. Similarly, in the middle and late dialogues, Socrates is the lead speaker in the dialogues when the themes relate to ethics. But where Plato concerns himself with topics completely outside the Socratic domain, he does not use Socrates as an interlocutor. For example, in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, where the themes treated are largely metaphysical, he employs the visitor from Elea to convey his arguments and views; in the largely cosmological concerns in the *Timaeus*, he uses an interlocutor by that name; and finally, when his concern is largely constitutional as in *Laws*, he uses the Athenian Stranger. Thus, in the middle and late dialogues where Socrates is the lead character, he is maintained because he shares the same thematic concerns as Plato (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2011).

It is also argued that Plato remains fundamentally Socratic even with his introduction of novel views in later dialogues. Socrates thinks of human beings as potentially rational. However, Plato thinks “of human beings as a permanent

combination of the rational and irrational" (Rowe, 2006, 18). It is also asserted by Socrates and held by Plato that we all desire happiness and undertake actions with our happiness in view. But for Socrates, we perform wrong acts because we hold wrong beliefs. By including non-rationality in human nature, Plato is able to argue that we do wrong things because our beliefs are distorted by our non-rational parts. This view is distinctively Plato's. However, Plato thinks of the introduction of the non-rational parts as an improvement on the stance of Socrates and not a complete departure from that stance:

For Plato, post-Republic, actions done under the influence of the irrational parts, and contrary to what reason – in its unperverted state – would direct, are not properly wished for, desired, by the agent; any more than actions done as a result of straight intellectual error will be so desired. And this already takes us a long way back in the direction of the Socratic position, at the very core of which is precisely the claim that we never desire what is not in fact good for us. (We may think we desire it, or want it, but that is entirely another matter) (Rowe, 2006, 20).

Hence, Plato perhaps thinks of himself as both continuing the arguments of his master Socrates, and improving his mentor's positions in various ways. Hence, the dialogues may be understood as a development of the Socratic-Platonic philosophy with expansion, improvement, modification and even changes across the dialogues but still

basically the same philosophical thread from two philosophers that at the core proffer similar solutions to similar questions that they considered important for their time.

2.4 Conclusion

In the introduction of this chapter, the relevance of an introduction to the study of Plato as a prerequisite to expounding his views on education is stated. It may be worthwhile to reiterate this relevance again in order not to lose sight of it in the maze of topics covered in this chapter. The developmentalist view of the dialogues suggests that Plato shares many of Socrates' moral concerns and views and aims to perfect them as much as possible. This double task – of championing the ideas of Socrates and proffering his own ideas to meet their limitations – has generated significant confusion among readers of the dialogues.

The disagreements among scholars of Plato, regarding which ideas are Socrates' and which Plato's are an obvious sign of this confusion. Some readers of the dialogues have raised issues about attributing any views in the dialogues to Socrates since he did not write any of them. Others have doubted whether there are any philosophical views in the dialogues that may be considered those of Plato given that he never says anything directly but only through his characters; so which of his characters represent his views? Therefore, in discussing the stance of Plato on education, it is pertinent that these questions be resolved.

In addition to these questions, scholars have proposed different ways of interpreting Plato's dialogues. A particular interpretation of Plato leads to a unique understanding of the dialogues. This chapter argues why the developmentalist method of

reading Plato is more helpful in our understanding of him, and in particular, our understanding of his views on education in the *Republic* and *Laws*. The resolution of these concerns (at least an attempt at their resolution) may pave the path for a comprehensive understanding of Plato's view on education.

Having waded through the Socratic Problem, and having articulated the differences and similarities in methods and views between Socrates and Plato, the stage is almost set for the main task of this thesis, to examine what the *Republic* and the *Laws* think the purpose of education is. However, before we undertake this crucial task, it will be illuminating to outline what Plato thinks the nature of human beings is and what he believes is our ultimate highest end; since for Plato, education, must train the human being in its proper nature so that it can achieve its highest end in this life. The nature of the human being as Plato understands it is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3 The Seat of Wisdom: *Psyche*

3.1 Introduction

Education aims at developing a human being. Therefore an understanding of the nature of the human being is paramount to and, in fact, facilitates our understanding of the purpose of education. It is mainly within a certain understanding of the nature of humans and their overriding goal in life that education appears to be a means. Many thinkers have dedicated long hours and profound reflections to these questions in disciplines as diverse as psychology, sociology, theology, neuroscience, and of course, philosophy, among others. Plato is one such reflective individual who dedicated perhaps the whole of his life to thinking about what a human being is, what his purpose in life is, and what best enables him to achieve this purpose.

Plato thinks of a human being as consisting of two distinct parts; body and *psyche* (for lack of a better term, translated as soul). Of the two, and agreeing with Socrates on the importance of the soul relative to the body, Plato thinks of the soul as the most important part of a person. The *psyche*, sometimes imperfectly translated as the mind, is for Plato the essence of any human being. The education that Plato recommends in the *Republic* and *Laws* is aimed at developing both the body and the soul, but its emphasis is undoubtedly on training the soul in a manner that will guide it to knowledge. This knowledge will in turn guide the person in taking decisions and performing admirable actions that culminate in a flourishing life for such a person. The focus of this chapter is to outline Plato's view of the soul as the "seat of wisdom" and the arguments he advances in support of his view.

Plato's idea of the soul, like most of his prominent concepts, keeps developing and changing as the dialogues develop and change over time. Hence, for a comprehensive understanding of his concept of the human soul, this chapter will first outline the arguments Plato offers in support of his earlier view of the soul, especially in the *Phaedo*. This will pave the path for an appreciative understanding of the arguments in support of the soul in his post-early later dialogues, especially the *Republic*. However, before we consider the concept of the soul in the middle and late dialogues, we will first address Plato's position on *akrasia* and the Socratic principle that one does not willingly do evil. This is because it is Plato's position on these related matters that informs his revision of his early concept of the soul in the later dialogues. All these views are examined in relation to the soul to emphasize the central thesis in this chapter: the soul is the "seat of wisdom" and a crucial purpose of education for Plato is to hone this "seat of wisdom" to enable it effectively to undertake its task of examining our life to make it a worthy pursuit.

3.2 Soul in the *Phaedo*

Phaedo (also known as "On the Soul") is one of the dialogues that gives an account of the last days of Socrates. Thinking about his impending death, Socrates and his interlocutors, Simmias and Cebes, argue for and against the thesis that there may be or may not be life after death. The *Phaedo* is mainly Plato's Socrates' attempt to convince his listeners of the immortality of the soul. Even though a great weight of the argument in the *Phaedo* is given to proffering proofs for the immortality of the soul, the concern of this chapter is to extract from these arguments Plato's conception of the soul as the "seat

of wisdom." Plato begins by first arguing for the distinctness of the body from the soul by using his notions of death and purification.

Death is defined as when "the body comes to be separated by itself apart from the soul, and the soul comes to be separated by itself apart from the body" (*Phd.* 64c5-8). Plato thinks of death as some sort of purification as the latter is also some sort of separation between the body and the soul. According to Plato, when the soul is embodied, the body and its desires tend to corrupt the soul. The soul is corrupted when it gives in to the inclinations of the body uncontrolled by wisdom. Purification is therefore the ability "to separate the soul as far as possible from the body and accustom it ... to dwell by itself as far as it can be freed, as it were, from the bonds of the body" (*Phd.* 67c5-d2). One who detaches the soul as far as possible from the bonds of the body by denouncing bodily pleasures and pursuing wisdom, such as Socrates has been doing, need not fear death. (That might explain why Socrates is reported to be calm and even happy in the hours prior to his execution). Thus, Plato's distinction between the body and the soul points to the soul as the dwelling place of potential wisdom.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato offers four arguments for the immortality of the soul. The first of these arguments for the immortality of the soul is the cyclical argument for reincarnation. At *Phaedo* 70c4-8 Socrates recounts an ancient myth that reports that souls arriving in the world come from the underworld, that is, from the realm of the dead. Based on this myth, Socrates concludes that if it is indeed true "that the living come back from the dead, then surely our souls must exist there [in the underworld], for they could not come back if they did not exist." Plato further argues the following: Things come to be from their opposites: the beautiful is the opposite of the ugly; the just is the opposite of

the unjust; the larger is the opposite of the smaller; the weaker is the opposite of the stronger; the swifter is the opposite of the slower, the worse is the opposite of the better, and finally sleep is the opposite of being awake (*Phd.* 70e-71a). These come to be from their respective opposites.

This principle of opposites applies to life and death according to Plato; to be dead is the opposite of being alive. Being dead comes to be from being alive and being alive comes to be from being dead; "living creatures come to be from the dead" (*Phd.* 71d1). Plato further argues that between these opposites, there are two processes; separation and combination. One of the processes is dying and the other is coming to life. "Therefore, ... if there is such a thing as coming to life again, it would be a process of coming from the dead to the living" (*Phd.* 72a1). If the living come from the dead and the dead come from the living, it means that the souls of the dead are somewhere, or they cannot come back again.

Somehow, Plato thinks of this separation and combination as cyclical rather than lineal. He thinks that if everything that dies remained dead and did not come back to life, it implies that everything will finally become dead and nothing alive. If nothing came back from the dead, all living things will someday be absorbed in death. "If the two processes of becoming did not always balance each other as if they were going round in a circle, but generation proceeded from one point to its opposite in a straight line and it did not turn back again to the other opposite or take any turning," the implication of this for Plato is that "all things would ultimately have the same form, be affected in the same way, and cease to become" (*Phd.* 72b1-6).

Fred D. Miller (2006, 281-82) reformulates Plato's cyclical argument for reincarnation in the *Phaedo* most succinctly thus:

1. If there is a process from O_1 to O_2 there is also a process from O_2 to O_1 (where O_1 and O_2 are opposites). For example, heating is the process from cold to hot, and cooling is the process from hot to cold (71a12-b4)
2. If things came to be O_2 from being O_1 but not O_1 from being O_2 , everything would end up having the same form; for example everything would end up hot (72a11-b5).
3. [Everything will not end up having the same form.] (Tacit premise)
4. Therefore, if things come to be O_2 from being O_1 , they also come to be O_1 from being O_2 .
5. Life and death are opposites (71c1-5).
6. Souls come to be dead from being alive (71d10-11).
7. Therefore, souls come to be alive from being dead (71d14-15). (281-82).

The cyclical argument for reincarnation does not offer much in way of understanding the soul as the "seat of wisdom." But it adds to our understanding of the other arguments that portray the soul as the "seat of wisdom."

The second argument for the immortality of the soul is the argument from recollection. Plato cites two examples in support of this argument. The first is Plato's stance that when a person, ignorant of a certain knowledge, is interrogated in the proper manner, such a person is often able to provide the right answer on his own accord. In this instance, Plato is alluding to the episode in the *Meno* (81c-86b) where Socrates with the aid of a diagram guides an uneducated slave boy to the geometric truth that the sum of

the square of the height and base of a right angle triangle is equal to the square of its hypotenuse. For Plato, this supports the claim that the soul had prior knowledge of certain truths before its embodiment. And if the soul has knowledge prior to its embodiment, it means that a soul existed somewhere before it became part of the body. So according to this theory too, the soul is likely to be something immortal (*Phd.* 73a1-3).

Thus, in learning, according to the theory of recollection, the soul is merely recollecting what it knew in a prior life and has forgotten during its possession of the body. The theory of recollection attributes the ability to learn and identifies the faculty that accommodates the knowledge that we learn (or better still recollect) with the soul. The soul is therefore the seat of knowledge.

Plato employs our awareness of the existence of Forms in support of the theory of recollection. For example, Equal is said to exist; that is, the Equal itself exists. We come to have knowledge of The Equal from our consideration of other things that are equal, for instance, equal sticks or stones. The Equal is different from equal things. In fact other equal things strive to be like the Equal itself but are deficient. We come to know equal things through our senses. If we refer our sense perceptions of equal things to the Equal itself, it follows that we have prior knowledge of the Equal itself. And this prior knowledge of the Equal we had before our birth because we begin to hear and perceive after birth. This also applies to the Beautiful, the Good, the Pious, and the other Forms (*Phd.* 74a-e). Again, this example identifies the soul as that faculty in humans that has knowledge as its proper object.

The argument from recollection is expressed by Miller in the following syllogistic form:

1. Since we recollect the Forms when we see particulars, then either we were born with knowledge of them or we acquired them at birth or we obtained them in a previous existence and lost them at birth.
2. We did not acquire knowledge of the Forms at birth or after that, because we cannot give an account (*logos*) of them.
3. Therefore, we acquired knowledge of the Forms in a previous existence and lost it at birth (2006, 282).

Having advanced the arguments above, Plato next describes the nature of the soul as simple and hence more like the Forms. That which splits up is composite while that which does not is non-composite. Things that change or vary often are composite while things that are stable are most likely to be non-composite. For example, the Equal, the Beautiful, the Good are stable and unchanging. However, things such as horses, men and clothes are unstable and ever varying. Changing things we grasp by our senses, in fact, we can see and touch them, while unchanging things are grasped by reasoning of the mind. Hence, there are two kinds of existence, the visible and the invisible. Hence, the body is composite and the soul is non-composite.

Another way of putting the above argument is this:

1. Because like is known by like and the soul knows Forms by itself, the soul most resembles the Forms, which are pure, immortal, and unchanging.
2. Because the divine rules the mortal and the soul naturally rules the body, the soul most resembles the Forms, which are divine.

3. Thus because the soul is most like the Forms which are divine, immortal, intelligible, and uniform, the soul, unlike the body, is altogether indissoluble or nearly so (Miller, 2006, 283).

Furthermore, when the soul investigates things using the body, it does so via our senses and the soul "is dragged by the body to the things that are never the same, and the soul itself strays and is confused and dizzy." But on the other hand according to Plato "when the soul investigates by itself it passes into the realm of what is pure, ever existing, immortal and unchanging, and being akin to this, it always stays with it whenever it is by itself and can do so; it ceases to stray and remains in the same state as it is in touch with things of the same kind, and its experience then is what is called wisdom" (*Phd.* 79d1-5).

In the passages in the *Phaedo* quoted above, Plato is confident that when we seek knowledge in the proper manner, that is, using the mind uninfluenced by our senses, we are likely to acquire wisdom. Again, the soul is seen as the faculty that both seeks and houses wisdom, that is, the "seat of wisdom."

At this point, Simmias and Cebes note that Socrates has demonstrated that the soul has prior existence to its embodiment. But the arguments fail to show that the soul continues to live after its separation from death. (And since Socrates is about to die in the very near future, he better provide sound argument for the continuous existence of the soul after death before rejoicing in his hope of a continuous and undistracted practice of philosophy after death). The two interlocutors raise two objections against Socrates' assumption that his arguments so far entail the existence of the soul after death.

Simmias puts forward the first objection with an analogy. He compares the soul to a harmony that is the result of arranging a lyre and strings in the right order. The lyre and

the strings are like the body in that they are mortal, physical and visible. The harmony which is the product of the right mixture or attunement of these is invisible. However, when the lyre and the strings are destroyed, the harmony is also destroyed (*Phd.* 85e-86e). Hence, if the soul fits the harmony in this analogy, it means that the soul perishes with the death of the body.

Socrates dispels Simmias' arguments by pointing out how the relationship between the body and the soul is not essentially analogous to the relationship between a musical instrument and harmony. The soul cannot be like a harmony. This is because a harmony is composite while the soul is non-composite. And a harmony does not exist before the right combination of a lyre and string brings it into being. But a soul exists before it is embodied as seen from the arguments of the theory of recollection and the cyclical reincarnation. On the other hand, a harmony is last of all to come into existence from the combination of a lyre and string and it is the first to be destroyed (*Phd.* 91a-93a).

Socrates further argues that the soul directs the body (hence, the soul is superior to the body), however, a harmony is directed by the parts that produce it. Besides, a soul can oppose the desires of the body but a harmony does not; "when the body is hot and thirsty the soul draws him to the opposite, to not drinking; when the body is hungry, to not eating, and we see a thousand other examples of the soul opposing the affections of the body" (*Phd.* 94b8-11).

Cebes' argument against the continuous existence of the soul after death is an analogy but a different kind of analogy from the one Simmias gives. It is absurd, Cebes thinks, to argue that a man who makes a shirt has not perished after death since the shirt

that he has made is still in use; for a shirt is more temporary than a person. He thinks of the body as akin to the shirt and the soul to a man. Thus, a soul may outlive many bodies but it does not mean that it outlives all bodies; "the soul often wears out many bodies and then, on leaving its last body, is now itself destroyed" (*Phd.* 91d3-6).

Plato turns to the theory of the Forms in his attempt to overcome this objection. The Beautiful, the Great, and the Good all exist in themselves. Hence, beautiful things share in the Beautiful or the Beautiful is present in them. Hence, it is through Beauty that beautiful things are made beautiful. Also, a number is two by sharing in Twoness. These things that share in the Forms do not only contain the thing's Form "but also always that of some opposite. For example, three contains the Form of not only three, but also odd...Not only does the opposite not admit its opposite, but that which brings along some opposite into that which it occupies, that which brings this along will not admit the opposite to that which it brings along" (105a3-6).

Plato's counterargument is basically that it is the presence of the soul in a body that makes it living. The soul brings with it life; but death is the opposite of life. And the soul like the examples given above will not admit of the opposite of what it brings – that is, it brings life and hence will not admit of death. And since it does not admit of death, the soul is deathless. And since the deathless is indestructible, the soul is also indestructible. Miller (2006, 285) formulates this argument more precisely:

1. A special bearer of O_1 -ness is O_1 and it brings O_1 -ness to whatever it occupies.

E.g., fire is hot and it brings heat to whatever it occupies (104e10).

2. What brings O₁-ness to whatever it occupies will never admit its opposite, O₂-ness. E.g., what brings heat to whatever it occupies will itself never admit coldness (105a1-5).
3. The soul is a special bearer of life (105d3-4).
4. Life and Death are opposites (105d6-9).
5. Therefore, the soul will not admit Death (105e4-5).
6. Therefore, the soul is deathless (105e6).
7. What is deathless is imperishable (106b2).
8. Therefore, the soul is imperishable (106b2-3).

But as we mentioned in the introduction, our focus in addressing Plato's concept of the soul in the *Phaedo* is not to demonstrate the immortality of the soul. Our focus is to show that Plato thinks of the soul as the seat of wisdom or knowledge. Plato portrays the soul as capable of knowing. And the proper object of such knowing is wisdom. It is Plato's thesis that the soul is capable of knowing (giving us cause to suspect that the soul may be akin to the mind or reason) that inspires the relevance of his view of the relevance of a proper understanding of human soul to education. Before we make a case for this relevance in later sections of this chapter, let us examine the changes that Plato has made in his account of the soul in the middle dialogues, especially the *Republic*. The modification of Plato's idea of the soul in the *Republic* is informed by his attempted resolution of one of the Socratic puzzles – the denial of *akrasia* and the generally perceived existence of *akrasia*.

3.3 Making Sense of *Akrasia*

Plato, as is demonstrated in chapter two, inherited both philosophical methods and doctrines from his master, Socrates. Plato sought ways of improving these methods and doctrines. One such Socratic doctrine that Plato focuses on and seeks to resolve is Socrates' denial of *akrasia* or the possibility of weakness of will. The tripartite soul in the *Republic* is Plato's attempt to reconcile Socrates' principle that we cannot willingly do that which we know to be wrong.

Socrates argues in the *Protagoras* and some other pre-*Republic* dialogues that *akrasia* – weakness of will or incontinence – is impossible. At *Protagoras* 358b7-c1, Socrates makes the case for his denial of weakness of will or incontinence thus: “No one who either knows or believes that something else, which is in his power to do, is better than what he is doing, subsequently does the other, when he can do what is better” (cf. *Gorgias* 475d4-e2; *Apology* 25d8-26a7). A few lines later in *Protagoras*, Socrates makes his point more succinctly: “No one freely goes for bad things or things he believes to be bad; it's not ... in human nature to be prepared to go for what you think to be bad in preference to what is good. And when he is forced to choose one of two evils, nobody will choose the greater when he can have the lesser” (*Prot.* 358c6-d4).

Intuitively, it does not make sense to choose what will most harm us over what will least harm us. But our daily experiences contradict Socrates' stance on the impossibility of *akrasia*. For example, many smokers know and believe that smoking is bad for their health. In fact, smokers know that they are likely to die of cancer as a result of smoking. These smokers do not want to die from cancer yet they are unable to quit

smoking. Socrates thinks it impossible for a smoker to not want to die of smoking, yet chooses to smoke all the same.

Socrates points out one plausible explanation for the (apparent) existence of *akrasia*: Many people believe that knowledge is something that is not strong enough to control and govern a person. "The many believe that knowledge can be 'dragged about' by various non-rational desires and impulses (*Prot.* 352a1-c7), and so they reject the view that knowledge is sufficient for virtue" (Irwin, 1995, 83). Most people argue that non-rational motivations such as desire, pleasure, pain, lust, and fear are sometimes stronger than knowledge, hence, can "drag" knowledge about. Proponents of *akrasia* hold that knowledge is a slave that is dragged by the aforementioned (*Prot.* 352b3-c2). Socrates rejects this argument with the following argument, which Reeve (1988, 132-34) attempts to simplify:

1. The many believe that good is pleasure, and evil is pain
2. But sometimes A knows that x is worse than y, but his desire for the pleasure of x pushes him to choose x over y.

[In a choice between x and y, x may not be worse than y, but less pleasurable than y. Hence, (2) may be reformulated as]:

3. Sometimes A knows that x is less pleasurable than y, but his desire for the less pleasurable x pushes him to choose x over y.

This for Socrates and for any reasonable person does not make sense, because

4. In competing pleasures, A must choose the more pleasurable over the less pleasurable.

Hence, the explanation of *akrasia* given at (2) is not convincing.

There are two presumed principles concealed in (4):

5. The strength of A's desire for an object is directly proportional to the pleasure that A believes that the object will provide, and
6. All desire is for the pleasurable and nothing else.

Premises (5) and (6) are needed to validate (4) because without (5), a stronger desire for less pleasure might override the desire for more pleasure. And without (6) a person might not choose the more pleasurable due to another desire other than pleasure.

To avoid the wrath of the anti-hedonist, let us replace "good" for "pleasure" in these premises, that is, (5) and (6):

7. The strength of A's desire for an object is directly proportional to the good that A believes that the object will provide (presumed at *Protagoras* 355d1-e4), and
8. All desire is for the good and nothing else (presumed at *Gorgias* 467c5-468b4).

With (7) and (8), knowledge of what is good cannot be overridden by desire, fear, pain or any of the other candidates. This Socratic belief in the power of knowledge is sometimes formulated in the maxim: "To know the good is to do the good" (Brickhouse and Smith, 2000, 174).

Plato posits the tripartite soul to resolve this mystery (at least apparently) by disputing (8). The *Republic* attributes non-rational roles to parts of the soul. "He [Plato] does not take it for granted that the desires of the rational part will always move us to action against the tendency of our non-rational desires" (Irwin, 2007, 76). Thus, in suggesting that people sometimes act according to what their non-rational desires want, Plato is suggesting that these non-rational desires may not always target the good.

Akrasia is possible according to the account of the tripartite soul because desire sometimes overrides belief or knowledge about what is best for a person. Socrates' view is still correct; no one willingly performs an act that he thinks is bad for him instead of one that is good for him. However, the desires that cause incontinence do not necessarily target the bad. The objects that these desires aim at are food, drink, sex, and honour. The focus of these desires may turn out to be bad. And since these desires do not aim at the overall good, they can occasion our willingly doing actions that are not best for us if they are stronger in the moment than the reasoning part. We now turn to the *Republic* for a detailed account of Plato's view of the soul.

3.4 Soul in the *Republic*

There is a radical shift in the nature of the soul in the *Republic* from the earlier account presented in the *Phaedo*. The *Republic's* soul is apparently composite (on the surface) with three distinct parts each with its own desires and concerns compared to the unitary soul of the *Phaedo*. These parts are the appetitive, the spirited, and the rational.

Plato's division of the psyche into three parts has its basis in the "principle of opposites," also known as the "principle of non-opposition." It is a corollary of the principle of non-contradiction; this principle states that "the same thing won't be willing to do or suffer opposites in the same part of itself in relation to the same thing at the same time" (*Rep.* 436b8-9; cf, 436e8-437a2). According to C. D. C. Reeve (1988, 119), the "principle of opposites" is basically the principle of non-contradiction "formulated in terms of properties rather than propositions, and restricted to properties that are relational forms." The examples that Plato cites as incompatible are that the same thing cannot be

both good and evil, just and unjust, fine and shameful, pleasurable and pain (*Rep.* 361c3-4,475e9, 583c3). This principle is concerned with opposites of properties (and not propositions) that are relational, that is, opposites that a thing can do, suffer, or be in respect of itself. Before we examine how Plato applies this principle of opposites to entail a division of the soul into distinct parts it may be more helpful for our understanding of this principle to consider one objection against it.

Take a standing man who moves his hands about. The claim may be made that the man is moving and yet standing, that is, the same thing is performing opposite acts at the same time. Plato's Socrates refutes this objection saying that it is wrong to say that the same man is both standing and moving; rather it should be said that one part of him is moving while the other part is standing. In reference to a similar example that an archer both pushes the bow away from himself and draws it toward himself, Socrates argues that "To say of the archer that his arms at the same time push the bow away and draw it towards him is not to speak well. We ought to say that one arm pushes it away and the other draws it towards him" (*Rep.* 439b8-11).

Reeve clarifies Socrates' objection above when he observes that these sorts of counterexamples to the principle of opposites are possible only in situations involving synecdoche; "the figurative transference of a property possessed by a part of a thing to the thing as a whole." Literally speaking, it is not the whole man that is both moving and standing, but one part of him that is moving and another that is standing. Thus, "all apparent violations of PO [the principle of opposites] are synecdochical" (1988, 119). Now we turn our attention to how the principle of opposites entails a tripartite soul.

3.4.1 The Appetitive Part of the Soul

Consider a thirsty man lost in a desert who comes across a body of water. Due to dehydration, his primitive biological urges him to drink the water. However, a part of him, different from these biological urges, tells him not to drink because the water is polluted. This for Plato is a clear indication of two distinct parts operating within the soul, one appetitive, which seeks to satisfy the appetites and the other rational, which calculates as to what is best for the overall good of a person. Wanting to drink and not wanting to drink are two opposite forces within the same person. It is a violation of the principle of opposites for the same thing to both desire to drink and not desire to drink. With this conflict in the soul, Plato distinguishes the appetitive part from the other parts of the soul.

The argument above is simplified below:

1. The same thing cannot do or undergo opposite things in the same respect toward the same object at the same time (*Rep.* 436b8-9).
2. Hence, if there are opposing actions in X, the actions must be due to different parts of X (*Rep.* 436b9-c1).
3. Desiring to A and being unwilling to A are opposite actions (*Rep.* 437b1-c6).
4. Some persons want to drink but are also unwilling to drink (*Rep.* 439c2-3).
5. Therefore, the part in them (i.e., appetite) that wants to drink is different from the part (i.e., reason) that wants not to drink (*Rep.* 439d4-4) (Miller, 2006 287).

At *Republic* 439e6-440a3, Plato distinguishes the appetitive part from the spirited part of the soul with what I call the Leontius Case. According to this ancient story, one Leontius, son of Aglaion, was walking around the walls of the Piraeus when he saw some

corpses lying about. Leontius had this strong desire to look at the corpses [because he was notorious for his love for boys as pale as corpses (Reeve, 1988, 129)] but at the same time, he was disgusted at his desires. “For a time he struggled with himself and covered his face, but, finally, overpowered by his sexual appetites, he pushed his eyes wide open and rushed towards the corpses, saying, ‘Look for yourselves, you evil wretches, take your fill of the beautiful sight!’” (*Republic* 439e10–440a3). From this story, Plato argues that it is an instance of the spirited part opposing the appetitive part. Here, the spirited part aligns itself with the rational part in opposition to the appetitive part.

Earlier in the *Republic*, Plato had identified three classes of people in the city – the producing, military, and ruling classes. The appetitive part is a unique characteristic of the producing class. Plato calls them the money-loving class; hence, this part of the soul is the money-loving or profit-loving part. Plato calls it the money-loving part because it is by means of money that the clearest desires of the appetitive part such as thirst, hunger and sex and the other bodily pleasures are satisfied. A person who is governed by his appetitive part identifies wealth as the overarching good and hence his rational part is conditioned to identify and create money making opportunities.

In books VIII and IX of the *Republic*, Plato identifies the oligarchic person as typical of one governed by his appetitive part. Such a person does not allow his reason to “admire and esteem anything else but wealth and the wealthy or to seek public esteem on any other ground than the possession of money and whatever else contributes to that” (*Rep.* 553d4–7). In our contemporary world such an oligarch strives to be successful in business and may admire and aspire to be like top business people. By inference, an

education that sees the creation of wealth as its ultimate goal is an appetite conceived and inspired notion of education.

3.4.2 The Spirited Part of the Soul

One of the cases that Plato cites which he thinks violates the principle of opposites and hence warrants a distinct separation of the spirited part of the soul from the other two parts is the anger of Odysseus at his former maids. In book 20 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus returns to find his maids flirting with other men. Once, he witnesses them on their way to spend the night with their suitors. This infuriated Odysseus and he desired to kill them instantly. But his reason prevailed over his spirit. Homer captures this triumph of reason over spirit thus: "He [Odysseus] struck his chest and spoke to his heart. Endure, my heart, you've suffered more shameful things than this" (*Odyssey* 20. 17-18). The principle of opposites may be applied here to show the distinction between these two parts:

1. The same thing cannot do or undergo opposite things in the same respect toward the same object at the same time (*Rep.* 436b8-9).
2. Hence, if there are opposing actions in X, the actions must be due to different parts of X (*Rep.* 436b9-c1).
3. Desiring to kill the maids and not desiring to kill the maids are opposites.
4. Odysseus wants to kill the maids but is also unwilling to kill them.
5. Therefore, the part in him (i.e., spirited) that wants to kill is different from the part (i.e., reason) that is unwilling to kill.

The spirited part of the soul is the less distinct among the three. Plato's standard word for the spirited part of the soul is τὸ θυμοειδές. This word is derived from the word

θυμος which means "anger." The word anger in fact has its roots in the word "fuming." Homer uses the term θυμος frequently in his works with a broader meaning:

it names the part of themselves to which Homeric heroes speak, or which speaks to them, when they are aroused for action, and into which they, or some tutelary deity, pour might and strength when their prowess is about to be put to the test. It is thus the immediate source of action, especially vigorous action, and the seat of emotion, especially those emotions (anger, for example, but also on occasion sexual passion) that motivate vigorous and bold action (Cooper, 1999, 199-20).

The Odysseus case attempts to prove that the spirited part is different from the reasoning part of the soul. Plato cites the anger of babies to argue that the spirited part differs from the appetitive part. Babies lack reasoning faculties but are nonetheless highly spirited in many instances. "For even in small children one can see that they are full of anger right from birth, while as for calculation, some seem never to get a share of it, and the majority do so quite late" (*Rep.* 441a7-10). Hence, in a child one notices the appetitive and spirited parts at work with the reasoning part developing later.

The warrior class in Plato's classification of citizens have the spirited part dominant in their nature. A spirited person will like to outdo others and be noticed in society. Such a person will have the proclivity towards undertaking projects that involve competition, for instance, sports, military service and even political pursuits. He takes

pride in his victories over others. The spirited person esteems those who have distinguished themselves with victories (Lorenz, 2006, 159-60). Plato at *Republic* 581a9-581b3 calls such a person victory-loving or honor-loving. Such a character is timocratic; he is “harsh to his slaves rather than merely looking down on them as an adequately educated person does. He’d be gentle to free people and very obedient to rulers, being himself a lover of ruling and a lover of honor” (*Rep.* 549a1-4).

3.4.3 The Reasoning Part of the Soul

In sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, various instances are employed to illustrate the distinctions between the reasoning part of the soul and its other two parts. For example, that a person both desires to drink and does not want to drink is indicative of an internal “war” between his appetitive part that is driven to satisfy his biological need to satiate his thirst, and his reasoning capacity that tells him that the water available is polluted and hence unhealthy for the health of his body. Also, Odysseus’ passion to instantly kill his disgraceful former maids and his decision to postpone the killing is proof of the opposition between his spirited part to kill anyone who dishonors him and his reasoning part to postpone the killing in order to achieve his dream of killing the suitors of his former maids later.

Of the three parts of the soul, it is the reasoning part that Plato thinks of as the most important part, because it seeks knowledge, including knowledge of what is best for the other parts of the body. Plato calls it the knowledge-loving part. For Plato, it is the part most suited to rule over the other parts. In the rest of this section, Plato’s reasons for ranking the reasoning part of the soul higher than the other parts will be examined.

For Plato, as Reeve understands him, the desires of the soul may or may not aim at some good. The desires of the appetitive part are independent of the good of the other parts of the soul or the soul as a whole. The objects of desire of the spirited part are partly dependent on the good, namely, on what the spirited part sees as the good. The reasoning part of the soul is fully dependent on the good of the other parts of the soul and the soul as a whole (Reeve, 1988, 135). We will expand on this summarized relationship between the various parts of the soul and the good in the immediately following paragraphs.

The desires of the appetitive part are independent of the good of the soul as a whole. For example, if Socrates desires to eat x , x must be food. However, Socrates hunger for x does not necessarily imply that x is good for him. Nor does it even imply that Socrates thinks of x as good for him. In fact, x may be harmful for Socrates even though he hungers for it. Hence, food and the other forms of desire of the appetite such as lust and thirst are independent of the good. That is not to say that appetitive desires are evil. In fact, appetitive desires facilitate the nutritional growth of a person. However, these desires need to be guided and controlled – possibly by education – because it is not every food and drink desired that is necessarily good for a person's nutrition or amusement.

The objects of desire of the spirited part are partly dependent on the good, namely, on what the spirited part sees as the good, which is a partial picture of the good. Plato's typical example of an emotion belonging to the spirited part of the soul is anger. Like other emotions, anger is often generated by a belief and a desire. "If A is angry with B, then (typically) he must believe that B has purposely done something bad to him and desire to retaliate as a result...If A believes that B has done something bad to him, some

conception of his own good, and what conduces to it or detracts from it, must bear on his belief" (Reeve, 1988, 136). This belief may be reflective or not. For example, Odysseus' rage at the maids involves an understanding of what he thinks as dishonor from his former house helpers. Leontius is angry at himself for lusting after corpses because he has this conception of what sexual desires befit his status. Thus, because anger involves an unsophisticated or incomplete belief about the good, the spirited part is "part-good-dependent." The desires of the spirited part are therefore different from those of the appetitive part because the latter are largely biological impulses that impel a person to action while the former arises out of some sort of understanding (partial or even totally wrong) of what is good for a person.

Finally, the reasoning part of the soul is fully dependent on a conception of the good of the other parts of the soul and the soul as a whole. This is because it is the seat of knowledge or wisdom. And when our choices are guided by wisdom, our decisions and actions tend to be focused on what is good for us according to Plato. Hence, apart from its intellectual curiosity, Plato assigns the reasoning part the task of governing:

For reason to rule here takes the form of its deciding on its own authority what is the best thing to do, issuing injunctions (442c6), and seeing to it that the required action is undertaken. And just as Socrates makes the desire for knowledge – that is, the desire which leads reason to perform one part of its natural job – the direct consequence of our rational nature, so, I believe it can be shown,

he also assigns to reason an inherent desire to perform the other part of its natural job, that of ruling (Cooper, 1999, 191).

We now, in the next section, examine some noted objections against the account of the soul in the *Republic*.

3.5 An Evaluation of Plato's Conception of the Soul

Scholars of Plato are the first to notice various perceived and real weaknesses in Plato's psychology. Some of the objections against Plato's doctrine of the existence of the soul as both pre-dating and post-dating the decomposition of the body are telling. This section will address some of the noted criticisms against Plato. But since this chapter is not focused on the immortality of the soul as argued in the *Phaedo* and the other dialogues, it will not address objections relating to issues of immortality of soul. Rather, the fundamental objections against the account of the soul in the *Republic* will be addressed.

Two objections against the *Republic's* account of the soul are notable. The first is the claim that Plato's tripartite theory potentially generates an infinite number of parts. And the second objection argues that Plato's account does not generate any parts at all. The first objection raises a scenario such as this: Suppose that a person wants a drink that is hot; however he does not want a drink that is sweet. But the drink in front of him is both hot and sweet; hence, he desires the drink because it is hot but does not desire it because it is sweet. This, according to the critics, is indicative of a divided appetitive part. Thus, within the appetitive part, there are other distinct parts (Reeve, 1988, 124).

The second objection can be derived from the example of the first objection: Suppose that a person wants a drink that is hot; however he does not want a drink that is sweet. But the drink in front of him is both hot and sweet; hence, he desires the drink because it is hot but does not desire it because it is sweet. The objection is this: why does Plato attribute the division in desires to the person rather than to the drink? It may well be the case that it is the object of desire - that is, drink, food, and sex - that has different parts not the person desiring it (Reeve, 1988, 125).

In a response to the first objection, Reeve (1988, 25) argues that for Plato, opposing appetitive desires can compromise. That is, if A desires a hot drink *x* but realizes that *x* is sweet which he is averse to, it indeed implies that A wants and does not want *x*. However, A will form a compromise attitude toward *x* which represents various desires. If A's desire for hot drink is stronger than his aversion to sweet drink, A will have a weaker desire for *x*. But if A's desire for hot drink is weaker than his aversion to sweet drink, A will have a weaker aversion to *x*. If the two desires are somehow balanced, A will have an indifferent attitude towards *x*. In any case, such a compromise points to a division in the psyche and not the drink. The point of Reeve in arguing against an infinite division of the soul with the potential of the soul to form compromise of its various parts appears to be that, if the soul were infinitely divided, compromise of its various parts will be more difficult than it appears.

In answer to the second objection, in conflicts between the three parts of the *psyche*, for example between the appetitive and the reasoning parts, compromise is impossible in the way that we see in the case of desires within an appetitive part of the soul. Conflicts of desires within a part of the soul are more easily resolvable than

conflicts between parts of the soul. The latter conflicts are often accompanied by intense tension within the person as in the case of Leontius and Odysseus. Hence, the soul, due to its inability to form compromise between its distinct parts, has three parts as Plato argues.

In spite of its archaic outlook, there are some part of Plato's account of the nature of human being that resonate with contemporary notions of people. For example, Plato attributes rationality to everybody (babies have potential rationality which develops as they grow) in as far as he attributes a reasoning part of the soul to every human being. This rationality is commonly attributed to the fact that we all have minds, in contemporary parlance. Though scholars disagree about the nature of such a mind (a few perhaps even doubt its existence), a human being is generally said to be very different from other creatures because he has a capacity to perform certain levels of high reasoning that other creatures are incapable of. This mind, rationality, call it whatever you prefer, in my view is akin to Plato's reasoning part of the psyche. And it is especially this reasoning part, the "seat of wisdom," that education seeks to develop.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has traced what Plato thinks of as the nature of a person. Consistent with our stance that a better way of interpreting Plato is the developmentalist approach, we see Plato's view on the nature of the person developing as his dialogues develop. The view that he holds of the nature of a person in the *Phaedo* undergoes a modification in the *Republic*; the unitary soul of the *Phaedo* gives way to a tripartite soul in the *Republic*. But both dialogues agree that the human person is distinct from other creatures because it has a rational faculty. Education is possible and makes sense for the human species

because we believe that our rational or reasoning faculty can be honed to decipher beliefs that promote our wellbeing and the good of society in general from beliefs that do not. The next chapter focuses on how Plato thinks education should influence our reason to enable it to be receptive to right beliefs.

Chapter 4: Plato's Conception of Education

4.1 Introduction

We now confront the centerpiece of this thesis: Plato's notion of the end of education and the various means and methods that should be employed to achieve this end. To position this chapter to aid in the task at hand, we turn to some of the dialogues in which education may be argued to be one of their central topics. Various dialogues are readily available in this regard since, for Plato, education is both an ethical and a political topic. Hence his ethical and political dialogues are, to a significant extent, educational dialogues. Whilst a number of Plato's dialogues address educational questions, it is, in a middle dialogue – *Republic* – and a late dialogue – *Laws* – that we find comprehensive treatises on the theme.

Commenting on the central role of education in both the *Republic* and *Laws* Malcolm Schofield (2006, 35) writes that “education – interpreted in the broadest possible sense – has a claim to be considered perhaps the greatest preoccupation of both the *Republic* and the *Laws* alike.” On the *Republic* specifically, Schofield further notes that “Plato could scarcely mark the centrality of this theme in the *Republic* more emphatically than by making it the topic of the most powerfully memorable of all the images which saturate the dialogue: the allegory of the Cave at the beginning of Book 7” (2006, 36).

In both dialogues, we confront a Plato whose ultimate aim of education has the soul as its focus. The end of education in the *Republic* and *Laws* is the development of what Plato calls the divine aspect of the person, the soul, especially the reasoning part.

The *Republic* and *Laws* do not, as their main focus, argue for the cultivation of practical skills for the growth of the economy of the *polis* (which is what our current national discourse on education has mostly in view), but emphasize the development of the rationality of a person in order to seek knowledge and wisdom. Plato's conception of education, an education that cultivates the best in us, seems to be at odds with the prevailing notion of education in our times as a means to economic advantage in society. This chapter will propound this Platonic notion of education, and the final chapter of this thesis will demonstrate how Plato's ultimate end of education may contribute in crucial ways to the development of an emerging democratic nation such as Ghana.

For clarity in executing its goal, this chapter is structured in three main sections: education in the Socratic dialogues, education in the *Republic*, and finally, education in the *Laws*. Since the central ideas of Plato are "efforts to perfect Socratic thought" (Curren, 2000, 35), this chapter first examines the Socratic notion of education. In the *Apology*, *Crito*, *Meno* and *Protagoras*, we find notions of education that most respected interpreters of Plato often attribute to Socrates. Second, in the *Republic*, we shall trace how Plato maintains this core Socratic conception of education that he inherits. But, we shall also show how Plato revises and refines his Socratic inheritance to achieve a better understanding of the topic. And third, in the last main section of this chapter, and following our developmental interpretation of Plato (as argued in chapter two section 2.4), this chapter further traces the main educational thread from the *Republic* to the *Laws* and shows how the *Laws* is a further revision and elucidation of the main Platonic notion of education as the sharpening of human reason.

4.2 Socratic Conception of Education

Any attribution of a Socratic conception of education must first clear one hurdle: Can there be a Socratic notion of education when Socrates repeatedly denies that virtue (which he defines as knowledge) can be taught, and, that even if virtue can be taught, it has no teachers? Curren (2006, 20) puts this objection so succinctly that paraphrasing it stands the risk of losing its clarity:

How could Socrates be an advocate of public education, a public education in virtue moreover, if he believes one must have moral knowledge to be a teacher of virtue, and believes no one possesses such knowledge? How could he be an advocate of public education when we find him concluding in the *Meno* and *Protagoras*, two transitional dialogues, that there are no teachers of virtue and virtue simply cannot be taught, on the express grounds that there are no examples of success in teaching it (*Meno* 89d-96d; *Protagoras* 319b-20b), and the implied grounds that when he questions those who claim to teach virtue it becomes evident that they lack moral knowledge (cf. *Apology* 21b-23a)?

Expounders of both Socrates and Plato have argued for a reconciliation between Socrates' claim that virtue (or knowledge) cannot be taught and his notion of the plausibility of education in virtue. They argue that Socrates doubts that perfect virtue can be taught but holds that it is possible and in fact crucial for citizens to receive elementary

education in virtue. Richard Kraut (qtd. in Curren, 2000, 20), for example identifies four stages of the development of virtues, which are paraphrased below:

1. A child receives conventional moral education from his society that contains both true and false moral beliefs. The child thinks that he has moral knowledge. But due to his false moral beliefs, he sometimes makes wrong moral decisions and performs immoral acts.
2. Socrates challenges a person who thinks he has moral knowledge. The self-proclaimed knower of moral truths is shown to have contradictory beliefs. Hence, he realizes that some of his long held moral beliefs are false.
3. Socrates himself has reached a stage where he has questioned received moral beliefs and systematized them. However, he is still disturbed by some moral puzzles. [For example, his worries regarding *akrasia*].
4. A moral expert is a person who has resolved all his moral puzzles and knows how to act rightly even in very difficult situations. This is the final stage of development of virtue or moral development.

Socrates, said to be the wisest man during his time, sees himself at stage three; he has scrutinized his received moral beliefs and systematized some of them but is still left puzzled by others. However, following his examination of his fellow Athenians, he finds an overwhelming majority of them at stage two, hardly anyone at stage three, and certainly no one at the final stage, stage four. "Thus, we may reasonably conclude that when Socrates expresses doubts about the teachability of virtue [or knowledge as the case

may be] he means virtue that is perfected by the possession of systematic moral knowledge or moral expertise, and not virtue of a more ordinary sort" (Curren, 2000, 21).

Socrates' pessimistic view on the teachability of virtue notwithstanding, one can infer from certain passages in the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Protagoras* that Socrates thinks that it is possible for a person to progress in his possession of virtue through education. At *Apology* 30a-b, Socrates argues that he has a mission from the god (presumably Apollo) to ask his fellow Athenians to care more for their soul than for their body and the pursuit of wealth than the pleasures of the body. Caring for one's soul, especially the divine element in the soul, reason, requires that one acquire knowledge of the virtues. How can Socrates believe in and carry out this mission if he sincerely believes that virtue, and knowledge for that matter, is not teachable?

At *Crito* 50d-e, in his exchange with the personified laws of Athens, Socrates mentions that the city and his family educated him when he was young. Whatever the limits of this education, at least we see a Socrates open to the plausibility of educating citizens. And finally, in the *Protagoras*, we find a Socrates making the following remarks; "it is to our collective advantage that we each possess justice and virtue, and so we all gladly tell and teach each other what is just and lawful...you must regard the most unjust person ever reared in a human society under law as a paragon of justice compared with people lacking education" (327b-d).

Obviously in the above passages, Socrates demonstrates some conviction in the practicability of education in virtue and its importance for any society. As mentioned before in previous paragraphs, what Socrates might have seen lacking in the education of his time is moral education at stage four. There appeared to be nobody in stage three

apart from Socrates. However, education and moral education, particularly from stage one to three, is undeniably possible in Socrates' view.

Having somewhat demonstrated that Socrates thinks education is possible, it is now appropriate to outline what the end of education is for Socrates. He is largely preoccupied with one dimension of education, education in the virtues. He sees a direct correlation between having true beliefs about what is right and doing the right thing. Socrates is convinced that reason is crucial to good behavior; and that knowing the right course of action guarantees that one does the right thing. On the other hand, he thinks that people do wrong things because their education fails to teach them the right thing:

If I corrupt them unwillingly, the law does not require you to bring people to court for such unwilling wrongdoings, but to get hold of them privately, to instruct them and exhort them; for clearly, if I learn better, I shall cease to do what I am doing unwillingly. You, however, have avoided my company and were unwilling to instruct me, but you bring me here, where the law requires one to bring those who are in need of punishment, not of instruction (*Ap.* 26a).

The feature in humans which has the capacity to know and is open to instruction and persuasion is our reason or rational intellect, the most important part of the soul. Hence, for Socrates, the proper focus of an educational process is reason. Education, education in the virtues, aims at developing reason to love virtue and this will guide a person to do what is right in society. And the one element in a person that enables him to have

knowledge when properly educated is reason. Curren (2000, 22-24) identifies the nurturing of our reason through instruction and persuasion to attain knowledge as an imperative entailed by the *principle of fidelity to reason*. According to the *principle of fidelity to reason*, as Curren formulates it, "Intellect is the divine element in human nature, and the one we should cultivate and rely on in ourselves and others, if we are to live well and admirably." Curren holds that the principle of fidelity to reason operates in three spheres – thought, speech, and actions:

1. In thought: In deciding what to believe, rely on reason and evidence and let the stronger argument prevail.
2. In speech: Speak the truth, and rely on reason and evidence in persuading others of the truth. Respect the reasons and evidence that others give and encourage them to speak the truth and render and rely on well-reasoned judgments.
3. In action: Act in conformity with the dictates of reason. In moving others to act, rely to the greatest extent possible on rational persuasion and instruction instead of force and violence.

Due to the presupposition that every citizen has a rational faculty, and that this faculty can be "educated" to perceive issues in a rational light, Socrates implicitly argues in the *Apology* and *Crito* that in our thoughts, reason should define and shape our beliefs, and that in deliberations, reason should guide the conversation. The conclusions of deliberations should be dependent on well-reasoned judgments. Similarly, people should be persuaded by reason to embrace a different point of view. And in actions, both

individual and collective, our deeds must conform to the decrees of reason. Rational persuasion rather than force is what must be employed to move others to action. Education, therefore, for Socrates, has the task of ensuring that citizens are well brought up to be responsive to reason in their thinking, deliberation and actions.

One way that Socrates exemplifies the *principle of fidelity to reason* in his life, especially in his interaction with his fellow citizens is the elenchus. [Chapter 2, section 2.2.2, gives a detail description of the elenchus]. It is worth recalling for our present purpose that the elenchus examines beliefs by detecting the consistencies or inconsistencies in these beliefs. Reason is employed to show how the beliefs that guide a person's actions are consistent with other beliefs that the person holds to be true. The elenchus is useful only within a community of rational people. Its limitations notwithstanding, the elenchus remains a rational means of examining, revising, and redefining our beliefs in order to be guided by beliefs that stand the test of reason. The elenchus attempts to ensure that our beliefs are "faithful" to reason.

Socrates does not think of the citizen as a passive receiver of knowledge. He rates the capacity of reason so highly that in some cases an individual may be more knowledgeable and right on an issue than the city and its laws. In such a scenario, Socrates requires of such a "genius" to subject the city to instruction and persuasion if there is reason to think the city may be receptive. Since the other citizens are rational, and more importantly, if they have their rational faculty properly tuned, they will be receptive to the instruction and persuasion of such a person with a contrary but perhaps a right view which may conflict with the views of the rest. "When the laws demand the wrong thing, what fidelity to reason demands in the manner of their defiance of law is that they [the

citizens] make a reasonable effort to persuade the city that what it demands is wrong” (Curren, 2000, 24).

In the *Protagoras*, a transitional dialogue, Plato gradually, but firmly introduces and grounds his own notion of the end of education. The *Protagoras* prepares the ground for Plato’s educational scheme later in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. In the *Protagoras*, Plato puts to rest any hesitation that Socrates might have had regarding the plausibility of education. In what is often referred to as the “Great Speech,” Protagoras makes the case for the teachability of virtues especially:

In the case of evils that men universally regard as afflictions due to nature or bad luck, no one ever gets angry with anyone so afflicted or reproves, admonishes, punishes, or tries to correct them. We simply pity them...someone who is ugly, for example, or scrawny or weak...But in the case of the good things which accrue to men through careful attention and training and teaching, if someone does not possess these goods but rather their corresponding evils, he finds himself the object of anger, punishment, and reproof. Among these evils are injustice, impiety, and in general everything that is opposed to civic virtue...The key, Socrates, to the true significance of punishment lies in the fact that human beings consider virtue to be something acquired through training (323d-24a).

In the “Great Speech” Plato is not only arguing that education in the virtues is possible, but he is also suggesting strongly that due to their rationality, humans through education can be trained to be responsive to reason and thus are both able and inclined to be persuaded by reason. In this reading of Plato, he is still preserving his Socratic inheritance of the *principle of fidelity to reason*. The fundamental aim of education for both Plato and Socrates is to train the student to allow reason to prevail in their decisions and actions. We now turn to the great Platonic dialogues on education, the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

4.3 Education in the *Republic*

In the *Republic*, Plato’s treatise on education does not deviate from the Socratic ideal of the *principle of fidelity to reason* as the key focus of education. The attention paid to reason as the central focus of education is emphasized at every stage of Plato’s educational journey in the *Republic*, even at an earlier stage where a child’s rational faculty is not developed enough to be responsive to reason. The *Republic* accommodates and endorses the Socratic *principle of fidelity to reason* in its treatment of the major sub-topics of the theme of education. We see the *Republic* upholding the *principle of fidelity to reason* in the following: Even Platonic primary education, which is basically the education that children below six years receive in music and dance, has reason as its ultimate end; some of the dominant analogies in the *Republic*, the Cave, the Line, and the Sun have educational import for citizens in that they have reason as the ultimate focus; and eventually, further education for the guardians and the philosopher-kings is an education in a higher development of the rational faculty for those citizens of the

Republic who are capable. One's "social class" in the state determines the education that is proper to him.

4.3.1 The three Classes of Citizens

In chapter three, our discussion on the soul alluded briefly to the triadic division of citizens in the *Republic* into producers, warriors, and rulers. The triadic division of citizens according to Reeve (1988, 172) finds its bases in a doctrine, the *unique aptitude doctrine* and a principle, the *prescriptive principle of specialization*. According to the *unique aptitude doctrine*, each person is born with a natural aptitude fit for some particular craft, whether in carpentry, pottery, medicine, guardianship, or ruling. Plato writes that "a physician has a different nature than a carpenter" (*Rep.* 454d1-5), and also that "one woman is a physician by nature, another not, one is by nature musical, another nonmusical" (*Rep.* 455e6-7). Plato further appears to suggest that people should stick to their talent throughout their lives if both they and the state are to yield the greatest benefit from their talents (*Rep.* 370a7-b2, 374a6-c2).

The *unique aptitude doctrine* identifies three kinds of natural tendencies, and hence three kinds of social groups in a state: a citizen belongs to the producing class if born with unique skills peculiar to the crafts; a citizen belongs to the warrior class if born with an aptitude fit for guardianship; and a citizen belongs to the ruling class if born with a nature that can be educated to meet the demands of governance. The *prescriptive principle of specialization* which is derived from the *unique aptitude doctrine* states that "each member of the *Kallipolis* must practice exclusively throughout life the unique craft for which he has a natural aptitude" (Reeve, 1988, 172). The *prescriptive principle of*

specialization requires its citizen to remain in his or her social class and perform the task required during the entire stay in the *Kallipolis*.

Plato calls the producing class “pleasure-seekers” or “money-lovers.” This group is the producing base of the state. They undertake productive activities such as farming, building, carpentering, and all the other trades that have the material needs of the state as their end. The producers find happiness in the accumulation of wealth and satisfying the pleasures of the body such as hunger, thirst and lust. Plato imagines citizens born with an aptitude suitable to the producing class as people born with bronze in their nature. They are on the lowest level of the epistemic scale.

“Victory-lovers” or “honour-lovers” is what Plato calls the guardian class. The guardians are citizens with qualities that include the following; they are quick to see things, fast and strong, brave and high-spirited, both fierce and docile (*Rep.* 374d4-375b8). Plato likens them to a “pedigree guard dog” (*Rep.* 375e1-2) who is both fierce and friendly, hence, is hostile to the enemy and friendly to its owner. Thus, as protectors of the state, the guardians are trained to attack the enemy and protect the citizens that need their protection. Since they know the enemy from the friend, they must be lovers of wisdom and of learning according to Plato (*Rep.* 376c1-2). For anyone “whose criterion of the friendly and the alien is knowledge and ignorance,” must love learning and wisdom. They are in the middle of the epistemic scale between the producers and the philosophers. The warrior class finds its happiness in winning victories and honours.

The most outstanding citizens among the guardians are recruited into and promoted to the class of rulers. These are the philosophers, wisdom lovers (*Rep.* 475b8-9). A few lines down after describing the philosopher as wisdom lover, Plato’s Socrates

further defines the philosopher as “the one who is willing to taste every kind of learning with gusto, and who turns to learning with enthusiasm, and cannot get enough of it, he is the one we shall rightly call a philosopher” (*Rep.* 475c6-8). This definition is too broad, as Glaucon, one of the interlocutors in the *Republic* notes; it includes both sightseers and craft-lovers, “who are what they are because they delight in learning” (*Rep.* 475d1-e1). But Socrates is quick to point out that sightseers and craft-lovers and the other lovers of sights and sounds are lovers of opinion. But the philosopher is a lover of true wisdom or knowledge (Reeve, 1988, 192). They are at the peak of the epistemic scale. The philosopher class is interested in knowledge of the truth.

Thus, the task of each class in the *Kallipolis* is well defined: The producing class provides the material needs of the state; the warrior class guarantees the security of the state against enemies both within and external to it; and the ruling class provides the wisdom that is reflected in the laws of the state which governs the conduct of all citizens, ensuring a harmonious state. While the duties of all classes are crucial for the overall good of the state, those of the ruling class are deemed paramount because their governance creates a harmonious order in the city. Plato argues that if these classes of citizens are to execute their task properly, especially the warrior and ruling classes, they must receive an adequate education that is appropriate to their duties.

4.3.2 Education of the three Classes of Citizens

Before we outline the education that Plato thinks suits each of these three classes of people, it is appropriate to acknowledge that not all expounders of Plato think that his view is that all three classes of citizens are entitled to an education apart from training in

their various crafts. Such commentators argue, for example, that Plato limits education only to the guardian class, which has the soldiers and the philosopher-rulers as its subsets. According to this interpretation, the producing class is restricted to the craft skills that they acquire. C.D.C. Reeve is one proponent of this view. Our discussion will be more comprehensive, if we evaluate his arguments.

If there is a kind of education for the producing class in the *Republic*, this education will be primary education, which covers the arts and physical exercise. Reeve does not think that such a basic education is extended to the producing class; "Primary education is for future soldiers or guardians, not for future producers" (1988, 186). He argues that primary education aims at turning children with the natural traits for fighting into guardians. This primary education is associated with a eugenic programme and living arrangements that require its beneficiaries to live apart from the rest of the city. The future producing class is set apart from the educational setting that primary education involves; hence, they are not the beneficiaries of this education.

Moreover, Plato did not explicitly state that future producers must receive primary education (Reeve 1988, 186-87). Reeve argues that Plato states that primary education is a test that separates the guardians from the future philosopher-rulers of the city and that Plato does not say that it separates the producers from the guardians.

Furthermore, Reeve argues that primary education is aimed at developing some traits peculiar to future guardians. Children who have these traits are said to have gold and silver in their natures (*Rep.* 415c3-5). Such character traits will include the ability to be docile and fierce at the same time. Regarding learning, they should have the potential for a good memory. Since the future producers lack these characteristics, it will be

pointless for them to receive primary education. "If primary education is intended for producers, we are not provided with the kind of rationale for doing it that is carefully provided in the case of the guardians themselves" (Reeve, 1988, 187).

Also, if we evaluate the content of primary education, according to Reeve, none of it applies to the producing class. For example, primary education promotes stories in its literature that encourages its beneficiaries to imitate and take for their model some hero of the Athenian past. Such heroes are often brave warriors such as Achilles, Ajax, or Odysseus (*Rep.* 394e1-395b4). On this showing according to Reeve, "future producers should be taking the parts of cobblers and carpenters in stories about hard-working and obedient producers" (1988, 187). But such stories are not part of the content of primary education. Therefore, the future producers are not entitled to primary education.

Another argument that Reeve advances in support of his claim that future producers are not parties to primary education is what gymnastics and music, core components of primary education, seek to achieve eventually. Plato seems to indicate that the end of gymnastics and music is for aspiration and reason. "It seems then that a god has given these two crafts, music and gymnastics, to human beings for these two things, not for the psyche and the body, except incidentally, but for aspiration and for reason, in order that these might be in harmony with each other, each being turned to the proper degree of tension and relaxation" (*Rep.* 411e4-412a2). Thus, if Plato indeed means what he says in these lines, that music and physical exercise are aimed at aspiration and reason, and not at appetite and body, it follows that primary education is for the guardians and not the producers, for aspiration and reason are proper to the guardians.

If Reeve's claims are valid, it will mean that at least for the producing class, Plato thinks that training in their various crafts is enough to develop their rational faculties (at least in the *Republic*). But Reeve's claims can be challenged.

The ultimate end of Platonic education is to nurture virtue in its recipient to enable such recipient to live a happy life. The development of the faculty of reason is a crucial step toward the realization of this end. There are various virtues that are proper to each of the three classes of citizens: wisdom for the philosopher-rulers, courage for the guardians, and moderation for the producers. Each citizen fails to live a happy life if he fails to live a life that is guided by reason, since the cultivation of reason (or wisdom) is essential to the cultivation of the virtues. For the producers, for instance, a cultivation of the virtue of moderation will require them to receive a training and education that will moderate their unnecessary appetites. What kind of education does Plato recommend for the moderation of appetites for the producers?

Reeve's failure to address this question convincingly is where he fails; "it is training in a craft that releases an appetitive psyche from the rule of unnecessary appetites, gives it access to modes, and causes it to abandon the pleasures of food, drink, and sex for the more pleasant pleasure of making money" (1988, 190). Reeve fails to quote a single phrase from the *Republic* to support his claim that Plato thinks of education in a craft as capable of nurturing the virtue of moderation in a producer. Just how learning how to make shoes will result in acquiring the virtue of moderation to tame the appetites and allow reason to rule in the psyche of a person begs explanation. But Reeve does not offer any.

For order in the *polis*, Plato argues that there must be harmony among the three classes of citizens. The rest of the citizens should obey the wise rulers to ensure this harmony. And primary education is meant to nurture virtuous lessons in the lower classes to enable them to see the point in obeying the decrees of their rulers. In fact, in Book IV (*Rep.* 425a-c), Plato argues that training in self-control will obviate the need for numerous laws for the polis. This aspect of obedience to the rulers and the laws of the polis is tied to the virtue of moderation or self-control; “Won’t our young people need self-control? ...And aren’t these the most important things about self-control for most people: to be obedient to the rulers, and to be rulers themselves over the pleasures of drink, sex, and food” (*Rep.* 389d-e). Again, how does an education only in the crafts ensure obedience to the laws of the polis and enable a person to master the pleasures of drink, lust, and food?

There are other considerations that support a claim of primary education for every citizen in the *Republic*. The *prescriptive principle of specialization*, which states that people should do what best suits them means that some children of the producing class will be moved to the guardian class depending on their natural tendencies and vice versa:

If a child of theirs [of the rulers] should be born with an admixture of bronze or iron, by no means are they to take pity on it, but they are to honour its nature appropriately, and drive it out into the workers and farmers; and, again, if from these a child should be born who has an admixture of gold or silver, they will honour it, and bring it up to join the rulers or guardians (*Rep.* 415b6-c6).

Without assessing them through primary education, how does one know the “nature” of the children to determine where they belong? (Dorter, 2006, 74).

Given the foregoing, the evidence supports the conclusion that primary education is for all the classes of citizens in the *Republic*. In the *Laws*, Plato again states the importance of primary education and again outlines its content and stages and what it aims to achieve. However, in the *Laws*, unlike in the *Republic*, there is no doubt that primary education, and in fact, education in general, is for all citizens. Hence, we will take up our discussion of primary education later in this chapter when we discuss education in the *Laws*. For now, we turn to education in mathematical science and dialectics for the guardian class to show how they conform with the *principle of fidelity to reason*.

4.3.3 Education of the Guardians

Those children who have exhibited promise in their primary education and display the traits of guardianship will receive a further education in mathematical science. And those students who excel in their studies of mathematics will receive a final education in dialectics or philosophy. Plato’s conception of education in mathematics and philosophy is clearer when discussed within the context of his metaphysics and epistemology. Two analogies in the *Republic*, the Cave and the Line best, capture Plato’s metaphysics and epistemology and how these relate to his conception of education for the guardians and the rulers. So, next, we turn to these analogies and trace how they provide further evidence for reason as the central target in education for Plato.

4.3.4 The Analogy of the Cave

Plato uses the allegory of the Cave (*Rep.* 514a-e) to demonstrate the effect that education is supposed to have on its recipients. In his allegory of the Cave, Plato paints the following picture: Imagine a bunch of people in a cave. Just after the entrance into the cave is a fire. In front of the fire are people walking and carrying all sorts of objects. The people face an elevation rising from the ground. Before the elevation are people who are chained with their backs to the entrance of the cave, incapable of turning their heads to either side. And finally, in front of the chained people is a wall that is able to receive the shadows cast by the people and the objects behind the prisoners. The conversation of those behind the elevation is echoed together with their shadows and that of the objects on the wall. These people have been chained since birth. Hence, the only realities that they know are the shadows of the objects and the echoes on the wall. In fact, they presume the images on the wall to be reality because they are not aware that the images on the wall are the representations of real people and objects just behind them.

Plato invites us to suppose that one of the prisoners makes his way out of the cave into the open. The sharp rays of the sun will strain his vision and make him very uncomfortable. But with time, he will become used to the things outside of the cave. The colours and clearness of the objects outside of the cave will allow him to realize that the dark shadows on the wall were just mere images of real people and objects. Thus, he will become accustomed to a whole range of real objects in the real world outside the world of images in the cave.

Mapping the various classes of citizens in the *Republic* to the people in the allegory of the Cave, Reeve (1988, 51-52) identifies the following stages of education in the state. The prisoners tied in the Cave who cannot turn in any direction are the bound cave-dwellers. These are members of the producing class who "are tethered by bonds of unnecessary appetite." Their lives are directed solely by their appetitive needs. Higher than them in the epistemic scale are the unbound cave-dwellers. These are still members of the producing class who have received education in a craft, music and gymnastics and hence are released from their unnecessary appetites, hence are "turned around" to see the originals of the shadows and images whose copies they previously thought were the original objects. However, they are still "tethered by necessary appetites."

More educated than the bound and unbound cave-dwellers are the bound and unbound daylight-dwellers. The bound daylight-dwellers through "systematic training in music, gymnastics, and the mathematical sciences" are able to escape from the Cave and released into the sunlight; hence their necessary appetites are broken. "They see the originals of the things [of] which they previously saw only models." But they are still "tethered by bonds of aspiration or spirited desire." And finally, the unbound daylight-dwellers are citizens who through education in dialectic and practical city management are able to break free of the bonds of aspiration, satisfying the appetites and seeking honour. (They see the cause of the shadows of the original of existing things in the perceptual world). Such citizens are only tethered by rational desire. From the allegory of the Cave, Plato thinks of education as a journey that frees a person more and more from his appetites and other non-rational desires toward a person fully directed by his rational

faculty. Plato's metaphysics in the analogy of the Line will reveal this rational end of education more forcefully.

4.3.5 The Analogy of the Line

The allegory of the divided Line (*Rep.* 509d-511e, see also Reeve, 1988, 53-58), demonstrates how for Plato education enables reason to travel upwards to higher forms of knowledge. Imagine a vertical line, x to y . The line from x to y is divided into two unequal parts. The lower part, which is shorter, represents the visible world. The upper part, which is longer, represents the intelligible world. The unequal length of the line shows that there is a lower level of truth and reality in the shorter part and a higher level of truth and reality in the longer part. Each of the two parts of the line is further divided into two parts with each representing a domain of knowledge. Thus, in the lower portion of the line, we have xa and ab . And in the upper part of the line we have bc and cy .

Plato thinks of each domain of the divided line as containing the existence of objects from the less real to the real. If we take objects that we can see, for example a tree, a painting or picture can be made of the tree. For Plato the copy of the tree in the form of a painting or a picture is less real than the tree itself. He calls such copies of perceptual objects qualities. Hence, objects in xa are qualities. Of course, objects in ab are more real than their copies. Entities that occupy this domain are modes. Further up in the realm of being are figures which occupy the domain bc . According to Plato, modes are copies of figures. And finally the highest up realm of being are the Forms which occupy the domain cy . Juxtaposing Plato's metaphysics in the analogy of the Line with his epistemology in the allegory of the Cave, the following analysis results:

The domain of qualities, *xa*, is the world of imagining. It is the lowest form of reality. Images, the least form of reality, are presented to the senses. And here is the domain of the intelligence of the bound cave-dwellers. Their reason is almost non-developed, being controlled by their appetites. They exercise perceptual-thought and perceive qualities to be the objects of reality.

The domain of modes, *ab*, is the world of belief. It is higher than the world of imagining. This is the domain where objects are seen, therefore leading to a belief in them. However, objects presented in this domain may differ from context to context. For example, the Athenian concept of justice might differ from the Milesian. Thus, our knowledge about justice might be limited to a particular context. Such a contextual knowledge provides us with only an opinion. This is not enough for the mind's search for certain knowledge. This is the epistemological limit of the unbound cave-dwellers. They possess folk-wisdom and the entities that they take for knowledge are modes. Certain knowledge eludes people at this level of their education.

The domain of figures, *bc*, is the world of thinking. The quest for certain knowledge propels the mind from the domain of opinion to the domain of thinking. Thus, the mind moves from the world of visible things to the world of intelligible things, from the domain of opinion to the domain of knowledge. Scientists and mathematicians best illustrate this world. The mathematician, for example, abstracts or draws out of the visible world that which the visible world stands for. It is the domain of the bound daylight-dwellers. They exercise scientific-thought and the entities that they have intellectual access to are figures.

And finally, we come to the highest domain – the domain of perfect intelligence. When the mind (reason) is totally liberated from the visible world, we have perfect intelligence. At this level, the mind directly accesses the Forms. It is the realm of unbound daylight-dwellers, the wisdom-lovers. These are the philosophers of the *Kallipolis* who exercise dialectical thought and hence are supposed to be able to access the Forms, the objects, in Plato's view, of certain knowledge.

4.4 Education and Rationality in the *Republic*

Platonic education in the *Republic* is summed up in this passage:

Education then, I said, is the art of doing this very thing, this turning around, concerned with the way in which this power (rationality) can be most easily and efficiently turned around (from the world of becoming) until it can endure to look at being and at the brightest of the beings, the good itself (*Rep.* 518c8-d1), not an art of producing sight [rationality] in it. It takes as given that sight is there, but not rightly turned or looking at what it ought to look at, and accomplishes this end (*Rep.* 518c8-d7).

That which is referred to as "sight" and "power" is reason or rationality. This special faculty according to Plato is present in every person, be he a producer, a guardian or a philosopher. In fact, the reasoning potential in any of these different kinds of people is as great as in the others:

Have you never noticed in men [and women] who are said to be wicked but clever, how sharply their little psyche looks into the things to which it turns its attention? Its power of sight [reason] is not inferior, but it is compelled to serve evil ends, so that the more sharply it looks the more evil it works...Yet if a psyche of this kind had been hammered at from childhood and these excrescences had been knocked off it which belong to the world of becoming and have been fastened upon it by fasting, gluttony, and similar pleasures, and which like leaden weights draw the psyche to look downward – if, being rid of these, it turned to look at things that are true, then the same psyche of the same man would see these just as sharply as it now sees the things to which it is directed (519a1-b5).

Thus, all people have reason. However, the differences in their rational faculty is in the use to which they put such reason. And the use to which they put their reason is influenced greatly by what goals they see as facilitating their happiness in this life. Thus, a person who sees the accumulation of wealth as the sure means to his happiness will employ his reason to the service of making money. This is because wealth is seen as the means to the satisfaction of his pleasures; which is what the pleasure-seeker sees as the ultimate path to his happiness. The honour-lover, for his part, directs his reason to achieving more and more victories. And finally, the lover of wisdom directs his reason to the search of the truth. Properly honed reason is important for the wellbeing of all people.

4.5. Education in the *Laws*

The *Laws* does not declare an educative intent in its opening pages. The goals announced are to examine different constitutions and laws with a view to ascertaining the principles that should guide legislation; and to formulate a body of laws that will govern Magnesia, a city that will be founded in the future. Another major task that emerges later in the dialogue is of course the ultimate goal of legislation that legislators should have in mind when making laws. Plato assigns these multiple legislative tasks to three interlocutors in the *Laws*— Kleinias, a citizen of Crete, Megillus, a citizen of Sparta, and an unnamed Athenian Stranger. Given their human imperfections, these interlocutors declare that they are incapable of legislating perfect laws for Magnesia (*Laws* 632d, 859c). This is because perfect laws come from the gods; for only the gods have perfect knowledge (*Laws* 657a-b):

Athenian: Is it a god or a man, visitors who is responsible for the arrangement of your laws?

*Kleinias: A god, visitor a god, to say the most just things. We Cretans call Zeus our lawgiver; while among the Spartans, where this man [Megillus] is from, I think they claim Apollo as theirs (*Laws* 624a1-5).*

The Athenian further argues that “there can be no rest from evils and toils for those cities in which some mortal rules rather than a god.” And that regarding obedience to the laws of the state citizens should obey the aspect in them that best resembles the gods (*Laws* 713e4-714a2).

The claim of the *Laws* above seems to contradict Plato's claim in the *Republic* that the philosopher-king, who because of his long and profound training in matters of knowledge and truth, is capable of giving perfect laws and governing the state in a manner conducive to the happiness of everybody. Given this notable shift, some commentators (Stalley, 1983, 16) are quick to observe that Plato revises his stance on the all-perfect rule of the Philosopher-king because he discovers upon further reflection after writing the *Republic* that the high qualification of the philosopher-king is beyond the reach of any human being. Only gods are capable of performing the role of the philosopher-king outlined in the *Republic*. Hence, the *Laws* is often seen as a revision of the high standards expected of the philosopher-rulers in the *Republic*. This revision of the *Republic* extends in very significant ways to education in the *Republic*; for example, the *Laws* appears to qualify everybody to receive a kind of education similar to what the *Republic* would reserve for the guardians only.

The claim of the Athenian and his co-legislators from Crete and Sparta that it is the gods who give perfect laws to a state should not be taken literally. For they will not have to undergo the tedious progress of evaluating existing laws with a view to proposing new laws if they could go to either Zeus or Apollo for perfect laws. Many commentators on this claim [about laws coming from the gods] rather point to the divine element in humans, reason, as the source of our best laws; thus, our best laws come from the gods since they are informed by reason which is the divine spark in us. "Since reason is itself divine, god rules insofar as reason rules and reason can rule, if it finds expression in correct or just law. Reason 'strives to become law' (*Laws* 835e5) and Plato describes law as a 'calculation' or 'reasoning' about good and bad that has become 'the common

judgment of the city' (*Laws* 644d1-3)" (Bobonich, 2002, 94). One page later, Bobonich further eulogizes the power of reason as resembling the divine in this eloquent passage:

Reason has an inherent tendency both to grasp what is best and to order things so as to bring them into the best condition. Reason in the individual soul grasps what is best for the individual and directs the person in the pursuit of it (*Laws* 644c-645c). Reason, as embodied in law, also pursues this ordering goal at the level of the city as a whole. Reason determines that the proper ultimate end or *telos* for the city's laws and political and social institutions is the best condition of the city itself, that is, its greatest happiness (2002, 95).

Bobonich is not alone in interpreting Plato's claim that the laws of the state come from the gods to mean that the state's laws have a divine origin if these laws are informed by reason:

Even though laws are only imperfect approximations of political expertise (*Laws* 857e), to live according to laws is to live 'in obedience to what little spark of immortality lies in us' (*Laws* 713e). This 'spark of immortality' is reason or intelligence (*nous*), which we 'dignify with the name of law' (*Laws* 714a1-2). Laws, in this view, are expressions (albeit imperfect ones) of divine reason. They are also expressions of human reason: the ability to discriminate between better and worse objects of pursuit (*Laws*

644d), which, 'when it becomes the common dogma of the city, is called law' (*Laws* 644d2-3)...Insofar as we conduct ourselves wisely, we are following the divine element in ourselves (Meyer, 2006, 385).

It is in the context of stating the crucial place of reason in legislating laws for the state that Plato could not escape treating the theme of education vis-à-vis reason in the *Laws*. For Plato, reason is so crucial for the ultimate end of the individual and the state that even education in the arts is aimed at training a person to be responsive to reason later on. In the remaining two sections under education in the *Laws* two things remain to be addressed: the role that the arts play in education; and the educative nature of Plato's prelude to laws.

4.5.1 Education, Arts, and Reason in the *Laws*

At *Laws* 643e, Plato defines education (*paideia*) as the training of a person in virtue to perform his civic role in the state, knowing how to obey and rule justly. Plato distinguishes such an education in virtue from other trainings that do not have virtue as a focus; "any training which aims at wealth or strength or any other accomplishment unattended by wisdom and justice is vulgar, illiberal, and utterly unworthy to be called education" (*Laws* 644a). (Plato appears, in a few lines down from this quote, to suggest that education in the crafts may be considered as part of education). But the aim of Platonic education according to Morrow (1960, 297) "is to develop in the child the qualities of mind [reason] and character that most fully express the ideal of human nature."

Platonic education in virtuous character is realized through a period of habituation. Sometimes Plato refers to this period of training as a process of “molding” the soul in a pattern (*Laws* 666b-c, 671c). And in other passages, Plato calls this period of training a process of leading or guiding. In the *Republic*, Plato refers to this process also as “turning” of the “sight.” This “sight” he identifies with the divine spark in us, that is, our reason. In the *Laws* as in the *Republic*, education is concerned with the soul, a specific part of the soul that is our rationality. When the divine spark in us is correctly “turned,” “molded,” or “guided,” it leads to discovery of the ethical and metaphysical order that underlines the universe.

Given the rational outlook of the Platonic conception of education, one would think of the emotive appeal of the arts as having very little place in his educational scheme. However, Plato thinks that the feelings that the arts arouse in us can serve a rational purpose. In fact, Plato thinks that the arts are so important to education that he states that the educated “has learned to sing and dance aright, while the uneducated is untrained in choral discipline” (*Laws* 654b). “For him [Plato] there is a metaphysical and ethical order to the world which it is philosophy’s task to discover by means of rational thought, and the arts can have true worth only if they correctly represent this order or help in aligning us with it” (Janaway, 2006, 388). The arts are especially a useful source of “molding” our reasoning faculty because “poetry appeals to an emotional, desiring, and genuinely childish part within each individual” (Janaway, 2006, 391). Hence, via education in the arts, the art-loving, pleasure-seeking soul in the student is charmed and enticed towards reason, Plato argues.

Due to the amenable character of our emotions and feelings which education in the arts addresses, it is paramount according to Plato that the content and form of education receive a critical censorship (*Rep.* 401c4-d2). Thus, the kind of poems, songs, musical notes, dances and even the musical instruments that should be played should be such that they affect the soul in such a manner that it harmonizes with reason and the good. Therefore, while praising the poetic prowess of Homer, Plato frequently struck from his list of artistic content for education those works of Homer that he evaluates to be potentially capable of disturbing the harmony between a person's reason and his emotion.

But how exactly does the art "mold" our nature so that we are later responsive to reason? First, in the stories and poems from antiquity that are told to children and even adults to serve a didactic purpose, only those stories that promote the moral lessons that reason has accepted as permissible will be told to the citizens. For example, all didactic literature should exhort the just over the unjust, the virtuous over the vicious, and the good over the bad. And so also in music and dance, only those songs and bodily movements and gestures that promote the precepts of reason in the moral, legal, and social life will be allowed in the state. Hence, according to Plato, when our emotions are aligned to agree with the virtuous in our artistic education, we are better positioned to agree with reason later on when in either the laws or other social arrangements in general, the just life is recommended by reason as the best life.

4.5.2 Education, Preludes and Reason in the *Laws*

The point of departure of the novel method of legislating that the Athenian and his co-legislators propose, after critically evaluating existing constitutions, is that the former

legislate to persuade citizens to obedience whilst the latter legislates to force and command obedience (*Laws* 722b5-c2). Since law, if it is to promote the good of those it addresses, originates from reason, and since reason is gentle rather than violent, in Plato's view, laws should have a persuasive appeal rather than a coercive force.

Plato's emphasis on giving legislation a persuasive appeal is further demonstrated in his comparison between the novel method of legislation he proposes and the old method of legislating and the analogy of a free doctor and a slave doctor respectively. The free doctor according to Plato learns the skills of doctoring from understanding the nature of the various illnesses and how the relevant remedies work for each ailment. The slave doctor learns his trade by observing and copying what his master does without really understanding the causes involved (*Laws* 720ab-b5). According to Plato, these two doctors attend to patients in different ways:

Sick people in the cities, slaves and free, are treated differently. The slaves are for the most part treated by slaves...None of these doctors gives or receives any account of each malady afflicting each domestic slave. Instead, he gives him orders on the basis of the opinions he has derived from experience. Claiming to know with precision, he gives his commands stubbornly, just like a tyrant, and hurries off to some other sick domestic slave...The free doctor mostly cares for and examines the maladies of free men. He investigates these from their beginning and according to nature, communing with the patient himself and his friends, and he both

learns something himself from the invalids and, as much as he can, teaches the one who is sick. He does not give orders until he has in some way persuaded; once he has on each occasion made the sick person gentle by means of persuasion, he attempts to lead him back to health (*Laws* 720b8-e2).

The patient who receives treatment from the slave doctor learns nothing about his illness; in fact, the slave doctor himself does not understand the prescriptions that he offers his patient. However, the patient who receives his cure from the free doctor learns about the cause of his ailments and how and why the medication works to cure the ailment; for the free doctor understands what he does. Likewise, Plato argues, when laws are issued as commands, the rest of the citizens stand to learn nothing from why they should obey such laws (*Laws* 722e7-723a6).

Plato is quick to note the objection that confronts his analogy. For in the case of sickness, the goal for both doctor and patient is to restore health:

if one of those doctors who practices medicine on the basis of experience without the aid of theory should ever encounter a free doctor conversing with a free man who was sick – using arguments that come close to philosophizing, grasping the disease from its source, and going back up to the whole nature of bodies – he would swiftly burst out laughing and would say nothing other than what is always said about such things by most of the so-called

doctors. For he would declare, 'Idiot!' You are not doctoring the sick man, you are practically educating him, as if what he needed were to become a doctor, rather than healthy! (*Laws* 857c2-e5).

The question at stake for Plato is, what is the most effective way of having citizens understand and live according to the dictates of reason, communicated by the laws of the state? For Plato, it is when these citizens, having been made more responsive to reason by prior education, understand the goals of the laws. Thus, laws should be first and foremost educative. And for laws to be educative, they must first explain themselves and be persuasive, that is, appeal to reason as to why living according to them [the laws] will serve the good of the individual and the state. The Athenian and his co-legislators therefore attach explanatory and hortatory preludes to the laws to enable them to fulfill their educative function.

Plato recommends two kinds of preludes – a general prelude to all the laws and individual preludes to individual laws. In the preludes to individual laws, “in addition to the body of the law which specifies the offense and the attendant penalties, citizens will receive an account of why they should act as the law prescribes” (Bobonich, 2002, 99). The presupposition is that once citizens agree that the laws intend to serve their good as explained in the preludes, they are more apt to obey them. In fact, when laws address them in an explanatory voice rather than a forceful one, they appeal to their nature as reasoning beings who themselves endorse the very laws that require their obedience. On this showing, the relationship between laws and citizens is unlike the relationship between laws and slaves. It is more dignifying in the former.

The suggestion that precludes to laws should seek to explain the rationales behind various laws contrasts with the account of laws in the *Republic* significantly. In the *Republic*, the rest of the citizens apart from the guardians barely understand why the laws are for their good. Perhaps, given the level of education of non-philosophers, Plato thought they might fail to understand the nitty-gritty of every law. However, we see in the *Laws* Plato's conception of all citizens capable of receiving an education that will guide their reason to appreciate the intents of the laws of the state.

From the perspective of the relevance of the educative outlook of the laws in the *Laws* to contemporary understanding of education for a developing nation such as Ghana, two things may be pointed out. First, due to our rationality as humans, education should seek to inspire the desire for learning in citizens. This learning should not be restricted to disciplines that will conduce to the economic fortune of individual and country but to a critical understanding of anything that comes our way and beggars understanding.

An education that promotes rational competence as Plato understands the aim of education to be is apt to promote the following according to Curren (2000, 204-05). Firstly, it ensures that individuals are guided by critical understanding and good judgment. The importance of critical understanding and good judgment is evident in cases where citizens may be loyal to either a person or an institution. Where loyalty to a person or an institution is not guided by good judgment, it puts those who are loyal at the risk of being manipulated and betrayed. Citizens whose loyalty is manipulated for gains by certain persons or institutions may end up harming others. "The disadvantages of blind loyalty are significant enough that one may reasonably doubt whether it is a good thing to inculcate it, but the same cannot be said of loyalty that is judicious" (Curren, 2000, 205).

And by judicious loyalty, I understand Curren to mean, loyalty that is guided by critical understanding and good judgment.

Secondly, an education that enables its recipients to be faithful to reason also grants them autonomy in their judgments. This enhances contemporary democratic virtue of respect for others. In educating people to be autonomous in their judgments, they are educated not merely to follow decisions and perform acts demanded of them. But they are truly the authors of their own decisions and actions because they are rationally capable of deciding the right thing.

And finally, an education that hones rationality enables its recipients to be proactive in revising the laws, policies, beliefs, values and traditions that shape their society. Hence, such an education creates citizens who are active in deliberations that are crucial for crafting policies that will eventually give a sense of direction to their community. This point will be treated in depth in the next chapter.

4.6 Conclusion

In the introduction (chapter one) of this thesis, it is stated that the ultimate end of a Platonic education is the cultivation of virtue. However, during the educational process, the content and form of the Platonic educational scheme is focused on reason, the divine spark in humans. Platonic education therefore is a process that guides the student to be faithful and responsive to reason. Curren argues that this is rooted in the *principle of fidelity to reason*. This chapter demonstrates how the *principle of fidelity to reason* originates in Socrates. In the *Republic*, the ultimate education that Plato proposes is an education that is a thorough exercise in training reason to its highest possible capacity,

albeit for a few in society. The *Laws* revises this restriction to rightly include almost every citizen; for reason holds great promise for every person. As far as a person has reason, education should seek to develop this reason to seek understanding of the world and our place in it.

Thus, this penultimate chapter sets the agenda for our next and final chapter of this thesis. We can employ a Platonic notion of education to enhance democratic governance. Plato's pessimism about democratic governance is informed by the recognition that most citizens are ignorant of the issues that need addressing in governance. However, if citizens are properly educated to seek to know and critical of the most significant public questions relevant to their society, Plato will deem them duly qualified to partake of governance. Hence, even though it is an oxymoron to talk about Plato and democracy, a Platonic conception of education is a potent solution to democratic deficiencies in a nation such as Ghana.

Chapter 5 – Plato, Democracy and Education

5.1 An Overview of the Chapter

Perhaps, the most historic political event of global note in the past two years is the advent of the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests, sometimes of violent dimensions, for good governance that occurred mostly in the Arab nations, but also extended to some non-Arab countries. It first began in Tunisia with the self-immolation of a young man in protest against police corruption and ill treatment, but then swept across Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Mauritania, Yemen, Iran, Bahrain, Libya, and even Kuwait. It affected to a significant degree political events in Jordan, Morocco, Sudan, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Western Sahara, and even Israel. It has resulted in the death of some heads of state and the overthrow of absolute regimes, and it has compelled many rulers to promise to relinquish the political power that they have been holding for too long. It has also left in its wake the loss of human lives and the destruction of valuable properties.

The causes of the Arab Rebellion are numerous: dictatorship, absolute monarchy, human rights violations, incompetent and oppressive governments, corruption, the concentration of national wealth in the hands of a few, unemployment, and extreme poverty among others; in summary, bad governance and its consequences as reflected in the poor social and economic lives of citizens. Protesters therefore shook off decades of cowed passivity under dictatorships that ruled with no deference to popular wishes in countries and nations that until then were perceived to be unwelcoming of any protest of any sort against the government. They demanded for every citizen: freedom, justice, the

rule of law and a voice in how he or she is governed. They demanded democracy. These uprisings are a further endorsement of democracy as the preferred form of government in our time. More and more, we witness nations embracing democracy more than any other kind of rule, especially in developing nations.

Of the various forms of government examined in the Platonic corpus (monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, timocracy, democracy and tyranny), Plato thinks of democracy as only better than tyranny and largely worse than the others. The Arab Spring is evidence that nations are embracing and promoting one of the worst forms of government in Plato's view – democracy. Was Plato completely wrong about the viability of democracy? Or are nations indeed embracing one of the worst forms of government, out of ignorance? One plausible answer to these queries may be that democracy as Plato saw it in ancient Athens is totally different from democracy as it exists today. Unfortunately a closer examination of democracy during Plato's time and ours shows essential similarities. Therefore, there must be another plausible explanation of the opposition between Plato's lack of confidence in democracy and the contemporary conception of democracy as the most viable alternative for a flourishing nation. This evaluation however calls for the examination of the well worn theme of the meaning and features of democracy. This is however necessary for our purpose in this chapter.

Etymologically, we inherit the meaning of democracy from two Greek words '*demos*' and '*kratos*.' The former means people and the latter power. Hence, in this ancient context, democracy meant the power of the people. Thus, the people should have the power to participate in matters of governance and other crucial affairs of the *polis*. But it must be noted that the citizens who participated in matters of governance in ancient

Athens were limited to some groups. Athenian democracy excluded women, foreigners and slaves from participating in public decision making. Even with this limitation on the number of people who could participate, democracy remained the government of the people (or the masses) as distinct from monarchy (government of the one), and aristocracy or oligarchy (government of the few). In modern times, Abraham Lincoln is perhaps readily remembered for his definition of the term with a simple epigram: "government of the people by the people and for the people." Hence, both in Plato's time and our time, the masses as rulers is the defining mark of democracy.

The rule of the masses as the essential feature of democracy is compatible with democracy being manifested in various distinct ways. A few of the types of democracy are: grassroot democracy, participatory democracy, people's democracy, economic democracy, cellular democracy, constitutional democracy, defensive democracy, multiparty democracy, non-partisan democracy, parliamentary democracy, dominant party democracy, religious democracy, electronic democracy, traditional African democracy and even African democracy. The list is almost inexhaustible and expands by the day. However, two types emerge as very dominant: participatory and representative democracies.

Participatory democracy has its roots in Athenian democracy. Ancient Athenian democracy required that adult males of Athenian descent actively participate in governance and other crucial affairs of the polis. However, the modern theoretical assumptions of participatory democracy find articulation in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The concept of the 'general will' of the people is central in Rousseau's political philosophy and democracy. In *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau (1983, Books

III and IV) thinks of the people as the trustees and the beneficiaries of the trust. The common good of the people defines the 'general will' that should be reflected in the decisions of the general assembly of the people, which retains sovereign legislative power.

Rousseau argues for a direct participation of individuals in the political process as a way of preserving individual freedom. Rousseau did not think that one could be represented and yet be free. He argues that when power is transferred, such a power can elude the people, and the people will be subjected to abuse by those who are entrusted with power. Due to his firm belief that power can elude the people when entrusted to others, Rousseau has little confidence in political parties and groupings. For him, political groupings, interest groups, pressure groups or political parties represent their own particular wills and agenda, not necessarily the general will of the people. Hence for Rousseau, if these interest groups must exist at all, they should reflect the general will.

Participatory democracy, as Rousseau understands it, demands that every citizen gets involved in the business of governance. Participatory democracy is feasible in smaller republics. In fact, Rousseau and other advocates of participatory democracy are quick to realize the impracticality of the concept of direct participation and non-transference of power in a large republic.

The second, and perhaps the dominant type of democracy, especially in modern times, is representative democracy. The defining mark of representative democracy is that it protects individual freedom. Most modern nations that practice democracy endorse and respect the following institutions:

1. Representation – A representative government and those who represent the people either in the Parliament or the Senate are accountable to the people.
2. Constitutionalism – Rules and institutional arrangements that serve as a check on the legislative and government power. It can be a document or in the form of a constitutional convention. The constitution serves as a check on every exercise of power that affects the citizen.
3. Separation of Powers– according to Montesquieu, anybody entrusted with power will exercise it to its limits; thus, anybody entrusted with power is likely to abuse it. In order to curtail the abuse of power, all power should not be concentrated in a few hands. Therefore, the executive, legislative and judicial powers must be in separate hands.
4. Rule of law – decisions, judicial and otherwise, are taken according to prescribed laws of the state. The weight of the law must be felt equally by all. From this emanates the saying that the law is no respecter of persons. Or, nobody is above the law.
5. Fundamental human rights – The purpose of government is to protect the rights of all. The rights of the individual as entrenched in the constitution must be respected. Some of these rights of the individual are the right to life, the right to freedom of expression, freedom of movement etc.
6. Free Media – The media, often referred to as the fourth realm of the estate after the executive, the legislature and the judiciary is expected to convey the needed and relevant information to citizens responsibly and without the interference of the state powers.

Due to the large populations of most contemporary nations, participatory democracy in its full expression is impossible; hence, representative democracy is the most practiced in modern times.

Whatever its various manifestations, the argument of democracy is that citizens should have a significant say in how they are governed. Plato does not think that this is a good idea. This chapter finds some of Plato's ideas on governance, especially, the place of knowledge in governance very appealing. We are probably stuck with democracy. And democracy is not flawless. Plato has a generally low opinion of democracy as a form of governance. If we embrace his conception of education outlined and defended in the fourth chapter we will potentially develop citizens with a quest for knowledge in general, and, for knowledge of social issues that affect a nation. Such knowledgeable citizens will be able to participate in democratic national discussions, thus potentially contribute to the formulation of wise policies.

In furtherance of this agenda, the rest of the chapter is ordered in the following way: it examines Plato's argument against democracy; then, it outlines what Plato's argument on the role of knowledge in governing is, as argued for in the *Statesman*; next, it argues that the end of our current education carved largely in terms of economic gains does not encourage the quest for wisdom in general, and hence, many citizens are ill equipped to appreciate serious public discourse; and finally, it argues that an education that instills the love of wisdom in students, irrespective of the immediate economic gain, is the pivot of a useful democratic government that has national development as its focus.

5.2 Plato on Democracy

Plato's anti-democracy posture like so many of his views finds its firm roots in Socrates. Socrates has very low opinion of the *hoi polloi*, that is, the many. Regarding government, it may be reasonably argued that Socrates' vote of no confidence in the competence of the many implies his lack of confidence in the rule of the many, democracy. Socrates is consistently of the view that decisions and actions taken by the many are often poor. On this reading of Socrates, Richard Kraut (1999, 38) notes: "It is hard to see how a critic of the many can be anything other than a critic of democracy." In fact, there are numerous explicit passages and instances in the Socratic dialogues that support the claim that Socrates does think of democracy as one of the worse forms of government.

One Socratic dialogue that reveals Socrates' pessimism about the masses as agents of making decisions or doing actions that require expertise is the *Laches*. In this dialogue, Lysimachus, one of the discussants of the dialogue, asks for the opinion of two generals, Laches and Nicias, whether his son should learn fighting as part of his upbringing. Nicias thinks that training in how to fight with armor is a useful part of the education of a young man while Laches thinks that it is not. Socrates is asked to cast the deciding vote. In reply, Socrates poses this question; "Suppose there should be a council to decide whether your son ought to practice a particular kind of gymnastic exercise, would you be persuaded by the greater number or by whoever has been educated and exercised under a good trainer?" (*Lac.*184e).

His fellow interlocutors in the *Laches* of course answer that it is the view of a person well educated in a particular issue that one should consider in taking decisions pertaining to that specific issue. Socrates agrees with them and states that decisions

should be taken based on knowledge and not the view of the majority: “So I think it is by knowledge that one ought to make decisions, if one is to make them well, and not by majority rule” (*Lac.* 184e10-11). This is an instance in which Socrates indicts the competence of the many in deciding on issues that require expertise. Since governance requires expertise, one could imply that Socrates indicts a government of the many, that is, democracy, since democracy is not essentially government of the wise but of the many who for Socrates are often not wise.

Similarly in the *Crito*, one of the reasons that Crito advances in his attempt to convince Socrates to escape from prison and hence avoid his impending death is that the masses may think very ill of the inability of the friends of Socrates to aid him in avoiding undeserved death. And since escape is the most viable option in avoiding death in the current situation, Crito thinks that Socrates should cooperate with his plans about how they can stage a prison break. In response, Socrates again maintains that the view of the many is not relevant to important matters in society such as a decision to obey the ruling of the Athenian court or not. “With actions just and unjust, shameful and fine, good and bad ...[we should not] follow the opinion of the many and fear it, [but] that of the one – if there is one who has knowledge of these things” (*Cri.* 47c9-d2). These two instances in the *Laches* and the *Crito* are but a few examples in the early dialogues where Socrates firmly questions the competence of the many in tackling issues of social importance.

Thus, the spirit of the Socratic dialogues in general regarding the role of the many in matters of grave concern for a state and matters of governance is that a government of the many is one open to poor decisions and actions. Hence, for Socrates, political authority should not be distributed to all alike but limited to the experts who know how to

govern. Plato does not deviate from the Socratic dislike for an active role of the many in government. In fact, in three of his most prominent dialogues with a political orientation, the *Republic*, the *Laws*, and the *Statesman*, Plato unleashes one of the most ferocious attacks on democracy in the history of philosophy. The analogy of the Ship of State in the *Republic* captures the essence of Plato's anti-democratic posture in these three dialogues.

In Book six of the *Republic* (488a7-489a6), in the analogy of the Ship of State, Plato writes about a ship-owner who is pressured by various interest groups to steer his ship in particular directions. Plato describes the ship owner as bigger and stronger than everybody but with a limited knowledge of seafaring. In the Ship of State analogy, Plato, like Socrates opines that a state, like a ship, should not be directed by those who are ignorant, especially, the masses. Commenting on this analogy, David Keyt (2006, 199) likens the ship to the state and the ship-owner to the *demos*:

Since the *demos* is font of political power only when sitting as an assembly, the ship-owner symbolizes the *demos* in the broad sense of the term. His limited knowledge of seafaring symbolizes its limited knowledge of statesmanship; his deafness and shortsightedness symbolizes its ignorance and lack of foresight, perceptual limitations symbolizing intellectual limitations as in the Sun and the Cave. If this interpretation of the ship-owner is correct, Plato's target in the Ship of State analogy is Greek democracy in general and Athenian democracy in particular. For it is only in a democracy that the *demos* and the assembly are identified, and the foremost democracy in the Greek world was the one

inhabited by Plato and Socrates and in whose port the conversation of the *Republic* takes place.

I do not think Plato will be less critical of democracy in our time than he is of ancient Greek democracy since the essence of democracy is the masses as the source of political power and to whose dictates an exercise of such a power should not significantly deviate. Regardless of Plato's low opinion of democracy, some of his views on governance, especially the crucial role of knowledge in governance may enhance the success of our modern democratic endeavours. The *Statesman* argues Plato's position on the role of knowledge in governance.

5.3 The Rule of Knowledge – *Statesman*

A good government for Plato is the cornerstone of the realization of the aspiration and good of any people. Hence, at various stages of his philosophical career, he gives very profound thought to the big question of governance. In the *Republic*, for example, a dialogue predating the *Statesman* arguably, he espouses the idea of the philosopher-rulers who with their unequalled epistemic training and high moral character are capable of creating a flourishing state if such a state is left to their infallible guidance. Plato was so convinced that knowledge of statesmanship is the only way of liberating a state from its problems that he wrote this enduring quote:

Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political

power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils, Glaucon, nor, I think, will the human race. And, until this happens, the constitution we've been describing in theory will never be born to the fullest possible or see the light of the sun (*Rep.* 475c10-d6).

In the *Republic*, a ruler of a state is of use to the state if and only if he has knowledge of how to govern well. Plato gave a detailed account (chapter four) of how such rulers should be educated. Knowledge, and not the strength of numbers, remains for Plato the main qualification for assuming the political leadership of a state.

Perhaps, finding the concept of the philosopher kings to be too ideal a proposal for practical implementation, Plato in the *Laws* recommends the governance of the city according to the laws of the city. These laws are of course the formulation into decrees of what is best for a state according to the best legislators that a state can find. In fact, in the *Laws*, the laws of the state are to continually undergo improvement if need be so to avoid their been rendered arcane and redundant by time and new circumstances. In both dialogues, knowledge is the ultimate decider of who should govern and what form a government should take. The *Statesman* treats fully the view of Plato on the indispensable role of knowledge in governance.

The subject of the *Statesman* is the nature of political knowledge, that is, the knowledge peculiar to the statesman. The statesman is one who has the knowledge of political governance and therefore should be charged with the task of political

governance of the state. At 291c -293e of the *Statesman*, the lead interlocutor, the Eleatic Stranger, observes that the manner in which different constitutions are grouped is flawed. Constitutions are classified in two ways: according to the number of rulers – one (monarchy or tyranny), few (aristocracy or oligarchy), or many (democracy) – and, according to whether a government is imposed on the citizens or chosen by the citizens, poor or rich, and lawless or lawful. The objection of the Eleatic Stranger to this classification of different constitutions is that it does not consider the fundamental question of governance – does the ruler have the requisite political expertise. According to Plato it is irrelevant whether a government is constituted by one, few or many. What matters is whether the person or group that governs has the needed political expertise.

Like Socrates, Plato holds that political expertise shares a unique feature with other crafts in that it is the preserve of a few and never of the many (*States*, 292e). Thus, Plato thinks that a rule of one if he possesses the expertise of statecraft will be better than the rule of the few and the rule of the few with the requisite political knowledge will be better than the rule of the many. “A mass of any people whatsoever would never be able to acquire this sort of expert knowledge and so govern a city with intelligence” (*Statesman*, 297b10-11). So, Plato’s pessimism about democracy is basically that “if rule is cognitive and only cognitive, non-knowers have no claim to participate in ruling through, say, election or heredity” (Blitz, 2010, 242).

On this line of interpretation, democracy is one of the most plausible candidates for the worst form of government in a nation with limited political expertise. Plato in fact ranks governments without expertise from the best to the worse as follows: monarchy (single ruler bound by laws), aristocracy (few rulers bound by laws), law-abiding

democracy (many rulers, bound by laws), “law-less” democracy (many rulers, not bound by laws), oligarchy (few rulers, not bound by laws), tyranny (single ruler, not bound by laws) (Meyer, 2006, 378).

Knowledge is so crucial to the quality of a government that Plato does not think that a statesman with the requisite expertise needs to necessarily steer the affairs of the state according to laws. Plato does not think that rule according to laws is superior to rule according to knowledge. Laws for him are general principles that are at best an approximation of the knowledge of the expert statesman. Besides, since a nation is a collection of diverse individuals, general laws are likely to fail to promote the good of every individual:

Law could never accurately embrace what is best and most just for all at the same time, and so prescribe what is best. For the dissimilarities between human beings and their actions, and the fact that practically nothing in human affairs ever remains stable, prevent any sort of expertise whatsoever from making any simple decision in any sphere that covers all cases and will last for all time (*States*. 294a10-b6).

Thus, rule according to laws is second to rule according to an expert – the statesman. The former is useful in a state because of two reasons. First, since the statesman cannot legislate individual laws for what is best for individual citizens laws targeted at the good of the majority are inevitable. Thus, laws for Plato have the potential to promote the wellbeing of the majority. Even that, the expert ruler is not bound by the laws, and may

depart from them if doing so will facilitate the aspirations of the state. Secondly, when a state lacks an expert statesman, rule of law is the best imitation of the expert statesman.

For Plato, putting the expert statesman under the laws of the state is absurd. At 295b-302b of the *Statesman*, Plato argues with this analogy: a doctor who travels will leave instructions for his recuperating patient. These instructions are a result of the doctor's expertise. However, when the doctor returns, he is not bound in any way to these instructions if for example the condition of his patient needs a different kind of attention. Likewise, the expert statesman may rule contrary to the laws if doing so is for the good of the state.

R. F. Stalley (1983, 18-21), reflecting on Plato's stance on the direct relationship between knowledge and governance, notes: "The aim of statecraft is the good of the city, and it is knowledge which normally enables us to achieve such goals. But a ruler who could direct every detail of the common life in accordance with knowledge would have to be more than human." Commenting further, Stalley remarks that it is the implausibility of such a most knowledgeable statesman that might have informed Plato's realization of the impracticality of the reign of the philosopher king:

The picture that emerges from this survey of Plato's writings shows him starting with the doctrine that politics is a matter of knowledge. This doctrine culminates in the description of the philosopher kings in the *Republic*. In view of the fact that there is no practical way of guaranteeing that our rulers will possess the wisdom of the philosopher, this ideal of a philosopher king can work only at a theoretical level. But it does

nevertheless have some practical implications in that it will lead us to prefer institutions which encourage rationality in the taking of decisions (Stalley, 1983, 21).

If political competence is a matter of knowledge, then, for Plato, there is only one sure path to the attainment of this competence – education. In the major dialogues with a somewhat strong political orientation, two strategies are employed as means to achieving such a political competence. “The first is political education: if those likely to gain power are given an appropriate training there is a chance that the state will be wisely governed” (Stalley, 1983, 15). Plato’s Academy appears to be established with a view to the first strategy. In the *Republic*, a dialogue with a moral focus but replete with political suggestions, the education of the philosopher rulers is a detailed educational curriculum of the process of such a political education. Many commentators such as Stalley maintain it is not far fetched to argue that Plato only realizes in time the practical impossibility of the rule of the philosopher king; hence he shifts his attention in the later dialogues to matters concerning statecraft as a strategic alternative.

Then comes the second strategy, if there are no infallible statesmen, at least, what is left of the wisdom of noted citizens can be preserved in laws for the guidance of the city. The *Laws* appear to be a project in response to the second strategy. “The second strategy is to adopt constitutional forms that encourage wise decisions, or, at least, help to prevent foolish ones.” Stalley continues, “If the area of discretion granted to rulers is tightly circumscribed by law, it may also be possible to ensure that political decisions are taken only after prolonged discussion in which all points of view can be heard” (1983,

15). In the absence of an infallible statesman, varied points of view must be heard to inform a wiser decision.

It is therefore in matters of governance among other things that an education in philosophy with its emphasis on rationality (see the discussion on the *principle of fidelity to reason* in sections 4.2 and 4.3 of chapter 4) is still very relevant for an emerging democracy such as Ghana. What constitutes philosophical education may be broad, may be difficult to differentiate from some disciplines, and may even be a matter of irreconcilably debate. However, it is commonly held that philosophy first inspires a quest to know. The philosopher is therefore one who seeks knowledge. In a society where the value of knowledge is commensurate with the economic profit that such knowledge may provide, the cultivation of the spirit of inquiry, especially inquiry concerning public issues regardless of their economic benefit may be one contribution of philosophy to any society. Philosophy does not just inspire a quest to know; it also promotes the logical examination of beliefs and common notions of a society. Philosophy enables the critical examination of the beliefs and information that is passed on to citizens. The history of philosophy shows how its early practitioners such as Socrates scrutinized beliefs (see *elenchus*, section 2.2.2 of chapter 2). Since governance is central to the realization of the aspirations of a people, an education in philosophy can motivate and enable the quest to be aware of and scrutinize social and political questions in a democracy.

Truly, philosophy does very little to directly influence the economic growth of any nation. Similarly, philosophy does very little to dramatically improve the physical infrastructure of a nation. However, a philosophical orientation of a nation's citizens is likely to yield more intelligent development policies. Such an interest is apt to lead to an

increase in the quality of social deliberations that democracy offers and requires of citizens. Decisions that are informed by knowledgeable deliberations contribute to the development of any society. Our attention turns now to this potential contribution of philosophy to any society that seeks development.

5.4 Philosophy and Social Deliberation

One manner of coming to policy decisions in a democratic society is the consensus and conclusions that result from public deliberations and debates. Even in instances in which consensus is impossible because of radical differences among opposing parties on an issue, and in which majority votes have to decide the direction of policy decisions, public deliberations are employed as much as possible to enable citizens to hear the various perspectives on an issue. Public deliberations and debates are predicated on the assumption that human beings are rational and therefore through rational deliberation the best course of action for a society can be discovered and adopted. Public debates and deliberations also presuppose that citizens are well informed about the relevant social issues and therefore can either effectively participate in the deliberations or at least appreciate such deliberations. This section seeks to show how philosophy can promote citizens' awareness of social issues for meaningful public deliberation in a democracy.

5.4.1 Ignorance of Citizens

In his "Public Knowledge and its Discontents," Philip Kitcher (2011, 105-22) observes that the inadequate knowledge of citizens (in fact, the lack of knowledge of citizens) is a challenge to public deliberations and policy decisions. Kitcher in this article argues in

part that public ignorance of issues pertinent to decisions is one of the major hindrances to making policy decisions with the good of society in view in a democratic society. Democracy enfranchises citizens to engage in public deliberation on social issues that affect their lives. This enfranchisement hinges on one or two major epistemic presuppositions – *the commitment to epistemic equality* and *the division of epistemic labor*.

The commitment to epistemic equality denies that either citizens are unequal regarding knowledge or that such inequality in knowledge is important. Hence, in democratic societies, policy decisions are often subjected to discussion and vote involving citizens regardless of citizens' epistemic competence on the particular issue. For example, in deciding who should govern a nation, the *commitment to epistemic equality* that democracy upholds demands that every citizen [at least those of sound mind and of 18 years or above] be allowed to have an equal say via a vote regardless of their epistemic competence in matters of governance. The same is true for a crucial decision such as adopting a constitution for a nation – a referendum of an overwhelming percentage of the people must endorse a proposed constitution for it to be operative. "Democracy requires, on this vision, that people make up their minds about the goals to be achieved and the facts pertinent to reaching those goals, free of any norm that would counsel trust in supposed authorities" (Kitcher, 2011, 105).

It is an exaggeration to assert that all policy decisions require the input of citizens without regard to epistemic expertise because of the *commitment to epistemic equality* in a democracy. There is a sense of *division of epistemic labor* in democracies, that is, certain technical disciplines are the purview of experts in those disciplines and others

should defer to these experts on questions relating to the said discipline. For example, facts about distant regions in space are the concern of astronomers and astronauts; facts about the micro-structure of matter are the focus of particle physicists; the rate of inflation is the domain proper to the economist; and the weather forecast requires the expertise of the meteorologist. In these specialized fields, citizens defer to the experts. Nonetheless, citizens still have a major say in the policy decisions affecting these domains regardless of their lack of expertise; for example whether cloning is ethical and must be pursued or not invites inputs from citizens regardless of their epistemic competence in genetic engineering.

Philip Kitcher contends that a notable obstacle to public deliberation is the ignorance of citizens in matters both technical and general. "Many contemporary citizens live in societies in which there is massive ignorance about all sorts of things that affect those citizens' projects. Indeed, public ignorance comes in grades, with plenty of people at the most extreme grades" (Kitcher, 2011, 119). He identifies two major kinds of public ignorance: remediable and irreparable.

Remediable ignorance, according to Kitcher, has two levels – directly remediable and indirectly remediable. On the one hand, an individual is directly remedially ignorant if he has enough background information regarding the particular branch of knowledge. A directly remedially ignorant citizen is familiar with the concepts and principles of the relevant discipline, and hence, is able to consult the right sources and learn for himself answers that are pertinent to queries in the said discipline. It is the mildest grade of ignorance according to Kitcher. On the other hand is the extreme stage of remediable ignorance – indirectly remediable ignorance. You are indirectly remedially ignorant if

you lack the background to find answers relevant to queries in a field for yourself; however, “you know enough to identify reliable people – experts – to whom you can turn for enlightenment” (Kitcher, 2011, 119). An indirectly remediable ignorant citizen is aware of the idea of the division of epistemic labor, hence, can turn to the relevant experts for epistemic guidance.

Kitcher further identifies a much more extreme stage of ignorance than the level of indirectly remediable ignorance. People who are at this level of ignorance are not even aware of which epistemic department is relevant to a particular issue. Kitcher describes such people as “truly in the dark” (2011, 119). For our purpose in this thesis, citizens who are “truly in the dark” may not be aware of a crucial national (or even international) issue in need of an important or even urgent policy decision. For example, how many citizens of the world are aware of the threat that climate change poses for the world in the future? Several factors may contribute to irremediable ignorance: such citizens may not have access to the most urgent and relevant information; they may not have the ability to understand such information even if it were available; and those who can access and make sense of such information may not see the use in acquiring such information.

It is difficult for this thesis to propose an approximate percentage of Ghanaians who are in each of these stages of ignorance. However, it may not be completely unrealistic to think that a significant percentage of our population suffers from irremediable ignorance. But the free discussion that democracy so upholds presupposes “an individualistic epistemology that takes citizens to suffer from directly remediable ignorance.” However, as Kitcher rightly notes; “in the contemporary world, that

presupposition is so far from reality that it is [fitting] to credit it even as an idealization.”

He further argues that most citizens are indirectly remedially ignorant:

Many citizens do not know enough to address certain social questions and are even often confused about who the experts are... In debates like this, skillful rhetoricians will tap into attractive themes of populism and tolerance. The confusions occurring in this debate are further reinforced by widespread tendencies to favor a chimeric epistemology (2011, 119).

Kitcher identifies what he claims is the major cause of the ignorance of citizens – the channel of social information. The media distort information that they pass on to citizens. The media for its own gain may even spread falsehood that is difficult for people to identify. The media misinforms largely due to influential economic interests that dictates its content and direction. According to Kitcher, in some cases newspapers, radio programmes, TV stations and websites tell the public both what the owners of these media outlets want the public to hear and in other instances what the public wants to hear in order to earn patronage. The result of such misinformation is that even those citizens who earnestly seek the truth may fail to detect the truth from the maze of information thrown at them.

In order for the free and open deliberation that democracy secures for a nation to promote the wellbeing of citizens, lack of access to the right information must be overcome and ignorance of the citizens mitigated as much as possible. A largely ignorant citizenry is more likely to misidentify the policies that will contribute to their good. The

quest to know that philosophy promotes may be relevant to mitigating the ignorance of citizens for a more useful public deliberation in a democracy.

5.4.2 Philosophy and the Quest to Know

Philosophy is traditionally defined as the love of wisdom. This “love of wisdom” from the pre-Socratic era through the Socratic and the Platonic to the Aristotelian days covered a broad range of disciplines. In modern times, disciplines such as psychology, mathematics, physics, politics, and even biology on which ancient philosophers left their imprint have asserted their autonomy and are now largely independent of what is left of philosophy. But what is still left of philosophy in our day, covering areas such as epistemology, metaphysics, logic, and ethics exude that traditional spirit of the founders of philosophy – the quest to know that which puzzles irrespective of immediate or even distant economic gain. This quest to know, the embodiment of the spirit of philosophy, is fading and perhaps has faded in our national educational arrangement. A palpable consequence of the absence of the quest to know in a nation is the ignorance of its citizens.

In chapter one, it was pointed out that the current national attention on education is one that is inclined toward economic gain. Hence, most citizens have received an upbringing and continue to receive a national orientation in what is valuable in life as that which is translatable into real economic gain. The result is a citizenry largely ignorant of other areas of inquiry that are not directly related to material wellbeing. This ignorance at best may be described as indirectly remediable: every professional focuses solely on his or her work and how the proceeds from these efforts may be put into the realization of his

material dreams. Hence, there is no time and little interest to consider other issues that do not directly bear on one's immediate and direct economic gain.

Take one example – climate change. What constitutes a flourishing life for most adults may well include the well-being of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren both in the present and in the future. Climate research has shown that if the continuous warming of our planet is not curtailed, the effect on future generations is likely to be vastly negative and to even render the existence of human life highly intolerable if not impossible. One therefore expects many citizens to at least worry about the current state of our climate and therefore push for more vibrant public deliberations in the direction of formulating policy decisions to save the future. The main group of people expressing interest and worry in climate matters however is in academia. And the efforts of researchers at creating public awareness are hindered by big corporations who stand to decline in profit if global warming is seriously addressed. Citizens' ignorance of crucial issues such as climate change is further compounded by the educational orientation of citizens in general – to seek that which has immediate material gain.

In chapter four, the Socratic-Platonic conception of the *principle of fidelity to reason* as the guiding principle of education is espoused. According to this principle, reason is the main target of education and hence, it should be developed and equipped through the educational process. Chapter three has argued that by virtue of our humanity, we all have reason and hence are potentially capable of developing it. When education that is philosophically oriented develops reason, a person longs for knowledge in general. Such a person is both reflective and critical of the information that he receives from his endeavours in wanting to know. Thus, Plato's view of education does not only orient the

student to develop an unquenchable quest to know; it also alerts the student to be reflective and critical of that which purports to be knowledge.

Therefore, one advantage of a philosophical mind that is the result of a philosophical education is the desire to know. Aristotle starts his *Metaphysics* with the observation that “All men [and women] by nature desire to know” (Book I 980^a 21). Philosophy sustains this “desire to know” and strives to direct it in the right direction – the direction of truth. If a reasonable percentage of the citizenry has such an epistemic quest, then, many people are likely to be enlightened. The farmer from his knowledge of agriculture may pick up a journal of national geography to know more about our physical world. The banker is not only lost in his world of finance, but may venture into the happenings in other disciplines as part of satisfying his quest outside of his field. And the same can be said of other professionals with a philosophical passion. A nation with citizens who long to know is likely to witness a knowledgeable and high standard of public deliberations and debates. Such a nation is certainly poised to realize the well informed aspirations of its people through sound policy decisions that are the fruits of rational deliberations.

Kitcher argues that one source of ignorance of citizens is the distortion or outright misinformation from the media. An educated person who is faithful to reason in Plato’s view should be able to wade through the distortion to the truth. Such a critical mind thoroughly assesses what passes as public knowledge and hence is not gullible to those who might misinform for their own gain. Such a critically minded citizen is poised to enhance the level of public deliberation that democracy offers. Plato will not be justified any longer in denying such knowledgeable citizens the right to participate in the

governance of the state. The other advantage of a philosophical orientation apart from serving as the catalyst to seek knowledge and enhance the level of public deliberation is its ability to inspire individual reflection on beliefs and values.

5.4.3 Critical Reflection and Social Values

One of the core components of a society is its values. These values shape and direct human decisions and actions in general and moral decisions and actions in particular. An individual largely inherits his values from a variety of institutions within his society – family, clan, tribe, education, religion, political party, and other institutions that are capable of inculcating values in a person. Often enough these institutions are the cause of the false and dangerous beliefs and values that individuals come to believe in and practice. Allen Buchanan in his “Political Liberalism and Social Epistemology” addresses the risks that inculcated false beliefs are capable of unleashing on victims in a society and offers what he thinks are some of the best solutions to checking the existence of false beliefs in a society.

As has been alluded to in previous sections, division of epistemic labour is unavoidable in a democratic society because every citizen cannot be an expert in every field. Hence, for the well-being of a society, *epistemic deference* is indispensable. *Epistemic deference* is “the tendency to regard certain persons as reliable sources of beliefs” (Buchanan, 2004, 97) in a society that upholds the division of epistemic labour. *Epistemic deference* is not without its flaws: “But as I and all too many others have learned to our sorrow, epistemic deference can be risky. Sometimes the experts are sources of error, even in their domains of expertise, and sometimes we err by relying on

them for truths about matters that are not in fact within their domains of expertise” (Buchanan, 2004, 103-04).

Human history is replete with instances of institutions granted certain epistemic authority that have produced, preserved and transmitted erroneous beliefs and dangerous values: tribalism, human sacrifice, marginalization of women, slavery and racism are reminders of how the institutions that are supposed to guide individuals in moral decisions and actions can turn out to be rather harmful. Not only do these institutions transmit false beliefs to individuals, they also orient the epistemic outlook of the person in a manner making it impossible to realize the errors in these beliefs. “A person brought up in a racist society ...also learns epistemic vices that make it hard for him to come to see the falsity of these beliefs” (Buchanan, 2004, 96).

Buchanan further correctly notes that false beliefs cannot be utterly eliminated in a society. “All societies inculcate false beliefs (as well as true ones)” (2004, 98). He does not say why society cannot rid itself of false beliefs. But I think the presence of false beliefs may be due to human epistemic limitation. But Buchanan is right to argue that the best we can do by way of eliminating false beliefs is to aim at their optimal reduction:

Assuming that we are profoundly and unavoidably dependent for true beliefs upon social institutions broadly defined, and assuming that no human institutions could be constructed that would create, preserve, and transmit only true beliefs, it follows that the proper goal is not to eliminate the moral and prudential risks of social epistemic dependency but to achieve an optimal reduction of them (2004, 102-03).

In search of a way to the optimal reduction of false beliefs in society, Buchanan proposes “certain key liberal institutions” as the solution. And what he means by “key liberal institutions” are the democratic institutional arrangements that promote freedom of thought, conscience, expression, and association. These “key liberal institutions” further involve: a dominant role of merit on deciding reliable sources of epistemic authority. Associated with this is the basic idea that liberal institutions distinguish truth from error and communicate the truth; and a culture of epistemic egalitarianism. Buchanan describes epistemic egalitarianism as “the tendency of ordinary people to think well enough of themselves to be willing to challenge socially identified authorities on occasion, and to think well enough of their fellow citizens to be disposed to listen to them when they criticize socially recognized authorities and accepted practices” (2004, 99).

In my view, these “key liberal institutions,” especially educational institutions enhance the freedom that democracy grants citizens in limiting their ignorance. Of what use is freedom of thought, conscience, expression and association to an ignorant person? Freedom of thought and expression, hallmarks of democracy, allow a citizen to be heard in public deliberations. If a citizen is ignorant of the relevant public issues and does not even see the point in learning crucial social issues, of what use is his input to public discourse. Again, here, in my view, is what is most useful of a philosophical education in general and a Platonic conception of education in particular to a society. The spirit of intellectual curiosity that philosophy (when it is done well) inspires in people ensures a citizenry with an everlasting epistemic quest. This enduring epistemic quest leads to a habit of wanting to know, especially, a desire to know issues that affect both individual

and public life. Such a quest eventually culminates in eroding the ignorance of citizens so significantly as to qualify them to contribute to and enhance the quality of public debate.

One source of false beliefs according to Buchanan is the errors in the conclusions of experts that others defer to. The Platonic conception of education based on the *Laws* that is outlined and espoused in the fourth chapter of this thesis invites citizens to a critical understanding of the laws and customs (and for our present purpose, beliefs) that the various social institutions hand down. Plato seeks to provide a critical understanding of beliefs with the preambles to the laws. The citizen must be critical enough to ask why a belief should be embraced and what its contributions to the well-being of society are. Thus, a Platonic conception of education does not encourage an “unwarranted epistemic deference.” Critical assessment of social beliefs is likely to contribute to an optimal reduction of false beliefs.

Another source of false beliefs related to epistemic deference is the overzealousness of experts to pontificate on issues beyond their domain. Unsuspecting citizens who might defer to an expert for epistemic guidance may do so uncritically, giving room for such experts to exaggerate by unjustifiably broadening the domain of their expertise. A philosophical orientation that is critical of experts and a Socratic-Platonic recommendation of the *principle of fidelity to reason* inspires the spirit of questioning epistemic pretensions of various experts in a society. Such a critical appreciation of the expertise of others is likely to delineate the competent boundaries of the experts that citizens defer to. The economic gain of such benefit from a philosophical outlook that education can give its citizens is not immediate, if at all, but its crucial role in facilitating the well being of society is indubitable.

Whilst the role of economics in the development of every nation cannot be overemphasized, the production and distribution of economic gains are shaped by certain primary social values and morals. When false beliefs guide how material production and distribution should occur, as we saw during the period of slavery and perhaps continue to see in the unequal international trade relations between the first world and the third world, our better epistemic judgment later tells us that the progress ensured by such dubious values and morals does not reflect the best of our humanity. Therefore, having true beliefs is a good thing; for true beliefs guarantee our ability to act rightly whereas false beliefs put this ability at a risk.

Beliefs can be rationally evaluated. An education that sharpens our rational evaluation skills is surely an education that is both poised to produce true beliefs and optimally reduce false ones. Philosophic education in general as Plato understands it in the *Republic* and the *Laws* gives special place and attention to the honing of the skill of rational or logical evaluation. Given this crucial role of the philosophical enterprise in public deliberation and policy decisions in a democracy, it is worrying that anybody should suggest that philosophy be pushed to the periphery of national education as commentators on education in Ghana appear to be suggesting. Philosophy has a relevant role to play in national development and must be given the needed assistance in our educational institutions to enable it give its unique contribution to our well being as a people.

5.5 General Conclusion

This thesis is largely an exegetical examination of Plato's views on education. From this main exercise emerges a subsidiary focus, the importance of philosophy to the goals of any society. The thesis argues that philosophy is relevant to national development and human wellbeing with three claims: First, the common understanding of human wellbeing as mainly the product of economic wellbeing is inadequate. Drawing from the wealth of knowledge in the dialogues of Plato, especially the *Republic* and *Laws*, the thesis notes that the key role of knowledge (or wisdom) is often missing in the factors that many Ghanaians believe contribute to human wellbeing. Next, philosophy can contribute to national development through its ability to inspire citizens to seek knowledge, since, knowledgeable citizens are essential to public deliberations that aim to produce the right policy guidelines especially in democratic societies. And finally, seeking knowledge is not enough to shape and direct choices and actions for the good of citizens; the knowledge sought must be critically evaluated to ensure the usefulness of such knowledge in defining the choices and actions of the society.

Perhaps, one of the greatest tasks as a nation is the social, economic and infrastructural development that confronts us. Education can and should play a crucial part in our national development. Many understand the development of a nation largely in physical and practical dimensions. Therefore, for people who think of development in these material terms, if education is to be relevant to national development, it should prove to be useful in physical and practical terms. This perception of the possible contribution of education to national development places a lot of emphasis on the promotion of disciplines which are directly relevant to economic growth. Conversely,

perceived theoretical disciplines such as philosophy are believed to be of very little relevance to the practical development of a society.

However, this understanding of national development, and the role it plays in human wellbeing in largely economic terms, is inadequate. What constitutes human wellbeing or happiness is of course a matter of no intellectual consensus. However, there appears to be a general consensus that human wellbeing is a life devoid of pain and suffering. Plato does not deny that wealth, health, beauty, power and honour contribute to human wellbeing. But he also thinks that virtues such as piety, self-control, justice, and courage compliment the economic goods in ensuring human wellbeing. Thus, for Plato, the mere abundance of material wealth does not necessarily lead to human wellbeing. In fact, Plato argues that it is wisdom that transforms all of these goods into things that are advantageous for their possessors. Hence, for Plato, education should first and foremost seek to promote the quest for and the acquisition of knowledge.

If, as Plato argues, knowledge is central to the use of goods for human wellbeing, then, philosophy has a crucial role in ensuring human wellbeing. The creation, distribution and use of wealth are often guided by values and beliefs. The values and beliefs that guide the use of goods in society for the good of its members are based on knowledge that its members have. In the absence of knowledge of the relevant issues affecting a particular society, such values and beliefs may even be detrimental to shaping how the goods of a society are used. Therefore, philosophy with its desire to know may be relevant in minimizing the ignorance of citizens and promoting the desire to know in them. Citizens' knowledge of crucial social issues will surely enhance the quality of public debate and deliberation that democracy offers.

For discerning the right policy decisions and having the values and beliefs to shape and guide the creation, distribution and use of goods in a society, citizens must do more than seek knowledge. They must critically evaluate information. This is another crucial dimension of the education of citizens that philosophy can be useful for. The ability of a person to seek knowledge and evaluate what passes as knowledge flows from Plato's understanding of human nature. According to Plato, the part in humans that moves a person to deliberative action is *psuche* (the soul) – the seat of wisdom. The unique rational faculty of humans sets them apart from other creatures. Education is possible and makes sense for the human species because we believe that our rational or reasoning faculty can be honed to decipher beliefs that promote our wellbeing and the good of society in general and eliminate beliefs that do not. It is against this understanding of the purpose of education that the value of philosophy can be appreciated. If the task of education is to hone a person's reason so that his beliefs and actions are formed and guided by wisdom, which discipline is more apt to perform this task better than philosophy?

Primarily, Plato's conception of education aims at the cultivation of virtue. However, he sees the honing of our reason as indispensable to the cultivation of virtue. The centrality of properly training reason to enable a person and society to make the right judgments is so vital for Plato that much of his entire educational process is targeted at developing human reason. Plato inherits this conception of a unique role that education is supposed to play in developing our reasoning faculty from Socrates. Curren, as outlined in chapter four, identifies the nurturing of our reason through instruction and persuasion to attain knowledge with the *principle of fidelity to reason*. Socrates lived the *principle of*

fidelity to reason in his interaction with his fellow citizens with the elenchus. The elenchus examines beliefs for consistencies or inconsistencies in these beliefs. Reason is employed to show how the beliefs that guide a person's action are consistent with other beliefs that the person holds to be true. The elenchus attempts to ensure that our beliefs are "faithful" to reason. The *principle of fidelity to reason* occupies a central focus in Plato's discussion of education in the *Republic* and *Laws* as this thesis shows in the fourth chapter.

The call to infrastructural and economic development in Ghana is a noble cause and must be given the needed attention and support. As a nation of vast resources including recently discovered oil in commercial quantities, it does not make sense to continue to wade in hunger, homelessness, premature deaths, filth, lack of portable water, naked poverty and massive ignorance. We have the resources to shake off decades of abject poverty and helplessness. And we must rid our society of poverty. Education, in no doubt, is essential to creating decent conditions of living for citizens. However, the role of education in promoting national development must not be left largely in the hands of those for whom the only aspect of education is the one that promotes economic or infrastructural growth. This thesis attempts in its five chapters to argue for the relevance of philosophy to national development generally and human wellbeing specifically. It is only in the wise decisions and actions of its knowledgeable citizens that a nation is truly capable of developing economically and socially.

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