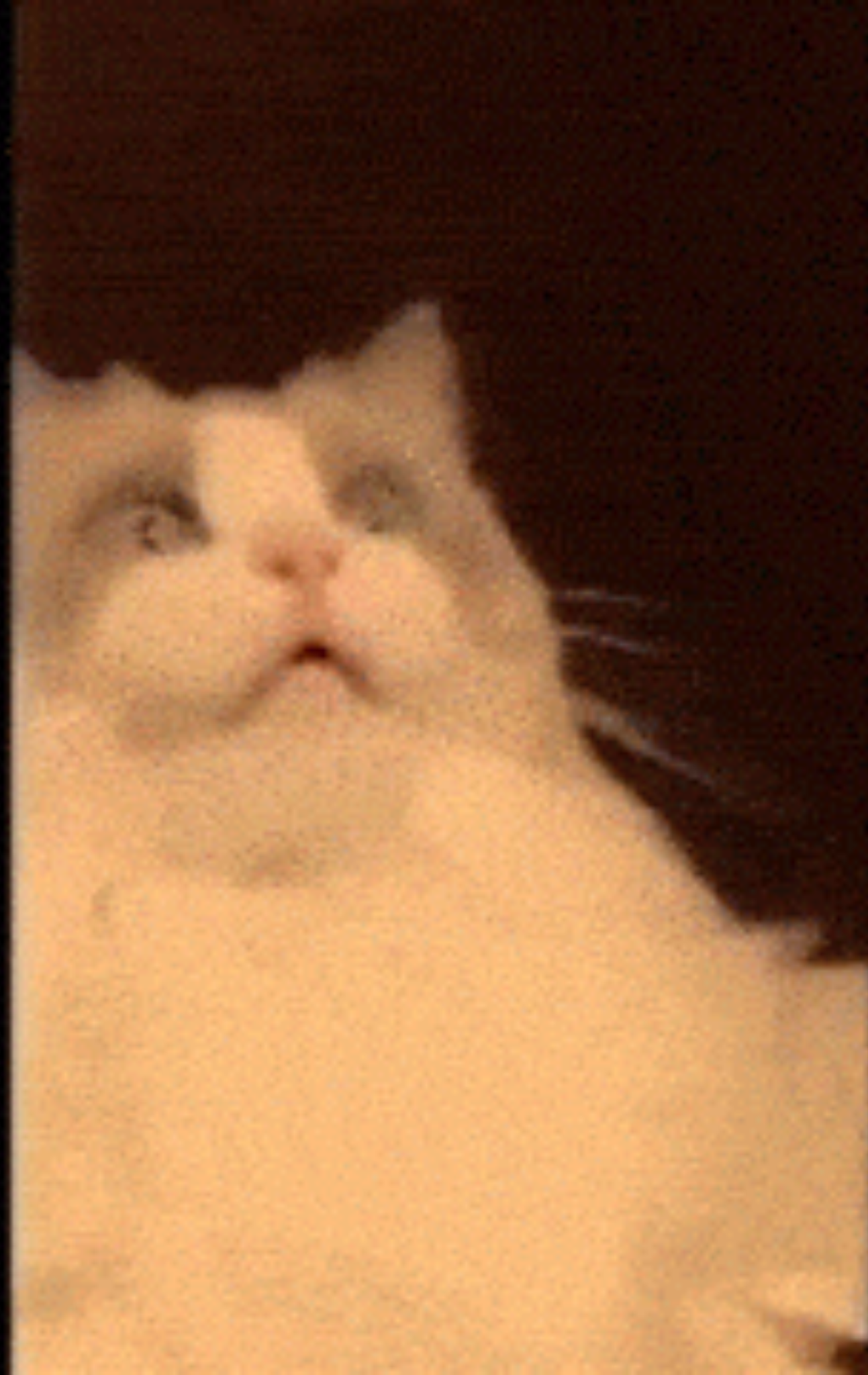


Plato 429-347 BCE
Republic, ca 370-60 BCE

First Impressions



What sort of text is this?



- a novel?
- who is speaking?
(Plato? Socrates?)
- is it possible for any of the characters in “dialogue” to disagree with Socrates?
- becomes more dialectical than dialogical
- say what?

Is Plato a self-serving maniac?



“Until philosophers rule as kings in their cities, or those who are nowadays called kings and leading men become genuine and adequate philosophers so that political power and philosophy become thoroughly blended together... cities will have no rest from evils....” (473d-e); p. 166

Is Plato an alien?

PLA_{NK}TO_N



So, what is Plato up to?

Immediate purpose of
Republic....

What is justice?

But other related core
questions

1. Who is *authorized* to rule?

answer:

me—or people like me; those
with *techne* (craft or art)

2. Who should *not* rule?



But a bigger question underlies the rest....

What is reality?



Knowing *true* reality
is the only proper
basis for authority
(more later)

Contextualization (how Plato became Plato)

Life (427 BCE—347 BCE)

407 BCE—meets Socrates, abandons play writing
(404—end of PW, started in 431)

403 BCE—abandons politics for philosophy

399 BCE—trial and death of the Socrates

398 BCE—flees Athens

c. 398 BCE - c. 380 BC (travels: e.g. Egypt, Italy, Syracuse and Sicily)

380(ca) BCE—founds his Academy outside of Athens

c. 380 BCE *Republic*

367 BCE—new student named Aristotle

361 BCE—experiments with Dionysius II in Syracuse

347 BCE—dies at his Academy

Plato's 26 dialogues are traditionally divided into early, middle and late period. Here are the most notable works of each period

Early period

- Apology of Socrates
 - Crito
 - Protagoras
 - Meno

Middle period

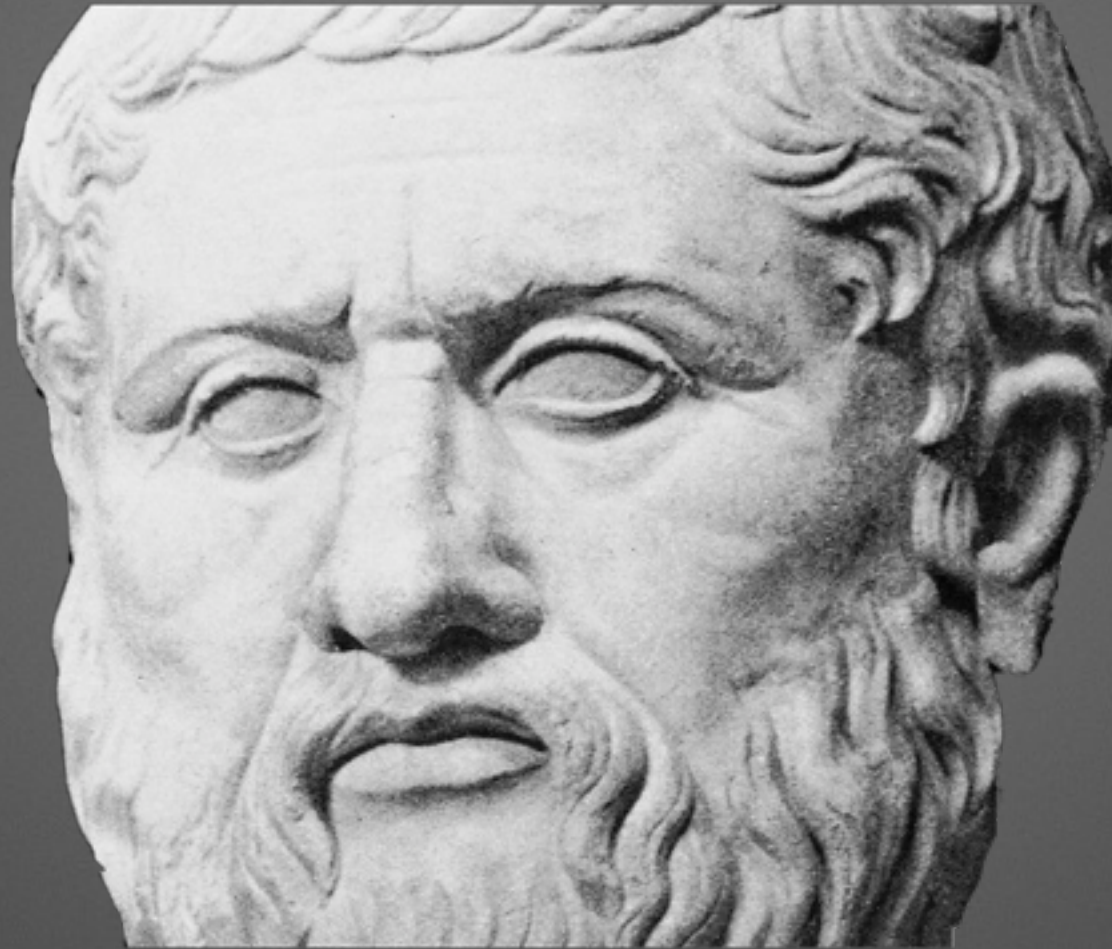
- Republic (ca 380 BCE)
- Symposium
- Phaedrus
- Phaedo

Late period

- Sophist
- Laws
- Statesman
- Critias
- Timaeus

Politics

- Republic set squarely in context and assumptions of *polis* life
- something natural about the a polis; more than a spatial category
- polis an educational school that teaches its citizens how to live
- but many different schools (constitutions)! which is best?
- why MUST one be best??
- can't they just be different? (Aristotle)
- can't we just question everything? (the real Socrates)

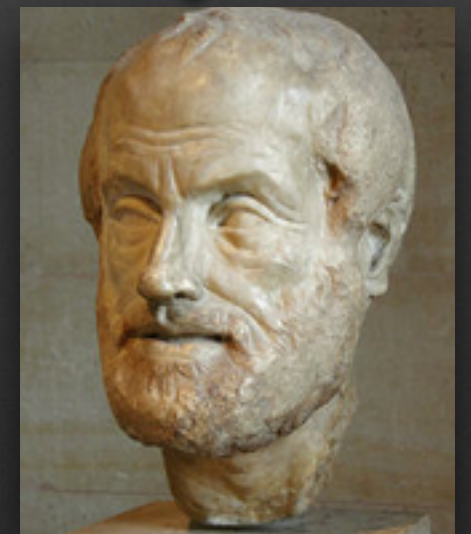
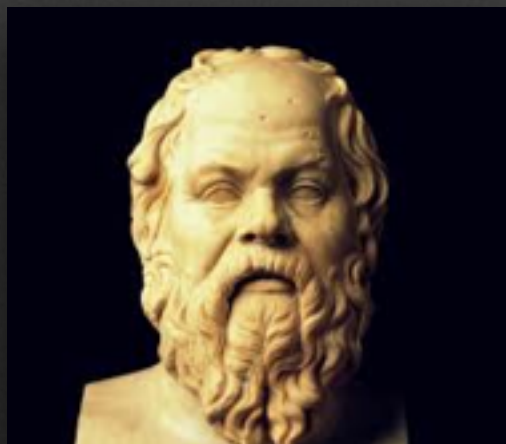


“Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so self-sufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god”

All agree that man is a *zoon politikon*

But Plato alone strives for perfection

Why?



Basic philosophical differences

- Pre-Socratic philosophy looks only at the physical world (as does Aristotle)
- what is the nature of that world? is it always the same? or in constant flux?
- Plato goes meta: takes story to a whole new dimension by saying its BOTH
- his conception of the just life does not depend on fleeting false realities but on Ideas that are REAL and permanent
- justice comes from outside all existing political arrangements
- BUT truths cannot be seen so WTF is Plato pointing at exactly?



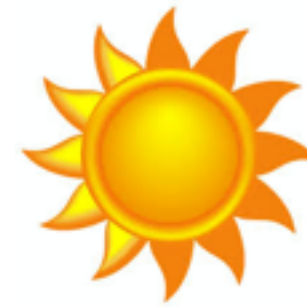
Kallipolis is Plato's closest approximation of perfection

- Plato can be viewed as a philosophical version of the sculptor Polyclitus who actually changed body's natural proportions in favour of modular proportion!
- Theory versus Practice p. 165, 472 d



**Proper political arrangements
explained via the allegory of
the Cave (Book 7)**

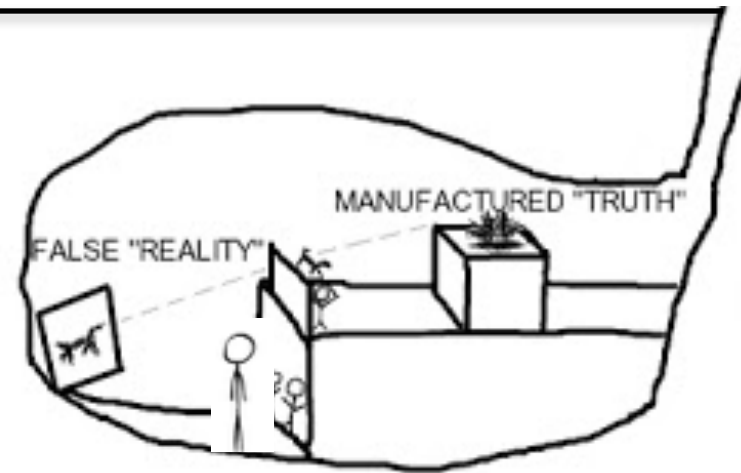
Noesis, “understanding”



Dianoia, “thought”



Pistis, “belief”



Eikasia, “imagination”

Noesis, “understanding”



Dianoia, “thought”



Pistis, “belief”

To
know the
good is to do
the good

Eikasia, “imagination”



justice

Noesis, “understanding”



Politics & Authority

Platonic virtues

Dianoia, “thought”



wisdom

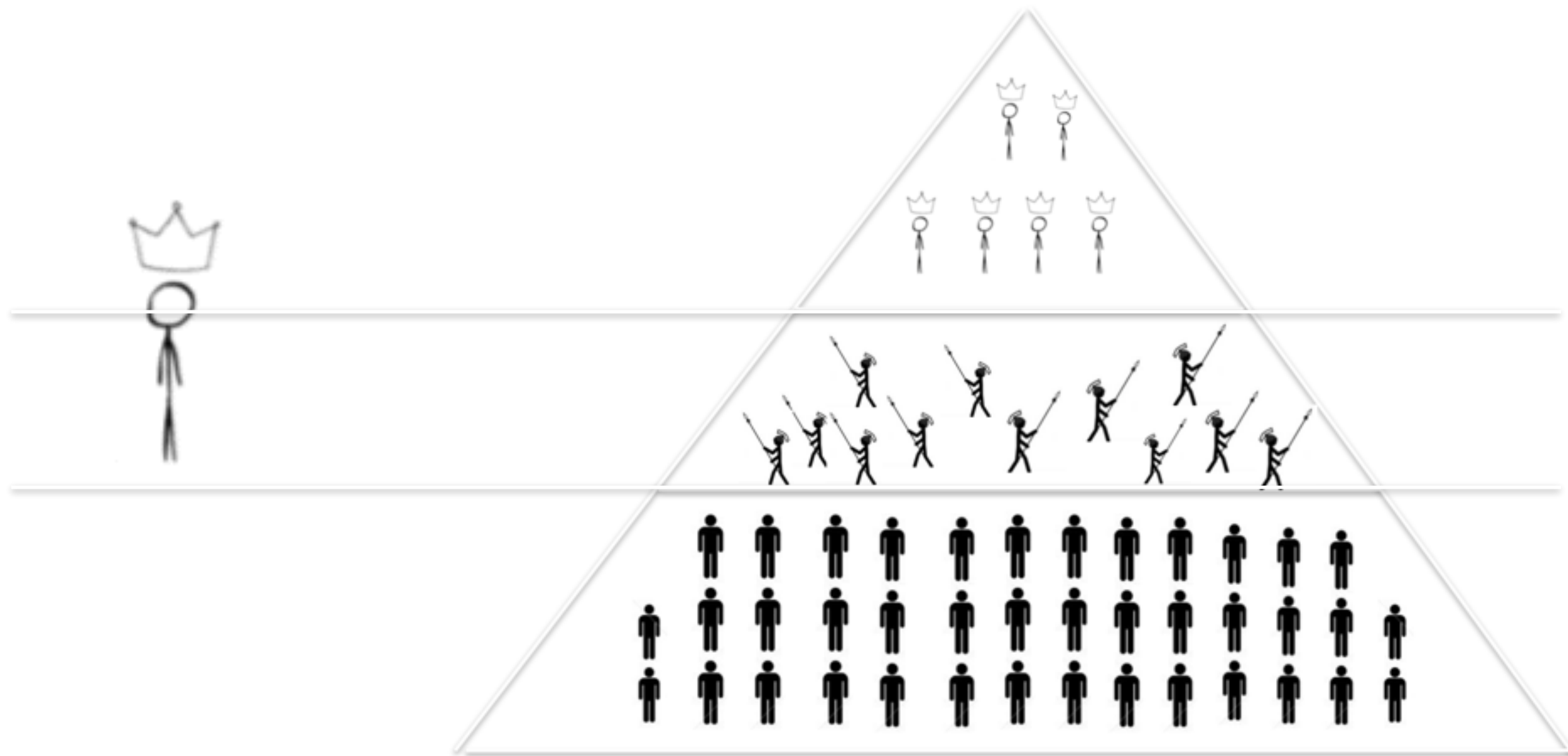
courage

temperance

Pistis, “belief”

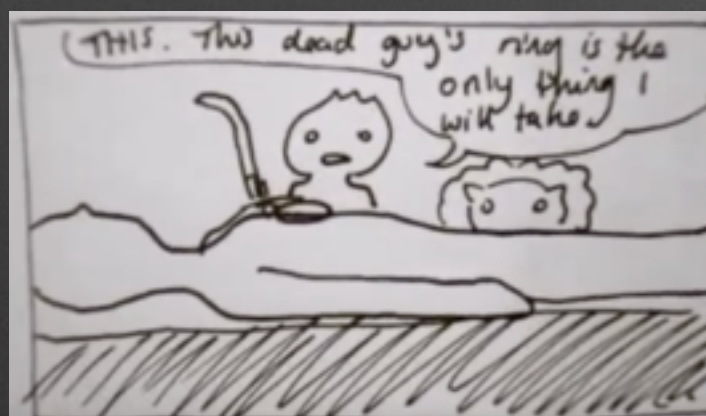
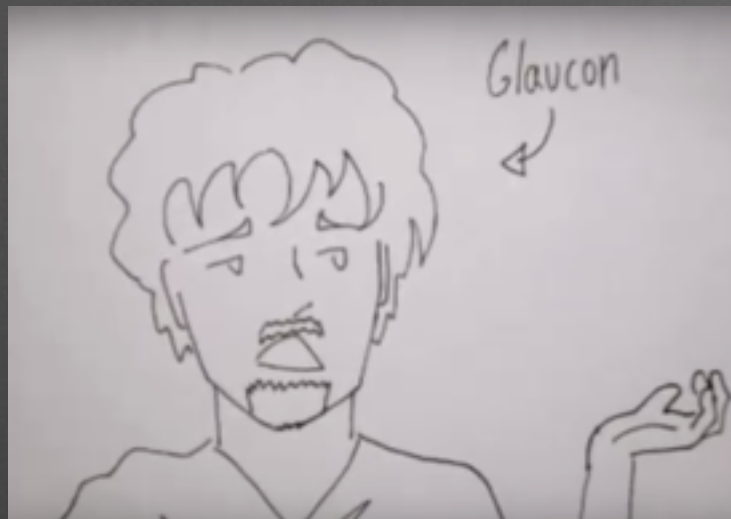
Eikasia, “imagination”

Plato's Micro-Macro Approach



**Proper moral action explained via
Glaucou's story of the Ring of Gyges
in Book 2 (2.359a–2.360d, p. 38)**

Ring of Gyges: (2.359a–2.360d, p. 38)



At all times, Plato shows his special contempt for the democratic state and soul

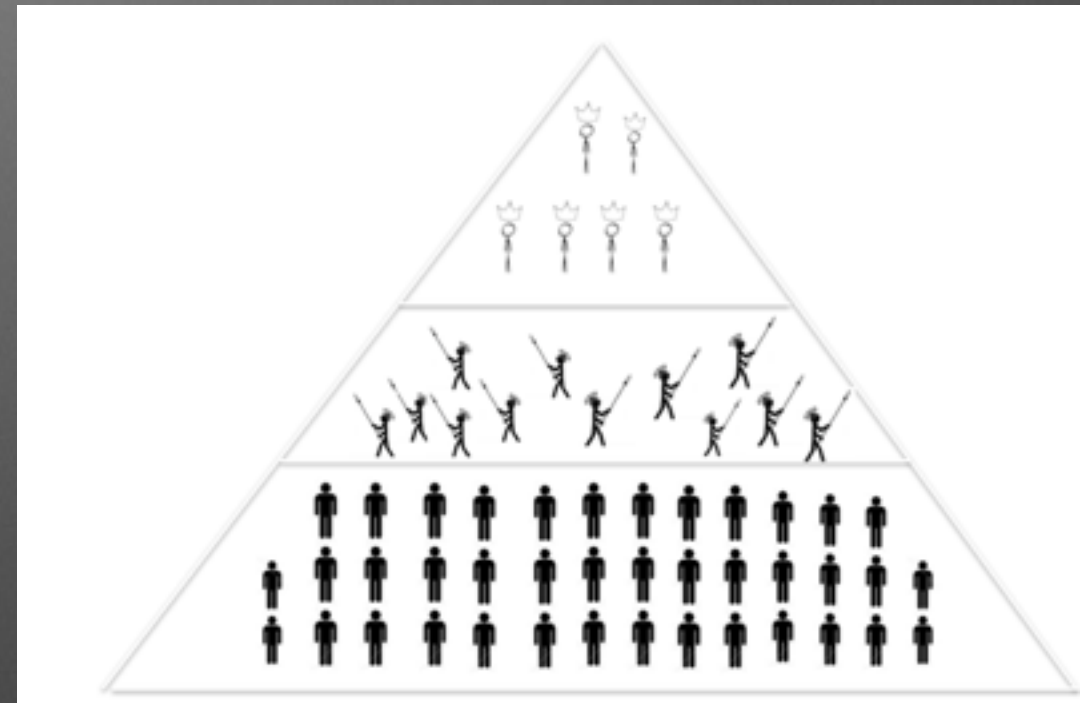
- Gyges is a beast
- Thrasymachus is a beast (338 b, p, 14)
- rejection of sophistry
- the demos is a “many-headed monster” & “multiform beast” (493 b, p. 186; 588 e, p. 293)



Gyges today

Authority weaved into the very fabric of the polis

- Plato places no value on freedom
- what we call liberty he calls “licence”
- in fact, what we call liberty he calls slavery
- the Platonic state is a **paternal** state that cares for our souls
- but it buries its controlling features in its design & its myths
- is Plato okay with lying?
- a totalizing state that does not need overt force & coercion
- note how its Guardian’s spears face outward



BUT Plato simply doesn't understand individuals & their values in our way

- liberty = licence
- no intrinsic value to human life (we all have a function in a bigger entity)
- happiness is a collective idea (420 c, p. 103)
- equality is a collective idea
- liberty must have value (free *to* do something)