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12 CHARACTERISTICS FOR A RULER'S LIFE: GUARDIANSHIP IN BOOKS I-V OF PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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Abstract

This paper presents an exploration of the first five books of Plato's *Republic* to express the relevance of characterizing 12 traits for a ruler's life. Contemporary problems today center on education, so that the problem of teaching and learning in society becomes a crucial dimension of political life. It is in this sense that the problem posed by Plato is still relevant up-to-date. Seeing this problem as a quasi-impossibility, the paper opens up the space to discuss the training of rulers or guardianship as a craft that is teachable, unselfish, and monofunctional. To explain this further, the job of being an educated citizen is presented as laden with 12 interconnected characteristics that altogether forge the hope for a just order.

Keywords: Plato, Republic, Guardians, Guardianship, Characteristics, Education

INTRODUCTION

In one of his talks about whether or not he would vote for the coming election and the political situation as a whole, Comedian George Carlin satirically remarks,

Now, there's one thing you might have noticed I don't complain about: Politicians. Everybody complains about politicians. Everybody says they suck. Well, where do people think these politicians come from? They don't fall out of the sky. They don't pass through a membrane from another reality... It's what our system produces: Garbage In, Garbage Out. If you have selfish ignorant citizens, you're going to get selfish, ignorant leaders.

Saying this, the comedian delivers a truth that is relevant in our undertaking: *rulers do not fall from the stars*. The persons who have now become personalities in the political scene, holding ruling positions of the government – they do not simply rule and are naturally born to rule the system. Rather they are from the people, reared, attended to, and taught the principles necessary to win over the system and succeed as the rulers. The rulers, therefore, are a reflection of our communities, how we breed them into what they are now, regardless of the change of status. This is now the problem that shares with Plato's *Republic* in books I-V. As Allan Bloom says,

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The *problem* of the Republic was to educate a ruling class which is such as to possess the characteristics of both the citizen, who cares for his country and has the spirit to fight for it and the philosopher, who is gentle and cosmopolitan. This is a *quasi-impossibility*, and it is the leading theme of the onerous and complex training prescribed in the succeeding five books.¹

In short, how do we educate the rulers that are once living with us, how to establish a rule that will help the rulers become what they ought to be and how they ought to govern the city. In the *Republic*, there is an equation that renames these rulers. "The rulers, in particular, those who fight and thus hold power in the city, have been called *guardians*."² The society that Plato exposed in the *Republic*, fairly read by Aristotle, is in fact centered on a "community of the guardians" (Santoro, 2019). These are the men to be taught the craft of ruling. This craft is what lies at the very kernel of communal life and nothing is more prized than the education of rulers.

Moreover, the question of Juvenal, the Roman author, 'But who will guard the guardians' (*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*) finds an answer in Plato when he expressed the necessary *trust* for them. As Hurwicz (2008) says concerning Plato's remark, "one should be able to trust them to behave properly; that it was absurd to suppose that they should require oversight" (p. 577). This is supported by the fact that Socrates himself already clarified the rejoinder. In the *Republic* itself, Socrates is explicit in meaning that "there are no guardians above the guardians: the only guardian of the guardians is proper education."³ From its namesake, these guardians are the rulers who watch over the city. Hence, it is necessary that this trust must be there, although it has repercussions in the global framework (Fukuyama, 1995).

During Socrates' stay for the festival, he discusses what consists, in picturing out a just and ideal city, of this education called "Guardianship." Guardianship is what we would mean when we talk of philosophic education, brave, gentle and cosmopolitan to reflect on reality.

Because the facets that govern this education concerns reality, it is important that the manner of presenting Guardianship must be in the form of a craft, as a fundamental consequence of *arête* that reimagines the good and just life. This paper then presents the ideal craft of guardianship. It rereads the *Republic* by showing Guardianship as teachable, unselfish, and monofunctional. It is becoming more crucial to revisit the fundamental tenets of a just society and whether or not the possibility of justice can still conjure hope. To do this, the paper presents 12 principal characteristics that the guardians must possess to achieve a just Republic.

1. GUARDIANSHIP IS A CRAFT

1.1. TEACHABLE, OR ON BECOMING JUST

As long as it is a craft, this means that Guardianship can firstly be learned. In the dialogues, the pattern to be held in seeking the just ruler is first to find out what justice means. For to be a ruler, one needs first to seek justice. It is in such standards that the city must be ruled. Guardianship *as* a craft should be taught in such a way that it jives with the right definition of justice, how the ruler should be reared and what must be done to acquire it.

As early as Book I, Socrates challenges the traditional idea of Justice. It was Cephalus who spoke of Hesiod and his definition of justice. For him, justice is to give back what you owe and being honest about one's legal duties in the city. If a man hands over a sum of money to another, the latter should give back what he owes by paying that sum in due time, according to the contracts and agreements both have made with each other. But Socrates says that justice is not merely and always like this, because if a man hands over a knife to another, and in due time he became mad, justice would not recommend that the other will give the knife back. To give the knife back as the thing he legally owes is an injustice for those around the madman. The next definition of justice that Socrates challenged was that of Polemarchus. Polemarchus claims that justice is to bring good to friends and harm to enemies. This idea is problematic because people make mistakes about people. Some seem to be good only for a show, and some whom we declare as enemies might be the ones really doing good things. The last definition of justice is taught by the sophist Thrasymachus. Thrasymachus says that justice is no other than the advantage of the stronger. In a way, being cynical about the idea of justice, the rulers are just taking advantage for their own benefit. The goal is to have more and more, in order to rule. We might even think that to be just, one needs to do whatever it takes to be stronger in order to rule the city. This was the function of sophists during the time. They were

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 2nd edition, trans. with notes and interpretative essay, Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1968), xvi-xvii.

² Ibid. xvi-xvii.

³ Ibid., xvii



itinerant and were hired precisely to teach the youth how to be a ruler but in whatever means possible – even unjust means. One of such means is to persuade in argumentation even if one is wrong. Although this ‘art of persuasion’ done through rhetoric is not entirely the goal of the Sophists (Gagarin, 2001), this still was a prevalent practice.

What does it mean then for Guardianship for it to be taught in the proper educative manner? For the definitions of justice challenged by Socrates, he opened for us a path by which we can be taught the right way to educate ourselves. In Book I, the traditional and the sophist way of understanding justice have been dismissed, for they are not proper for the guardians’ education. First, it seems that for Cephalus, justice cannot be taught because it is giving only what one owes from the other. Guardianship in this sense is not teachable; it is only imposed as an obligation, even to the point of giving back what is dangerous to the other. Second, for Polemarchus, Guardianship is not teachable also, for it seems to require only on how to use politicking as a manner to win friends and inflict harm to enemies. This is a natural tendency subject to so many errors. And finally, for Thrasymachus, it would also seem that Guardianship is not teachable, for as long as you are weak by nature, you cannot learn how to be strong. Only the strong ones are fit to rule. This would make Guardianship a practice for bullies, seeking only what is advantageous for themselves and not for the good of the city. Guardianship, as Socrates challenges these claims of what justice is, is an avenue for learning. It can be taught as a practice. It is a craft that must include proper training as it acts on becoming just. Justice must be done at all times regardless of obligation, friendship, or strength.

1.2. UNSELFISH, OR HAVING ‘OTHERS’ IN MIND

Following the path Socrates opened for us in Book I, the next idea to suppose is that justice is therefore not only for the sake of one’s self. To educate oneself in becoming a just ruler, one must be unselfish. Against Thrasymachus’ claim that it is only for the benefit of the stronger, Guardianship must not dwell on one’s strength. Guardianship is a craft that is altruistic, which means that it is for the other. Likewise, it benefits all. And just like any other craft, it demands that the ruler should give what is due for the ruled.

Socrates claims that “no art or kind of rule provides for its own benefit, but, as we have been saying all along, it provides for and commands the one who is ruled, considering his advantage – that of the weaker – and not that of the stronger (346e).” Socrates believes that to be a ruler, one needs to consider the other, and as a just thing to do, a good ruler never considers such benefits for his own. However, this never means that the rulers do not have the right to have their own benefit. What does Socrates mean by this? The rulers too have their own wages, for Guardianship is an art or a craft too, but what they seek for as wage is not the same benefit for the one ruled. The wages of the “best men,” so to speak, do not concern the “love of honor and love of money (347).” They rule not for those kinds of things, for that would only mean that they are “hiredlings,” or suspected rather, that because they gain nothing, they must have a secret way of stealing that makes them look like “thieves.”

What then drives Guardianship as a craft to be unselfish? For Socrates, the rulers rule not because they want something from ruling. Guardianship as a craft is a way of being unselfish when it is driven by necessity and penalty (347). Both are necessary to consider a ruler as unselfish.

By necessity, he means to say that the rulers must rule “as a necessity” because “they have no one better than or like themselves to whom to turn it over.” By penalty, Socrates considers that “the greatest of penalties is being ruled by a worse man if one is not willing to rule oneself.” The rulers must step up for the good of the ones ruled. They must rise above their own comfortable lives and heed the necessary thing to do in serving the city if there is no other willing to do it. Moreover, the rulers must learn the craft of fighting for the good, for it would be bad for the city if it is ruled by worse men who have no discipline for themselves. For Socrates, it is a grave penalty for a city to be ruled by an unjust ruler who seeks only all the interests for himself.

For Guardianship as unselfish, Socrates says that “a true ruler really does not naturally consider his own advantage but rather that of the one who is ruled (347).” Only then can we understand that the art of ruling has a heart for his people, for others. To be able to rule is not something selfish people must take. Otherwise, there would be corruption and we would have a wrong notion of what justice means. Against Thrasymachus’ claim that justice is for the advantage or the benefit of the stronger, Socrates points to this kind of justice which a true ruler must possess. Not for the sake of honor or money, but for the sake of the ones being ruled.

Having been taught that Guardianship is unselfish, Thrasymachus seems to be unconvinced that justice is so. Socrates has to device the arguments so that it will be clear that justice is a virtue and injustice a vice since Thrasymachus, the sophist, does not believe it to be so. He seems to mismatch the two as if justice



is for the unlikely or for the bad and injustice for the likely and the opposite. This becomes a good opportunity to reverse things. Socrates argues that “the just man is like the wise and good, but the unjust man like the bad and the unlearned (350c).” And the “man who is both good and wise will not want to get the better of the like, but of the unlike and opposite (350b)”. Simply put, the good and the wise is for all, even for the bad and the unwise. And this is done in the context of a community. “Everybody is sure that Plato knew something about community”⁴ and it is in this context that the rulers must give its benefit to all, both the just and the unjust.

The understanding that the ruler must learn the craft of benefiting all meets in the *Republic* a strange idea. Socrates thinks, and even goes to this point, that *for the benefit of the city*, that is, for the benefit of all, “it’s appropriate for the rulers, if for anyone at all, to lie for the benefit of the city in cases involving enemies or citizens, while all the rest must not put their hands to anything of the sort (389b).” It is a radical idea of sacrificing all individuality for the sake of the community that Plato insists.

The true test of this idea is Glaucon’s narrating of the legend of the *ring of Gyges* (359d). If both the unjust man and the just man acquires a ring that will make the one who wears it invisible, Glaucon argues that both the just man and the unjust man would do injustice. This is because it is more profitable for a man who is unjust (but is seemingly just) than a man who is just. This is supported by his claim that by nature we are all unjust. The unjust man who seems just has the favor of both men and the gods for he would have many friends because of his power and influence, and that he has the capacity to offer more for the gods. On the other hand, the just man gains not the favor of men and is less likely to be profitable because he does things slowly, outside the fast lane, and influence.

Socrates thinks that the good is pursuable and more profitable for its own sake. A good and wise ruler becomes just when he learns that what he is doing is not really for himself but for the benefit of all, governing both the just and the unjust.

1.3. MONOFUNCTIONAL, OR DOING ‘ONE JOB’

There is no greater evil or injustice than to see the city diverge into factions. The nature of Guardianship is that it gathers together the functions of the society into a single unitary whole. Socrates envisioned and began to build in a speech the ideal city through the foundation of justice as doing one’s functions for the sake of the whole. The crucial move for this idea of justice is the principle of monofunctionality or “One Person, One Job.”

Guardianship as a craft that oversees these functions means that “different men are apt for the accomplishment of different jobs (370b)” and so one’s occupation must be likened to one’s aptitude for work and according to his nature. A man who is good at farming should do the job of a farmer. Similarly, the man who is apt at shoemaking should function for the job of the shoemaker, the shepherding man for the position of the shepherd, the one apt for house-building for the position of the house-builder, and so on. To make this possible, the ruler must see to it that the city follows this principle of justice as the harmony of all functions into one – “One man, one art (370b).”

“One man, one job – so that each man, practicing his own, which is one, will not become many but one; and thus, you see, the whole city will naturally grow to be one and not many (423d).” By doing this, the people in the city will grow together as one, avoiding any factions that will soon cause the deterioration of the city. Simply put, the principle “one man, one job” makes the city united than a city whose men multi-tasks jobs with overlapping priorities. In effect, one does not get a job done or that tasks are done haphazardly.

As Socrates says, “I don’t suppose the thing done is willing to await the leisure of the man who does it; but it’s necessary for the man who does it to follow close upon the thing done, and not as a spare-time occupation (370c).” The key term is *focus*. If one man focuses on his job and takes his job closely according to his aptitude for it, there would be no time for unnecessary leisure. Men would easily finish the job free from any temptation to be slack.

Continues Socrates, “so on this basis each thing becomes more plentiful, finer, and easier, when one man, exempt from other tasks, does one thing according to nature and at the crucial moment. (370c).” Because one man is not distracted from what he needs to do, the work becomes easier and with proper focus, the work becomes more efficacious, resulting in finer and productive things. Therefore, there would be efficiency, productivity, and consequently, excellence.

For the guardians or rulers, Socrates says that “our guardians must give up all other crafts and very precisely be craftsmen of the city’s freedom and practice nothing other than what tends to it – they mustn’t

⁴ Preface to the second edition



do or imitate anything else (395b-c).” One of the practices for the proper training of guardians or rulers is to imitate the best of things. Because of this, it would be rightly implied that they too must not imitate other things other than that of learning only the craft of one thing, that is, to safeguard the city’s freedom, to rule it in such a way that the functions of all members are properly harmonized.

2. 12 PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GUARDIANS

What characteristics then are needed for the expected rulers to have if Guardianship is teachable, philanthropic, and monofunctional? At face value, this might point to the idea that the ruler is selfless. In this first and foremost sense, Guardianship is a selfless craft and the guardians must dedicate themselves for the good of the city. But before we arrive on this, it is perhaps good to consider first what Socrates problematizes when they were finding the characteristics of the guardians. He asks, “Where will we find a disposition at the same time gentle and great-spirited? Surely a gentle nature is opposite to a spirited one... These conditions resemble impossibilities, and so it follows that a good guardian is impossible (375c-d).” But we already know that this is only a quasi-impossibility. Hence, the hope to be expected of the guardians to be able to rule the city justly is a hard (but not an impossible) task.

2.1. SHARP SENSES AND ENDURANCE (375a; 390d)

For the necessary physicality needed to be a ruler, the guardians “need sharp senses, speed to catch what they perceive, and finally strength if they have to fight it out with what they have caught (375a-b).” This means that to be a guardian, one must have already been capable of achieving the optimal instincts as an animal. Good eyesight, a sharp hearing, and all the other sense must be trained in their optimal height to be one of those rulers who will guard the city.

At the beginning of Book II, we find that this is a basic good because it includes the proper training of the body: gymnastic exercise and medical treatment (357c). This is necessary so that the ruler finishes strong in his tasks. He does not slack or succumb to lethargy. His body would be capable of achieving things that would require strength and dexterity. He would be keen in dealing with things and sharp in deciding things.

The guardian of the city is therefore expected to be attentive all the time. He should be conscious of what he is doing. And even in times when there would be much work to do, he embraces these things willfully because he knew that bodily speaking, he can handle stress and stressful works.

In the training of the guardians in Book II, the expected rulers are told of stories that will give them the best possible traits. One of these traits which will hopefully come about in having sharp senses is “Endurance.” This endurance jives with the motivation to become better. An example of the verses to be told to them concerns not only physical endurance but also emotional endurance: “Endure, heart; you have endured worse before (390d).”

Endurance is indeed a test of sharpness. For one does not only perform in one strong moment but in moments. A guardian in the height of his sharp senses has to be prepared to endure the many vicissitudes that are present in his governance of the city.

2.2. MODERATION (389d)

In book III, moderation is also expected for the guardians. It is a disposition of the soul which is much needed to maintain a certain balance in oneself. This characteristic, which is a virtue, must be trained – “especially the young.” For the guardians or rulers to endure, moderation is needed to curb the hormonal impulses that are excessive in young bodies.

This is necessary because “drunkenness, softness, and idleness are most unseemingly for guardians (398e).” For the sake of the city, one cannot afford to be soft and intoxicated, for it will reflect in the things that will happen to the city. Moderation as a principle of balance is a kind of obedience to oneself. One has to master oneself to be able to rule the city. The worst thing that can happen is when a man cannot rule himself. Socrates equates the virtues and the dispositions of the soul of the man to that of the city. Hence, when a man cannot rule himself, he cannot also rule or become a guardian of the city.

Since the drama of the human condition can be seen in conflict found in Plato’s understanding of the parts of the soul, there is an injustice – an evil – that lies in the heart of the human (Segalerba, 2019). And this must be moderated from the start.

In mastering oneself, the guardians are expected to be “obedient to the rulers, and being themselves rulers of the pleasures of drink, sex, and eating (389e).” This is easy to say but hard to do. It is hard because we are dealing with pleasures. And not only pleasures, which we are prone to be after, but these are



pleasures that compose the threshold of survival.⁵ Eating, drinking, and having sex, are necessary for the preservation of the species. In these things, the pleasure we get from them is more intense and is further intensified by proclivity. Therefore, it is hard to establish moderation in mastering oneself, and all the more, when one has become a ruler, he must not abuse himself in these kinds of things.

Moderation, according to Socrates, is “a unanimity, an accord of worse and better, according to nature, as to which must rule in the city and in each one (432a).” In achieving the state wherein one has already mastered oneself, the whole person becomes one. The most moderate person has to rule the city, because he too, after making himself one, can harmonize the city as a whole.

The man who cannot take this task to heart will surely become mad. If one is not moderate, he is not fond of doing things in their extreme. The moderate characteristic expected of the guardians is “not common with excessive pleasure, which puts men out of their minds no less than pain (402e).” Hence, to avoid having crazy rulers who cannot handle stress, moderation must be honed.

2.3. NOBLE (375e)

Another characteristic that is expected for the guardians is the nobility of spirit. Socrates expects this trait to be like that of the noble dogs: “when it sees someone it does not know, it’s angry, although it never had any bad experience with him. And when it sees someone it knows, it greets him warmly, even if it never had a good experience with him – an attractive affection of its nature and truly philosophic (376a-b).” So apart from the physical nature and the necessary connection to the gentle nature, the problem posed before, Socrates says that the guardians must imitate the noble dogs, who are gentle and also prime in its instincts. The noble dog is brave and strong.

Socrates describes the attitude of noble dogs like the following: “*Philosophic, spirited, swift and strong.*” The noble dogs are loyal to their masters just as the rulers are loyal to the city. They are philosophic because they are discerning when to attack and when not to. The philosophic nature makes one gentle. But it also means that nobility is spirited; it is brave in facing trials. The noble dogs are also swift because, by nature, they have trained to be quick in dealing with things. And lastly, the noble dogs or nobility that is expected of the guardians, is a strong characteristic. It has the charisma that incites a strong aura proper for a leader. His presence encourages people. In this trait, even anger is justified when it is educated. Meaning to say, the passion of anger must be tempered by the philosophic nature of nobility for the sake of justice (Wasserman, 2019).

2.4. PRIME (412c)

The guardians are expected also to have attained that prime-age wherein they are more prudent and most likely to decide things clearly. The expected rulers of the city then are preferred to be “older” and “better at judgment” (412c). In this sense, they have already experienced so many things that they are clever about whatever problem that they will face.

For this reason, Socrates says that “the young we shall call auxiliaries and helpers of the rulers’ convictions (414b).” There are therefore the prime guardians, the best of the guardians who are capable of ruling the guardians on the one hand, and the auxiliary guardians who are spirited but are still obedient to the older ones. Their training will only achieve their height as they age. “We put the auxiliaries in our city like dogs obedient to the rulers, who are like shepherds of the city (440d).”

This training is, therefore, a long and arduous process because it deals more time and not units to be studied. It is a mixture of knowledge and experience. When this is done, the “best of the guardians” is now expected to be the “most skillful in guarding the city (412c).” Because of age, the best of the guardians who have acquired their prime is now “prudent, powerful, and cares for the city (412c).” Socrates stresses this primacy of age (459b) because this one, after a long education, proves the “best.”

What is radical in this choosing of the best is that it does not exclude women. In fact in book V, the “best” of the women can also be guardians (cf. Alexander, 2019, Talbert, 2019, Glodowska, et.al., 2019). They are to be one in the training of the men guardians albeit with less difficult tasks. These women too, at their prime age, are chosen for the good of the city. These mature women engage together with men even at times when the guardians would have to be naked. This, of course, can be differed with the assumption that “the primary conflict between them arises due to men’s desire for women and women’s frailty in the face of that desire” (Alexander, 2019, p. 1). Then there is also the problem that this proposal of women as guardians must not be taken seriously since Plato criticizes women on other occasions (Ward, 2019). But there is no doubting that the best of these women is to join the ranks of the guardians for the sake of the city as a whole. Apart from being philosophic dogs, men and women guardians in Book V must develop “the erotic

⁵ In the argument of the passions, this can create an error in reasoning. See Steven Jensen (2009).



characteristic of the leisurely hunt driven not by a thumotic desire for victory, but by an erotic desire for the unknown" (Alexander, 2019).

2.5. COURAGEOUS (375b)

Socrates, in another, also expects the guardians or the rules to be spirited or courageous. In times of war, the guardians must first be the ones to face the problem and conquer it. For the sake of the city, the guardians must have an "irresistible and unbeatable spirit, so that its presence makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything (375b)."

In times of war, only the courageous ones have the ability to conquer. The guardians who are expected to be spirited, are the ones who have engaged the war within themselves and are properly trained in overcoming their fears. They are told of stories that make them courageous. Because of this, in the early years of the guardians' training, they are expected to have a memory that they can aspire to, the courage to conquer and live the future. When the young guardian is told of these heroic things, he will be hard to deceive and more decisive in his resolve to win the war.

Hence, to be a guardian, "a man who has a memory and is hard to deceive must be chosen (413c)." A man who has courage is expected to have overcome his past self and is ready to traverse a new one. This kind of dedication and sharpness of will is hard to deceive. His will is concentrated only on the goal at hand. The training of courage is such that no adversity can discourage a guardian and this is because it is based on the spirit (Migliore, 2019). This and for many other reasons exposes the fact that other virtues are hinged on courage as a cardinal virtue (Müller, 2019).

2.6. WISE AND PHILOSOPHIC (375d)

It might be early to discuss this characteristic of the future guardians, but to be clear once and for all, an expected guardian according to Socrates must have in himself "a Philosopher in his nature (375d)." This is a principal characteristic because it requires the necessary knowledge and wisdom to rule the city. It is a nature that is reared through time. The pursuit of the knowledge of the Good is an "ongoing research program" (Kotsonis, 2019). This is hard and is considered one of the real challenges of the *Republic* (Jones, 2019).

The guardian who is philosophic by nature is consistent in learning. He is a lover of knowledge as a whole and not just of parts. The philosopher by nature learns and strives to attain learning through hard work. He realizes that knowledge is a toilsome task. A guardian is expected to have this kind of nature. One that is curious and tries to understand the whole of things, although limited by time itself.

All the more significant, Socrates prizes this characteristic or nature because being wise is not for all. Wisdom and this philosophic nature are "possessed by a few, the perfect guardians (428d)."

2.7. GOOD AND FAIR DISPOSITION (400d-e)

The guardians who are expected to rule the city must be a unified whole. They are agents of justice and they knew how to be just in their dealings with those who are ruled. The expected guardians, therefore, must be virtuous. They must have according to Socrates "good speech, good harmony, good grace, and good rhythm accompany good disposition (400d-e)."

This good and fair disposition is virtue. These traits harmonize the whole. The guardians "in truth, at that time they were under the earth within, being fashioned and reared themselves, and their arms and other tools being *crafted* (414d-e)." Being a wholesome practice, guardianship and in this sense means that good and fair disposition is a craft that deals with all. The good that the guardians inculcate themselves does not only concerns themselves but also their crafts, their arms and their tools. In this sense, Socratic virtue entails the necessary skill or ethical expertise (Stichter, 2007).

2.8. MUSICAL AND GYMNASTIC

Following good and fair disposition, Socrates highlights these traits of the guardians that are principal in their rearing. They cannot be separated, and these two make up the proper education in Book III. Socrates, however, stresses the importance of music than the other one when he claims that "Rearing in Music is most sovereign (401d-e)."

Hence, in the training of the guardians, they are expected to know music first before gymnastic (377a). This is a fundamental thing to do because music harmonizes the soul of man. Before one becomes musical, one must have already accomplished other things in the training to become a guardian. Socrates says that we will never be musical if we do not recognize the forms of "moderation, courage, liberality, magnificence, and all their kin (402c)."

There is no surprise then that the musical man is prudent (349e). He knows when to decide and in what manner he decides things. He knows how to weigh things properly. His actions and thoughts are harmonized together. That is why, "in the things in which he is prudent, he is also good (349e)." The musical



man does not do things hurriedly but in rhythm. The musical man already is expected to have good dispositions. He exercises virtue well that he imitates the fairest of things.

“It’s the musical man who would most of all love the fairest human beings (402d).” The training of the guardians is mostly done through imitation. The expected guardians are to imitate the most beautiful forms as models of their existence. Musicians, Plato describes, have “ecstatic influences” (Kostelnik, 2019). For Socrates, Musical matters “should end in love matters that concern of the fair (403c).” Love, as an expected disposition of the guardians, must be done in a “moderate and musical way (403a).” When a guardian has this, he has a guarantee to be in harmony with himself.

Gymnastics, on the other hand, deals with the training of physical nature as was mentioned above. To be a guardian, it is also required to have “a simple and decent gymnastic, of course, especially in matters of war (404b).” A good and sound body is capable of intense training. It has the capacity to work hard in molding skills for the war. Gymnastic produces “health in bodies” (404d). It is a healthy disposition that makes use of one’s own capabilities to maintain a regimen of care. But the proper education of guardians should harmonize the two. If there is no music, gymnastics will be bad for the guardians, because the “excessive care of the body, if it’s over and above gymnastic, hinders it just about more than anything (407b). If there is no music, the caring of one’s body will lose its harmony and the balance is disturbed.

In the education of the guardians using music and gymnastic, “the latter should care for the body and the former for the soul (410c).” These two are necessary for the optimal function of the bodies and minds of the expected guardians. They are not only strong in health but also in mental capacities. In this sense, “the finest mixture of gymnastic with music brings them to his soul in the most proper measure is the one of whom we would most correctly say that he is the most perfectly musical and harmonized (412a).” The guardians must have both of these two natures, harmonized (410c).

2.9. COMMUNITARIAN (416d-e) AND LOVERS OF THE CITY (412d-e)

Socrates in choosing for the best guardians does not leave the sensible things behind. He says that one should “select among the guardians those who are able to love most, that is, those who seek what is most advantageous of the city (412d-e).” This is a communal task because the training must also inculcate in the guardians a sense of community.

He further says that the guardians “should be lovers of the land they are in, treating it like a family (414d-e).” Although the guardians are to leave their families behind, finding a safe and conducive place for training, they are to exercise their craft while bearing in mind that what they are doing is for the love of their city. If they will not train for war, their city will be destroyed. Socrates says that “a man would care most for that which he happened to love (412d).” A candidate guardian must learn how to love, that is, to care most for his beloved city.

Being communitarian, the guardians’ wages all come from the community they are guarding, no more, no less, and no private property (416d-e). Even the cause for war, in this sense, must be to bring peace for the community (Lockwood, 2019).

2.10. CONTENTED

In Book IV, the topic of wealth and poverty is discussed. The guardians are expected not to have any properties. The reason is clear. “The guardians must guard against wealth and poverty – since the one produces luxury, idleness, and innovation, while the other produces illiberality and wrongdoing as well as innovation (422a).” What is flawed with innovation in this case? Here, innovation is hinged in imagination. Plato, through Socrates his mouthpiece, discusses two kinds of imagination: rational and non-rational. What is non-rational is supported by fantasies that cater to “desires that constantly call for satisfaction and pleasure” (Harper, 2019). Since such desires are linked to wealth and poverty, only the innovation that is hinged in non-rational imagination is considered in a bad light.

Socrates says that “from both poverty and wealth the products of the arts are worse and the men themselves are worse (421e).” The implication would be that rich guardians will only try to sustain their wealth in the polis and poor guardians will also try to amass wealth for himself. And this would be a product of non-rational imagination. The community takes care of their expenses and lodging. In this sense, they would be free from corruption (416a-b). They are provided with a house and other properties, necessary for sustenance (416d-e). In this sense, it is important that guardians are not lovers of money (390d).

In times of war, the guardians simply ally with other cities for them to have strategic help using the bargain of wealth. The guardians, having enough, are only focused on winning the war and not its spoils. If in cases where the city engages a city-to-city battle, the guardians are not worried about properties.



2.11. GENUINE

In Book II, Socrates warns that the guardians that they must not be a fan of laughter. Laughter is dangerous because, for him, it is an indicator that one has escaped or managed to do unjust acts while seeming to be just. It becomes a clever exterior that is fond of honors from clandestine ways. It bears its testimony in the form of an evil laugh.

In the training of guardians, they have to aspire to imitate the best and ideal models (414a). Laughter, as found in 388e, indicates change, so they should not be shown to have laughed. Socrates says "they shouldn't be lovers of laughter either. For when a man lets himself go and laughs mightily, he also seeks a mighty change to accompany his condition (388e)." More so in the case of gods, because they are models, and because they shouldn't change. This idea, however, is not to be taken as absolutist. There are still ways to suppose that what Plato thinks of here, concerning the banning of entertainment, poetry or fiction in particular, is that one should still practice a responsible use to them (Bolaños, 2017).

The guardians then must not be fickle, but genuine. They should pattern their ways according to their models.

2.12. JUST (434a)

Finally, justice is the summation of all the characteristics of becoming a guardian. The traits expected of them can be recapitulated in the meaning of justice: "the having and doing of one's own and what belongs to oneself (434a)." Socrates says that it is "ridiculous if the guardian needs a guardian (403e)." Therefore, the just man deals with the proper training for himself in a just manner as possible. It is a virtuous task and it requires most of his life.

The guardian and its training in guardianship is a subtler exercise. Socrates entrusts the city of justice in the hands of these guardians, for they are the best caretakers of this city. And if this is so, this subtler exercise means much more. Socrates envisions guardians who engage in their craft virtuously, since, and for the most part, they must be sleepless like hounds (404b).

3. RECAPITULATION

The question that goes against the relevance of this paper is the perennial question of cynicism: is there hope under the cynicism of the contemporary constellation of political affairs? The position of the paper leans towards the positivity of hope. There is hope because it somehow rests on an ideality that persists on the quasi-impossibility of justice. It is this vital injunction that "philosophic education is more than just a pipe dream and that philosophic logos is not just bad poetry" (Howland, 2004, p. 22). One has to take a reasonable leap at this point in going over the fact that the guardians themselves can be trusted in rearing their own education and that for the most part the cynicism that encroaches political affairs does not totally dictate societal dealings. Underlying the very kernel of the 'cynical impulse' is the irony of honestly seeking an ideal track by which we can assess contemporary culture and by which we can resist (in a postmodern way) the 'enlightened' false consciousness of our time (cf. Sloterdijk, 1988).

This realistically hindered by the instances that counter the ideal position of the state. For instance, there are professional settings where the young are made to rule and are promised to be trained *during* the act of ruling. But this is not training but a kind of injustice since they must be treated only as auxiliaries of those who are at their prime. The problem is when those who are at their prime cannot also rule and deflect their huge responsibility by burdening the young. The problem of women today also is related to this when women become subjects of violence rather than taught to become leaders (cf. Wertheimer, 2018; Deguma, 2018). Then there is the problem of happiness. When the focus is always on the state and the good of the city and the guardians are deprived of inordinate desires, are the guardians happy? Socrates seems to bypass this question by acknowledging the bigger picture of the polis (Butler, 2018).

Moreover, it would also seem that this privilege is not free of criticisms when it would seem that the guardians are posts that proliferate their power and hierarchical positionality. Such a privilege can be ensured by one of their functions, that is, in safeguarding the 'power, wealth, and privilege of the minority ruling class against the instinct for democratic freedoms' (Iveson, 2019).

The number of realistic claims can fracture at this point the ideality that lies at the core of the text. However, a shot of hope resides in the path of enlightenment, so that the guardians are not rulers without knowledge of what is going on. They are put in a position because they are the most fitting to engage in the vicissitudes of the craft of ruling. The 12 principal characteristics of guardians are not only blueprints but motives for a better ruler. Curbing the democratic freedoms of citizens to an enlightened path or focusing on the good of the state can create positive results. A guardian, though not expecting reciprocations, is contended that the life and governance of the polis are just and creates, though not entirely, spaces for



justice. And this can be a source of happiness, the privilege of those in service. It puts an ideal that is inclusive of women and concerns the community as a whole. Acknowledging that there are real problems to be addressed and that only a continuous and ongoing training can address the aporias and deadlocks at hand, a guardian works within the conditions on the ground. Hence, a guardian is “not a fantastical leader of a fantastical city, but an enlightened citizen of any city who has now acquired the ability, and with it the obligation, to apply the lessons learned by working for justice, in imitation of Socrates” (Wood, 2018).

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