

The Education of the Third Class in *The Republic*: Plato and the *locus classicus* of formative justice

Avi I. Mintz

The final version of this paper was published in *Teachers College Record*, Volume 118 (October 2016)

DEDICATION: I dedicate this essay to my mentor and friend, Robbie McClintock, and I am honored to contribute to this symposium on his work. I take my engagement with the history of educational thought in this paper to be one of the most fitting tributes I could offer to Professor McClintock, a man for whom the history of educational thought is an endlessly productive preoccupation, and to whom I am deeply indebted for my own appreciation of its place in contemporary educational scholarship and practice.

In *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey credited Plato for recognizing, among other things, “the function of education in discovering and developing personal capacities, and training them so that they would connect with the activities of others.”¹ Yet Dewey ultimately argued that Plato’s rigid class-based system was antithetical to individuals’ flourishing: “original capacities are indefinitely numerous and variable... the degree in which society has become democratic, social organization means utilization of the specific and variable qualities of individuals, not stratification by classes.”² I mention Dewey’s criticism of Socrates’ ideas in *The Republic* because they are illuminating when contrasted with Professor McClintock’s discussion of Plato in his groundbreaking work on formative justice. McClintock shares both Dewey’s optimism about the potential for all people to contribute meaningfully to society and Dewey’s recognition that education ought to aid in that endeavor by developing people’s personal capacities.³ Like Dewey, McClintock credits Plato for recognizing the necessity of creating appropriate conditions to enable individuals or groups to control their own formation; indeed, he argues that such “formative justice” is the core concern of Plato’s *Republic*.

In addition, like Dewey, McClintock worries about tailoring education to fixed ends, arguing that “real education [does] not involve conforming to predictabilities.”⁴ In that respect, McClintock might have read Plato’s *Republic* as limiting each individual’s potential, just as Dewey did. Yet McClintock defends Plato from this attack. He sides with those who read *The Republic* as an exhortation to live justly rather than as a dialogue offering an educational, social, or political blueprint. Thus, he suggests, we need not worry about the extent to which class stratification in the city-in-speech limits personal flourishing because Plato ultimately proposed no such thing.⁵ Ultimately, McClintock’s Plato was concerned with concept formation, exploring how each person can undertake the project of self-formation while simultaneously inspiring his readers to do so. McClintock identifies Plato’s chief educational concern as an argument that one’s potential cannot be surmised from one’s heredity and, therefore, Plato contemplated an expansion of education beyond anything most Greeks would have imagined. McClintock describes the selection of the guardians as promoting a Rawlsian “veil of ignorance” in which a common education provides the foundation for the discovery of people’s true individualities.

As McClintock is well aware, many scholars have argued that Socrates does not actually propose a viable mechanism for the social promotion and demotion of children born to different classes. Indeed, McClintock’s reading of *The Republic* is chiefly directed against Karl Popper and others who read Plato as totalitarian elitist who believed *hoi polloi* needed to be subordinated, or even enslaved. By describing Plato’s *Republic* as the “*locus classicus*” of the concept of formative justice,⁶ McClintock reads Plato as exhorting readers to reconsider their own path to flourishing and to see others’ potential flourishing as a central societal concern.

McClintock, therefore, encourages his readers to reexamine this foundational text in the history of educational thought – inviting them to set aside prejudices that have tainted the work’s reception by educational theorists for over half a century. That *The Republic* is a key text in the history of educational thought is not debated. Indeed, educational theorists refer to it, teach it, and write about it regularly. But, surprisingly, with only one exception of which I am aware prior to McClintock, educational theorists have not considered precisely for whom the primary common education is intended in Plato’s *Republic*.⁷ Yet as some philosophers and classicists have noted, it is not at all clear that the third class of producers receives the same education as the guardians. This uncertainty calls into question whether Plato’s Socrates advocates a “veil of ignorance” and this question is critical into understanding Socrates’ proposal for education in the city-in-speech. In this paper, I review some of the evidence about the eligibility of the third class for the common education. I then offer an alternative reading of *The Republic* on the education of the third class, suggesting that Plato’s treatment of the third class in *The Republic* can be read aporetically – that is, though there is evidence that implies that Socrates has little interest in educating the third class, there is also reason to believe that Plato may have intentionally drawn readers into questioning whether the third class ought to receive the common education.

The Case for the Education of the Third Class

When recounting the discussion of education in Book VII, Socrates says, “This much has been agreed, Glaucon: for a city that is going to be governed on a high level, women must be in common, *children and their entire education must be in common*, and similarly the practices in war and peace must be in common, and their kings must be those among them who have proved best in philosophy and with respect to war” (543a; my emphasis).⁸ Earlier, when describing the

myth of the metals, Socrates noted that everyone in the city is related despite differences in the three classes – rulers have gold in their souls, auxiliaries silver, and producers iron and bronze. Because of the common relation, “it sometimes happens that a silver child will be born from a golden parent, a golden child from a silver parent, and similarly all the others from each other” (415a-b). Socrates emphasizes the importance of class transference: “if a child of slight ability were born of the guardians, he would have to be sent off to the others, and if a serious one were born of the others, he would have to be sent off to the guardians” (423c). Socrates also seems to suggest – though the text is not without ambiguity – that the early education must be common up through the point at which it can be determined which kind of metal is in the soul: “I’ll attempt to persuade first the rulers and the soldiers, then the rest of the city, that the rearing and education we gave them were like dreams; they only thought they were undergoing all that was happening to them, while, 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). Socrates’ comments imply that the early education would be dismissed as a dream because the assignment to a class must occur only after common education; that is, only after a child has been educated and assessed can one tell to which role she is best suited (413c-414a). The selection process is sufficiently important that the well-being, the very justice of the city depends on it, as each person must do the job that suits her (423d & 434c). Socrates even explicitly says that the guardians’ chief responsibility is to oversee the education: “the god commands the rulers first and foremost [*prōton kai malista*] to be of nothing such good guardians and to keep over nothing so careful a watch as the children, seeing which of these metals is mixed in their souls” (415b). The metals cannot be determined without the guardians’ oversight, and therefore the children’s performance in their education requires meticulous assessment.

In light of these comments about education, many readers have argued that the common education of all classes is logically required to support Socrates' argument. McClintock's analysis is consistent with this position as he argues that a Rawlsian veil of ignorance governs the system of promotion.⁹ Francis M. Cornford notes of the third class that "no explicit provision is made for their education; but unless they share in the early education provided for the Guardians, there could hardly be opportunities for promoting their most promising children to a higher order."¹⁰

Likewise, Robin Barrow, who has worked extensively on education in Plato, writes, "it is an obvious inference that some aspects of the primary stage of education outlined for the Guardians must apply to the majority too. For if the city is to exhibit the virtues of moderation, and if the governed must therefore consent to the rule of the philosopher-kings, the majority must share at least the moral upbringing of the Guardians. It is therefore a reasonable surmise that the education in 'mousike' and gymnastics is common to all."¹¹ Barrow emphasizes that only *some* aspects of the education will be common to all, yet a common basis must indeed exist.¹² Similarly, N. R. Murphy writes that Plato "would have had to allow that the extension of elementary education to all members of his state was really a necessary feature not only in the selection of the guardians according to natural capacity but also (a) for the moral training necessary to produce *homonoia* [solidarity] throughout the city, (b) in accordance with the principle that each man should have the kind of life that will ensure his happiness."¹³

The Case against the Education of the Third Class

If Socrates intends to include the third class in the comprehensive education, he unfortunately provides no explicit detail about how the social and educational system might

enable transfers between classes. Some scholars have read Socrates' relative silence on the issue as evidence of Plato's contempt for the third class and skepticism about future guardians emerging from it. In the most extreme articulation of this position, Karl Popper argues that "only members of the ruling class are educated"¹⁴ and Warner Fite states that there is not "a hint in the *Republic* of any 'all-embracing system of public education.' All the education proposed in the *Republic* is stated explicitly to be education for the guardians and there is no hint of any provision for the masses... For Plato the education of the masses was neither necessary nor important."¹⁵ Without going quite as far as Popper and Fite, George Hourani and C.D.C. Reeve have developed further critiques of Plato's treatment of the third class.¹⁶

Hourani argues that there is no direct evidence that the third class receives the common education at all, and there are explicit comments that suggest that they do not.¹⁷ A few points warrant review here. Hourani notes that children are separated at birth based on their parents. In the myth of the metals, Socrates says that children with iron in their souls will be thrust out "among the craftsmen or the farmers" (415c). As Hourani points out, it is possible that this reassignment might come late; that is, after the second "birth" from the earth following the common education (mentioned above).¹⁸ But, on the other hand, Socrates later says that designated officers "will take the offspring of the good and bring them into the pen to certain nurses who live apart in a certain section of the city. And those of the worse, and any of the others born deformed, they will hide away in an unspeakable and unseen place" (460c).¹⁹ If the children of the third class are separated at birth, could they receive an equally good education?

Hourani also points out that in the recapitulation of *The Republic* in *Timaeus*, Socrates says, "do we also remember saying that the children of the good parents were to be brought up, while those of the bad ones were to be secretly handed on to another city? And that these

children should be constantly watched as they grew up, so that the ones that turned out deserving might be taken back again and the ones they kept who did not turn out that way should change places with them?” (19a; cf. 18a-b).²⁰ One could challenge Hourani’s argument about this evidence because the recapitulation in *Timaeus* is not necessarily a straightforward description of *The Republic*.²¹ Socrates proposed no explicit plan to take children to other cities in *The Republic*. Yet the line in the *Timaeus* is both in the spirit of *The Republic*’s meritocracy – heredity is not destiny as some worthy children would return to the city, and some unworthy children would be sent away – and in the spirit of the alleged contempt of the third class that Hourani sees in Plato – Hourani writes of Socrates’ proposed education, “No one could be less keen than Plato to throw his pearls before swine.”²² While one could counter Hourani by arguing that perhaps the children of “the good” parents in *The Republic* and *Timaeus* refers to the good parents of each class, such an interpretation seems to strain Socrates’ meaning.²³

Additionally, the premise of the entire discussion of education is what is appropriate for those with exceptional natural qualities (376c). There is no explicit mention of the education of the third class in books two and three. Yet in book five there is, but the implication is not a common education but two separate educations: “In the city we were founding, which do you think will turn out to be better men for us—the guardians who get the education we have described or the shoemakers, educated in shoemaking?” (456d).²⁴ This comment is not definitive in the case against the common education for the third class because, at some point, specialization must occur – guardians are educated to be guardians while producers are educated in their crafts; perhaps this refers to a specialized education that occurs after an earlier common education. Nevertheless, Socrates’ comment does add yet another piece of evidence that suggests that education will not be shared by all classes.

Hourani's argument has been further expanded and developed by C.D.C. Reeve, who also argues that only the gold and silver children receive primary education explicitly. Reeve points out that the only tests mentioned for the young, the sole mechanism for promotion, are those that separate philosopher-kings from other guardians. No tests to separate producers from guardians are mentioned. Reeve writes, "Given the explicitness of the *Republic* on educational matters, especially innovative ones of this sort, this is strong evidence that no such pool is countenanced."²⁵ Further, given the importance of imitation in the education (394e-395b), the stories designed for the craftsmen would need to be different from those of the guardians that feature warriors like Achilles, Ajax and Odysseus. But no alternative stories for producers are proposed. And no one receives the music education before they "recognize the forms of moderation, courage, liberality, magnificence" and so forth (402c), which, Reeve argues, limits the producers' eligibility for music education.²⁶ Finally, the musical education and physical education are both aimed at the soul (410c). Since the education is aimed at "reason and aspiration... they should be aimed at the guardians and rulers, not the producers."²⁷

Reeve concedes more than Hourani by concluding that some aspects of the primary education may indeed be common to all, insofar as the stories that will be told must be common to all in the city. But Reeve argues that this relatively minimal provision of common education may be directed at producers, but only for the sake of the guardians; that is, the education is not directed at producers "in order to *educate* them. And that seems to be just another way of saying that primary *education* is not intended for producers."²⁸

If Popper argued for Plato's outright hostility towards and subjugation of the third class, Hourani and Reeve make the case for Plato's neglect of them. Either way, it is difficult to see how a compelling case could be made that Socrates explicitly outlines a prolonged, substantial

primary education for the children of all three classes and a viable mechanism for promoting the children born to parents of the third class. However, it is worth reiterating that no clear case against the third class's education exists because Socrates' proposal makes some provision for common education a logical necessity. Thus, perhaps one can do no better than conclude that it is not clear what the education of the third class would entail based on Socrates' proposal in Plato's *Republic*.

Aristotle on the Education of the Third Class

Curiously, neither Hourani nor Reeve notes a line in Aristotle's discussion of *The Republic*, in *Politics* (2.1-5), that supports their case. In Aristotle's discussion of Plato's *Republic*, he says that Socrates claims that the regime will need few regulations because of the quality of the education (424e ff.). Aristotle counters that state regulations are necessary because Socrates "gives that education only to the guardians" (1264a32).²⁹ Reeve, citing Murphy's reference to Aristotle, mentions only Aristotle's earlier comment: "as to what the regime will be like for those who are members of it, Socrates has not said, nor is it easy to say" (1264a11-13).³⁰ Murphy notes, in addition, another passage in which Aristotle reiterates that, concerning the third class, "Socrates has decided nothing" (1264b36-37). Murphy's citations from Aristotle supports his analysis of the education of the third class in that, essentially, he argues that the text is ambiguous (as described above).³¹ But Aristotle's explicit claim that the education is designed for the guardians alone should not be casually dismissed.

As Aristotle studied in Plato's academy and was just a generation younger, it would be easy to give his statement priority. However, the matter is not so simple. First, it is not clear to which education Aristotle refers. Is it to a primary education sufficient for determining the

various capacities and aptitudes of the young? Or is it to the full education of the guardians, including the military training and the curriculum outlined in Book VII? Aristotle refers simply to the *paideia*. It is possible that a philosopher like Aristotle might have believed that the only people who require few state regulations are those philosophers who have studied higher order mathematics, harmony, and dialectic, as the guardians do. Thus, he might be implying that only philosophers can live without many external laws and regulations. Even then, as the process of moral education in *The Nicomachean Ethics* demonstrates, Aristotle sees tremendous moral, social, and political value in laws.³² Further, Aristotle's strong comments about Socrates' provision for the guardians' education alone is undermined by his remark in the following sentence that "nothing has been decided ... of what regime, education, and laws the farmers are to have" (1264a36-38). Aristotle seems to be saying only that the education is explicitly outlined for the guardians; since Socrates does not specify how the third class will be educated, it is not necessarily denied to them. This sentiment is consistent with the other remarks cited above where Aristotle states that Socrates has simply not said much about the producers at all (1264a11-13 & 1264b36-37).

Interestingly, Aristotle describes the regime as Socrates', rather than Plato's. In his first discussion of the regime, Aristotle writes, "Plato's *Republic*, where Socrates says..." (1261a6-7). Aristotle mentions Plato by name only three more times in *Politics* Book 2, and those three references each attribute the regime of *Laws* to Plato.³³ On the other hand, he describes the regime of *The Republic* as Socrates' thirteen times and never directly attributes the argument of *The Republic* to Plato.³⁴ Aristotle's comments may suggest that he distances Socrates' argument from Plato's in *The Republic*. Regardless of Aristotle's intent, Plato's relationship to Socrates' proposals warrants consideration.

When Popper was writing, and for much of the twentieth century, it was a matter of course to assign all views in the alleged “middle” and “late” dialogues to Plato. In recent decades, however, scholars have increasingly hesitated to do so. *The Republic* does develop a positive account in that various images and arguments are offered that point to the existence of Forms or a single Form of the Good. Yet *The Republic* is still a dialogue, designed to engage, confuse, provoke, test, and, most importantly, educate its readers.³⁵ If one recognizes that Plato incorporates certain inconsistencies or silences to suit his pedagogical purpose, the interesting matter involves considering which inconsistencies or silences might have been intentional.

In the context of the third class’s education, Murphy writes, “it is interesting to notice that neither here, nor elsewhere, does there seem to be any evidence that Aristotle ever consulted Plato himself about the meaning of a passage in the Dialogues.”³⁶ Perhaps Aristotle never did discuss his critique of *The Republic* in *Politics 2.5* with Plato. Yet it is possible that, for Aristotle and others within and outside of the Academy reading *The Republic*, the third class’s education was a subject of discussion. Unlike our critiques of Plato’s arguments which, given the expanse of time, are often anachronistic, the discussions of Aristotle and his generation were more likely to have been intentionally provoked by Plato himself. At the very least, we can say with certainty that Plato’s *Republic* so intriguingly points to the need to address the education of the third class that it has been striking readers as a problem at least since Aristotle. I am now venturing into speculative ground, and it is dangerous to argue a specific intent from Plato’s silence. Is there any support for this idea that the silence on the third class’s education might have been an intentional provocation?

Socrates’ Three Waves and Plato’s Silence

In his description of the city-in-speech, Socrates particularly causes a stir among his interlocutors by raising three issues, to which he faces three waves of challenges. First, he argues that women should receive the same education as men and are equally fit to be guardians. Second, women and children should be common to all. Third, philosophers should rule. All three of these proposals are radical from the perspective of fifth and fourth century BCE Athenian life, but among Plato's Athenian readers, none would be understood as emerging *ex nihilo*. First, while Athenian girls received little education, Spartan girls did. Xenophon describes how the Spartans required that "women should take as much trouble over physical fitness as men. Moreover, he [Lycurgus] instituted contests of speed and strength for women parallel to those for men."³⁷ The Spartan women were also reputed to have exerted great control over the regime. Aristotle criticizes Spartans because "the management of many things fell into the hands of women," and he goes on to say that women practically ruled Sparta: "what is the difference between women ruling and the rulers being ruled by women? For the same results occurred" (1269b31-33).³⁸ But Spartan women were not true rulers, and though they received some physical education, they were not warriors. Athenian readers, however, would have been familiar with women who did indeed fight and rule.

Foremost in mind of Greeks debating the ability of women to rule, administer, and fight would have been the Amazons, a fierce warrior society led by women, possibly excluding men entirely. An intense war with Amazons was prominent in Athenian history and myth. According to myth, Theseus accompanied Heracles as he completed his ninth task, capturing the girdle of the Amazon queen, Hippolyta. Theseus returned home to Athens with Hippolyta's sister, Antiope, probably as a captor or war prize, whom the Amazons came to liberate. After three months of siege of the Acropolis, Theseus' army was finally able to defeat the Amazons.

References to the Amazons women are found in Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, and the orator Lysias, who, notably, is present in *The Republic* (328b). As Sue Blundell concludes, “although the origins of the Amazon myth are obscure, there is no doubting its popularity, particularly in Classical Athens: confrontations with Amazons were mentioned frequently by poets, orators, and historians, and were a common theme in sculpture, frescoes and vase paintings. Presumably, then, it was a myth that meant something to the population at large; undoubtedly, it had gained a place in the official buildings, including the Parthenon.”³⁹

More contemporaneously for Plato’s readers, Artemisia joined Xeres’ campaign against Greece, and rose to become a trusted advisor and military leader. Herodotus’ account celebrates both her wisdom and bravery.⁴⁰ In addition, Sauromatai women were reputed to fight, ride, and hunt, at least until marriage. Herodotus reports that a Sauromatai girl could not marry until she killed an enemy in battle. Some confirmation of existence of these women warriors was found in sites dating from the sixth to fourth centuries in which women were buried with weapons and armor.⁴¹ Many Athenians may have thought such societies were ill-conceived, as Lysias seems to have,⁴² but they would not have seen Socrates’ idea of women warriors and rulers as unprecedented. Athenians also revisited the question of women’s political participation in their festivals featuring comic poetry – the theme of, for example, Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* and *Assemblywomen*, and *Women at the Thesmorphia*.⁴³ Further, in Plato’s Academy, at some point in Plato’s lifetime, according to later accounts, two women, Lastheneia of Mantinea and Axiothea of Philius, became students.⁴⁴ At least once these women were present,⁴⁵ if not earlier, the readers within Plato’s Academy would have well understood women’s philosophical potential.

Regarding the communism of the city-in-speech, Plato's readers would have had some familiar precedents as well. The Spartans knew who their own children were, but parented them communally, in a sense, in that any adult could instruct or punish others' children when warranted.⁴⁶ Aristotle notes that the Libyans had women in common (1262a19-21) and Phaleas proposed the leveling of property (1274b9-11). Herodotus mentions common women among the Massagetai, the Agathyrsoi, the Nasamones, and the Auseans.⁴⁷ Common messes were a well-known feature of life in Sparta and Crete.⁴⁸ While Socrates' proposal pushes communism further than any historical regimes of which Plato would have been aware, his readers would have been familiar with the accounts of other societies which incorporated aspects of communal living, common women, and common rearing of children.

The proposal that philosophers should rule would certainly seem shocking to many Athenians. So far were Athenians from considering whether philosophers should rule that they rather debated whether a philosopher was merely trivial and unmanly, on the one hand, or subversive and dangerous, on the other.⁴⁹ Plato surely recognized that he has the very philosopher who was tried and executed for philosophizing propose that philosophers should rule. Yet, in another sense, Plato's readers would have recognized the value of wise leaders. Before "sophist" became disreputable in Socrates' and Plato's lifetimes, "sophist" was used to describe Solon, one of the founders of Athenian democracy, and the others considered the Seven Sages, *hoi hepta sophoi*.⁵⁰ Plato's Socrates desired a philosopher-ruler just as many people throughout the centuries and throughout the world have desired rulers who are just and wise. Certainly, the friends of Socrates sitting with him in *The Republic*, the very people who compelled Socrates to remain with them that evening (327c) – including Socrates' hosts, who

had, by the time Plato wrote *The Republic*, suffered terribly under Athenian tyrants – would have recognized the value in philosophical rulers.

Plato's Socrates is undoubtedly advocating radical views with respect to women's participation in politics and rule, communism, and philosopher-rulers. All of these positions would have been viewed as extreme, and even, perhaps, foolish by many of his contemporary Athenians. However, each of these positions had some precedent familiar to the residents of Classical Athens. Because of the many sources that attest to women warriors and rulers, communism, and philosopher-rulers, we can safely assume that all of these subjects would have been discussed among Plato's readers. Just as we should be careful to distance Plato from Plato's Socrates, we might distance Socrates' interlocutors from Plato's readers. Though Socrates' interlocutors do not reveal deep awareness of these historical precedents, Plato's readers presumably would have; such topics appear frequently in the surviving literature of Classical Athens. While Socrates' proposals are radical, they are not Socratic inventions, though they are nearly treated that way in the dialogue. Plato must have been aware of this difference. *The Republic* was probably not primarily designed to convey how Socrates' audience would have historically responded – would Lysias not have had something to say about women warriors and rulers?⁵¹ Plato must rather have intended for *The Republic* to serve as a starting point, a provocation for his readers.

As Aristotle and more recent readers have noticed, Socrates' argument is oddly silent on the education of the third class, and the lives of the third class in general. Common education was clearly a topic of discussion in Classical Athens – not only in Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, but also in Xenophon's discussions of Sparta and, to a more limited extent, Persia.⁵² Aristotle returns often to the importance of common education and the historical regimes, like Crete and

Sparta, in which it can be found.⁵³ But there was no historical precedent for common education so broad that would have included something akin to an underclass, or third class. Indeed, Sparta, a clear comparative *polis* for the city-in-speech (544c), pointedly denied the common education to the Helots, their repressed underclass of producers.⁵⁴

The Spartan example has led some scholars to conclude that Plato had no intent to include the third class in the common education.⁵⁵ If Sparta was the model for the city-in-speech's common education, then Socrates would have shown no interest in educating the producers. In fact, Sparta is an important point of reference for the educational regime, but not a model. Sparta is explicitly the model for the *timocracy*, which is compared unfavorably to the ideal regime (545a). And Socrates implicitly criticizes Sparta by requiring that the auxiliaries treat third class well (416a-b).

If Plato had Socrates include the third class in the common education, that would have been both Socrates' most radical proposal, and his most original proposal. Socrates proposes no such thing. Two reasons for Platonic silence on the issue are possible. First, Plato never even considered the option, possibly because he shared a Spartan contempt for the third class. Second, in contrast, Plato had Socrates create a problem for the readers of *The Republic*. Socrates devotes so much of his argument to the importance of education that the provision for the third class strikes readers as a significant omission. Perhaps Plato wanted his readers to engage in precisely the kind of inquiry that Aristotle takes up: what kind of educational provision would best support the regime? Should it include the third class? If so, what mechanism must be established for such a common education? Like Aristotle, we find ourselves asking these questions at the end of the dialogue. There is a case to be made that such a reaction is no accident. Because Plato's pedagogical intent is integral to his work, and because he understood the value of education so

well, he would not challenge first time readers with the most radical ideas. First time readers would be sufficiently perplexed and, probably, disturbed by the three waves.⁵⁶ But for more serious students, the ones who might have studied in the Academy and who would have returned to *The Republic* repeatedly, a more radical and serious topic opens up before them – the possibility, or perhaps the necessity, of including the third class in the education. Given Socrates’ inconsistent and neglectful treatment of the third class’s education, I argue only for the possibility that it is Plato’s intentional provocation to draw serious readers into considering a radical idea.

Conclusion

Due to Socrates’ conflicting suggestions about the selection process of the guardians, W.K.C. Guthrie wrote, “Unfortunately Plato seems confused about this, and the kindest thing one can say is that he wished to give the talk an air of naturalness by allowing new ideas to strike [Socrates] from time to time which would modify what has gone before.”⁵⁷ My suggestion that Plato may have intended this confusion has led me to a conclusion similar to McClintock’s: Plato might have intentionally encouraged readers to consider the conditions necessary for enabling all individuals in a society to flourish. Like McClintock, I agree that Plato provided no unequivocal political or educational blueprint for a society in *The Republic*. The fact that the dialogue may be open on the critical question of the education of the third class seems to me to support the idea that Plato is indeed exhorting readers to live more justly, and to reconsider the nature of education that would enable others to take control of their self-formation. By locating the *locus classicus* of formative justice in Plato’s *Republic*, McClintock illuminates a concept that helps us rethink our own often foolhardy educational ideas and practices. But his use of Plato also reveals

something about McClintock himself: he is a genuine scholar whose broad and deep reading has informed his critique of our society's educational priorities and, perhaps more importantly, has helped his readers and students revisit the question, "why educate?"⁵⁸

1. John Dewey, *The Middle Works, 1899-1924, vol. 9: 1916* (Carbondale: SIU Press, 1980): 95.
2. Ibid., 96-97. On Dewey's treatment of Plato's *Republic* in *Democracy and Education*, see Avi Mintz, "Dewey's Ancestry, Dewey's Legacy, and the Aims of Education in *Democracy and Education*," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, 8(1), 2016, pp. 23-35.
3. "Human potential has multiple components, each overflowing with possibilities, with each needing to be developed and brought into an appropriate balance and order, one unique to each person, which it is the person's vital challenge to fulfill. Robbie McClintock, *Homeless in the house of intellect: Formative justice and education as an academic study* (New York: Laboratory for Liberal Learning, 2005): 76-7.
4. Robbie McClintock, *Enough: A Pedagogic Speculation* (New York: Collaboratory for Liberal Learning, 2012): 177.
5. "If taken as a set of socio-political restrictions prescribed for objective polities, Plato's division of his postulated city into three functional castes, sharply differentiated from each other, strikes present-day readers as profoundly reprehensible. But Plato was not prescribing political arrangements; he was explaining an educational concept... The castes were a conceptual fiction." McClintock, *Homeless in the house of intellect*: 76.
6. McClintock, *Enough*: 178.
7. To my knowledge, no one has addressed this point in education journals. Robin Barrow, however, has addressed this topic in three of his books. I will return to Barrow below.
8. All translations of *The Republic* in this essay are from Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, Second ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
9. As McClintock argues in this issue, "Rawls called on people to act counterfactually, as if they were ignorant of their position in society. Plato's use of a veil of ignorance was far more sensible, for people are ignorant of their potentialities until they develop them, and it remains a very powerful argument for extending full educational opportunity to all."
10. Francis M Cornford, *The Republic of Plato* (Oxford, 1941): 63-4; cf. 154n1. Cornford was in good company in his argument. Paul Shorey, Norma Wilde, Constantin Ritter, Benjamin Jowett, and A.E. Taylor held the same position. Warner Fite assembles the relevant sources in his critique of their position in Warner Fite, *The platonic legend* (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1934): 15-17.
11. Robin Barrow, *Plato and Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976): 28.
12. Robin Barrow, *Plato, utilitarianism and education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975): 21-22. More recently, Barrow has cautioned that Plato may not have envisaged "regular and routine" transfers between classes, but Barrow still concludes that the text supports some provision of common education for the third class. Robin Barrow, *Plato* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007): 41-2 & 122-3n3.
13. Neville Richard Murphy, *The interpretation of Plato's Republic* (Clarendon Press, 1951): 78. Others too have argued that the third class must receive some moral education. Vlastos argues of the musical education, "That this is directed at all the citizens, not only the philosophers-to-be, is certain: it is explicitly designed to inculcate *sophrosunē*, a virtue required of all three classes." Gregory Vlastos, "Justice and Happiness," in *Platonic studies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), 137. See also Fred D Miller, "Plato on the Rule of Reason," *The*

- Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43(2005): 78n45 and Randall R. Curren, *Aristotle on the necessity of public education* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000): 50-1 & 233-4n22.
14. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1: *The Spell of Plato* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; repr., 1971): 267n13; cf. 46.
 15. Fite, *The platonic legend*: 24.
 16. Fite's treatment is extensive (pp. 14-40) but, I would argue, lacks the balance of Hourani and Reeve. Fite's conclusion in particular goes too far: "It seems then that there can be little doubt that a 'system of caste' was Plato's cherished ideal: a system, namely, in which occupation and social status would pass without change from father to son through the thousands of years." *Ibid.*, 40. Even if Socrates had thought regular class transfers were unlikely, he explicitly says that heredity is not destiny.
 17. See also Fite on this point; *ibid.*, 21-23.
 18. George F Hourani, "The Education of the Third Class in Plato's Republic," *The Classical Quarterly* 43, no. 1-2 (1949): 60n1.
 19. *Ibid.*, 59.
 20. Plato, "Timaeus," trans. D. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997).
 21. The audiences are different for one thing, and a dramatic dating makes a conversation of *The Republic* occurring the previous day unlikely, as is noted in *Timaeus* (17a-c). Though Socrates may have simply recounted *The Republic* on the previous day, rather than actually having had the conversation with Glaucon, Adeimantus et al. on the previous day. See the discussion and sources in Catherine H. Zuckert, *Plato's philosophers: the coherence of the dialogues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009): 420n1 and Debra Nails, *The people of Plato: a prosopography of Plato and other Socratics* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Pub., 2002): 326.
 22. Hourani, "The Education of the Third Class in Plato's Republic," 59.
 23. The "good," *agathoi*, like the "best," *aristoi*, had a connotation of an aristocratic class, which makes this suggestion less plausible.
 24. See also Fite, *The Platonic legend*: 24.
 25. C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-kings: The argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): 186-7.
 26. *Ibid.*, 188.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. *Ibid.*, 189.; Reeve's emphasis. Likewise, Rachana Kamtekar argues that Plato generally does not intend the third class to receive the primary education but regarding the moral education, "there is no reason to suppose that producers would be prevented from hearing these stories, for how could they harm them?" Rachana Kamtekar, "What's the good of agreeing? Homonoia in Platonic politics," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 26 (2004): 159n49. For criticism of Vlastos's position that the third class receives the music education see C. C. W. Taylor, "Plato's totalitarianism," *Polis* 5, no. 2 (1986): 291n17. And C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-kings*: 310n8. For a defense of Vlastos against Reeve, see Curren, *Aristotle on the necessity of public education*: 233-4n22.
 29. Translations from *Politics* are from Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter Simpson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
 30. Reeve, *Philosopher-kings*: 309n5.
 31. Murphy writes that the "exposition of the scheme in the early books may be deliberately indefinite; Plato would have been conscious that he has not yet come to the question of intellectual education in its full sense, and it would have been labour wasted to go into details of an educational scheme which is to receive radical revision in Book VII." Murphy, *The interpretation of Plato's Republic*: 78-79. Below I suggest another interpretation for the indefinite exposition.

32. Aristotle writes, “to obtain the right training for virtue from youth up is difficult, unless one has been brought up under the right laws” (1179b31-32). Further, Laws make virtuous action familiar, and therefore benefit people not only when young but throughout their lives (1179b32-1180a24). Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald, The Library of liberal arts (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, repr. 1999).
33. At 1266b5, “Plato, in writing the *Laws*...”; at 1271b1, “One might also criticize the supposition of the legislator in the same way that Plato did in the *Laws*”; and at 1274b9, “Also peculiar to Plato are the law about drinking, that the sober should preside at drinking parties, and the law about military exercises, that there should be training with both hands, as it ought not be the case that one hand should be useful and the other useless.” Though 1274b9 does not mention *Laws* explicitly, Aristotle is describing two regulations proposed by the Athenian Stranger in *Laws*.
34. 1261a6, 1261a12, 1261a16, 1261b19, 1261b21, 1262b6, 1262b9, 1264a12, 1264a29, 1264b7, 1264b24, 1264b29, and 1264b37.
35. Much has been written about Platonic pedagogy. For an authoritative and compelling account of it in *The Republic*, and in Plato’s dialogues generally, see William H.F. Altman, *Plato the Teacher: The Crisis of The Republic* (Lexington Books, 2012).
36. Murphy, *The interpretation of Plato's Republic*: 78n1.
37. Xenophon, "The Politeia of the Spartans," in *Aristotle and Xenophon on democracy and oligarchy*, trans. & ed. J. M. Moore (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), I.4.
38. On the education, politics, and lives of Spartan women, see Paul Cartledge, *The Spartans: the world of the warrior-heroes of ancient Greece, from utopia to crisis and collapse* (New York: Vintage books, 2004): 165-80.
39. Sue Blundell, *Women in ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995): 61.
40. Herodotus, *The histories*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt, rev. John Marincola (New York: Penguin Books, 2003): 7.99, 8.68-69, 8.101-103, though less positively at 8.87-88.
41. Blundell, *Women in ancient Greece*: 61. See also, Herodotus, *The histories*: 4.116-17.
42. Lysias was no feminist. He argued that the Amazon’s rise was due to their innovations in weaponry (their use of iron) and fighting (on horseback). These innovations made them “seem superior to men in spirit.” But Lysias goes on to say that when they encountered the Athenians, “brave men,” “they displayed spirits to match their bodies.” Lysias, *Lysias: The oratory of classical Greece*, vol. 1, trans. S. C. Todd, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). 2.4-6.
43. Aristophanes, *Loeb Classical Library Vols. III & IV*, ed. & trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000 & 2002).
44. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks (New York.: W. Heinemann; G.P. Putnam's sons, 1925): III.46 & IV.2.
45. Writing long after this period, about 750 years (and therefore undermining the credibility of the account), Themistius records that Axiothea came to Athens from Arcadia to see Plato after having read his work on the state. Themistius, Oration 23, “The Sophist” in Robert J Penella, *The private orations of Themistius* (Univ of California Press, 2000): 122.
46. Xenophon, "The Politeia of the Spartans," I.10-11.
47. Herodotus, *The histories*: 1.216, 4.104, 4.172, 4.180. These sources and others are gathered in in Robert Mayhew, *Aristotle's criticism of Plato's Republic* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997): 9-10n14. Mayhew’s thorough discussion of Aristotle’s treatment of *The Republic* is also helpful on the topic of education; see pp. 112-114 and, on the question of the third class’s education, 49, 130-133 & 136n4.
48. Numerous sources attest this. For example, Aristotle, *Politics*, 1271a26-36 & 1272a1 ff.; Strabo, *The geography of Strabo*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, 8 vols., Loeb classical library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923). X.iv.16 & 20.
49. The charges that Socrates faced of impiety and corrupting the youth suggest the fear that philosophers were subversive and dangerous. In Plato’s *Gorgias*, for example, Callicles’ describes philosophy as something befitting only the young, an “unmanly” and “laughable”

- pursuit (485b-485e). Plato. *Gorgias*, tr. J.A. Arieti and R.M. Barrus, Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing.
50. W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Sophists* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971): 28-9.
 51. See note 42. On Plato's engagement with Lysias in *The Republic*, see Howland, Jacob. "Plato's Reply to Lysias: *Republic* 1 and 2 and *Against Eratosthenes*." *The American Journal of Philology* 125, no. 2 (2004): 179-208.
 52. Xenophon, "The Politeia of the Spartans"; Xenophon, *The education of Cyrus*, trans. Wayne Ambler, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001): I.ii.2-9.
 53. Randall Curren reconstructs Aristotle's position on common education in *Aristotle on the necessity of public education*. Curren gathers relevant sources (both ancient and contemporary) on the topic of common education in Greece in general on pp. 11-19.
 54. Aristotle was clearly concerned about the volatility of underclasses. See *Politics* 1264a32-36, 1269a34-1269b12, and 1272a39-b22.
 55. For example, Popper writes, "As in Sparta, the ruling class alone is permitted to carry arms, it alone has any political or other rights, and it alone receives education, i.e. a specialized training in the art of keeping down its human sheep or its human cattle" Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*: 46.
 56. It is worth noting here how well Altman makes the case that Plato's *Republic* includes preparatory, visionary, and testing elements. Altman, *Plato the Teacher*.
 57. Guthrie, W. K. C. *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. IV: Plato, the Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period*. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975): 457.
 58. I am grateful for critical comments I have received from many, but I cannot neglect to mention, in particular, those of W.H.F. Altman and those of the audience at the University of Haifa's Philosophy of Education Forum.