

The Forms:

The Sun, The Line, The Cave

The Classical World: Spring 2010

- I. Review of *Republic* So Far
- II. The Forms
- III. First Analogy: The Sun
- IV. Second Analogy: The Line
- V. Allegory of The Cave

Review of *Republic*

Overall questions:

What is justice?

What is a just man?

What is a just polis?

Book I: Attempted *elenchus*

- define justice by using conventional beliefs
- fails; irreconcilable premises

Books II-IV: Construction of ideal polis

- education of the guardians – purify beliefs

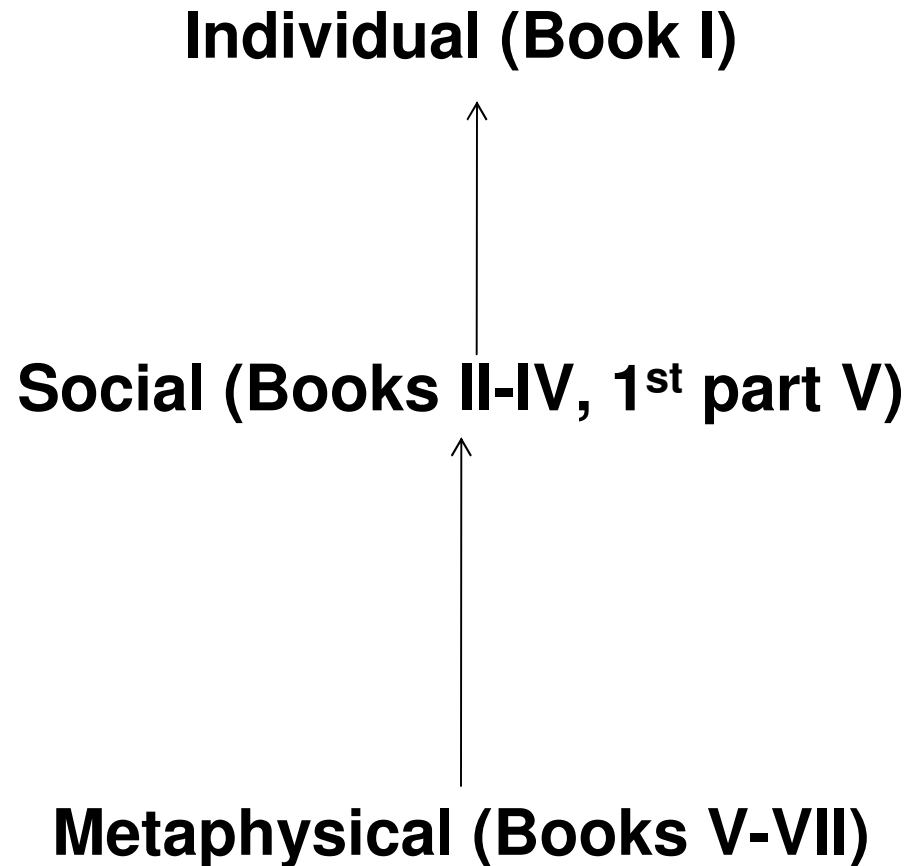
Situation at End of Book IV

Disagreement in Book I cannot be resolved because conventional beliefs are unreliable.

Solution of Books II-IV is to construct a polis in which people (rulers) will not merely have beliefs but knowledge.

But what guarantees that the polis of Book IV is a polis that will foster knowledge? (Why not think that the kallipolis is constructed from Socrates' own conventional, unreliable beliefs?)

Levels of Accounts of Justice



Book V: Odd Twists

Families in the Kallipolis

(no conflicts between Antigone and Creon here!)

Rules of war and civil war

(an important topic, given recent events)

Glaucon presses a question:

“whether it’s possible for this constitution to come into being, and in what way it could be brought about” (471c).

Book V: A New Tack

Socrates' Reponse:

“Until philosophers rule as kings in cities or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils, Glaucon, nor, I think, will the human race” (473c,d).

The Philosophers

“Then many strange people will be philosophers, for the lovers of sights seem to be included, since they take pleasure in learning things. ... Are we to say that these people – and those who learn similar things or petty crafts – are philosophers?”

“No, but they are like philosophers.”

“And who are the true philosophers?”

“Those who love the sight of truth.”

“That’s right, but what exactly do you mean by it?”
(475e)

True Philosophers and Forms

“Since the beautiful is the opposite of the ugly, they are two...”

“And since they are two, each is one...”

“And the same account is true of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and all the forms. Each of them is itself one, but because they manifest themselves everywhere in association with actions, bodies and one another, each of them appears to be many.

“On the one side are those you just now called lovers of sights, lovers of crafts, and practical people; on the other side are those ... whom one would alone call philosophers” (475e-476a).

True Philosopher or Crank?

“And Adeimantus replied: No one would be able to contradict the things you’ve said, Socrates, but on each occasion that you say them, your hearers are affected in some such way as this. They think that, because they’re inexperienced in asking and answering questions, they’re led astray a little bit by the argument at every question and that, when these little bits are added together at the end of the discussion, great is their fall...” (487a-b)

True Philosopher or Crank?

“I say this with a view to the present case, for someone might well say now that he’s unable to oppose you as you ask each of your questions, yet he sees that of all those who take up philosophy ... the greatest number become cranks ... while those who seem completely decent are rendered useless to the city because of the studies you recommend” (487c-d).

Adeimantus' Challenge

Two Levels

(1)The explicit: Show me that philosophers are fit to rule.

(2)The implicit: Show me how we can be sure that your argument is sound – and not merely an instance of eristic trickery.

Status of the Argument

Socrates has built up the kallipolis, and his account of justice, through dialectic.

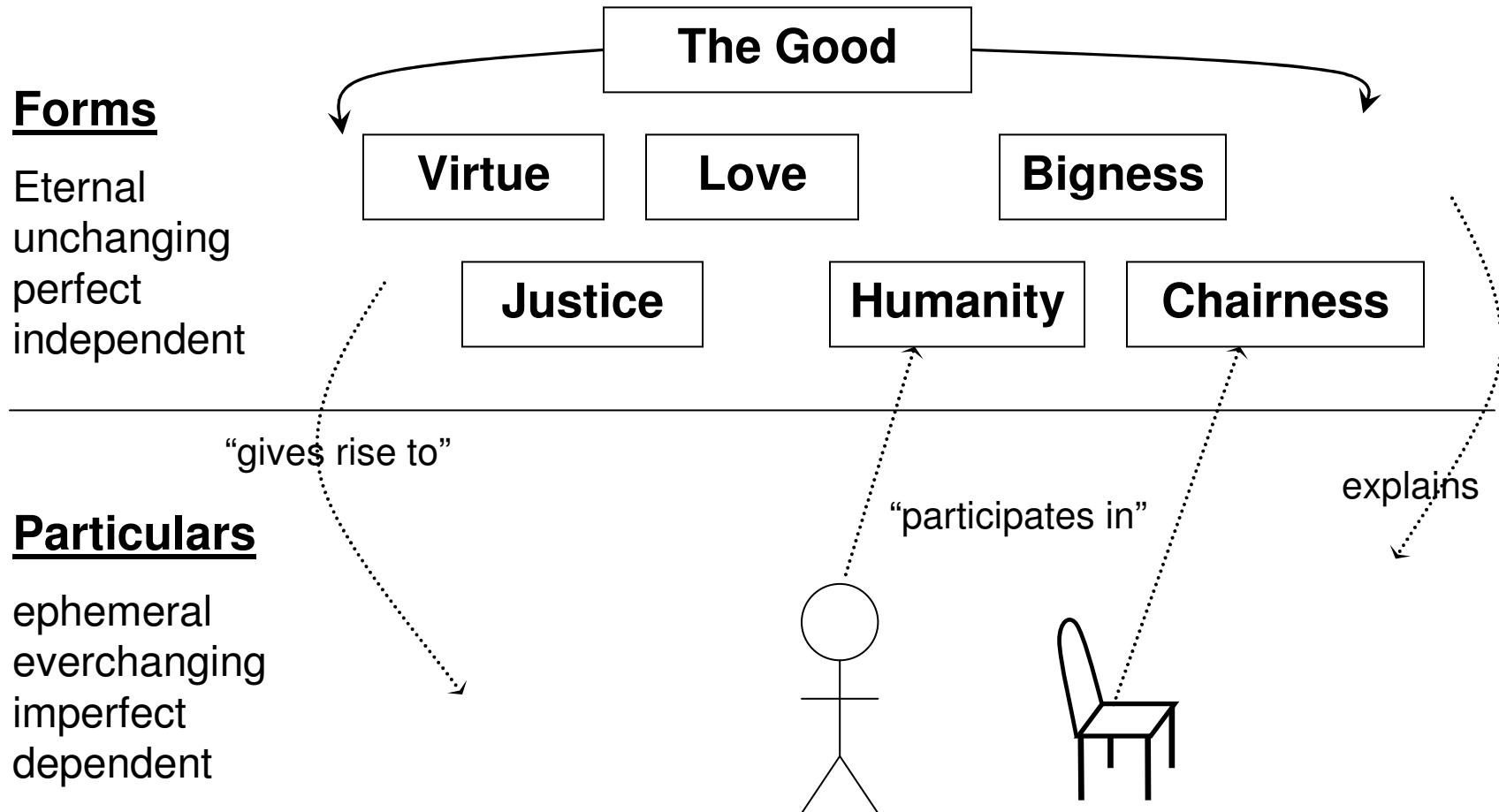
This is an unsure foundation, insofar as it depends upon the beliefs and reasoning abilities of the interlocutors.

Therefore, Socrates' account of justice needs a more solid foundation.

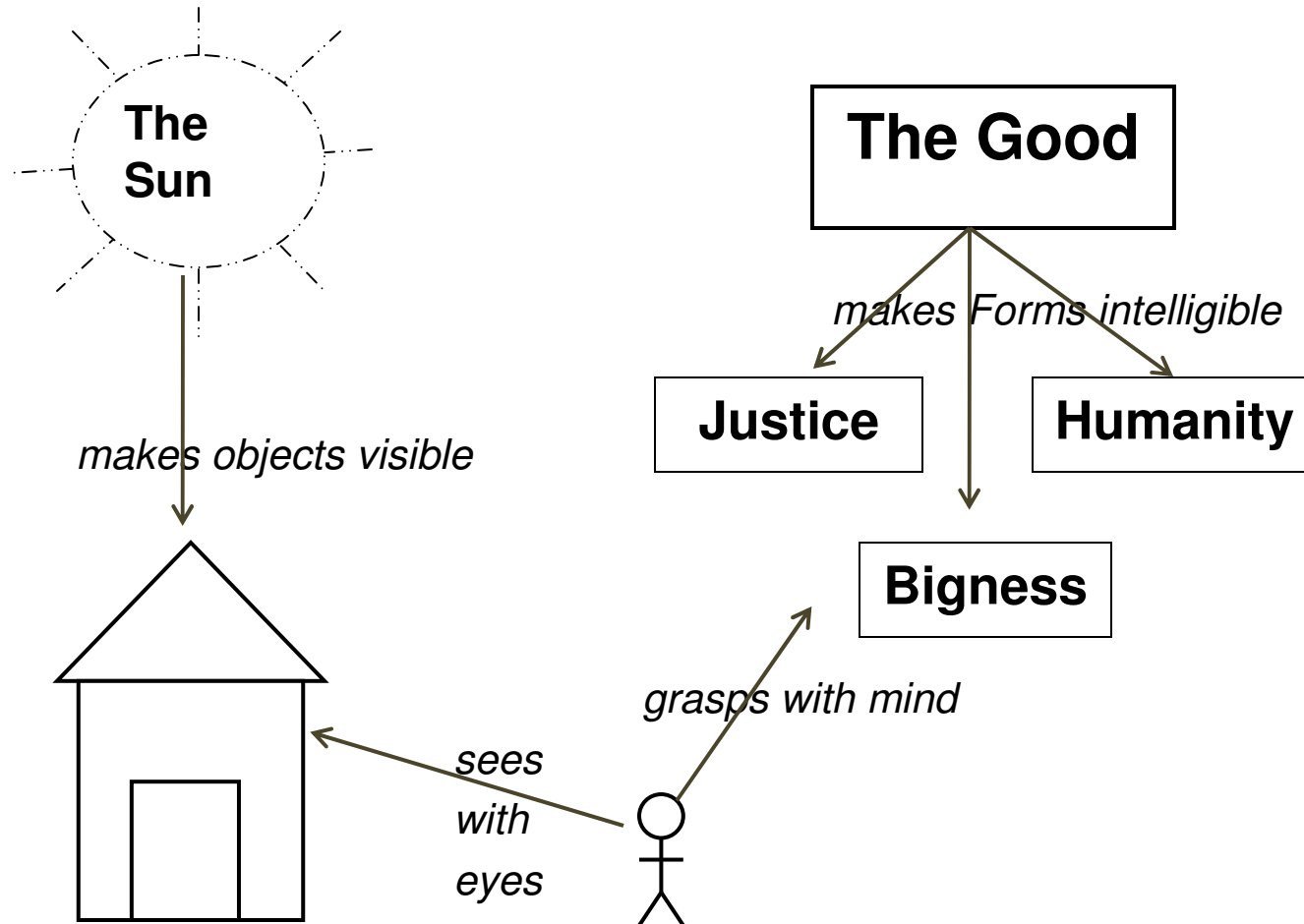
Return to the Forms

“We say that there are many beautiful things and many good things, and so on for each kind, and in this way we distinguish them in words. ... we speak of beauty itself and good itself, and so in the case of all the things that we then set down as many, we turn about and set down in accord with a single form of each, believing there is but one, and call it ‘the being’ of each” (507b).

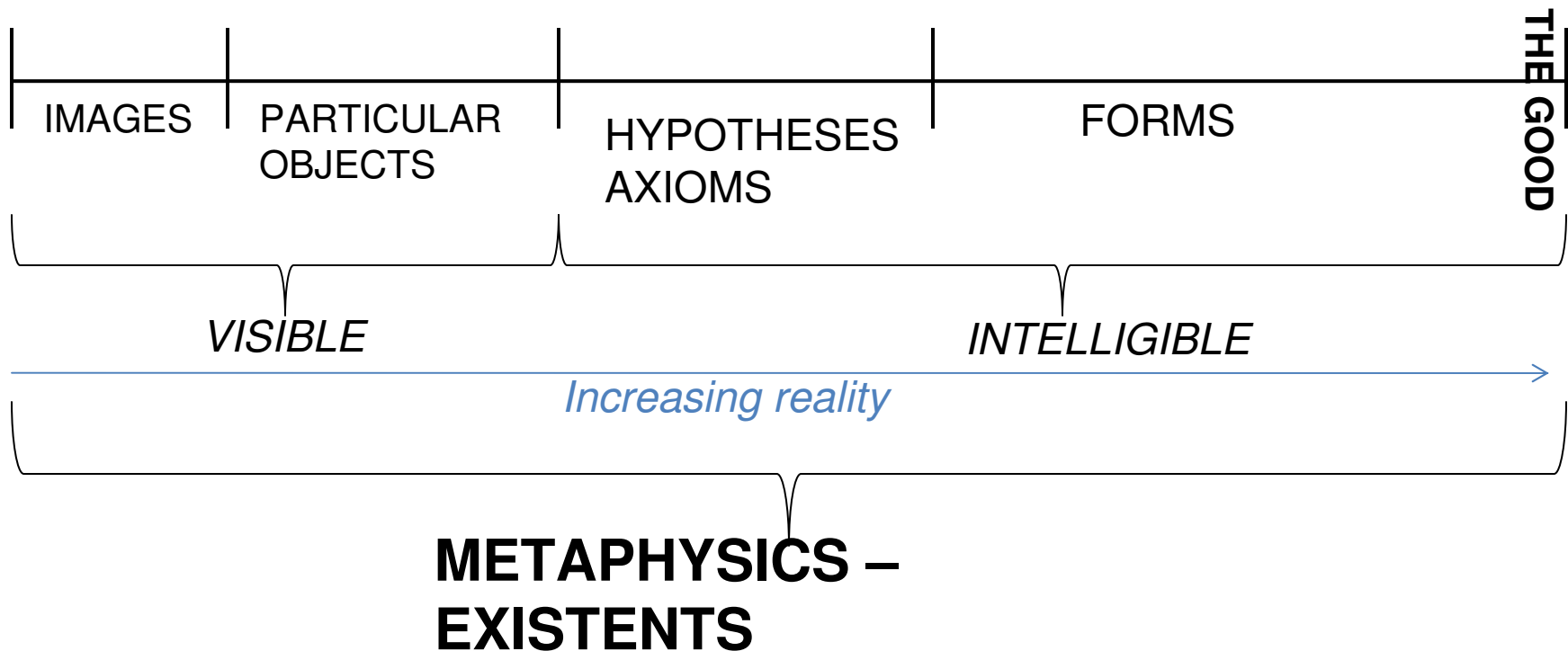
The Forms



First Analogy: The Sun

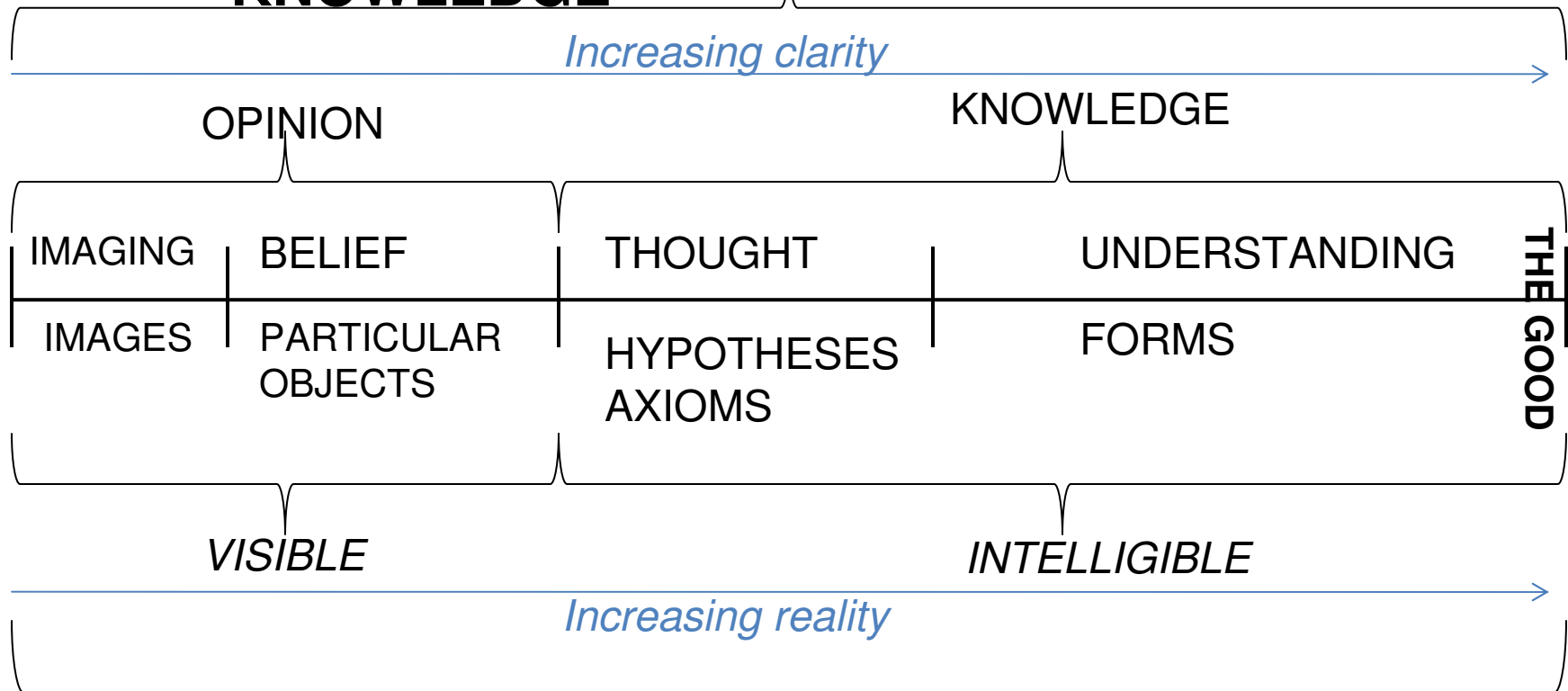


Second Analogy: The Line



Second Analogy: The Line

EPISTEMOLOGY – THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE



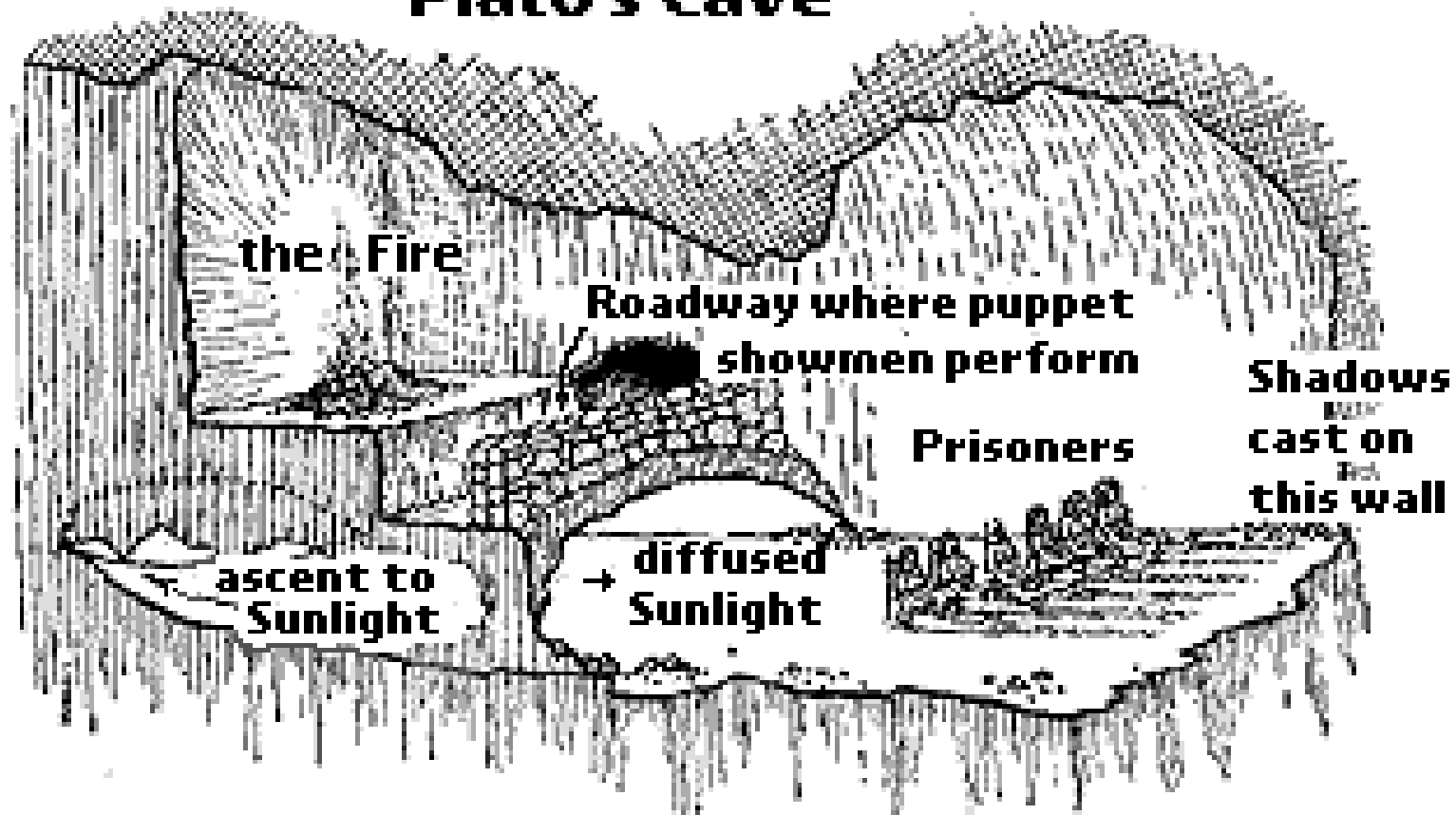
METAPHYSICS – EXISTENTS

The Line: Gaining Knowledge

“...by the other subsection of the intelligible, I mean that which reason itself grasps by the power of dialectic. It does not consider these hypotheses as first principles but truly as hypotheses – stepping stones to take off from, enabling it to reach the unhypothetical first principle of everything. Having grasped this principle, it reverses itself and, keeping hold of what follows from it, comes down to a conclusion without making use of anything at all, but only of forms themselves, moving on from forms to forms, and ending in forms” (511b-c).

Allegory of the Cave

Plato's Cave



From *Great Dialogues of Plato: Complete Texts of the Republic, Apology, Crito, Phaido, Ion, and Meno, Vol. 1.* (Warmington and Rouse, eds.) New York, Signet Classics: 1999. p. 316.
Downloaded from <http://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/320/cave.htm>

The Cave and Education

“Education isn’t what some people declare it to be, namely, putting knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes. ... But our present discussion, on the other hand, shows that the power to learn is present in everyone’s soul and that the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is, namely, the one we call the good” (518b-d).

Dialectic and the Forms

“...dialectic is the only inquiry that travels this road, doing away with hypotheses and proceeding to the first principle itself, so as to be secure” (533c-d).

“Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation, as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you’ll say that he doesn’t know the good itself or any other good” (534b-c).

Summary

The kallipolis *is* the ideal polis, because:

- the ideal polis is ruled by those who have secure knowledge, and
- the kallipolis is ruled by philosopher-kings, and
- the philosopher-kings alone have secure knowledge, because:
 - they alone have pursued dialectic to the point of grasping the form of The Good, and
 - only those who have grasped the form of The Good in this way have secure knowledge.