**Workshop Five: Making Plato Concrete**

**Out of the Cave : Education, Ancient and Modern**

**Pomona College — Spring 2021**

**time started: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**workshop duration: 85 minutes**

**complete by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Part I: General Instructions & Check-Ins (15 minutes)**

For this workshop, you will be organized in a Zoom Breakout Room with a group of approximately four students.

Please begin today by reading the instructions and making note of your assigned topic:

* Room 1 = Prompt A.
* Room 2 = Prompt B.
* Room 3 = Prompt C.
* Room 4 = Prompt D.

You will have one hour to work through your topic, following the prompts below, and to prepare a report to the class. You’ll also have time for a ten-minute break.

First, decide who is going to give the report. Discuss for a minute or two who would benefit the most from making this presentation, and then select that person. Someone else should keep an eye on the time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please send a message via Zoom asking for help. I’ll join you as soon as possible.

Please do make notes — even if you aren’t the volunteer reporter — of your responses to this workshop. Once you’re clear on the workshop’s organization, please take a few minutes to check in before beginning.

**TOPICS**

*Note: Translations are by Grube & Reeve, so will differ slightly from the Griffith that we decided to use. If you’d like, you may compare the translations as part of your analysis of your concept.*

1. **A primary purpose of education is to learn self-regulation.**

“One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself, He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes that three parts of himself like the three limiting notes in a musical scale – high, low, and middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious. Only then does he act.” (443d)

1. **Stirring up understanding**

“The [sense perceptions] that don’t summon the understanding are all those that don’t go off into opposite perceptions at the same time. But the ones that do go off in that way I call *summoners*—whenever sense perception doesn’t declare one thing any more than its opposite, no matter whether the object striking the senses is near at hand or far away.” (523c)

“If the one is adequately seen itself by itself or is so perceived by any of the other senses, then as we were saying in the case of fingers, it wouldn’t draw the soul towards being. But if something opposite to it is always seen at the same time, so that nothing is apparently any more one than the opposite of one, then something would be needed to judge the matter. The soul would then be puzzled, would look for an answer, would stir up its understanding, and would ask what the one itself is. And so this would be among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around towards the study of that which is.” (524e-525a)

1. **Moving up the divided line toward knowledge of the Good**

For Plato, higher education is ultimately aimed at knowledge of the Good. This is the final goal of education: all the other steps are designed to pave the way to this end.

“It is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to reach the study we said before is the most important, namely, to make the ascent and see the good.” (519c)

1. **Education as a turning of the soul.**

“Education isn’t what some people declare it to be, namely, putting knowledge into souls that lack it, like putting sight into blind eyes…. Our present discussion shows … That the power to learn is present in everyone’s soul and that the instrument with which each learns … cannot be turned around … without turning the whole soul…. [E]ducation is the craft concerned with doing this very thing, this turning around, and with how the soul can most easily and effectively be made to do it” (*Republic*, 518b-d).

**PROMPTS**

**1. (about 20 mins.)** Turn to the relevant portion of the *Republic* (associated with, but not limited to the quotes provided on this worksheet) and discuss thoroughly what Plato means by the idea you have been given. Try to understand this idea both in his terms and your own. Treat the idea sympathetically. For the time being, assume it has merit and try to figure out an interpretation of it that brings this merit to the fore and makes sense of it. Be prepared to explain the idea and its implications to the class.

**Please take a 10-minute break before proceeding to Prompt 2.**

**2. (about 15 mins.)** Imagine that each of you is a high-school teacher. Discuss the implications of this idea for high-school students. (For this exercise, don’t worry about the “selectivity” issue. Assume that all your students have the “best natures” and deserve the best education possible.) How would you reorganize high school education in order to best realize Plato’s idea? Be prepared to present your proposal with its justification to the class.

**3. (about 25 mins.)** Maintaining your role as teachers, come up with a specific, creative teaching/learning proposal you could do in your classroom which follows directly from the Platonic idea you have been considering. Flesh this out with as much detail as you can. Be prepared to present your example with its justification to the class.