PERHAPS THE MAJOR PROBLEM which any political regime faces is the problem of establishing stability; i.e., maintaining order within the society. Plato was one of the first political philosophers to attempt to solve this problem in an integral way. His writings greatly influenced later thinkers and are valuable in assessing current attempts to educate citizens in the values of a particular political regime.

Proper education (paideia) according to Plato could provide the requisite stability in his ideal polis, the Republic. The Greek concept of paideia meant much more than what we mean by "education" today. The term was used in a general way to mean the equivalent of our concept of "culture." It involved learning the basic skills but also included the result of the educational process as well: culture and the cultivation of the values of civilization. Plato saw education as serving to "cement" the different elements of the community together in such a way as to provide for a self-sufficient and well-ordered community. He saw the fruits of education being intricately woven into the characters of the men of the community and contributing constantly to the achievement and preservation of the
"good life" in the community and in the souls of men. Civic education, i.e. the education of the citizens to support the goals of the regime, was thus an integral part of the process of education, and this view influenced almost all political philosophers who came after Plato.

In examining the Platonic system of education, I will first discuss the relationship Plato believed existed between the human soul and the political community. There is an important difference here, I believe, between the modern interpretation of the connection between individual soul and community and Plato's interpretation. To understand fully what Plato assumes about human nature and its relationship to the political community is necessary if one is to understand what he is saying about education. I will then focus on Plato's attack on Athenian education of the fourth century B.C. To understand the weaknesses in the system Plato analyzed is to understand more clearly what Plato was attempting to do in establishing a better (nay the best) system for his ideal community. Third, I will outline the development of Plato's educational process from early childhood through maturity. What are the important components of each level of education? What does each component contribute to the overall search for ultimate truth? Finally, I will raise some questions which should serve as a beginning for students to consider the implications of Plato's ideas for their own experiences.

The Human Soul and the Political Community

So the reason ought to rule, having the wisdom and foresight to act for the whole, and the spirit ought to obey and support it. . . . When these two elements have been brought up, and trained and educated to their proper function, they must be put in charge of appetite. . . . They must prevent it taking its fill of the so-called physical pleasures, for otherwise it will get too large and strong to mind its own business and will try to subject and control the other elements, which it has no right to do, and so wreck the life of all of them.²

Plato's method in outlining an ideal system of government in the Republic is to investigate the quality or character of the good and happy person. The human soul, according to Plato, is divided into three "parts"; i.e., three elements or powers each of which is manifested by some aspect of human behavior.³ The highest of these elements is the reasoning power of the soul since it is the power which is best able to approach some comprehension and love of the ultimate Good (ton agathon). Reasoning is the one human faculty which is able to order the whole soul according to the order of the ultimate Good. A second quality of the soul is spirit or courage (thumos). This is a quality of will enabling one to act forthrightly in what
one has decided to do. (The level of knowledge in this quality of soul is based on faith or trust rather than on the understanding of reason.) This quality does not apprehend the Good in itself as reason does, but it trusts resolutely in reason's apprehension of the Good and follows reason's guidance. The lowest quality of the soul is desire (or the appetites) which human beings share with other animate creatures. These are the drives associated with passion, self-interest, and sensual urges. The happy and just person is one who has a well-ordered soul, i.e., who develops and maintains this hierarchical ordering of the soul's powers. The purpose of education is to develop in the individual the knowledge and the virtue to achieve this condition of happiness.

By projecting the soul's elements into the polis of the Republic, Plato makes a connection which modern society does not often do. To Plato, if a community is well-ordered, the people living in it will be happy, and they will be able to maintain the order of their souls because the community itself helps to maintain that order. Any weakening of this order in the community weakens the order in the human soul and vice versa. Such order is not produced automatically but requires effort on the part of each person and the guidance of the political regime.

Plato's system of education is both an attempt to find what is the proper place and task for each person in the community (which will therefore work for the perfection of that person and for the community as a whole) and to develop within each class the necessary abilities to perform its duties well and thus contribute to the overall good life of the polis. Each stage of the educational process is so organized as to determine the proper capacity for comprehension of the ultimate Good which each person possesses. The educational system thus develops a sense of self-discipline in each citizen to control his selfish desires and appetites.

Because, unlike courage and wisdom, which made our state brave and wise by being present in a particular part of it, self-discipline stretches across the whole scale. It produces a harmony between its strongest and weakest and middle elements. And so we are quite justified in regarding self-discipline as this unanimity in which there is a natural concordance between higher and lower about which of them is to rule in the state and individual.

Plato's Critique of Athenian Education

In the Republic Plato attacks the existing Athenian system of education. Plato argued that the educational system had corrupted the virtues of the good person and good citizen to such an extent that the polis of Athens was in chaos. Plato's attack was a three-sided critique. First, he attacked the
Athenian practice of education as a private concern. In Athens, education was not supported nor directed by the polis. Private individuals contracted with tutors (Sophists) to teach their children. Plato’s attack on the Sophists was that they often “tailored” the truth to meet the satisfaction of the paying customers. They were, on the whole, uninterested in exploring and loving wisdom; their teaching lacked the unique Socratic method of inquiry which forced a person to question continually any answer one might arrive at—especially answers which dealt with the ultimate purpose of life. While the Sophists asked “Is good a delusion?” Socrates asked, “What is the good?” Unlike the Sophists who assumed that there are no absolutes, Socrates and Plato believed that such absolutes exist. The Sophists were more concerned with producing citizens capable of debating positions on issues and persuading others to support their position regardless of the objective truth of the case. Education in their hands was not directed toward truth but toward the development of skills—especially the skills of argumentation and persuasion, i.e., rhetoric.

Plato argued that the polis must concern itself with education since its very life depended upon the qualities of excellence (virtues) which were developed in its citizens by the educational process. Since all persons were not capable of comprehending the truth at the same level, the polis had to establish and maintain a system by which each individual’s capacity to achieve an understanding of truth at his level of understanding (and thus to achieve a level of excellence or virtue) was developed to the fullest. The rulers of Plato’s Republic were to be the true teachers of men. They must have a “love of wisdom” which would manifest itself in the educational system as a constant search and love for the truth qua truth.

Second, Athens required only an elementary education for the citizens which was inadequate, in Plato’s view, to produce true citizens and statesmen. The role of ruler required an understanding of ultimate order and goodness, which could be achieved only through a long, rigorous, and arduous task of learning and administering the affairs of the polis.

Readiness to learn and remember, quickness and keenness of mind and the qualities that go with them, and enterprise and breadth of vision, aren’t usually combined with readiness to live an orderly, quiet and steady life; . . . but we demand a full and fair share of both sets of qualities from anyone who is to be given the highest form of education and any share of office or authority. . . . And we must not only test it [i.e., this type of character] in the pains of fears and pleasures we have already described, but also try it out in a series of intellectual studies . . . to see if it has the endurance to pursue the highest forms of knowledge, without flinching as others flinch in physical trials.
Because this type of character and quality of soul is so rare, only a few persons will have the ability to rule the city well and what will distinguish them from the others will be a love of wisdom rather than a love of power, wealth, or prestige.

Throughout much of the Peloponnesian War and following the defeat of Athens at the hands of the Spartans, Plato believed the polis was governed and administered by incompetents—men who were pandering to the wishes of the multitude and who were neither capable of understanding true order and justice nor capable of administering the state according to true virtue. The polis was incapable of achieving justice since its rulers (who were the full body of citizens) did not understand the true meaning of the concept. Since they had never been taught to question constantly their assumptions and opinions about such virtues as "justice," they acted only on the basis of disconnected opinions about it which led them into riotous and chaotic discussions about laws and administrative actions. In a vivid passage Plato describes what such "mobocracy" entailed:

> When they crowd into the seats in the assembly or law courts or theater, or get together in camp or any other popular meeting place, and, with a great deal of noise and a lack of moderation, shout and clap their approval or disapproval of whatever is proposed or done, the rocks and the whole place re-echo, and redouble the noise of their boos and applause.8

So much for the art of statesmanship which upholds the ideal of rational and deliberate weighing of options and choosing the best course of action regardless of the popularity of the decision.9 Certainly, for Plato, this was no way to order and to administer a political community.

Third, Athens made no provision for the education of women. They were simply instructed in household duties. Plato considered it necessary for true justice that a woman should receive the same training and education as a man.10 This would permit her to achieve the level of virtue of which she was capable. The polis was that much weaker and disordered for not seeing the necessity to educate a large element of the community which had a potential for good living and for contributing much to the welfare of the polis. Plato thus incorporates women into all three levels of the Republic and requires that they receive the same education as men. "There is therefore no administrative occupation which is peculiar to woman as woman or man as man; natural capacities are similarly distributed in each sex, and it is natural for women to take part in all occupations as well as men, though in all women will be the weaker partners."11
The Ideal Educational Program of the Republic

The methods of education set forth in the Republic reflect Plato's belief in the active participation of the soul in the educational process. Objects are not "presented" to the soul, but the soul directs itself to objects which it desires because there is an attraction between the object and a power of the soul. The instructor should never try to force this movement of the internal power to its object. He is concerned with structuring the environment (i.e., the objects toward which the soul moves). "That environment he seeks to adjust in such a way that the spirit, as it looks around, and moves in response to the attraction which it feels for what it sees, may look around on things beautiful, and move towards the beauty which it sees."\(^{12}\)

Thus, the true art of "teacher" lies in setting the right objects before the soul in order that the person will be drawn toward the true awareness of the various manifestations of the Good (and ultimately, if possible, toward the Good itself). Plato's theory of "remembrance" which is developed in his dialogue Meno is what the teacher builds upon. According to this theory, the soul "remembers" the form or Idea of an object or quality which it had beheld in an earlier spiritual existence. Through the influence of environment the teacher helps a student to resurrect this memory. The teacher's manipulation of environment is the basis Plato uses to develop the various stages of his educational system.

. . . [W]e must reject the conception of education professed by those who say that they can put into the mind knowledge that was not there before—rather as if they could put sight into blind eyes. . . . But our argument indicates that this is a capacity innate in each man's mind, and that the organ by which he learns is like an eye which cannot be turned from darkness to light unless the whole body is turned; in the same way the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change until its eye can bear to look straight at reality, and at the brightest of all realities which is what we call the good. . . . Then this turning around of the mind itself might be made a subject of professional skill, which would effect the conversion as easily and effectively as possible. It would not be concerned to implant sight, but to ensure that someone who had it already was not either turned in the wrong direction or looking the wrong way.\(^{13}\)

Plato is thus taking a definite stand against those who hold to the relativism of truth and to the belief that a teacher infuses his student with knowledge. The dialectic method, developed by Socrates and used by Plato as a teaching device in his Academy, was the vehicle \textit{par excellence} for turning and directing the soul to the proper good and thus permitting the person to "know himself."
Plato's educational plan consists of two major stages. The first involves elementary training up to the age of eighteen, with two additional years after this of military training. It is not clear from the text whether members of the artisan class are to be involved in this phase of education, but it seems reasonable to assume that they would be since this phase deals with the development of the qualities of self-discipline which Plato believed were the prerequisites for living the good life in an ordered polis. Also, moderation is the virtue most predominantly present in the artisan group and it is in this stage of education that such moderation is developed among all the members of the society. Another reason for making the assumption that everyone participates in this early education is the fact that Plato bases advancement in the educational system (and thus in the class-structure of the polis) upon demonstrated potential and achievement on prior educational levels. All youths must be initiated into the educational process in order to test their abilities and determine who among each class of the society should be advanced to the next educational level.

During the first part of this elementary stage, Plato emphasizes the important influence which stories told to children by their mothers and nurses have on their development. The early phases of this education are very crucial to the initial development in the young of a sense of self-discipline and order which will serve as the basis for the order of the community.

And the first step, as you know, is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with those who are young and tender. That is the time when they are easily moulded and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark. . . . Then it seems that our first business is to supervise the production of stories, and choose only those we think suitable and reject the rest. We shall persuade mothers and nurses to tell our chosen stories to their children, and by means of them to mould their minds and characters which are more important than their bodies.15

Thus, the environment must be manipulated almost from the birth of the child, and this manipulation leads Plato to discuss the problem of censorship. (This will be discussed below.)

As the child grows, the curriculum becomes more formalized. In this first stage (from birth to 18 years) the curriculum consists of gymnastics and music. These terms must be construed more broadly than the meaning used today. Gymnastics involved not only exercise, but the care and training of the body, including diet and hygiene. One must learn to care for the body properly since its well-being is an essential beginning for living the good life. Another reason was the necessity to produce strong warriors in the
auxiliary class, and this required the development of good healthful habits at an early stage of physical development. But perhaps the most important purpose was that Plato was aware that mental and physical fitness are related; that the higher element, the soul (wherein resides the mental capabilities) uses and directs the lower element, the body. Thus, the body must learn to respond to the direction of the soul, and to be under the control of the soul in a well-ordered person. Plato saw that the development of self-discipline through the training of the body was an essential first step in the ultimate training of the soul to be the ruling element.

Training in music consisted not so much in singing and instrumental music as in the study of certain specific forms of poetry and literature. This study began the analysis of an order and harmony which would be explored in a much more theoretical form in the higher stages of education. Its purpose was also to relate the deeds of great men for the edification of the young—to instill in them a feeling for proper limits and standards in their actions.

To accomplish this end, Plato proposes a rigid system of censorship to assure that the stories of early childhood and the training in music will be conducive to the type of social and political character which is desirable in the community. Some types of music are detrimental to this development, and it is important for the rulers to prevent these from polluting the minds of the young. This is especially the case with those forms of music which are not conducive to the proper ordering of the human soul. Such forms appeal primarily to the emotions and thus evoke an uncontrolled and irrational response (much like our modern romance novels). They also often depict the gods as less than perfect, and by so doing make it difficult for men to strive for the goodness and order which is proper to human persons, for the gods are the most perfect of beings and should be depicted in the proper way if men are to be expected to act properly.

Accordingly, if it [i.e., the soul] comes into contact with a dramatic form of expression, it will assimilate itself to the spirit of that form. Throwing itself into different characters, some of them good and some of them bad, in hearing or reading a drama it will begin to throw itself into different moods in its own actual life. It will begin to pose, now in this attitude, now in that; and it will thus go exactly contrary to the fundamental principle of the state, that a man should do the one thing, and preserve the one attitude, to which he is called.

In the just state, according to Plato, the literary form most acceptable will be the epic form in which the narrator presents a single perspective, or only occasionally takes on the personality of one of his characters and allows that character to speak.
Both music and gymnastics are required for education and both are directed toward the welfare of the soul and therefore of the person. "Neither alone leads to a satisfactory result, for gymnastics alone makes a man rough and quick-tempered, while mousike alone makes him too soft. What we should aim at is a proper balance of those two elements, temper and love of learning."  

The second stage of education involves a plan of advanced study for those individuals who have passed the screening process of elementary education. This new phase of education begins at the age of twenty and continues for fifteen years. The second stage permits a more individualized form of instruction since the group is much smaller than the elementary group and since Plato believed that the best type of instruction for philosophical understanding was a close relationship between pupil and teacher. Such a relationship would involve both teacher and student in a loving pursuit of the Good through loving the good which they each see in the other. Together they become true "lovers of Wisdom" (philosophers) after long and arduous study.

Plato is quite clear about the distinction between higher and elementary education. The elementary stage "gave a training by habituation, and used music and rhythm to produce a certain harmony and balance of character rather than knowledge; and its literature, whether fictional or factual, had similar effects. There was nothing in it to produce the effect [i.e., the true understanding of ultimate reality itself rather than these examples or imperfect glimpses of this reality] you are seeking." What is now sought is the certain knowledge of the truth found in philosophy.

The curriculum that will begin to lead these persons toward truth is mathematics (from its lower to its higher forms) and astronomy. This is the curriculum of the education system for the first ten years of stage two. Arithmetic is the first studied, and it involves the science of numbers in its broadest sense. Training in arithmetic, Plato believed, was the basis for all study of the truth, and for all practical arts as well. He felt that if one could not distinguish between unity and multiplicity (the one and the many) one could not think nor even act properly. Our perceptions very often are contradictory; whenever we advance beyond simple quantitative perceptions and try to understand qualities, we find that we can be involved in a number of contradictions. This is because the qualities of things which we perceive are relative to those of other perceptions. Thus, the same object may seem both large and small depending upon our comparison of that object with others which we perceive. The question which is raised is whether there is an absolute "large" or "small." If there is such, then how can there be many things which are large and many which are small; or how can there be something which is both large and small at the same time. Our minds are at a loss in attempting to confront these contradictions. Arith-
metric (i.e., the science of numbers) aids us in understanding and resolving the difficulty: it helps us to understand the meaning of unity and diversity. In other words, we learn that the concept "large" is a unique concept regardless of its relationship to things we perceive. When we perceive several objects and give each of them the adjective "large," we are applying the single meaning to a multiplicity of forms which we experience. How can there be a multiplicity of "large" when we experience it in different ways (e.g. a house is large in a different way than an elephant is large)? What Plato is seeking to do is to arrive at an understanding of the unique meaning of the term "large" itself, regardless of its experiential manifestations.

If our perceptions of the unit, by sight or any other sense, is quite unambiguous, then it does not draw the mind towards reality any more than did our perception of a finger. But if it is always combined with the perception of its opposite, and seems to involve plurality as much as unity, then it calls for the exercise of judgment and forces the mind into a quandary in which it must stir itself to think, and ask what unity in itself is; and if that is so, the study of the unit is among those that lead the mind on and turn it to the vision of reality.21

A study of arithmetic will lead men more than any other study to begin to ask questions about multiplicity and unity. The purpose of this phase is to develop reasoning ability in the students. Through this study they begin to question their perceptions in such a way that they move to a level of higher reasoning ability which was left undeveloped in their elementary education.

Following arithmetic, the students are taught plane geometry which is the study of two-dimensional objects. Since these do not exist in our sensual world except as representations of abstract perfect forms, this study moves the student to look to the realm of Ideas for the perfect reality, in which this sensual world only participates.22 Astronomy is also studied not to know and view the heavenly bodies, but to understand the laws of motion; i.e., the ways in which perfect mathematical bodies which are nonexistent in our imperfect sensual world would move in a perfect mathematical space.

In the study of harmonics (a high form of mathematics), Plato builds upon what was studied at the elementary level. In the advanced form of this study, however, he emphasizes a study of the principles which are involved: the study of ratios and mathematical proportions which produce harmony. Once again the study is designed to move the student from the world of sensual experience, which is a fleeting and imperfect experience, to the realm of principles (or Forms) which is the realm of absolute truth that
regulates the sensual world we experience. This is moving the student to understand the realm of reason and to move beyond the realm of sensual experience.

Following the ten-year study of mathematics, the student begins a five-year study of dialectics ("to render and exact an account of opinions in discussion"). This dialectic is the ability to think and to express oneself logically. Since the universals, the Forms, are the objects of reasoned or logical thought (what he has argued above), then dialectic is the discovery of these Forms. It is the method by which one philosophizes; i.e., the method by which one arrives at a true understanding of reality.

Those who understand dialectics will be able to grasp the various Forms and, finally, some awareness of the ultimate Good. They will be able to classify things according to these forms since they no longer judge things by "opinion" but know them in their truest sense. Dialectic is "the coping stone that tops our educational system; it completes the course of studies and there is no other study that can rightly be placed above it." At this level, then, the formal education of the student ends, but his pursuit of the Good and his understanding and love of it have only begun, for he will continue his "study" for the rest of his life. The educational process up to this point has been a constant development of the intellectual powers of the student which has moved through the various stages to the ultimate attainment of human knowledge: an apprehension and an appreciation of the ultimate Good.

At age thirty-five, those who have succeeded thus far in their intellectual advancement are assigned to perform civil and military duties in order that the polis might benefit from their theoretical knowledge and also "that they may have as much practical experience as their fellows." Plato is always consciously aware of the necessity to utilize theoretical knowledge in the interests of the community as a whole. His philosophers do not live in "ivory towers" removed from the everyday cares of the world. Theoretical knowledge must be used to order the community's life or the "good life" will not be possible in the community. During this practical stage, which lasts for fifteen years, the screening process of the students continues. Ultimate political service for them has not been reached, for they are still considered "trainees." They are learning the concrete and practical applications of the principles which they have been studying up to this point as theory. Through their education they are now aware of the problems of a unity and its various manifestations, which means that they are prepared to understand the unity and diversity which must exist in a political community. They now are able to apply their theories to the administration of the polis. According to Plato, service to the polis is one of the virtues of those who have achieved the highest level of knowledge.
When those who have successfully completed this in-service course in public administration reach the age of fifty, they have completed the entire training course and have demonstrated their ability to govern as well as to philosophize. They are then inducted into the Guardians, the true persons of reason, whose task it is to order the society and to control the elements of the polis so that the polis will be the just and "beautiful" city (Kallipolis). As Guardians, their time is divided between matters of administration on the highest level of the polis and periods of pure speculation contemplating the Good in its ultimate perfection. For Plato, the philosopher ruler must love the Good in itself and in its manifestation in the unity of the polis; it is this idea which ties the philosopher to the polis and makes him concerned that it is properly ordered.

The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed, my dear Glaucias, of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands . . . 27

Plato is well aware, however, of the tendency of the philosophers to shun their mundane responsibilities of ruling for the peace and enjoyment of contemplation. But, justice demands that these persons be the rulers of the polis since they are the best in the hierarchical order of the society (and justice demands that they not be ruled by anyone of lower ability or intellectual stature).

. . . [W]e have bred you [the philosophers] for your own sake and that of the whole community to act as leaders and king-bees in a hive; you are better qualified to combine the practice of philosophy and politics. You must therefore each descend in turn and live with your fellows in the cave and get used to seeing in the dark; once you get used to it you will see a thousand times better than they do and will distinguish the various shadows, and know what they are shadows of, because you have seen the truth about things admirable and just and good. 28

Plato does not discuss law in the Republic, not because he overlooked this aspect of rule, but because he believed that the best men (the Guardians) would not need laws to govern. In fact, he felt that it would be harmful to govern the most perfect state by laws: "I shouldn't have thought . . . that a real legislator ought to bother about making laws and institutions of this sort either in a bad state or a good one; in one because they are
no use and nothing comes of them in the other because they are partly obvious and partly the automatic result of earlier training." ²⁹ Plato thus emphasizes the self-discipline and the wisdom which come from the educational process to maintain order in the community.
Several Questions for Discussion

A reading of Plato's *Republic* presents a number of questions concerning his educational methodology and goals for the student of political philosophy. It is not my purpose to answer these questions here, but to raise them for further discussion as students attempt to confront Plato's meaning in studying the text.

For many modern American students there is a reaction against the elitism of Plato. Who is to determine who should advance along the path of education? Should I.Q. tests or some other standardized testing scheme be used to determine who should rule? Is there a connection between the ability of a political ruler to rule and his intellectual knowledge? What types of knowledge should a ruler have to be a good ruler?²³

An important issue which is raised by Plato is the connection between the individual soul and the polis as a whole. In fact, the entire dialogue is based upon the premise stated in Book II that the interlocutors can find justice in the human soul by looking for it in the soul writ large (i.e., the polis). We as moderns see a break between the individual and the political community. We believe that there is a part of us which is private and not subject to control by the political community. Even Aristotle, in his *Politics*, questions the extent of unity which Plato assumes in the *Republic*, and points out the problems of overcoming too extensively the distinction between individual and community. Even his critique does not convey the extent of the problem we have in dealing with Plato's assumption of perfect unity and no individuality in the ruling group of the *Republic*. How much should our lives be controlled by the community and its standards—even if those standards are claimed to be the true and noble standards upon which all persons should base their lives? Have we lost the connection which Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle assumed existed between moral well-being of the soul and political order in society? Without an absolute sense of what is right and good, is it possible for us to argue that political rulers (as well as all persons) must conform their lives to an objective, transcendent standard of Good?

Aristotle raises an important objection to Plato's educational scheme by arguing that Plato has mixed the roles of philosopher and statesman. For Aristotle the intellectual virtue of wisdom (*sophia*) is different from the virtue of practical wisdom (i.e., prudence [*phronesis*]), and thus Aristotle has no place or role for the philosopher ("the lover of wisdom") in the polis. He argues that the philosopher's goal is to find truth and in so doing he must remove himself from the daily cares and concerns of life, whereas the
statesman's goal is to rule well and so must be concerned with the daily needs of his city. Plato tends to minimize the tension directly (although Socrates' own life and mission in Athens graphically indicates such a tension between philosophy and politics), but it is one which we must confront as citizens in a democracy. How much can one expect from politics and the political community in living a happy and morally good life? Have Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and other modern thinkers (even our own Founders, Madison and Hamilton) raised a legitimate argument against the classical thinkers in arguing that the best we can expect from individuals is that each will seek his own self-interest first, and that any political order which does not take that into account is doomed to failure? What is the price we pay for having such a "realistic" or less noble view of the possibilities of human nature? Do we become less able to appreciate the nobility of human nature when we look for crass or enlightened self-interest as the motivation of human action?

These are only some of the questions which the modern student could raise concerning the issues discussed by Plato in his educational program in the Republic. What is important is that the student realize that the questions posed by Plato's analysis are enduring questions which every person should consider and attempt to answer. It is in this way that each is able to fulfill the challenge offered by Socrates and Plato to examine one's life in as complete a manner as possible. Only then is one able to live a truly human life and to achieve true human happiness.
Notes


3 Plato, *Republic*, 436b-441c.

4 This of course was an assumption on the part of Plato, and Aristotle after him, based on their own experiences and those of Socrates, who was Plato's teacher.

5 Ibid., 432a.

6 For a good account of the educational system of Athens during Plato's life see Plato's dialogue *Protagoras*. One of Plato's points throughout his dialogues is that such a chaotic educational system prevented the Athenians from recognizing and accepting a truly good man such as Socrates.

7 *Republic*, 503c-504a.

8 Ibid., 492b-c.

9 Contrast this Platonic approach to rational statesmanship with the ideas of Machiavelli in the *Prince* who breaks with the Platonic tradition of accepting an absolute standard of right action by giving a new meaning to the idea of "rational" decision making. The new meaning presents enlightened individual self-interest as the standard of right action. Modern political philosophy has been shaped by this "new" approach to statesmanship, and has had to confront the problems which are associated with its basic assumptions.

10 An interesting point of speculation is whether or not Plato would have permitted a woman to be "Philosopher Queen" if she possessed the necessary aptitudes and abilities. Although he probably felt that it was possible but highly unlikely that such would be the case, I believe that he would have accepted one because of his view that justice requires those who are the best to rule over the others.

11 Ibid., 455d.


13 *Republic*, 518c-e. For an excellent illustration of this idea and the use
of dialectic in pushing the soul to remember truth see Plato Meno, 82b ff.  
14 Republic, 376e-412a.

15 Ibid., 377b-d. An example of a good story would be one which depicted persons behaving in noble ways or one which showed evil repercussions resulting directly from bad behavior. 

16 An example of the kind of literature which Plato would permit the student to read would be one which depicted the gods acting correctly, and not warring and arguing against each other as depicted in some of the Greek classics. He would, for example, probably argue for censoring parts of the Iliad or of several plays of Sophocles which have too complicated a meaning for most students who no longer understand the nuances of the poetic devices used by the poets to convey their understanding of order and proper human action. What he was most concerned about was depicting the models of good and virtuous behavior in ways which could be understood by most persons. For an interesting, non-conformist view of Platonic censorship see Whitney J. Oates, Plato's View of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972).

17 Barker, op. cit., p. 130.


19 See Republic, 521c-541b.

20 Ibid., 522a.

21 Ibid., 524e.

22 See Grube, op cit., p. 238.

23 Republic, 531e, translated by Paul Shorey, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937), p. 195. I have used Shorey's translation here because it is much closer to the literal Greek used by Plato: dounai te kai amodexasthai logon.

24 Ibid., 534e. For another discussion of the relationship between philosophy and dialectic see Plato's dialogue Phaedrus.

25 Ibid., 539e.

26 Certainly one of the difficult problems they now face is how to render just punishments which are meaningful to both the community as a whole and to the wrongdoer. As rulers who know what justice really is, they must be prepared to dispense it in practical ways which both protect the community and its values and improve the person who has done wrong.

27 Ibid., 473d.

28 Ibid., 520b-d. Ruling, from the perspective of Plato, is no easy task and is filled with risks. Only the love of wisdom can keep a philosopher committed to his task.

29 Ibid., 427a. Plato later changed this view somewhat. In the dialogue Laws, he sees a basic good law (i.e., a constitution) as the best practical ordering principle of the polis. But he still argues that it is to be established
by a wise man, and should be seen as only relatively the best—not absolutely so. The perfect system is still that which is ruled by wise men.


31 See Leo Strauss' writings, especially his The City and Man (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).