

Plato's *Republic*: The Philosopher Kings Modified Version

A: There are two groups of people in the world: Philosophers who understand the universe, and everyone else who doesn't. Of those two groups- which one should rule the world?

B: And how can we know?

A: Well, which group can do a better job at protecting the government and laws—that group should be in charge.

B: Okay

A: And you'll agree with me here: the person who rules the world should have eyes and not be blind.

B: Of course.

A: And there is another group of people. They have eyes.... But don't really see. They are unoriginal and just don't get it.

B: That's true; there are a lot of people like that.

A: So should these "blind" people get to be in charge, when there are other people out there who also want to rule the world? There are other people who are "enlightened"- they are genius and understand more than anyone.

B: We should let the "enlightened" people be in charge, if they have all the good qualities that we need. But first, we have to figure out what makes a person "enlightened"

A: Of course

B: So our first step is to figure out who is one of those "enlightened philosophers". We have to make sure that a person like that actually exists. And then, only those people alone should rule the world.

A: What qualities are you looking for?

B: Well, in the first place the person should love knowledge and not be corrupt.

A: Agreed.

B: And the ruler should like people.

A: True

B: Isn't there another quality they should have, too?

A: What quality?

B: Truthfulness. The person must not lie.

A: Yes, we may make sure they are truthful.

B: "May?" We MUST make sure they are truthful.

A: Right.

B: Is there anything more wise than telling the truth?

A: How could there be?

B: Can someone who loves the truth tell lies?

A: Never.

B: So someone who really loves learning and wisdom, and only tells the truth.

A: Yes.

B: But then again, if a person is really good in one area, then they are usually not so good in other areas.

A: True

B: If a person is a true philosopher, then he will probably never feel real joy in his life—he'll be too caught up thinking.

A: Definitely.

B: The philosopher who rules the world must be kind, too.

A: True.

B: And there's another quality we forget.

A: What is it?

B: The person can't be greedy.

A: Of course.

B: The philosopher will be so intelligent that he won't worry about his life very much.

A: Probably he won't

B: Do you think he will fear death?

A: No.

B: So the philosopher king couldn't be a coward either.

A: Of course not.

B: He can't be jealous or mean or brag all the time either. And he can't be unfair.

A: Never.

B: So we will look at men. We'll look at them and figure out if they are gentle or rude; fair or unfair; these signs will help us figure out who is a regular man and who is a true philosopher who could rule the world.

A: True.

B: And there's one other thing.

A: What?

B: Whether or not he likes to learn new things. Whether or not he will stick to difficult tasks until he gets them done, or if he will just give up.

A: Of course.

B: And of course he couldn't be forgetful

A: Certainly.

B: Or a person who gets depressed easily

A: True

B: And they must have a really good memory too.

A: Certainly

B: And lastly, the bad things of nature can make things seem really bad sometimes. A philosopher can't get depressed.

A: You're right.

B: So he must keep his mind on the truth?

A: Yes.

B: So, most of all, we must find a person who is gracious, and kind. He must be able see the true nature of everything.

A: Yes.

B: Well, don't all these qualities we have been mentioning go together? Don't they form a full and perfect person?

A: Absolutely.

B: And a person would only be able to do that if he had the gifts of a good memory, quick mind, nobility, grace, friendliness, justice, courage and temperance. Who is like that?

A: Everyone would like a person like that.

B: So we've agreed. We should only let people like that rule our government. Nobody else is good enough.