

**THE “NOBLE LIE” AND TENSIONS IN MORAL SENSIBILITY  
THAT *FORM* THE PLATONIC GRID;  
MAKING MODERN DAY “DOGS OF WAR”**

A Thesis

by

STEPHEN RICHARD LASSE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

May 2009

Major Subject: Philosophy

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Approved by:

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**ABSTRACT**

The “Noble Lie” and Tensions in Moral Sensibility That *Form* the Platonic Grid;

Making Modern Day “Dogs of War”. (May 2009)

Stephen Richard Lasse, B.S., United States Military Academy

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. John J. McDermott

This inquiry explores the possibility of applying principles from Plato’s education system in the *Republic* to modern military leadership development programs. Both are concerned with producing a “guard-dog” that will serve the interests of the state rather than exploit vulnerable civilians. Plato proposes *educating* guardians with a natural disposition to believe the “noble lie,” that it is better to serve others than to pursue self-interest for personal gain; but, would the proper tension in moral sensibilities prescribed by the Platonic Grid help or hinder a military leader to successfully act on the battlefield?

First, I examine Plato’s theory to familiarize military leaders with the education system from the *Republic*; including his views on unity, reality, the theory of the forms, and recollection of knowledge that underlie Plato’s enquiry into the nature of justice, and lead to the need for inner harmony of the soul through the proper tension of wisdom, courage, and temperance to rule the three elements of the soul. Then I analyze the key leaders from the Battle of Balaclava, the Battle of Gettysburg, and the siege of the Alamo for possible correlations of the application of the Platonic Grid aligned with the

“noble lie” to success on the battlefield. This includes inquiry into the likelihood that belief in the “noble lie” can motivate soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice. I conclude by examining how Plato’s theories could be assimilated into a military pedagogy to produce modern day “dogs of war” that leads to the startling conclusion that adherence to the “noble lie” could also be in the self-interest of the guardian who seeks to serve the best interest of her nation.

**DEDICATION**

*For my parents, Richard Stephen and Dorothy Nancy Lasse,  
who embody servant leadership*

*I venerate and aspire to emulate your example.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has bridged the chasm between military leadership and academia, the two professions that have chosen me in adulthood. I wish to recognize some of the people who have profoundly influenced my interaction with each of these institutions. First, I would like to thank CPT Paul Tipton, who was brave enough to use the Socratic method to *educate* a bunch of inquisitive, and highly impressionable, young cadets – you challenged me to question my beliefs.

SFC Jonas Hewey, whose example spoke louder than his laconic prose, taught me more about leadership in a handful of months as my Platoon Sergeant than I learned in four years of classroom instruction. The men of SFODA 733, my first command in Special Forces, confirmed my belief in the professionalism, resourcefulness, and character of the non-commissioned officer corps; that so many of you made MSG and SGM is not surprising to me, I was fortunate to have served with you, and welcome the opportunity to work with you again.

COL “Griz” Getty, MSG Bugsy Moran, MSG Charlie Williams, CW4 Chet Haywood, MSG Rob Valles, and CPT Carlo Gonzales; each of whom showed me in their unique manner that there is more than one way to think outside the box, and that imposing limits on the present possibilities stifles the unconventional nature of the special operations soldier. Vice Admiral Andres Cely, of the Colombian Navy, demonstrated that servant leadership needs no translation when professionals from differing countries, cultures, and branches of service meet as brothers in arms.

I wish to thank the entire Philosophy department at Texas A&M University for

the wonderful, nurturing environment that welcomed a broken, old infantryman back to the academic arena. The dynamic interaction of each of my professors with their graduate students drove me to attempt to make relevant contributions to the collective conversation of each class I was fortunate enough to sit in, a daunting prospect for someone who had not read a philosophy text for over twenty years.

I would like to thank Dr. Scott Austin for helping organize my scattered thoughts on Plato, Dr. David A. Erlandson for sharing my excitement in combining the martial and academic elements of military leadership, and Dr. John J. McDermott for instigating the concept for this project and for aiding and abetting my unconventional approach. You have made this daunting task enjoyable and rewarding.

I have had the privilege of working with some remarkable people through the course of my career, and have been a member of some unique organizations, but none of my prior experiences have been as unique or remarkable as linking arms with the 30,000 other members of McDermott's pedagogic lineage. Thank you for letting me join in part of your journey, and for the wonderful nectaring along the way.

Finally, I thank my parents for their unwavering loyalty, and support. Your unconditional love is the fortress of my soul.

**NOMENCLATURE**

BRM	Basic Rifle Marksmanship
COL	Colonel
CPT	Captain
CW4	Chief Warrant Officer 4
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MAJ	Major
MSG	Master Sergeant
PLF	Parachute Landing Fall
SFC	Sergeant First Class
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha
SGM	Sergeant Major
USMA	United States Military Academy



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years a growing movement has become popular among intellectual military advisors to examine the efficacy of “character” development programs, and question whether they should be continued. Since the start of the Global War on Terrorism, some academic strategists have started suggesting the military stop teaching ethics to service members as a way of discouraging applications for conscientious objection from soldiers who might question the legality of orders to wage what some might consider to be an unjust war. As a professional combat arms officer I found such intellectual suggestions to be mystifying, but not particularly troubling, since I *know*, from deep in my soul, that moral “character” is a critical component for leadership development; and I had a compelling argument that I could answer with a personal application to any intellectual’s fourth point of contact<sup>1</sup> who might dare to visit my *real*, and physically tangible world in the army.

When I received orders to attend advanced civil schooling, with a follow-on assignment to teach military ethics to cadets at the United States Military Academy, these *academic* military questions grew to be alarming. My physical arguments, while persuasive, would not be compelling to civilian philosophers, nor to military cadets, who I could not legally place a hand on, let alone a combat boot. And while I *know*, from

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This thesis follows the style of *Social Theory and Practice*.

<sup>1</sup> There are five points of contact for an airborne soldier to conduct a proper Parachute Landing Fall (PLF); they are, in order of body parts hitting the earth in the proper sequence: 1) balls of the feet, 2) the calves, 3) the thigh, 4) the buttocks, and 5) the push-up muscle. There are many other activities in the army that involve external impact to the fourth point of contact as motivational and correctional leadership tools; when applied appropriately they can have remarkable results for attitude adjustment.

deep in my bones, my conviction is right, I am now in the position to have to examine my original beliefs to either justify or modify them. The problem is that I could no longer *recollect* the intellectual justification for those beliefs, a serious obstacle to my future assignment as an instructor of philosophy concentrating in military ethics. The matter was further complicated by the issue that “character” development means something different in philosophy than it does in military leadership development. I quickly realized I would need to find some way to connect my physical army activities with the academic activities of philosophy, if I was to have any success in this new world.

And then along came Plato ... again. I had a vague recollection of Plato’s education system from my undergraduate days; but Plato’s just state was a little too totalitarian for the comfort of a military cadet about to enter the Cold War against the threatening Soviet Union, and I was a little apprehensive about revisiting his theories. I was pleasantly surprised to realize that Socrates had become much more *knowledgeable* during the twenty-some years since my last reading of the *Republic*; furthermore, his proposed program to *educate* guardians who would serve the best interest of the state dealt directly with the two problems confronting me. Socrates provided a complete theory for how to develop an elite class of leaders with the natural disposition of guard dogs trained to serve their country, which our modern military would consider a ‘character’ development program. A critical analysis of Plato’s education system could provide a sufficient account to either accept or reject a belief in the efficacy of teaching military ethics to cadets.

Conducting this analysis would also give me a vehicle to unite my spirited, “physically” active military nature with the reasoning, “intellectually” active academic nature of a graduate student. Such a study would have to begin with a familiarization of Plato’s theories that contribute to his proposed education system, with a particular focus on making it relevant for cadets and soldiers, those who would be most immediately concerned with the training of junior service members in leadership development. Next, it would be important to see if this theory could be applied by leaders to enhance operational success on the battlefield; even if the theory is sound, if it hinders rather than contributes to tactical decision making, it might be more trouble than it is worth to incorporate in military training. Then, even if Plato’s theories prove beneficial, would they be convincing enough for soldiers who adopt them to actually be willing to risk their lives in battle? A true military application of Plato’s education system would have to motivate soldiers to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country and their fellow soldiers. If all these conditions are met, then it remains to be seen if tenets from Plato’s theories could actually be *taught* in a real training program; it seems very unlikely that any actual state could implement all the totalitarian control mechanisms Socrates argued for in the *Republic*.

A familiarization of Plato’s education system would have to start with his concept of unity, which describes how a city becomes a healthy, self-sufficiently functioning whole through the harmonically balanced interaction of the individual citizens. All the parts unite through their variety to form the complete whole. The individual citizen reflects this unity in variety through the harmonic balance of the

reason, spirit, and appetitive elements of the soul – when reason is ruled by wisdom, spirit governed by courage, and appetite moderated by temperance, the individual can achieve inner harmony of the soul. I will call this internal harmonic balance of the soul the Platonic Grid. The individual is placed in proper harmony with the collective whole when she is internally motivated by the “noble lie” that is to serve the best interest of the state rather than to pursue self-interest. Plato’s beliefs in the recollection of knowledge and the nature of reality expressed by his theory of the forms are also very important to the way he approaches the task of educating guardians to acquire the natural disposition needed to adopt the Platonic Grid in alignment with the “noble lie”.

Next, I will analyze the Battle of Balaclava, from the Crimean War; the Battle of Little Round Top, from the American Civil War; and the siege of the Alamo, from the Texas War for Independence from Mexico to see if there is any correlation between the balanced harmonic interaction of the moral sensibilities prescribed by the Platonic Grid aligned with the “noble lie” and operational success on the battlefield. By addressing the question of whether the application of principles from Plato’s education system to military leadership development would contribute to the successful execution of combat operations, I will also explore the question of whether the conviction to adhere to the “noble lie” could be strong enough to motivate soldiers to place duty to the city-state above self-interest and willingly risk their lives in defense of their country on the battlefield.

I will conclude by exploring the possibility that applications of the Platonic Grid could be incorporated into a modern education system to form modern day “dogs of

war”. According to Plato’s own analysis of his education system, guardians can never be expected to always act in accordance with the properly balanced tension of moral sensibilities, which opens the real possibility that a leader attempting to act justly in accordance with the “noble lie” can be placed in the predicament of being treated unjustly by his superiors. While discussing the pedagogy for a new military Platonic Grid, I will attempt to answer the question of why a developing leader should be motivated to follow the “noble lie” even at the risk of jeopardizing her career, a prospect that can be more threatening than risking her life in the physical danger of the battlefield.

I do not think that this study will provide empirical proof that would convince skeptical “intellectual” military advisors to accept “character” development programs, or to silence critics of teaching ethical theory to soldiers. My purpose for this work is to provide a foundation from which soldiers and philosophers could draw informed opinions from which to continue the conversation on the proper role, if any, for ethics in the military profession. I trust that you will be inclined to join me on this adventure to explore the possible union the physical activities of the military with the academic activities of the philosopher; can the two really interact in harmonic balance?

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLATONIC GRID

*For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world,  
and forfeit his soul?  
For what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will focus on explaining Plato's education system designed to produce an elite guardian class to a cadet enrolled in a military leadership program who is unfamiliar with philosophy. It will not be an exhaustive examination of the *Republic*, merely an introduction to some key components of Plato's theories that could have applications for training military leaders. Still, this study could be useful to philosophers with more rigorous academic interests by providing a fresh and innovative perspective to view some of Plato's basic principles applied to his examination of the nature of justice.

The program Plato introduces in the *Republic* has three tiers of continuing education that starts in childhood and culminates after the guardian reaches the age of fifty. The first tier is designed to guide the young guardian candidates to a properly balanced natural disposition of the soul, where the moral sensibilities of wisdom, courage, and temperance control the reason, spirit, and appetitive elements of the soul. The harmonic tension involved in the interaction of the elements of the soul using their respective virtues form a Platonic Grid, which Plato will align with the community through a "true belief" in the "noble lie", that it is better for the guardian to serve the best interest of the state rather than to pursue self-interest. After intensive training in academic and physical classes, the guardian advances to the second tier of the education

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<sup>2</sup> Mark 8:36–37; *New American Standard Bible*.

system around the age of twenty. For the next thirty years, the guardians are tested and evaluated on their ability to adhere to their “true belief” in the “noble lie” as they progress through a series of jobs of increasing responsibility in the army, the War Department, and the basic administration jobs of the government. Those who meet the standards are permitted to attempt the demanding test of dialectic refutation at the age of fifty to enter the third tier. Through the dialectic refutation process, the “true belief” in the “noble lie” is justified to count for true knowledge. When the guardian then recollects this knowledge, she is qualified to join the philosopher-rulers who are the elite of the guardian class.

Assuming Plato’s education system proves able to produce guardians with the proper natural disposition, there are several questions to keep in mind for the application to military leadership development. First, would a leader acting in accordance with Plato’s prescribed internal harmony actually be effective in ordering soldiers in a military operation, or, does adherence to the Platonic Grid help or hinder the operational effectiveness of a military unit? Could a ‘true belief’ in the “noble lie” be strong enough to motivate a soldier to risk his life and make the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefield? Next, is the “noble lie” compelling enough to convince leaders to act in the state’s best interest, even when the guardian would suffer personally? Plato’s lie might be noble, but is it compelling enough to keep “sensible knaves” from exploiting the citizens the guardians are charged with protecting and serving? Finally, if this “true belief” is really a lie, then it seems as if the guardians are manipulated and exploited by the citizens of the state, but it appears that Plato wants us to believe that following the “noble lie’s” call



to duty will actually benefit the guardian herself, and not just the collective community. Does adherence to the “noble lie” really benefit the guardian as well as the state?

Before we can answer any of these questions it will be necessary to understand some of Plato’s foundational beliefs including the nature of reality and his theory of forms, the nature of knowledge through *recollection*, and the nature of justice which includes unity of individual parts to the collective whole through variety. As his founding of the education system resulted from his attempt to find the origin of justice in the state, it would be appropriate to start by examining how Plato frames his answer to the question of what exactly it means to be just.

In order to settle the argument in *The Republic* of whether it is better to be *just* or merely appear to be *just*, Plato has Socrates examine what justice would look like in the state. In exploring the origins of the just state, Socrates starts with the proposition that each individual will only do one job, or task, in order to produce an efficient system. The doctor will focus on the practice of healing; she will not take time and effort away from this task to build her own house. The builder will focus on building houses; he will not divert his efforts to grow corn or to make shoes. Each individual in the community will perform the function they are best suited for,<sup>3</sup> and will focus totally on the specific tasks of their trade without distractions, therefore one person – one job will create maximum efficiency in the city. Socrates maintains that this community will stay

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas P. White refers to this idea as the Principle of Natural Division of Labor in *A Companion to Plato’s Republic*. (Plato, 432b-434c) Add Plato’s one man – one job tenet and the community maximizes efficiency by having each individual focus only on what they do best. When all four-five professions needed to provide the basic needs are covered by this union, the city realizes self-sufficiency through the unity of their efforts.

healthy and strong by limiting the number of professions to four or five simple tasks that will provide for food, housing, clothing, and related supporting needs that will satisfy the basic requirements for existence. These interconnected professions unite the city in a self-sufficient community capable of supporting healthy growth and functioning of individuals and the whole collective group.

When his associates protest this lifestyle as being fit for pigs, Socrates is forced to expand this limited society, and grudgingly examines the effects of introducing luxury items into society. By growing the professions and the population of the city in order to provide for luxury items, Socrates points out the city will become inflamed and unhealthy, reaching a size that cannot maintain itself independently. In order to sustain the excess of this swollen city, the state will have to invade neighboring cities to provide the surplus required for survival; and the state will have to defend itself from reprisals and similar incursions from other states. In accordance with the Principle of Natural Division of Labor, this will require a standing, professional military force; thereby creating a warrior class of society that will be the only ones to carry weapons, practice war, and specialize in the use of violence in the community. This introduces an internal dilemma for the community; the rest of the citizens in the city will be defenseless, and at the mercy of the goodwill of the warriors. How can the city be safe from a military class that has an effective monopoly on the use of violence? Who will be able to protect the weaker inhabitants from the strong and aggressive practitioners of violence?

Plato introduces a very innovative solution to this predicament through a comparison with guard dogs that are by nature loyal and protective of their masters, who

they know, but are aggressive and fierce towards their masters' enemies, who they do not recognize. The community will be safe if it can convert the warrior class into “dogs of war”.<sup>4</sup> A “dog of war” will know the citizens of their community; through this knowledge they will treat their fellow citizens with gentleness and affection, like a guard dog with his master's family. The “dog of war” will be combative and threatening towards strangers, whom it does not know or recognize. By identifying friends and foe through recognition, the “dogs of war” will *know* how to respond to the situation, whether to attack, to befriend, or to closely watch for signs of intent. A “dog of war” would be the perfect guardian of the state. But, how can these “dogs of war” *know* that the city is their family, how will they recognize the other citizens to respond to them with gentle and loving protection and loyalty, and why would anyone reasonably expect them to accept this duty?

The guardians will require a special education system to recognize their duty as “dogs of war”. The proper type of education will produce guardians who have the self-

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<sup>4</sup> In his excellent book *War of the Running Dogs*, about the British counter-insurgency in Malaysia from 1948-1960, Noel Barber narrated how the Chinese insurgents in that conflict derisively referred to the Malaysians who remained loyal to the British as *running dogs*. I was impressed by that phrase when I read his book in 1986 as a cadet in a History of Revolutionary Warfare class, and carried that powerful association of dogs and warfare with me as I embarked on my military career. Later, when I was a lieutenant in 1990, the First Sergeant of a sister company in my battalion went to great pains to christen his company as the “Dogs of War” through a series of events that made that term resonant and stay with me through the rest of my military career. Later still I realized that several authors had used that title for fictional war stories, and numerous other military units cited references to dogs and war, solidifying an association of dogs of war to savagery, violence, and unrestrained ferocity. Much later, when I read *The Republic* toward the end of my military career, it was natural for me to think of Plato’s guardians as “dogs of war” after hearing Socrates describe the connection to guard dogs. However, this notion of dogs in service to the state - treating citizens with gentleness and loyalty, while maintaining a natural ferocity towards the enemies of its “family” - has dynamically transformed that past image of dogs I had carried in my imagination for so much of my military career. *Recollectively* seeing this new (to me) image of warriors as guard dogs shed light on a true representation that caused those other images of dogs and warriors to appear distorted, twisted and ignorant of the true dog-like nature of warriors in the guardian tradition.

discipline to always act in the best interest of society. They will be fierce in defense of the state, never seeking personal gain at the expense of the community they support and defend, just like good “dogs of war”. The system will show the guardians to be wise in determining when and how to use force; to be courageous when force is required for the common good; and temperate in not pursuing self-interest. By the proper integration of these three component parts, the guardians will be just and society can trust them to act in their best interest. Since these characteristics also sound like good criteria for just rulers of the state, Plato determines that the rulers of the city need the same education. Following his one individual – one task principle, Plato will use one education system to produce the guardians and the rulers in society, with the rulers rising from the ranks of the “dogs of war”.

As Plato lays out this education system, it becomes clear that these guardians will need to be lovers of knowledge, since they need to *know* in order to act as “dogs of war”. Since those who know will also be the best qualified to rule, the guardian education system will also produce the rulers of the city; and since philosophers are the ones who actively pursue and love knowledge, the guardian-rulers will have to be philosophers. Plato's education system emerges with three tiers that start with training “dogs of war”; from whom qualified individuals will be selected as proper guardians fit for ruling status; from whom the most qualified will be selected to acquire true knowledge and become philosophers.

This remarkable train of thought emerges from an argument for efficiency in the state that calls for specialized professions with one person being assigned one job;

specialized professions require the acquisition of luxury items; acquiring luxury items demands an elite military class of society. The military class's monopoly on violence demands a specialized education system to produce “dogs of war”; the unique character traits produced by this system give birth to the guardian class producing rulers and philosophers from the ranks of “dogs of war”.

American scholars might well be dismayed at the thought of the United States being restricted in selecting our political leaders from the military. Modern philosophers might well view the suggestion of mandatory service in the military with trepidation. However, citizens in Athens enjoyed the right and privilege of mandatory military service, including purchasing and supplying their own personal armor and weapons. The Hoplite Revolution<sup>5</sup> of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. not only introduced phalanx warfare to the Greek city-states; it also dramatically changed the social and political culture of the Hellenic people. The population came to express themselves in thought, in art, and in words with and through war. The concept of fighting shifted from individual glory on the battlefield, inherited from Homer’s rendition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, to the collective glory of the militia of the city-state working together as a unit, gaining victory through the phalanx standing firm against all comers.

Depending on the modern interpretation, either farmers won citizenship through their voluntary military service in the phalanx, or farmers were granted citizenship and then were obligated to fight to preserve their new political power. Regardless of the

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<sup>5</sup> In *Ancient Warfare*, Harry Sidebottom details the impact of the so-called Hoplite Revolution on Greek social, political, and cultural identity; tracing the influence of warfare on their personal and national identity. This impact was expressed, and resonated in, Hellenic art, music, and dramatic productions from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. through Plato’s time.

origin of hoplite warfare, there was no concept of a standing army in Plato's real city. Athenians would be called to war with the advanced notice of an enemy invasion. Citizens would stop their normal activities, grab their personal weapons, form up in their militia units, and march off to battle on the plains surrounding the fields outside their city. Normally, one decisive battle would end the conflict, and the citizens would return to their professional responsibilities at the cessation of hostilities. By Plato's time the concept of the citizen-soldier was deeply ingrained in the Athenian self-image; the population of the city would fight their own wars and were very self-reliant. Elite citizens seeking political power would go through extensive study on the art of warfare; successful commanders on the battlefield would gain advantage in the Assembly.<sup>6</sup>

The very idea that a separate class in the state would have a monopoly on the art of war would be a slap in the face to the average Athenian, who would probably be as alarmed at this proposition as the National Rifle Association would be with the prospect of a federal ban restricting ownership of handguns to the police in the United States. Both groups would view this type of proposal as an infringement on their basic rights they enjoy as citizens of their respective states, and as great potential for abuses of the civilian population by those who possess the monopoly on weapons and use of weapons in the state.

This idea of a standing army provides an interesting and complex means for Plato

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<sup>6</sup> See Victor David Hanson's *The Western Way of War*, for details on the hoplite way of fighting, including the transition from individual glory and recognition in combat to collective unit recognition. Part of the shift in warfare due to the hoplite influence was the concept of one decisive battle that determined the outcome of the war, rather than extended campaigns comprised of individual combat between recognized heroes.

to generate interest in his theoretical examination of justice in the city. His audience might be intrigued by this radical proposition and entertained by a theoretical discussion into its merits, but would be extremely skeptical of any practical application in their society. They would no doubt be entertained to see how Plato could propose to so educate this powerful group to respect the rights of their weaker neighboring citizens. The prevailing sentiment in their culture was that normal human beings only seek the appearance of being just. After all, given Gyges' magic ring of invisibility, the obvious rational response would be to use it to anonymously practice injustice without being held responsible.<sup>7</sup> This hook of claiming he has a way for civilians to trust a standing army with a monopoly on violence is a very effective maneuver for Plato to introduce his argument for justice that weaves a relationship between the community and the individual. Probably, Plato does not seriously propose to change the Athenian military system, and most likely he is not suggesting Athens re-model itself after this just city-state that he is constructing in *The Republic*, but it is a very clever way for him to set the framework for his argument for justice.

As a modern professional soldier, I am fascinated by the investigation of what it takes for a civilian population to place trust in a standing army. Most United States citizens do not share the Athenian social and political connection with a citizen-soldier militia and the desire to render martial service. Thanks to established laws, such as

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<sup>7</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 360a-c. Glaucon relates the myth of how the ancestor of Gyges the Lydian rose from a lowly shepherd to king through the use of a ring that made the wearer invisible at will. Through use of this ring the shepherd appeared to be just a shepherd, while he seduced the king's wife and conspired to kill the king and usurp the throne for himself. The stated premise is that most people, given the opportunity, would use the ring's powers to exploit others' rights in order to maximize their own benefit.

*posse comitatus*,<sup>8</sup> and longstanding tradition of military subordination to control of the civilian government, they do not fear personal, domestic harm from a professional military, as ancient Greeks would have. However, events from recent wars such as Mai Lai and Abu Ghraib demonstrate modern concern of American citizens with trusting their military to not violate human rights of combatants and non-combatants on foreign soil. Modern Americans need to be able to trust their standing, professional army to not violate human rights of our enemies and non-combatant citizens of other nations; residents of Athens would be more concerned with trusting that a professional military not abuse their domestic human rights. As an avid student of military leadership and training, I think it will be fascinating to explore Plato's education system for the guardian class to determine if it might have any benefit for educating modern day “dogs of war”.

Before breaking down this program to educate guardians, I will address some of the background themes involved in Plato's defense for justice that will be critical to understand his aims for this proposed education program to produce “dogs of war”. First Plato seems to be committed to the notion that justice involves a relationship between the individual and the community. Every time that he mentions justice there is a connection to the internal workings of the individual's decision making process and the external relations that are affected by it. Justice for Plato seems to be the proper relation of the self to its society; he is wrestling with the problem of how individuals in the society can satisfy their self-interest without destabilizing relationships with the rest of

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<sup>8</sup> The Posse Comitatus Act was passed as a federal law on 16 June 1878 after the end of Reconstruction. This law substantially limits the power of the government to use federalized military forces in domestic “law and order” activities.



the community.

Early in Book II, Plato has Glaucon espouse an interesting condemnation of justice, in what appears to be an early concept of a social contract derived from a state of nature.<sup>9</sup> Glaucon claims that justice arises in this view from the notion that what is good, depends on the reward that an individual derives from an action; it is good for the powerful to wrong others when it brings them personal rewards, but it is evil to be wronged by another. Only individuals who cannot avoid being harmed by others will want to enter into a pact of mutual non-aggression and start making laws and agreements with others. In this case, justice is not based on a good, it is founded on the lack of power of individuals to wrong others, and no one powerful enough to do wrong would ever enter this kind of pact. As Glaucon frames the issue to Socrates early in Book II:

*They say that this is the origin and essential nature of justice, that it is a compromise between the best case, which is doing wrong and getting away with it, and the worst case, which is being wronged and being unable to retaliate. Justice, being half-way between these two extremes, is not prized as a good; it finds its value merely in people's want of power to do wrong. The person who does have the power to do wrong – the true man – would never make an agreement with anyone not to do wrong, and not to be wronged. It would be lunatic for him to do that.<sup>10</sup>*

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, English philosopher Thomas Hobbes established an early

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<sup>9</sup> In his edition of *The Republic*, G.R.F. Ferrari cites this passage (358e – 359b) as an ancient version of a social contract in a state of nature. There is no indication that Plato was referencing any particular version of this concept proposed by any of his contemporaries as a viable means of establishing a just state. In 1651 Thomas Hobbes published *Leviathan*, in which he depicts the state of nature as a perpetual state of war, where all human beings are purely driven by the animalistic drive to acquire power at the expense of other inhabitants. Hobbes derives justice in the state through laws of nature, which reveals the need of just such a mutual non-aggression pact (which he calls a covenant) as Glaucon rejects. However, this covenant can only be realized through the external compulsion of a Monarch with absolute power to “shock and awe” all other citizens through his ability to severely punish any individual he chooses. This absolute power is an external threat, which compels all others to honor social contracts with each other.

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 359a–b.

and elaborate account of social contract theory that springs from a state of nature where all inhabitants find themselves in a perpetual state of war, all vying for power to wrong others and not be wronged themselves, possibly deriving from popular acceptance of Glaucon's depiction of justice. Hobbes' espouses the external threat of a Monarch with absolute power to compel the inhabitants of society to endorse a mutual non-aggression covenant.

Plato, however, takes a different approach to create a just state. He envisions an internal motivation for individuals in his proposed city-state to embrace justice, and see it as a good for its own sake, as well as desirable for the sake of its consequences. To do this Plato proposes that justice in the individual will be similar to justice in the city. By theoretically tracing the origins of the city he also finds the origins of both justice and injustice that will then provide insights into justice for the individual. As he begins this theoretical investigation into the origins of the city, Plato finds himself in remarkably short order (thanks to the Principle of Natural Division of Labor coupled with the One Man – One Job corollary) requiring an education system for a guardian class in order for the civilian population to trust the “dogs of war” that will comprise the standing military force. This education system will provide the internal drive for “dogs of war”, who have a markedly unequal distribution of power in the state, to protect rather than exploit the weaker, more vulnerable population in society.

There are two more themes that are important to consider before exploring this education program. Plato's concept of unity and his account of knowledge both play significant roles in view of educating “dogs of war”. Unity is related to Plato's

commitment to the link between the individual and community. The health and sustenance of both are bound together; they are inter-connected and cannot be separated. Overindulgence in one part will result in a corresponding imbalance in all other parts. The health and stability of the whole, depends on the proper functioning of each individual part. The efficiency of the Principle of National Division of Labor coupled with One Man – One Job, leads to each individual maximizing their individual potential for the best of the community as a whole. It is important to note this unity is not comprised of all individual parts being the same, or receiving the same benefits or rewards. Unity for Plato is not equivalent to the mind-meld of the Borg.<sup>11</sup>

The parts are distinctly individual and separate from each other, but they unite as part of the whole; they all are equal only in their being a distinct part of the total picture. In his aesthetic theory, John Dewey gives a short definition of beauty that originated from the ancient Greeks: beauty as *unity in variety*. Dewey defines this unity as the opposite of static sameness; for him unity is dependent on distinctive differentiations. The individual parts are distinct; the whole is beautiful because the distinct differences of the individual parts depend on reciprocal resistance to each other.

*There is unity only when the resistances create a suspense that is resolved through cooperative interaction of the opposed energies. The “one” of the formula is the realization through interacting parts of their respective energies. The “many” is the manifestation of the defined individualizations due to*

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<sup>11</sup> The *Borg* is a hybrid, alien race in the Sci-Fi television series *Star Trek, Next Generation*. The *Borg* are all united in a mind-meld whereby each individual shares the thoughts and desires of the collective group, steered and controlled by a type of queen ant that manages all the other worker ants. In the spin off from the original *Star Trek* series, the *Borg* travel the galaxies, seeking to assimilate new “recruits” from other races to join the one collective, by forcibly assimilating them. Once assimilated, all *Borg* share a unanimous and total commitment to believe in, and act according to the will of the collective.

*opposed forces that finally sustain a balance.*<sup>12</sup>

This is the unity that results from the collective society being the sum of the individual parts that efficiently combine for self-sufficiency through the merger of the Principles of Natural Division of Labor and One Man – One Job. Dewey would say there is beauty in the successful unity of Plato’s simple, but self-sufficient city-state. It is significant that the worry generated by an individual class of society having a monopoly on the use of violence poses a distinct threat to the unity of the city. Plato creates his education system that converts warriors into “dogs of war” in order to preserve unity in the just city-state.

Plato is careful to maintain that this concept of unity of the individual citizens to the whole community is not concerned with happiness, not of the individuals as distinctive parts or necessarily of the community as a whole. He is concerned with the efficient functioning of the parts that leads to their interconnected functioning in an efficient manner, which leads to a united community that is self-sufficient and healthy. If the individuals or the collective aim for happiness, the health of both can be jeopardized. Plato is concerned with first and foremost guaranteeing the health and proper functioning whole, after which Plato will consider the happiness of the distinctive parts, which is not as important as the health of the complete whole. However, Plato suggests that in the end, after he’s done with his thorough examination of justice in the state, that the individual, who is functioning to contribute to the health and unity of the whole, will enjoy true happiness – a kind of happiness that does not lead to individual or

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<sup>12</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 167.

collective dysfunction. Also significant is the way Plato has Glaucon object that the simple, but healthy, city that maintains the basic needs through the integration of four to five professions “organizes a city of pigs,”<sup>13</sup> which leads Socrates to investigate how a city expands to incorporate luxury items. The acquisition of luxury is sought as a means of providing happiness for the inhabitants of the city. This pursuit of happiness causes the healthy city to become swollen and inflamed, an unhealthy condition which threatens the unity of the city-state. So, in a sense, Plato introduces the education of “dogs of war” to counter the threat the pursuit of happiness poses to the unity of the city-state.

Plato’s account of knowledge also has tremendous impact on the development of this education plan. For Plato, knowledge is innate, it cannot be learned or taught, because each individual has an inherent, although latent, link to real knowledge. The problem is that this *sensible* world we live in is cut off from the reality of the forms, and the individual can only see the real forms when placed in the correct framework to link to this knowledge. Knowledge is not acquired, it is *recollected*. When the internal conditions are ripe for recollection, the individual will be able to harvest that latent knowledge and recall it from her inner self.

Perhaps Plato endorsed recollection of knowledge as a result of a fascination with the study of numbers and geometry; through which study the ancient Greeks introduced the abstract concept of incommensurables – of both numbers and lines, and observed the phenomena that imprecise geometric lines and shapes can be used to represent known truths about real geometric relationships that cannot actually be

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<sup>13</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 372d.

perceived with physical (observable) lines and shapes. You cannot get this knowledge or learn it; you can only recall the knowledge when placed in the correct situation to perceive an instance of it, and part of realizing the correct framework to *recollect* involves questioning beliefs to the point of confusion.<sup>14</sup> If one has to recall knowledge, then one knew it before, and knowledge is innate, not learned, and this knowledge is eternal and non-changing, unlike the observable/perceivable world.

The physical lines in geometric shapes are similar to the geometric truth, but not exactly like the truth they resemble. The physical lines remind us of the innate truth we already know. Plato uses the concept of *forms* to explain this phenomenon of how the perceived world merely presents images, or imprecise reflections, of the abstract truth, the knowledge of which is innate. If *A* is the previously known, innate truth, and *B* is the reflection of that truth seen in the visible world, then I know *B* from my recollection of *A*. The form is what things in the perceptible world represent; the visible representations are just deficient *similars* of the form. The form *itself* is the abstract entity that the observable *similars*, or perceptibles, resemble. The forms are not thoughts – they are actual entities that cannot be perceived but can be recollected. The deficient perceptibles that remind us of the form *itself* are related to the form in a way that they partake of, or participate in, the form *itself*. The form is one thing, but has many similars that partake

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<sup>14</sup> In his dialogue *Meno*, Plato has Socrates question a slave boy who *thinks* he knows the answer to a geometric problem. Through Socrates questioning, the slave boy realizes he does not *know* what he thought he knew, and becomes confused. From this state of confusion, Socrates continues to question the slave boy who now wants to know the real answer. Solely from answering Socrates' questions the slave boy *recollects* that one calculates double the area of a square based on the diagonal of the original square. Socrates does not teach or instruct the boy; only this questioning leads the slave to *recollect* the true opinions that were inside the boy all the time, waiting to be unlocked through this process of dialectic refutation.

of, or participate in, and resemble the form *itself* in the perceptible world.

In different dialogues Plato gives accounts of five forms: the Equal [itself], the Beautiful [itself], the Good [itself], the Just [itself], the Pious [itself]. The forms are real; the perceptible world is only a shadowy representation of what is real. Plato uses the forms as a vehicle to approach the truth of the real world while we live in the shadow world of perception. *Recollection* is the process of setting the right conditions for the individual to access the inner knowledge of the forms, and reconcile that knowledge to the shadow images actually seen in the physical world.

Possibly the simplest illustration Plato gives for the process of creating a framework for recollection to take place is depicted in *The Republic* is his description of vision in book VI. Vision cannot be taught or learned, the individual can only be placed in the correct conditions to see; those conditions include having light present and a direct line of sight toward the object to be seen. Given the right conditions, the individual merely needs to open her eyes to see the object, since vision is an innate property. Similarly, knowledge is innate. No one can teach or impart knowledge, and no one can learn knowledge. This raises an interesting dilemma. If knowledge is critical to producing guardians of the proper natural disposition, but it is impossible to teach knowledge, how can Plato establish an education program to develop *knowledgeable* "dogs of war"?

It could be possible to have "teachers" function as guides or mentors to assist their charges with acquiring the proper framework from which the guardian-candidate can *recollectively* see. A guide could assist in opening the eyes of an individual who has

closed her eyes; or the guide could remove an obstacle that might be blocking her line of sight. That is not teaching or learning, that is just presenting the proper conditions for recollection to occur, the way a drill instructor assists a basic trainee *learn* how to acquire a proper sight picture in Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) training.<sup>15</sup>

However, such a guide would have to possess and exercise *recollective* vision. If this *teacher* had an obstacle blocking his own vision, he would be *guiding* his charge to a false vision, rather than the truth revealed through recollection. Any guide would need to be careful to remove the plank from their own eyes before attempting to take out the speck from another's eye.<sup>16</sup> Having *knowledgeable* instructors is essential for an education system designed to facilitate recollection of knowledge.

This illustration of vision only describes the simple operation of the faculty of recollection; the individual needs to have a catalyst to gaze inward and use this inherent property that resembles inward sight. In the *Meno*, Plato gives a rather simple description of how recollection of knowledge is sparked; where he has Socrates engage one of Meno's slaves in a series of questions about what the slave thinks he knows about

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<sup>15</sup> One of the most important aspects of *learning* to shoot is gaining the ability to acquire the same sight alignment for each shot. This proper *sight picture* is unique for each shooter, however, there are fundamental techniques that are universal, including body position, breath control, trigger squeeze, and placing the eye in the same position in relation to the front and rear sights for every attempted shot in order to *see* the proper picture formed by the weapon's front and rear sight in relation to the target. The drill instructor cannot impart this *knowledge*; the trainee must individualize each of these fundamentals. In BRM, instructors *coach* trainees to draw the correct shooting form from internal resources that are inherent in each prospective soldier.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew 7: 3-5; *The New American Standard Bible*. The concept of a *guide* helping to remove obstacles to *true* sight introduces the issue of *perspective* that places obstacles to guiding others to recollective vision. I am blind to an obstacle to my *recollective* sight that blocks my line of vision like a plank, while I try to remove an obstacle to someone else's line of *recollective* sight that only appears as a speck to my eyes. The question then arises, if the guide has not removed all the planks that impede his *true* vision – how can he have a *true* line of sight to identify the tiny speck he's charged with removing from the other's perspective framework of vision?



the relationship of lines to geometric shapes. Socrates does not teach the slave geometry, he merely asks a series of penetrating questions regarding what the slave thinks he *knows* about the lengths of lines from squares of different sizes. Through the series of questions the slave realizes that what he thought he *knew* is not true, and that he now no longer *thinks* that he knows anything true about the relationship. Plato calls this condition an aporetic state of confusion. In this case the slave reaches the aporetic state as a result of Socrates' intense interrogation, which Plato calls a dialectic refutation. Through dialectic refutation that leads to an aporetic state, Socrates sets the correct framework for the slave to recollect knowledge. In the aporetic state the slave knows he does not know, and therefore desires to know the true answer to the geometric problem they were discussing. The slave is placed in the proper framework to recollect when he realizes that even what he thought he knew is not correct, and he has no other recourse than to turn inward to *see* the truth.

From this aporetic state, Socrates then guides the slave to find the true answer through another series of questions. Socrates does this without giving the slave any answers, he merely asks questions that turn the slave's attention to the inner recollection of true knowledge, in this case that one calculates double the area of a square based on the diagonal of the original square. The slave obviously had this knowledge already within himself, trapped deep in his soul but not accessible; the dialectic refutation merely stirs up and awakens that knowledge so that the slave is in the proper condition to see this truth, thereby recollecting what he already knew.

Dialectic refutation leading to the aporetic state is the catalyst that spurs

recollection, however, Plato's simple account in the *Meno* does not end in the slave boy *knowing* the forms [themselves]. Rather, Plato describes the slave boy having acquired a true opinion or belief from the experience. "True beliefs" provide the individual proper guidance to live in accord with the reality of the forms until they can maintain the experience needed to meet the challenge of entering the dialectic for knowledge of the forms. The slave boy might not have thoroughly enjoyed the dialectic with Socrates, but it was not a drastically life-changing event. It was the mental, or possibly spiritual, equivalent of an athlete going through a particularly challenging workout; grueling, demanding, and maybe a little painful at times. This workout resulted in acquisition of a "true belief," which strengthens the internal faculties for living in accord with the reality behind the shadowy, perceptible images we humans can see in this world. Acquiring and living by "true beliefs" prepares the one who proposes to study and know the forms, the philosopher, for the ordeal of dialectic refutation.

Plato does consider the dialectic refutation that leads to knowledge of the forms to be an extremely significant emotional event, one that the unprepared will not survive with intact mental faculties. Plato gives a fantastic account of this process in Book VI of *The Republic* in his infamous Cave illustration. In the cave allegory all the citizens in the just state live in a cave, which is really a shadow world of illusions, the perceived reality of the physical world. No one who lives in the cave will voluntarily want to leave the cave to venture into the outside (real) world and subject themselves to the glaring sunlight and the harsh elements. If dragged outside, any of the denizens of the cave will want to return to the shadows and comfortable stability of the cave's illusions of reality

that they are familiar with. The guardian-philosopher candidate will be forcibly removed from the cave and constrained to endure the harsh conditions of the real outside world (the world of the forms) until the philosopher candidate recollects the true knowledge of the good [itself]. So, the potential guardian-philosopher is forced by other guardians (who already know the good), to engage in this advanced dialectic refutation, placing her in a condition that challenges all prior true beliefs, reducing her to a confused and frustrated state until the former cave dweller gradually gets used to the real world and recollects the reality of direct sunlight, actual trees, and the open sky. She experiences the sun and light, sees a true and intelligible object like a tree, and understands the relationship of the tree with its reflection (the prior shadow image that was the perceptible of the real tree), and recollects true being.

True knowing occurs when the soul turns itself toward the intelligible, but not sensible or perceptible; like the cave dweller who is forced to turn toward the sun and see the true world. Plato also describes this as the process of starting with “the many”, and by a process of recollection associates “the many with the one”, and “the one with the being” (or that which really is); something to do with the many being visible but not intelligible (like the shadow reflections in the cave are *similar* to the form, but not really intelligible) and the one being intelligible but not visible (true knowledge of the form cannot be seen in the shadow existence of the cave), and the many visible leading to the one that is real. Possibly, there is one true form but many instances of *similar*s to that form that can be perceived in the shadowy world of the cave.

It is hard to grasp exactly what Plato is trying to convey with regard to

recollection in this cave illustration. However, it is clear that this recollection of the forms [themselves] is more complicated and much more threatening to the individual going through this dialectic refutation than the slave's recollection of true belief in *Meno*. This task is not for the weak of heart or the unprepared. Plato later proposes that all guardian-philosopher candidates not be permitted to attempt this trial until they have accumulated the experiences from at least fifty years of living. They must demonstrate a lifetime of experience in following their "true belief" prior to exposure to the risks involved with gaining true knowledge of the forms. There is a relationship between the "true beliefs" Plato described in *Meno*, and this recollection of knowledge he illustrates with the cave analogy.

In the conclusion of *Meno*, Plato outlines the relationship of knowledge, true belief, and virtue. Neither virtue, nor knowledge is teachable, but they are both good things to possess, in order to be just. It is very useful to have a correct guide to assist in virtuous living. True belief and knowledge are the only correct guides to living with virtue, but knowledge is not teachable. Therefore, true belief is the correct guide to living virtuously. However, the "true belief" must eventually be justified by an account. The "true belief" is justified through the dialectic by refutation that leads to knowledge of the forms; knowing the forms will either confirm the true belief as valid or reject the true belief as mistaken. This relationship of true belief and knowledge to virtue is extremely important to Plato's education system.

Earlier, I traced Plato's analysis of the origins of the just city that lead to the startling conclusion that philosophers should rule in the city-state. With this detail on

Plato's views on unity and knowledge and their relation to justice in the state, it might be beneficial to start from the guardian-philosopher and reverse engineer his argument for the origin of the just state to enhance our understanding of his education system. The ultimate goal of this system is to produce guardian-philosophers who will be the most qualified to rule the community because they know the form(s). In order to know the forms, the candidate must have demonstrated the potential to act in accordance with the correct "true belief." This means the education system must identify the correct "true belief" and indoctrinate the guardians with this belief at a very young age so they can gain the valuable and necessary experience of living virtuously. This involves developing the proper internal faculties of the soul to interact in the proper way (according to the true belief) with the rest of the community. The entire project is necessary in order for the city to function properly with the problems of inflammation and ill health that arise with the acquisition of luxury items when the population seeks to pursue happiness, by which Plato cleverly introduces his proposition of creating civilian trust of a standing, professional military class with a monopoly on the use of violence.

These concepts form the framework from which Plato constructs his education system. He designs it with three tiers that address the basic requirements for recollection of true knowledge; to instill and ground "true beliefs" into the guardian-candidates at a young age, then to strengthen their commitment to the "true beliefs" through building a lifetime of demonstrated experience in accord with those beliefs, that prepares them for the final education phase of dialectic refutation to recollection of knowledge [of the form(s)]. The first tier is concerned with conditioning the internal faculties of the soul

with “true belief.” Just as all the inhabitants of the just city should be united through the proper union of their individual functions to form an efficient and cohesive whole, the guardian-candidate must achieve internal unity of the three elements of the soul. Reason controls the rational element, courage controls the spirit element, and temperance controls the appetitive element of the soul. Reason directs or leads the other elements, but all must be properly balanced so that each element performs its proper function to ensure a harmonious, and united, outcome that will be just.

It is interesting that Plato initially compares the guardian’s proper natural disposition with a guard dog. Modern dog trainers insist that is critical for puppies to be properly “socialized” at a very early age. This “socialization” calls for dog owners to familiarize their young canines with as many social situations as possible in order to produce mature dogs with healthy, well-mannered, responsible natures who will not act inappropriately, or *unjustly*, with other animals or human beings. The key for puppy socialization is introducing the dog to differing situations in a controlled environment, where the trainer conditions the pup to compliance with the “true belief” of obedience school.

Similarly, the first tier of Plato’s education system calls for a controlled environment for the “socialization” of young “dogs of war”. When considering how to purposely cultivate this “natural disposition”, Plato feels compelled to exercise almost totalitarian control over virtually every aspect of the formative lives of the guardian-candidates. An interesting, and hotly contested, debate can be made on the interpretation of whether Plato endorses a dictatorial regime as being necessary for a just state, or if he

is just using this description to demonstrate how it could be possible to cultivate this natural disposition in at least one class of society. Regardless of this debate, in *The Republic*, Plato completely controls the environment during the formative guardian years, actually starting before conception.

Just as with purebred dogs, Plato will manage the bloodlines for the guardian class. Only the guardians who exhibit the best natural dispositions will be permitted to mate and produce offspring. If the parents both have the proper disposition, then the children should inherit this good nature. The education system will be more efficient if all the candidates have the proper natural traits to be a guardian. Furthermore, the guardians who do mate will not form familial relationships. Parents will not marry or continue any form of permanent relation with each other. Similar to dog breeding, the parents are separated from each other as well as from their children. Plato believes it will be necessary for the guardians to have no closer bonds than the state and their fellow guardians, therefore it is essential that they maintain a communal relationship. Women and men mate to produce guardian-quality offspring, not to form familial relationships. Children are raised collectively, without any concept of sibling or parental relations. All identity is based on the guardian's relationship with the state and with the collective guardian class; no other relationships will be permitted to come before this foundation.

Socrates also suggests it will be essential to control the foundational myths inherent to Greek society in order to ensure the loyalty of the guardian class. Outside relationships can erode the commitment to the state and so can the introduction of

“important falsehoods”. Myths and legends of the gods are such stories that contain much falsehood, but are used to teach children life lessons in society. These myths generally depict the gods as liars and cheats, ever ready to fight with each other and mislead humans for their own pleasure and gain.<sup>17</sup> These salacious depictions of the gods serve to make the tales more entertaining and easier for children to remember, but they also have grave implications for young minds that are supposed to be fashioned to respect the rights and property of citizens who cannot defend themselves against the guardian class. These false stories must be censored. The storytellers must be prevented from telling any stories that will undermine the guardians’ education, the purpose of which is to produce “dogs of war” of the proper disposition to serve the civilian population rather than exploit them for personal gain. The rulers cannot permit these salacious storytellers license to poison the minds of the children, as Socrates warns:

*Not if we want the people who are going to protect our city to regard it as a crime to fall out with one another without a very good reason.*<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, Plato does not stop his examination of the role of verbal falsehood with the censorship of storytellers. He is careful to note a distinction between the lies told by storytellers (verbal) and actual falsehood. True falsehood is a condition of the soul being in ignorance, whereas verbal falsehood is just the reflection, or image, we see in the sensible world of that condition of ignorance of the soul.

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<sup>17</sup> Socrates specifically mentions tales told by Hesiod in *Theogony*, and Homer in *Iliad*. Hesiod tells how the sky god Ouranos mistreated his children and his consort Gaia, until his son Kronos castrated him and wrested control from Ouranos; Kronos then ate all his children until his consort, Rhea, deceived him and his son Zeus overthrew him, becoming king of the gods. Homer relates tales of Zeus beating Hera and throwing his son Hephaestus out of heaven for coming to his mother’s defense, while Hera rejected Hephaestus at birth and he wrecked revenge on her by binding her to her chair.

<sup>18</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 378c.



*... the thing everyone wants above all to avoid is being deceived in his soul about the way things are, or finding that he has been deceived, and is now in ignorance, that he holds and possesses the falsehood right there in his soul.*<sup>19</sup>

In this sense falsehood is almost akin to knowledge, both deal with inherent workings in the soul. True knowledge is gained when the soul recollects the reality of the forms [themselves]. True falsehood occurs when the soul only perceives distorted false images, thus remaining ignorant of reality. The storytellers who fabricate these tales are practicing verbal falsehood; their “lies” are imitations of true falsehood, and they create images of ignorance that listeners carry with them. Verbal falsehoods contribute to distorted beliefs. These images impact the way the listeners live their lives, especially while they are young and impressionable. While the verbal falsehood might lead to an image of a belief mixed with truth and ignorance, the more fanciful the tale the greater the risk to distract the hearer from “true belief” toward ignorance.

*... this ignorance in the soul, the ignorance of the person who has been deceived, can with absolute accuracy be called true falsehood, whereas verbal falsehood is a kind of imitation of this condition of the soul. It comes into being later; it is an image, not a wholly unmixed falsehood.*<sup>20</sup>

The more these storytellers imitate true falsehood, the more entertaining and memorable their stories become, the more enticing for their listeners to embrace. The imitators truly play fast and loose with reality, and great woe will befall the state if they are permitted to infect the young guardians with their verbal falsehoods. Therefore the state will rigidly censor all children’s tales and the rulers will severely chastise any storyteller who spins unapproved yarns that can be heard by the young, impressionable

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 382b.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 382b-c.

guardian-candidates.

However, Plato cleverly introduces the concept of a useful verbal falsehood as a type of medicine to counter madness or ignorance. For cases where we do not *know*, or cannot recollect, the truth, a tall tale can promote a useful image – especially if it imitates the truth as much as possible.

*Isn't a lie useful in those circumstances, in the same way medicine is useful? ... as a result of our not knowing what the truth is concerning events long ago, do we make falsehood as much like the truth as possible, and in this way make it useful?*<sup>21</sup>

Using verbal falsehoods to promote true images is a very strong medicine, capable of causing great damage if improperly administered. Therefore use of verbal falsehoods will only be entrusted to the rulers of the city, who will know when and how to tell such creative “true” lies that will preserve and maintain the health of individuals and the unity of the state.

So, Plato has suggested the best theoretical way to produce guardian-candidates (those who will be powerful – but will also maintain the trust of the exploitable civilian population) is to establish a powerful ruling regime with totalitarian power to impose a strict and rigidly regulated societal framework, at least for the guardian class. The rulers will select those they deem qualified to breed with the “mate” they deem best suited to produce golden-natured children – with the proper internal disposition for guardian duties. The guardians will have no relationships other than to the state and to the collective guardian class as a whole; they will have no families, no personal wealth, and no ties to anything other than their function as guardians of the state. The rulers exercise

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 382d.

strict censorship over all information communicated to the guardian class, severely punishing any impious “storytellers”, while maintaining the prerogative to tell their own “lies” for the “best interest” of the community.

The Athenians would find this line of reasoning extremely provocative; they were intimately familiar with tyrannical regimes that exploited their citizens for personal self-interest. In 404-403B.C. a group of Thirty Spartan sympathizing aristocrats led a coup in Athens. The reign of the Thirty was bloody, violent and relatively short-lived. A group of democratic resistance fighters quickly overthrew the Thirty, but despite publicly proclaiming a general amnesty for all crimes committed by non-junta members during the Thirty’s reign of terror, the reformers pursued their own self-interest with equal measures of violence and bloodshed. Socrates was actually one Athenian abused by both regimes.<sup>22</sup> By casting Socrates as the champion for a just state requiring the rulers to have this totalitarian power Plato caused a sensation with his Athenian audience familiar with that story. It would appear that Plato is building a shaky and suspicious foundation for his proposed education system; would Plato really expect any of his listeners to give credence to the notion that any group of rulers will not abuse such largess? It might be theoretically possible, but highly doubtful from past experience.

Plato heightens this underlying tension by introducing the “verbal falsehood” that the rulers can inject to make everyone, including the rulers themselves, believe in the

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<sup>22</sup> Plato’s *Apology* tells the story of how the Assembly convicts and executes Socrates, basically for the crime of corrupting the youth with impious stories. A charge that could have been made by the democratic reformers to retaliate against Socrates’ personal ties to a couple of members of the Thirty without violating their amnesty for all non-junta members. It is highly ironic that Plato would have Socrates defend the right of rulers to severely chastise impious storytellers in the *Republic*, then have him killed by rulers exploiting that right in *Apology*.

state and live in unity – the whole community and the individual civilians (parts of the whole) abiding in harmony. Plato is careful to express doubts about actually persuading people to believe it, but when pressed, he has Socrates introduce the “noble lie” through the story of the myth of the metals. This myth calls for the entire city believing that the upbringing and education provided from the city is really a dream, like the shadow existence of the cave dwellers – these “real” experiences are merely more distorted images they perceive. The reality is something entirely different:

*... in reality they spent that time being formed and raised deep within the earth - themselves, their weapons and the rest of the equipment which was made for them. When the process of making them was complete, the earth their mother released them, and now it is their duty to be responsible for defending the country in which they live against any attack – just as they would defend their mother or nurse – and to regard the rest of the citizens as their brothers, born from the earth.*<sup>23</sup>

*The earth their mother* gives birth to all the citizens of the state; forming some with golden natures, some with silver natures, and some with bronze, iron and other base-metaled natures. The metal of the citizen determines which profession she is best suited for, in accordance with the Principle of Natural Division of Labor that Plato establishes in his description of the origin of the just state. The ones who have the golden-natures are best suited to be guardians; those with baser metal natures are best suited for the other professions needed in the city. *The earth their mother* turns out to be the city, which, by providing the framework for each citizen to realize the potential of their metal-nature and perform the task they are best suited for, establishes the healthy relationship whereby each citizen is indebted to the city and repays the care and

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<sup>23</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 414e.

nurturing of *the earth their mother* by placing the needs of the state before their personal self-interest.

Apart from the issue of the credibility of accepting the myth of the metals, the question arises as to the nature of the “noble lie”. *Gennaios*, the word Plato uses to describe this lie, has a double meaning. It could signify a “noble lie” by virtue of its civic purpose, but it could also be used colloquially to imply a “true-blue” lie, meaning a massive lie on a grand scale – like the term “grand larceny”. Plato claims this myth of the metals is essential to his education system, but the equivocal nature of the *noble lie* adds to the ambiguous claims for the foundation of his just state. Can the people really trust the rulers to serve the best interest of the community, or should they expect the rulers to exploit them on the grandest of all scales? This question has to be in the back of any Athenian’s mind who is listening to Socrates’ account of the education of the guardians in *The Republic*.

The purpose of the first tier of the education program is to guide the young guardian-candidates to a properly balanced natural disposition of the soul. That is, for each guardian to acquire a harmonic relationship between the three elements of the soul: the reasoning part; the spirited part, or center of anger and indignation; and the appetitive part, comprised of a collection of cravings and desires. As mentioned earlier, Plato is seeking to cultivate a natural disposition in his “dogs of war” in which wisdom rules the soul, meaning the reasoning part will determine when, where, and how to use force; the spirit part of the soul must be courageous, to vigorously pursue the course reason sets; and the appetitive part must be temperate to not be excessive in pursuit of any selfish

desire. It is as if Plato applies the Natural Division of Labor and One Man – One Job principles of the just society to the soul; reason rules with wisdom, spirit courageously follows wisdom’s lead, and appetite is moderated by temperance to keep an even keel and not stray in pursuit of “luxury items” or other interests.

There appears to be a natural tension between the three parts of the soul. If a person focuses solely on physical activities such as sports and martial arts to the exclusion of academic classes, the spirit element dominates the other parts of the soul. The person will then rashly rush into physical activities without using reason to determine the dangers involved, like a modern day athlete experiencing steroid rage.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, only partaking in academic “book-learning” without exercising the body in physical training overdevelops a person’s propensity to over-think situations to the point of never finding the spirit or nerve to commit to a course of action. A failure to balance reason and spirit produces a “dog of war” who is too aggressive or a guardian who is too timid to properly use the military force entrusted to him. Finally, if the guardian cannot control the appetitive element of the soul, the “dog of war” will be easily corrupted by selfish desires that will overcome the reason and spirit elements; the most dangerous threat for the monopoly on the use of force to exploit the civilian community.

The first tier of the education system is designed to assist the guardian-candidates

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<sup>24</sup> A modern development of athletes seeking to excel in sports by enhancing their performance through taking steroids to boost their testosterone level; athletes who have prolonged steroid use stand a high risk of acquiring physical ailments like tumors, as well as their excessive testosterone level producing unprovoked and extreme rage that changes their natural disposition to tend to violent unprovoked outbursts.

to acquire the proper balance of the soul by developing their golden-natured disposition to the point where the virtues of wisdom, courage, and temperance, respectively, rule the reason, spirit, and appetitive elements of the soul; and all are maintained in the proper balance. Reason rules, not as a tyrannical dictator who serves himself; but as the proper ruler of the soul, ensuring each element is healthy and able to do what it is naturally best suited for, in the proper relation to the whole – a version of unity in the soul mirroring Plato’s vision of unity in the healthy community. I will call the three parts of the soul functioning in harmony with these moral sensibilities the Platonic Grid that is necessary for the education of the guardians.

The goal of the first education tier is for the guardian-candidates to realize the self-discipline needed to maintain the Platonic Grid in their daily functions as “dogs of war”. This stage begins before birth with the “breeding” program and continues through early childhood under the totalitarian system designed to produce golden-natured candidates, ready to receive the training. The self-discipline is acquired through the training regimen that begins in early childhood and includes mathematics, poetry and the arts to develop wisdom with the proper mix of sports and martial training to stimulate courage. Plato does not get specific as to the particular classes that will be taught; the important factor is finding the proper mix of academic and physical activities that will produce the right balance of reason and spirit. The appetitive element is balanced through the incorporation of the true beliefs the rulers inculcate in the community. The primary belief that will facilitate harmonic balance of the guardian’s soul is the “noble-lie”, carefully crafted and inserted from birth into the psyche of the guardians and

underscored in all aspects of guardian life.

This training program works on the same principle that modern drill instructors use to conduct BRM training. Educators cannot *teach* the guardian-candidates how to acquire the harmonic balance of Plato's moral sensibilities, just like soldiers cannot *be taught* how to acquire the fundamentals of marksmanship. Rather, the material is presented in a manner that creates a framework from which the future guardians can acquire their *recollective* sight picture of the proper internal relationship of the elements of the soul and the "true beliefs" that will guide their relationship with others. The specific material *taught* is less important than the way in which the guardian-candidate incorporates the recollections into her sight picture for life. If she develops the self-discipline necessary to maintain the proper internal balance of the Platonic Grid and guides herself with the true belief of the "noble lie", the guardian will fulfill her task of service to the city, which contributes to the healthy functioning of the collective whole of the community through the variety of its individual parts. This is the way the education system creates a guardian class that the powerless in the community can trust with a monopoly on the use of violence.

The guardians enter the second phase of the education system at twenty years of age, after mastering the Platonic Grid in the basic training program. In this phase, the rulers evaluate the "dogs of war" for their potential to serve as proper guardians. As "dogs of war" they are sent out to serve in a series of differing positions with differing responsibilities that will provide the rulers the opportunity to evaluate the mettle of their metal-nature. The "dogs of war" whose gold-nature does not tarnish in the tests of life



experience will be selected to continue on the proper guardian progression track to become philosopher-rulers. There are two interesting aspects to this evaluation and selection phase of the education system. First, Plato does not propose selecting guardians for their competence in any tactical or technical fields of warfare or government. They are not evaluated for wisdom in decision-making, or for courage in the face of danger. Rather, they are evaluated on their commitment to follow the "noble lie" and serve the best interest of the city rather than pursue personal gain.

*Then we must select from the guardians the kind of men who on examination strike us most strongly, their whole lives through, as being utterly determined to do what is in the city's interest, and refusing to act in any way against its interests.<sup>25</sup>*

Those who demonstrate unwavering duty to the state over serving their own self-interest continue on the proper guardian track. Those who fail to live by their *true belief* in the "noble lie" become auxiliaries. The auxiliaries are fit to assist the proper guardians; they are the "dogs of war", capable of performing the heavy lifting functions of the guardian class as long as they are supervised by proper guardians. The proper guardians ensure the auxiliaries only perform their duties in the best interest of the city. The discipline of the guardians to follow the proper tension of the Platonic Grid and the "noble lie" provides a correcting influence on any impulse from the auxiliaries to act against the interest of the city.

The second interesting aspect of the evaluation and selection phase is Plato's acknowledgement that his education system, which should produce an incorruptible guardian class, is inherently flawed. The totalitarian control over the childhood of the

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<sup>25</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 412e.

guardian class should guarantee gold-natured candidates; the education system should provide the framework for them all to *recollect* the truth of the “noble lie”, and once knowing this truth, live by their belief. Plato introduces the notion that while the *earth their mother* is forming the metal-nature of her children, sometimes the metals get mixed. Even if both parents have impeccable golden-natures the resultant offspring can sometimes be silver, bronze or even iron-natured. Since all children are *formed* by “the earth their mother”, it is possible for some children’s metal to leak from gold to a baser metal; or to transform from a baser metal like silver, bronze, or iron to gold. The rulers must always evaluate and select the guardian class for traces of the baser metals because they might manifest at any stage of the guardians’ life.

Plato claims there are three ways that a guardian’s gold-nature can be corrupted to a baser metal. The guardian can forget his belief in the “noble lie”, possibly through the stress of successfully completing challenging tasks. The guardian can be deceived into belief in a false truth, whereby she would come to believe that some other belief is more important than following her duty according to the “noble lie”. Finally, the guardian can fall under the magical spell of pleasure or fear, which would entice him from his belief in the “noble lie”.

Therefore, in the second tier, rulers insert tests and challenges into the education system to determine the guardians’ conviction to the “noble lie”. Some challenges test the propensity to forget true belief when overwhelmed by events; some tests measure the ability to deal with hardship, pain, and trials and still remain dedicated to the “noble lie”; some challenges expose differing beliefs that might replace conviction in the “noble lie”;

some tests observe reactions to “magic”, to see if fear or pleasure will entice actions contrary to the “noble lie”. While this testing begins in infancy, it becomes critical in the second tier of the education system. In this stage, guardians first emerge from the controlled environment they have lived in from early childhood through the basic training stage. How they act when given a bit of autonomy will be very revelatory of the composition of their true metal-nature.

At thirty years of age the guardian candidates that have consistently demonstrated true faith to the “noble lie” are selected for a five year “advanced course” where they receive specialized training to prepare for the intense ordeal of dialectic refutation. They continue to be evaluated and selected during this training; those who still maintain a total commitment to their belief in the “noble lie” are the ones who stand the best chance to recollect knowledge of the good in the final stage of Plato’s education system. However, even after these five years of preparation they are still not ready for the rigors of dialectic refutation.

Those who successfully pass the “advanced course” are sent back to the shadow world of the cave to serve for fifteen years in the mid to upper level management positions in the war department and the government of the city. This fifteen-year time as “provisional” rulers serves two purposes. The candidates for dialectic refutation handle the more mundane issues of ruler-ship. This permits the actual rulers – who *know* the good [itself] – to focus on ways to translate their recollected knowledge of the good [itself] to the rest of the society that only recognizes the shadow images, or distorted reflections, of reality. This bolsters unity in the community as a whole. This

“provisional” time also provides the candidates invaluable experience to prepare for dialectic refutation, which simultaneously gives the actual rulers a better means to evaluate and select the candidates who really are prepared for recollection.

At fifty years of age, the guardians who are selected move into the third tier of Plato’s education system, which starts with dialectic refutation. After fifty years of rigorous preparation, training, and life experience gained from the extensive education provided by the city, these guardians have the best opportunity possible to recollect the good [itself]. Once they have acquired this recollected knowledge the philosopher-guardians will truly be the ones best suited to rule the city. The problem is that once she *knows* the good [itself], the philosopher-guardian will desire to spend all her time in study of the good [itself]. She will not want to return to the city and divert her time to rule the cave inhabitants rather than focus all her attention to contemplating the real world, that of the form of the good [itself].

At this time the city rulers remind the new philosopher-guardian that she was able to ascend to recollection of true knowledge because of the tremendous expenditure of resources and effort that the collective city invested in her individual education. Since she is now best suited to rule the city, by virtue of her *knowledge*, and the city facilitated her acquisition of knowledge, she is now duty bound to use this knowledge to serve the best interest of the city [the earth their mother]. The philosopher-guardian *knows* this is true, therefore, she will now place duty to the city above the pursuit of her personal self-interest and return to rule the city, thereby justifying the “noble lie” as a “true belief.”

Plato believes the culmination of this education system starts a virtuous circle

that will ensure justice in the state. The philosopher-guardians who start their “rule” will focus on the education and upbringing of the next generation of guardians, thereby generating unity in the city. By selecting only the outstanding [gold-natured] children to continue in the education, the rulers will reject inferior [baser metaled] children from the guardian class. The rulers will also admit the superior [gold-natured] children found in the rest of the city into the education program; thereby transforming the mixing of the metals from an indictment against the effectiveness of Plato’s education system into the hook that draws the other classes of society to buy into the “noble lie” and unite the entire city in active support of the Principle of Natural Division of Labor and the One Man – One Job Principle that brings about a healthy city, anchored in unity through diversity.

*The requirement we mentioned earlier, for an inferior child of the guardians to be sent to join the other classes, and for an outstanding child from those classes to join the guardians. This was intended to show that among the rest of the citizen body they should assign each individual to the one task he is naturally fitted for, so that by applying himself to his own task each may become a single person rather than many people, and in this way the entire city may grow to be a single city rather than many cities.<sup>26</sup>*

Once this system is correctly started it will perpetually grow better and more virtuous with each generation, provided the education of the guardians and the upbringing of the entire city (included through extension by the mixing of the metals myth) is maintained and continues to flourish. The philosopher-guardians guard against any accidental destruction of the education system, and they will not permit any radical changes or innovations to the program. The guardians will especially guard against new

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 423d.

forms of music, stories, or physical training being incorporated, not only into the curriculum of training, but also into the society itself.

*Our regime will be a kind of virtuous circle. If you can keep a good system of upbringing and education, they produce naturally good specimens. These in their turn, if they receive a good education, develop into even better specimens than their predecessors. Better in general, and better in particular for reproduction... To put it briefly, then, the overseers of our city must keep a firm grip on our system of education, protecting it above all else, and not allowing it to be destroyed accidentally.<sup>27</sup>*

This has admittedly been a less than thoroughly complete examination of Plato's proposed education system for the guardian class in the just state. This chapter is merely intended to introduce some basic, but key, principles to a student of the profession of arms who is unfamiliar with Plato's method for educating guardians. I will attempt to tease out some of the rich complexities in the *Republic* from this rather limited introduction by exploring several questions from the perspective of seeking applications for military leadership training.

Assuming Plato is correct and his virtuous education circle will produce a just state, having the guardian class live in accordance with the Platonic Grid will be good for the health of the city. It is all well and good for a city-state to have a just military that the citizens can trust with a monopoly of the use of violence, but it is worth questioning if an army composed of leaders whose actions are guided by those moral sensibilities would actually be able to win a war. Does adherence to the Platonic Grid help or hinder the operational effectiveness of a military unit? Casualties are a known cost of warfare; it is one of the recognized risks of battle. While no soldier volunteers

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 424b.

for the military with the expectation of being killed in war, it is a known possibility that at some times in battle personal risk will have to be accepted in order to have operational success and win the battle. Is the internalized call to duty of the “noble lie” and the bonds of the Platonic Grid strong enough for an individual “dog of war” to be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice on the field of battle?

Also, Plato’s claim that his education system completes the virtuous circle of the just state is still open to debate. With the myth of mixing the metals, Plato freely admits it is possible for guardians to be corrupted at any age or stage of development. Forgetfulness of duty, enticement by “magical spells”, and the hardships of wealth and poverty; there are numerous and extremely varied means by which a guardian can be distracted from the call to duty or can slip out of alignment from the proper harmonic balance of moral sensibilities in the Platonic Grid. Plato’s system of continual evaluation and selection sounds impressive, but that does not necessarily make the system foolproof, especially if it is possible that one or more of the evaluators becomes distracted from her own internal moral alignment.

It is possible for a guardian to find herself working for a superior (and evaluating) officer who is distracted from his conviction to the “noble lie” and has become a version of the “sensible knave”<sup>28</sup> In such a situation the guardian acting under the conviction of her belief in the “noble lie” could be disciplined or even expelled from guardian status for acting “justly”. Has Plato really answered the original question

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<sup>28</sup> David Hume used the term sensible knave to depict a rational agent who, like Gyges’ ancestor with the magic ring, chooses to exploit others for personal self-interest when presented with an opportunity to escape being caught.

posed by Glaucon at the beginning of Book II: “Socrates, do you really want to convince us that it is in every way better to be just than unjust, or is it enough merely to seem to have convinced us?”<sup>29</sup> Is Plato’s argument compelling enough to convince a professional soldier it is better to be just and thought unjust, even if it means committing professional suicide? The demands for moral courage in this type of situation can be more challenging than physical courage in the face of impending death and disaster on the battlefield.

Finally, does Plato have a convincing argument that the philosopher can have fulfillment through service to the greater good of the state, even though he has to turn down the present pleasure of constant communion with the good [itself]? If the “noble lie” is actually a *true belief*, then once he has the justification of that belief through dialectic refutation, the philosopher should not need any coercion or persuasion to return to the drudgery of ruling the state. Is the “noble lie” really a *true belief*, or is it truly the grandest lie of all? Has Plato merely seemed to convince us of the plausibility of anyone adhering to the notion of placing duty to others over self-interest in personal gain? From Plato’s own description of the account of the philosopher-guardian it remains an open issue whether even someone who actually *knows* the good [itself] can ever reasonably be expected to live it; even the philosopher needs to be persuaded to follow her duty and return to the shadowy cave to rule the state. It seems as close as the guardians come to completing that virtuous circle, they never can quite close the loop. Is it good enough for Plato’s system to only ever have guardians come close to the reality of the good?

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<sup>29</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 357b.



These are just a few questions that I have identified with Plato's education system for guardians that I will address in subsequent chapters. The Platonic Grid coupled with belief in the "noble lie" provides the internal moral sensibilities for a guardian class that could be entrusted with a monopoly on the use of violence by the citizens of a free and just state. If Plato is right, and his education system is a virtuous, and self-perpetuating, circle, then a just state might be possible through the internal self-discipline of the citizens to follow the "noble lie". If not, then the rather pressing dilemma of who can, by external means, force a group with a monopoly on power to act in the best interest of the powerless persists as a pressing concern for any community.

### CHAPTER III

#### MILITARY VERSIONS OF THE PLATONIC GRID

*This is My commandment, that you love one another,  
just as I have loved you.  
Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down  
his life for his friends.  
You are My friends, if you do what I command you.  
No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what  
his master is doing;  
but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from  
My Father I have made known to you.*<sup>30</sup>

Many warriors have studied past battles attempting to find insights to use in future armed conflicts. The aspiring military leader should consider the many complex dynamics involved in transferring lessons learned from history into current operations. Two Union generals analyzed British operations in the Crimean War (1854-1856) and transferred their observations into their personal leadership in the American Civil War, with dramatically differing effects.

As an observer with the British forces in the Crimean War, George B. McClellan

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<sup>30</sup> John 15:12-15; *New American Standard Bible*. I originally chose to only include verse 13 as the theme for this chapter as it obviously deals with the notion of the greatest expression of love as being willing to *lay down one's life* for a friend. On reflection, the surrounding verses offer some interesting nuances for both Plato's notion of unity in society and for application to the military profession. Of particular interest is the notion of a commandment to love one another – the obedience to that command changes the relationship of master-slave, or possibly commander-subordinate, or even proper guardian to “dog of war”. Certainly for Plato – or the military commander – this is an unspoken, but nonetheless powerful, commandment; a commandment that transforms the command relationship to a dynamic friendship that opens tremendous opportunities for healthy growth of both the individual and the community as a whole. Read this way, the passage inspires an abundance of new meaning when the last verse is looked at through Plato's concept of the recollection of knowledge and his theory of the forms. By the transformation from slave to friend, the Lord *makes known* to his friends everything that has been revealed to Him. How exactly are these things *made known*? I have a suspicion that it's through a process similar to the drill instructor setting the correct conditions for the trainee to *see* the proper way to gain the correct sight picture, rather than relating them through a verbal or written dialogue. As I said, in this chapter I will primarily focus on the notion of troops being willing to lay down their lives for a friend on the battlefield. However, a host of possibilities for new explorations emerge from a rigorous examination of this unlikely – or previously unforeseen – intersection of parallel themes from Ancient Greece, the modern military, and the scriptures.

witnessed first-hand the devastating affects that failure of the commanding general to communicate clear and understandable orders in a timely manner can have on military operations. As commander-in-chief of the United States Army in the early stages of the Civil War, McClellan constantly overestimated the strength of confederate forces facing him and took excessive time to plan and calculate operations before issuing any orders. His extreme caution and refusal to attack targets of opportunity were motivated to a great degree from his observations of the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War, and contributed to extending the Civil War and causing massive casualties for union forces.

By contrast, few historians would characterize Ulysses S. Grant as a timid or cautious commander. As commander-in-chief of Union forces for the later part of the Civil War, Grant was never slow to attack the enemy. However, Grant had studied the reports that McClellan had written about the Crimean War, and he shared McClellan's concern to issue clear, understandable written orders to his subordinate commanders. Rather than spend inordinate amount of time in producing detailed plans, Grant's solution to this problem was to appoint Captain Smith to his personal staff.

Captain Smith was a proven commander in the field. He was fearless in the face of danger and able to motivate and lead his troops decisively in battle. However, Captain Smith was also generally considered to be dumber than a box of rocks. General Grant would not issue a written order until it passed his Smith Test – Smith would have to read and demonstrate understanding of the order before Grant would send it to his subordinate commanders. Grant reasoned that if Captain Smith understood his order, any of his other subordinates would have no trouble understanding it either. This

practice enabled Grant to be extremely aggressive and operationally effective.

My purpose in this chapter is to determine if the incorporation of the Platonic Grid by military leaders will contribute to success in military operations, like Grant's incorporation of the Smith Test; or if a military leader acting in accordance with Plato's guidelines would become like McClellan, too ponderous and slow to be of any real operational value. I will briefly analyze the actions of the leaders from three famous battles to see if it might be possible to draw a relevant conclusion on the merits of the "noble lie" tied to the three elements of the soul. I will start with the Battle of Balaclava, a key battle from the Crimean War that influenced both McClellan and Grant, and will also consider actions from the Battle of Gettysburg and the siege of the Alamo.

On 25 October 1854, in the Battle of Balaclava, the British Light Cavalry Brigade charged a Russian gun emplacement set at the end of the North Valley, flanked by fixed gun batteries along the Fedioukine and Causeway Heights, the two ridges running parallel to the route of attack. These canon crews rained merciless barrages of deadly fire on the brigade as they made their one and a quarter mile advance to the Russian guns. After seizing the objective, the brigade charged after a Russian cavalry unit that had come to reinforce the gun emplacement. While in pursuit of this unit the light brigade was cut off by a division of Cossack cavalry. Unassisted by any other British unit, the brigade was forced to fight their way through the overwhelming number of enemy lancers in mounted close combat to gain the opportunity to return to their friendly lines by running the gauntlet of the gun emplacements and navigate the valley of death a second time.

The people of England first learned of this action from William Howard Russell's article in *The Times* on 14 November 1854, in which he described the glory and heroism of the troops of the Light Brigade, simultaneously stating the attack resulted from a grievous mistake on the part of the leadership. Russell reported that in the short 50 minutes of heroic action the light brigade suffered 409 casualties out of the 607 troops that made that fateful charge; a horrible and incomprehensible loss, that could not be justified by what one French General observing the battle characterized as the glory and magnificence of war.<sup>31</sup>

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the acting Poet Laureate for Britain, wrote a stirring poem to commemorate the heroism of the troops involved while recognizing the bungling of the officers in charge of the campaign. Alfred published "The Charge of the Light Brigade" on 9 December 1854 in the *Examiner*. His verse captured the hearts and minds of the public and a generation of schoolchildren memorized the poem, which focused the entire nation on the valor of the heroic troops of the light brigade and the ineptness of their leaders.

*'Forward the Light Brigade!'  
Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
Some one had blunder'd.  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.*<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix A for a transcript of the original article, as published in *The Times* of London, and cited by Terry Brighton in *Hell Riders*, p. 198-201.

<sup>32</sup> Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade". See Appendix B for complete poem as cited in *Hell Riders*, p. 230-231.

Later, more thorough accounting and reporting actually reflects a much lower casualty rate; some modern historians piecing together reports from the days following the battle have actually reworked the casualty figures to be *only* 271 total personnel killed and wounded, claiming roughly a 40 percent casualty rate verses the 80 percent rate quoted in Russell's initial report in the *Times*. However the British public remained fixated on Russell and Tennyson's depiction of the battle, on both the tragic loss of life and the magnificence of the courage and heroism of those cavalry soldiers.

In the following years many of the survivors did, in fact, publicly discuss the circumstances and actions of that fateful day; questioning the reason why the charge was made and fueling the populace's fascination with the "blunder" that caused so many losses on that fateful day. The tragedy of the "Charge" is that the commander who issued the order never intended the brigade to charge the *Russian* guns at the far end of the valley. That commander intended the cavalry brigade to advance less than a quarter mile forward to prevent the attacking Russian forces from removing the canon abandoned by a *Turkish* (friendly) fortification on the Causeway Heights to the southeast of the Light Brigade. The *reason why* the brigade charged the entire length of that *valley of Death* lies in the failure of four key leaders in the chain of command to perform their assigned duties. One survivor of the charge later referred to them as the "four horsemen of the calamity".

Lord Raglan, the commander of the entire British army in the Crimean campaign; sent an order to his commander of cavalry that was ambiguous and misleading, steering the cavalry commander to the conclusion the intent was to attack the Russian guns at the

far end of the valley. Lord Lucan, the commander of the cavalry division, knew that the order to attack the Russian guns was insane and would be suicidal without proper support from infantry forces that were not present on the field. He did request clarification from the aide who delivered the orders, but when that aide also gave misleading directives, Lord Lucan did not wait and send back a request demanding clarification from Lord Raglan. Instead he ordered his light cavalry brigade to attack. Lord Cardigan, the commander of the light cavalry brigade, also knew the order to charge the Russian guns at the end of the valley was suicidal. He did protest to Lord Lucan requesting to cancel the charge, but after only a token gesture of reluctance, Cardigan ordered his brigade into the valley of Death. Captain Louis Nolan was the aide who delivered Lord Raglan's order to Lord Lucan; he was a professional cavalry officer who knew his responsibility to clarify the written orders he was charged with delivering, however, he purposely refused to clearly identify which guns were intended to be secured when Lord Lucan asked for more information.

Nolan was the first casualty on that fateful ride; killed by the first Russian artillery shell that exploded overhead as the brigade advanced up the valley. Before the surviving remnant of the brigade had returned to friendly lines, the remaining three contributors to the *blunder* were already casting allegations to blame the others and creating explanations to excuse their own actions. To this day historians attempt to find new interpretations of the archival evidence to either vilify or vindicate one or more of these four primary suspects in the tragic events that led to the slaughter of the Light Brigade. While the arguments are interesting in an academic approach to military

history, they do not contribute to applications for military leadership.

The fact is that if any of the four had acted with the proper tension between the elements of the soul and the “noble lie” called for in the Platonic Grid, the British forces would have avoided the great blunder that launched the light brigade through the valley of Death. Lord Raglan was an aristocrat, but was also a professional soldier. He started military service in 1804 and had served with distinction as a young officer on the staff of the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, where he was severely wounded and lost an arm. Raglan was well educated and extremely intelligent; however, prior to the Crimean War he had never been a commander. The command of the army proved to be too much responsibility for him; the stresses involved with the task revealed the cracks in his golden-nature.

As commander of the army, Raglan repeatedly demonstrated an imbalance between the rational and spirit elements of the soul. Raglan was intelligent enough to recognize the correct action to take, however, in the heat of battle he would become unreasonably irritated and react impatiently. The softness of his spirited nature caused reactions that overbalanced his reason; in his haste to act he would issue unclear, often incoherent orders that would confuse his subordinates, causing delays in the execution of their orders. The delays in execution further agitated Raglan, prompting him to issue more hasty orders that became more ambiguous and caused greater confusion. His actions depicted the dilemma Plato described of people who participated excessively in academic, intellectual activities without integrating the physical activities necessary to balance the reason and spirit elements of the soul.



*Have you never observed the mentality of those who spend all their time on physical education, to the exclusion of musical and poetic education? Or those whose way of life is the opposite? ... Savagery and hardness, in one case. Weakness and gentleness, in the other ... I have noticed that those whose education is purely physical turn out more savage than they should. Those who have only a musical and moral education, on the other hand, do become softer than is good for them.*<sup>33</sup>

Raglan's last order to the cavalry division on 25 October 1854 was intended to have the light brigade advance to the abandoned Turkish fortification on the Causeway Heights, immediately to the southeast of the brigade, to prevent the Russians from removing the Turkish (friendly) guns. From his position on the high ground Raglan could see the abandoned Turkish position and the Russian forces moving around it. However, the cavalry division was on the plain on the reverse slope of the ridge where the Turkish guns were located; Lucan could not see the Russians or the Turkish guns on the Causeway Heights, a fact that Raglan knew.

In view of this information, Raglan's order was dangerously vague, ambiguous, and downright mystifying.

*Lord Raglan wishes the Cavalry to advance rapidly to the front – follow the Enemy and try to prevent the Enemy carrying away the guns – Troop Horse Artillery may accompany – French cavalry is on your left. [signed] R Airey Immediate.*<sup>34</sup>

The only enemy guns Lucan could see was directly to his front at the far end of the valley. Raglan let his haste to take decisive action create an imbalance in the proper tension between the elements of the soul, letting the physical aspect of the situation

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<sup>33</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 410c-d.

<sup>34</sup> Raglan's order as reprinted in *Hell Riders*, p. 103.

override the reason element that should have led to producing a coherent order.<sup>35</sup> It would have taken barely a minutes extra time to check the written order and change it to a clear intent, such as directing *the Cavalry to advance a quarter mile to the southeast to prevent the Enemy carrying away the guns from the Turkish redoubt on the Causeway Heights.*

Raglan’s imbalance of the Platonic Grid might have been counter weighted if the aide carrying his written order had fulfilled his duty to provide clarifying instructions to Lord Lucan. Captain Nolan was a professional cavalry officer, who prided himself on his professionalism and who loathed “amateur” officers who bought their commissions.<sup>36</sup> He was known to be hostile and antagonistic to the aristocrats who paraded as cavalry officers. Nolan particularly disliked Lucan and Cardigan, both of whom he openly criticized as incompetent, *amateur* officers. As a professional officer Nolan knew it was his duty<sup>37</sup> as an aide carrying a written order to provide additional oral instructions for the commander receiving the order.<sup>38</sup>

Nolan, rather than focus on completing his one assigned task of delivering and

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<sup>35</sup> In contrast, Ulysses S. Grant was known for taking decisive action, but never issued hasty or, thanks to the Smith Test, incoherent orders to subordinates.

<sup>36</sup> In *Hell Riders*, p. 19-20, Terry Brighton lays out six steps that inform an aristocrat *How to Buy a Cavalry Regiment*.

<sup>37</sup> Plato’s concept of the “noble lie” entailed a duty for each citizen to serve the best interest of the state, but taken in conjunction with his One-Man One-Job Principle and Principle of Natural Division of Labor, it is implied that it is every individual’s duty to the state to perform her one job, the job that she is best suited for and therefore specializes in. The health of the city-state depends on each individual performing her particular job, and relying of each other individual to perform their respective individual parts that combine to create a whole, and healthy community. By allowing himself to be distracted from his primary duty as the aide carrying the order, Nolan was actually creating a tear, or a hole, in the whole fabric of the community he was one part of – the British army commanded by Lord Raglan.

<sup>38</sup> Ironically, in 1853 Captain Nolan had written a book on cavalry operations, in which he took careful pains to detail how the aide carrying written orders also had authority to supplement the written order with verbal instructions that were to be obeyed as coming from the commander.

clarifying Lord Raglan's order to Lord Lucan, permitted his resentment of aristocratic officers in general, and Lucan in particular, to take priority over his duty and used his authority as Raglan's voice of authority to vent his frustration with *amateurs* on Lucan. Colonel Lord George Paget, commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, a regiment in the Light Brigade, who personally knew all the four key leaders described the officer who delivered the fateful order to Lucan:

*An officer named Captain Nolan, who writes books, and was a great man in his own estimation, and who had already been talking very loud against the cavalry, his own branch of service, and especially Lucan.*<sup>39</sup>

According to several bystanders who witnessed Nolan delivering the order, Lucan expressed initial puzzlement, and commented on the uselessness and danger of such a proposed attack. Captain Nolan brashly cut off Lord Lucan with a "biting" and strident cry to the effect that "Lord Raglan's orders are that the cavalry are to attack immediately!" This no doubt added to Lucan's frustration over the unclear order; the written order merely wished to have the cavalry advance rapidly, follow the Enemy and prevent the enemy carrying away guns, now the accompanying verbal order directed an immediate attack. Lucan is reported by the same onlookers to have responded with words to the effect: "Attack, sir! Attack what? What guns?" To which Nolan imperiously swept his arm forward to point down the valley, at the end of which stood the Russian gun emplacements, and mockingly replied "There, my lord, is your enemy, there are your guns!"

This concluded Nolan's clarifying remarks. He chose to be no more specific in

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<sup>39</sup> Paget, Gen. Lord George, *The Light Cavalry Brigade in the Crimea*, Murray, London, 1881, cit. p.72.

his direct guidance than Raglan had been in the written order. Visibly upset by the orders he had just received and by Nolan's curt and arrogant manner of delivering them, Lucan immediately turned his horse and rode to the Light Brigade to pass the orders to Lord Cardigan, with Nolan trailing readily behind. It did not help that Lucan had an even more hostile relationship with Cardigan.<sup>40</sup> Lucan curtly ordered Cardigan to immediately attack the enemy position down the North Valley. At which point Cardigan and Lucan exchanged words to the effect:

*'Certainly sir; but allow me to point out to you that the Russians have a battery in the valley to our front, and batteries and riflemen on each flank.'* Whereupon Lucan resorted to the time-honoured ploy of commanders having to give unpopular orders, that of blaming his superior. *'I know it,' he said, 'but Lord Raglan will have it. We have no choice but to obey.'*<sup>41</sup>

Cardigan then formally saluted Lucan with his saber and turned to his brigade to make final preparations for the charge. Nolan observed the entire exchange, he knew these two aristocrats were clearly troubled by the order, but were still willing to charge down the North Valley. Still, the professional officer chose to remain silent rather than provide the information that could stop the dreadful attack. Within ten minutes the Light Brigade began their wild ride down Tennyson's valley of Death and into the annals of military history. It is interesting to note that Nolan, who was not required to, chose to attach himself to the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancer Regiment and ride in the charge with a former colleague of his from the India campaign. When the brigade passed the Turkish gun positions on the Causeway Heights, roughly a quarter mile down the valley, Nolan rode

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<sup>40</sup> Lucan and Cardigan were brothers-in-law; Lucan married Cardigan's sister Ann in 1829. From that day they shared a mutual disgust and loathing of each other, to the point that they would only talk to each other under compulsion.

<sup>41</sup> Adkin, Mark. *The Charge*. Leo Cooper, London. 1996. cit. p. 135.

across the front of the formation towards Lord Cardigan, shouting for the brigade to turn in the direction of the Turkish guns. It was at this point that Nolan was killed as the brigade came in range of the first Russian artillery battery. Historians speculate that Nolan was attempting to communicate to Cardigan that Raglan wanted “to attack” the Russians on the reverse slope of the Causeway Heights, rather than foolishly charge “down the valley”. If this is so, then Nolan really waited until the last moment to attempt to provide the clarity he was duty bound to insert before the operation started, possibly motivated by a desire to publicly humiliate the incompetent aristocrats Lucan and Cardigan, who were foolish enough to order a suicidal charge.

Regardless of whether this was his calculated plan; Nolan clearly demonstrated an imbalance in the moral sensibilities called for in the Platonic Grid. The rancor he felt for *amateur* officers who purchased their commands disrupted the proper internal tension of the Platonic Grid. Nolan’s consuming envy of the privilege and unearned status of aristocratic amateurs he deemed unworthy to perform the duties he was entitled to over-balanced what his reason and spirit elements would confirm as his duty to the “noble lie”. The appetitive element of Nolan’s nature seduced him from his duty; he let himself be ensorcelled by the pleasure of humiliating these two inept aristocrats at the expense of properly performing his job.

*As for magic, you would also accept, I imagine, that there are people whose beliefs change because they are seduced by pleasure, or because there is something they are afraid of.*<sup>42</sup>

By succumbing to the *magic spell* that enticed him to fail to indicate the Turkish position

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<sup>42</sup> Plato, *Republic*. 413c.

on the Causeway Heights, Nolan placed the entire light brigade in peril, just to place Lucan and Cardigan in a difficult position.

For their parts, both Lucan and Cardigan knew that the attack “ordered” by Raglan with Nolan’s assistance was suicidal and pointless. Even if the brigade could advance down the entire valley and actually survive the barrages to reach the Russian guns, without support from the infantry that was not present the brigade could not hold that position. Both men demonstrated their anticipation of taking catastrophic losses in an attack down that valley. Cardigan made sure to voice his protest of the Russian positions flanking the objective in front of several staff officers who would serve as witnesses to clear him of responsibility. Lucan thoughtfully presented Raglan’s written order to a personal aide not participating in the charge for “safeguarding” prior to departing their friendly lines. Both took steps to protect their careers and reputations before the attack, knowing the result of the operation would incur severe casualties with no tactical gain.

Contrary to Lucan’s insistence that they “had no choice” but to obey Raglan’s order, both had the opportunity to refuse the mission, or at least to delay it and send a message back to Raglan demanding clarification of the ambiguous and dangerous order they had received. Sadly, neither had the moral courage to stand against an order they both knew to be insane. Both knew that to refuse, or even to delay, execution of the order could jeopardize their careers and their reputations.

Lord Raglan could relieve them of their commands, and possibly even demand a trial by courts-martial in response to such action. Both also knew Captain Nolan would

use such a refusal, or delay, to mock and ridicule them for “amateurish” behavior if they did not “immediately attack” as he had dictated using Raglan’s command authority. In the line of fire, in the moment of truth, both placed concern for their career and reputation over their responsibility as commanders to meet their duty to both their superior commander and to the troops subordinate to their command.<sup>43</sup>

This predicament forcing leaders to choose to do what is right at the expense of their military career is as relevant today as it was in the Crimean War. Lucan and Cardigan’s actions at Balaclava epitomize a lesson that generals attempt to impress on junior officers in their commands: always have the courage to do what is morally right, even if the cost of doing so ruins your career. For Lucan and Cardigan the fear of losing their reputation overbalanced the proper tension required to maintain the Platonic Grid; causing them to lead their commands into the valley of Death rather than exercise their moral courage as directed by the guide of reason tempered by the demands of duty to the “noble lie”.

The tragedy of the charge of the light brigade is that if any of these “four horsemen of the calamity” had acted in accordance with the Platonic Grid, the pointless loss of life would not have occurred. However, this is not to say that acting in the proper balance of tension between the reason, spirit, and appetitive elements of the soul with the guidance of the “noble lie” would never prompt a commander to lead a hopeless advance

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<sup>43</sup> As noted before, applying Plato’s Principle of Natural Division of Labor and One-Man One-Job Principle to an army requires every individual in that army to perform the tasks assigned them for the collective health of the whole command. That entails a duty not just to follow the commander’s orders, but also to preserve and sustain the community as a whole. Participating in an action that destroys a significant part of that community without providing any redeeming value to offset the loss actually harms rather than preserves and maintains the health of the community.

against overwhelming odds. By happy chance, the next battle I will examine involves a desperate charge against overwhelming enemy forces.

On the afternoon of 2 July 1863 the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine Regiment moved into position on the southern slope of a large hill off of the southern end of long ridge running a little over a mile south of a small town in Pennsylvania. The commanding officer of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine was not a professional soldier. Professor Joshua Chamberlain left his teaching position at Bowdoin College in 1862 to join the army. After one year of military service, Colonel Chamberlain was a veteran with combat experience, but other Union officers generally regarded him as something of a novelty. They viewed the scholar turned officer as a quaint and charming idea, but not one to be taken seriously.

So, when Chamberlain's brigade commander walked the line with him to show his regiment's responsibilities at around 1600 hours, Colonel Vincent was careful to fully explain the significance of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine's position and the imperative that it hold at all costs. Chamberlain's regiment was assigned the left flank of the entire Union army. If the Confederates could manage to take that position, they would have free access to strike the rest of the Union forces from the flank and rear, rolling them up along the entire line of Cemetery Ridge. The enemy could then pass straight through Gettysburg with a clear shot at the Potomac River Valley. Contrary to the expectation of his peers, Chamberlain immediately recognized the importance of his position on Little Round Top and took Vincent's last command to "hold at all costs" to heart.

Within minutes of occupying their positions, Law's Alabama Brigade surged up the slopes of Little Round Top in wave after relentless wave, pressing hard against the



20<sup>th</sup> Maine. At the start of the action Chamberlain's regiment totaled around 300 effective soldiers. The Alabaman brigade sent close to 2,000 soldiers against the Union left flank. As the Confederate forces swarmed around Little Round Top, Chamberlain became aware that the Alabaman's were circling his position, attempting to come up the reverse slope of the hill on his extreme left flank. Chamberlain was faced with a difficult problem. He had to extend the line of his troops to the left and turn them perpendicular to his original position in order to hold his position, and he had to execute this maneuver while in contact with a numerically superior force that was exercising constant and fierce pressure. The situation was further complicated by the fact that this maneuver was not part of the field manual for operations.<sup>44</sup>

Somehow, Chamberlain was able to communicate this intent to his troops, and they were able to execute this new drill movement, in the most difficult of conditions. The impromptu maneuver was successful, but only as a temporary stopgap against the swell of the Confederate onslaught. By extending the line, Chamberlain's regiment was left dangerously thin and huge gaps started forming as his regiment took casualties and did not have enough men to bridge the holes in their extended front. Also, as the line was rapidly thinning out, the surviving troops were rapidly running out of ammunition. The regiment had started the engagement averaging 60 rounds per rifleman, but at the next lull in the attack Chamberlain received the report that most of his regiment had run out of bullets.

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<sup>44</sup> Like a quarterback calling an audible in a football game, Chamberlain called this new play for his regiment. However, the play he was audibling was not in the playbook. Chamberlain literally had to design and teach the play to his team while in direct contact with the enemy. Most professional military officers would never think to try inventing such a maneuver on the fly.

Badly outnumbered, with gaping holes in an extended line, and now with no ammunition, the regiment could not withstand the next Alabaman wave. As his lieutenants reported their troops' status to Chamberlain, the entire regiment expected to receive the order to withdraw from the impossible situation. However, Chamberlain remained calm in the face of disaster. Realizing he could not hold against the next assault, he still knew he could not accept the consequences of retreat, which would leave the entire Union army vulnerable to exploitation. Rather than surrender, Chamberlain ordered his regiment to fix bayonets and prepare to charge in a right wheel movement. This was another maneuver his regiment had never practiced or performed.<sup>45</sup> He directed his troops to remain anchored to the unit to their immediate right, and as the Alabaman brigade advanced in the next wave, he ordered his left-most elements to start the charge. The entire line swept like a door down the slope of Little Round Top, driving the Confederate forces across the front of the Pennsylvanian unit they were connected to on the right.

This move caught the Alabamans off-guard, shattering their formation. The Confederates who did not run surrendered to the remnants of Chamberlain's regiment. This suicidal bayonet charge blunted the Confederate attack that would have otherwise exposed the Union flank to be exploited by General Robert E. Lee's attacking army. Shortly thereafter, reinforcements arrived to shore up the gaps in the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine's line, and the Union lines held for the second day of the Battle of Gettysburg. The next day

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<sup>45</sup> This was the second maneuver that his troops had never conducted, that Chamberlain directed in the middle of this battle. In military theory it is not conceivable to expect troops to execute these types of unfamiliar maneuvers under the stress of combat conditions.

General Lee sent George Pickett's Division to charge the center of the Union lines. The failure of Pickett's Charge at Cemetery Ridge on 3 July 1863 marked the first time Union forces had defeated Confederates in a significant battle. The Battle of Gettysburg became known as the watershed mark of the American Civil War. The Union victory on 3 July was only possible due to the ability of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine to hold its position the day before, despite taking almost 50 percent casualties.

Like Lucan and Cardigan, Chamberlain found himself in a situation where he knew that following his orders would result in his unit suffering severe casualties. However, while duty at Balaclava demanded Lucan and Cardigan to exercise moral courage to disobey their perceived order and refuse to charge; duty (to his country, his superior, and his own unit) required Chamberlain to place his regiment in deadly peril, and to lead them on an improbable charge against an overwhelming enemy force. Unlike the 'four horsemen' from the Crimean Campaign, Chamberlain demonstrated the ability to act in a temperate manner with reason in harmonious balance guiding spirit in the proper application of physical and moral courage to follow the demands called for by duty to the "noble lie".

Plato would say that Chamberlain demonstrated the proper balance between spirit and reason, in contrast to the "four horsemen of calamity" whose imbalanced natures led to disharmony.

*The guardians must have both these natural attributes, we say ... and these must be balanced with one another ... the soul of someone who is harmonized in this way is self-disciplined and brave ... whereas the soul of someone*

*discordant is cowardly and uncivilized.*<sup>46</sup>

Chamberlain, like Lucan and Cardigan, was not a professional soldier, but unlike the aristocrats, he had acquired that self-discipline necessary to maintain the harmony of the properly balanced Platonic Grid and “noble lie”.

It is important to highlight that I have chosen to extend the “noble lie” from adherence to a general conviction to always act in the best interest of the state to a more specific obligation for soldiers to always act in the best interest of their command, in a maneuver similar to Chamberlain’s decision to extend his own line in order to counter the challenge presented by the enemy’s enveloping attack.<sup>47</sup> I extend the concept of duty from the general sense of obligation to the state to a more immediate and tangible sense of duty to one’s comrades in arms, in order to address the serious challenge to the “noble lie” posed by the question of why any soldier would willingly risk death in combat to serve such a seemingly nebulous concept of abstract duty to country. After all, wouldn’t the immediate threat of death overcome any theoretical obligation to the far removed from battle entity of the state?

Modern western military historians such as S.L.A. Marshall and John Keegan acknowledge the fact that soldiers fight for myriad of reasons. Military theorists had long identified fear as a strong motivational factor prompting soldiers to fight. In short, men would fight from fear; first from fear of punishment for not fighting; then from fear of being slaughtered as a result of not fighting well. However, this new western take has

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<sup>46</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 410e-411a.

<sup>47</sup> Implicit in this extension is the understanding that the entire military force act in the best interest of the state, always placing the community before self-interest.

a radically different view on why soldiers overcome fear on the terrible modern battlefield. Marshall and Keegan see an army as a genuine social organism with its own socially binding, but unwritten, “contracts”. Soldiers in a fighting unit develop “mutual acquaintanceship which establishes pride”; both an individual pride as a warrior, and collective pride in the group the individuals bond into. Soldiers develop a spiritual bond of unity that can overcome physical threat and hardship.

*So it is far more than a question of the soldier’s need of physical support from other men. He must have at least some feeling of spiritual unity with them if he is to do an efficient job of moving and fighting. Should he lack this feeling for any reason, whether it be because he is congenitally a social misfit or because he has lost physical contact or because he has been denied the chance to establish himself with them, he will become a castaway in the middle of a battle and as incapable of effective offensive action as if he were stranded somewhere without weapons.*<sup>48</sup>

This special bond of unity doesn’t make soldiers seek to take heroic action to impress their buddies; rather it is a fear of losing face in front of their comrades, the unwillingness to be considered “least worthy” in front of their peers, that will motivate soldiers to fight even in the face of imminent death. Mutual friendships help forge the bond that holds the military community strong and secure.<sup>49</sup>

*It is therefore, in Marshall’s view, vital that an army should foster the closest acquaintanceship among its soldiers, that it should seek to create groups of friends, centred if possible on someone identified as a ‘natural’ fighter, since it is their ‘mutual acquaintanceship’ which will ensure no one flinches or shirks. ‘When a soldier is ... known to the men who are around him, he ... has reason*

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<sup>48</sup> S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, p. 42.

<sup>49</sup> Aristotle espouses the importance of friendship in cementing the foundation of a community in his *Politics*. “Hence there arise in cities family connections, brotherhoods, common sacrifices, and amusements that draw men together. But these are created by friendship, for to choose to live together is friendship.” (III.9,1280b35) Friendship is the bond that permits Aristotle’s state to be self-sufficing. I believe this describes the bonding of “mutual acquaintanceship” described by Keegan and Marshall in army units.

*to fear losing the one thing he is likely to value more highly than life – his reputation as a man among other men.*<sup>50</sup>

This type of “mutual acquaintanceship” described by Keegan and Marshall can form a very special and unique bond that will hold a unit steady despite severe losses like those suffered by the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine on the slopes of Little Round Top. It might even account for how one soldier might sacrifice his own life to save members of his own small unit, who are his brothers in arms. However, I believe there is another aspect to this friendship that raises both individuals and collective units to a willingness to give their life in aid or support of fellow soldiers.<sup>51</sup>

The 20<sup>th</sup> Maine had fought fiercely on Little Round Top through the afternoon of 2 July. However, when the unit realized they were out of ammunition, it anticipated and looked for the order to retreat. They had not lost their nerve, but they also saw no reason to continue fighting without ammunition, especially with the opportunity to withdraw before the next wave of the Alabaman brigade hit. It would have been reasonable, since they did not actually know anyone from the other Union outfits along the line. Those units were from states such as New York and Pennsylvania; while allied to the same cause, they were outsiders who could be expected to look out for themselves. Expecting anything more from the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine would be asking them to sacrifice themselves for strangers they didn’t really know.

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<sup>50</sup> Keegan, John, *The Face of Battle*, p. 71-72.

<sup>51</sup> Keegan and Marshall’s description of “mutual acquaintanceship” works for small units, but the Platonic Grid requires a leader, perhaps the *natural fighter* Keegan mentions, to unite the small group, who will be convicted to follow duty to the collective community – a call for duty to something larger than just the small band of close brothers. Without a higher calling of duty, such small groups could be viewed as simply mercenary groups – only united by friendship rather than just financial remuneration.

However, Chamberlain was able to transfer that bond of “mutual acquaintanceship” to personnel and units not part of the immediate community of the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine. Just like he was able to extend his line to enlarge the physical space his regiment could defend, Chamberlain extended his bond of friendship to all the units in the Union line that he had no personal connection to; to soldiers he would never see, talk to, or clasp hands in friendship with. Nonetheless he did see them as brothers-in-arms.<sup>52</sup>

Hume’s account of how one can acquire this kind of general view might describe the way one individual soldier comes to embrace soldiers from units other than his own. However, Hume’s description does not quite depict the brute force of the impact that internalizing such a code can have. I would suggest that when Colonel Vincent informed him that his regiment was the left flank of the entire defense and therefore must hold at all costs, Chamberlain was immediately impressed by the weight of responsibility to protect and preserve the integrity of the whole army by maintaining that position. In a very tangible sense this is an application of the powerful, and sometimes terrible, binding virtue of *loyalty* that Josiah Royce, in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, describes as either saving or damning *detached* individuals.

I do not wish to imply that every soldier experiences this transfer of loyalty to the collective whole of the entire army, nor even that each individual completely buys into Marshall and Keegan’s “mutual acquaintanceship” bond to the small group. Each unit

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<sup>52</sup> In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part III, Section I, “Of the origins of the natural virtues and vices”, David Hume describes the process by which an individual acquires the General Point of View. He talks about how individuals are stirred by sympathetic resonance to place themselves in close friendship with strangers. In such a manner strangers can with unspoken mutual understanding accept and internalize a code to live by. In this case not a code consisting of a list of do’s and don’ts, rather a living code consisting of this strange and fierce acquaintanceship shared by warriors.

has a unique and complex dynamic that can fluctuate based on the constantly evolving interactions of the individuals to the whole. However, the stronger the bonds of loyalty, the more effective and cohesive the military unit will be in action. If, as Keegan and Marshall suggest, the unit has a “natural fighter” who the “group of friends” center on and emulate in combat, then only that one individual per unit is needed to be compelled by the bonds of loyalty to adhere to a “true belief” in the “noble lie” in order to unite the many small units to stand together in a formidable group, like the 20<sup>th</sup> Maine on a warm July afternoon in Pennsylvania.

During the last lull in combat, the regiment knew it could not stand the next assault. When Chamberlain issued the command “Fix bayonets!” all the individuals who had been looking for an escape route were transformed into a solid, unified front determined to hold their position or die in the attempt. It is quite possible that most of the regiment never gave a thought to the rest of the Union line; but by the force of will of a few leaders, the entire regiment was willing to continue to fight, even in the face of overwhelming odds and impending defeat or death. This type of experience is not necessarily common, even in combat. But when it does occur, it is a special moment, at the same time glorious and magnificent, as well as dreadful and terrible.

Some might object that this phenomenon only unites troops in battle if there is a special leader, like Joshua Chamberlain, who is larger than life and walks on water.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> A professor before entering the Army, Chamberlain was fluent in nine languages and had taught every course offered at Bowdoin College. During the entire war Chamberlain participated in over 20 engagements, was wounded six times, and was eventually promoted to Major General. General Grant personally chose Chamberlain to command the troops present to accept General Lee’s surrender at the Appomattox Court House. After the war, Chamberlain returned to Bowdoin College in Maine, but eventually ran for office and was elected governor for four consecutive one-year terms. He later became



Most leaders are mere mortals, flawed individuals who could not achieve the proper balance of the Platonic Grid coupled with the binding loyalty needed to follow the “noble lie”. Like the “four horsemen” from Balaclava, anyone who is flawed could never live up to the rigorous demands required to properly balance the tensions involved in the interaction of the elements of the soul, especially not in the stress of combat situations.

I would like to briefly examine the siege of the Alamo in 1836 in order to consider the issue of leaders of flawed character. It is difficult to separate fact from fiction when thinking of the Alamo. For generations Americans have been raised with the folklore and legends surrounding the Alamo from productions such as Disney’s portrayal of *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*. Much like Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s famous poem colored Great Britain’s memories of the Crimean War, Americans “Remembering” the Alamo are actually *recollecting* larger-than-life stories that have become legend.

Modern historians have gone to great lengths to debunk myths surrounding the Alamo; one aspect of their collective research has been to expose the character flaws of the three key leaders for the “Texian” forces that made their last stand at the Spanish mission in San Antonio: Jim Bowie, commander of the Texian volunteers; William Barret Travis, commander of the regular army Texian forces; and Davy Crockett, leader of a little group of “Tennessee Mounted Volunteers”. None of the three were native

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president of Bowdoin College. Eventually, at the age of 77, he died of wounds he had received during the Civil War and had suffered with for the rest of his life. Chamberlain truly was a remarkable man who was possibly as close as any modern man could come to be the embodiment of Plato’s model for a philosopher-guardian.

Texans, and all of them have been characterized by some historians as fortune hunters seeking money, land, and fame in the opportunities present in the unrest between the central Mexican government and the fiercely independence-minded province of Texas.

Jim Bowie was the first of this trio to come to Texas, arriving in San Antonio de Bexar in 1828. He was known as a knife fighter and a businessman with sketchy ethical practices. He had already made vast fortunes; \$65,000 from slave trading with the pirate Jean Lafitte in New Orleans and \$20,000 from speculating with fraudulent land titles in Arkansas, which he followed with huge speculations in Texas. He greatly assisted his efforts by converting to Catholicism, becoming a Mexican citizen, and, at 42 years of age, marrying the 19-year-old daughter of the lieutenant governor of Texas, and the richest Mexican family in San Antonio de Bexar.

William Barret Travis was a relatively successful young lawyer in Alabama, with political aspirations. He was newly married, with one child and another on way, when Travis abandoned his young family, leaving them for Texas. The motives for this remain unclear; some historians suggest a combination of boredom in Alabama and ambition for political and martial fame, if not also fortune. Family tradition states that he killed a man who had made advances toward his wife and fled to Texas to escape the law. Travis settled in Nacogdoches and quickly acquired a large reputation as a lawyer, a fashion trendsetter, a gambler, and a womanizer. He meticulously recorded his many “conquests”, largely consisting of slaves and prostitutes, in his diary. By all accounts he was an intense young man with an urge to greatness, although with not much demonstrated qualification for it, apart from a tremendous determination coupled with a

matching ego.

Davy Crockett was undisputedly the most famous of the Alamo defenders. He lost reelection as Congressman for Tennessee in 1835, in large part due to a fierce political fight with then President Andrew Jackson. In a stump speech Crockett actually told constituents thinking of voting him out of office, that: they “could go to hell,” he “would go to Texas.” Crockett did set out for Texas in early November of 1835, not, as many Americans then emigrating to that obscure province of Mexico, to join the growing movement for independence; but merely as a lark with a few good friends, to hunt and explore and wash the sour taste of Washington politics from his mouth.

It appears Crockett was actually a somewhat less than virtuous politician. He had acquired national fame and political power by selling himself as a good-natured, if ignorant, backwoodsman reformer, whose rifle marksmanship served as a substitute for book learning. Crockett carefully portrayed himself to the public as a frontiersman, more comfortable living outdoors in coonskin cap, buckskin coat, and Indian moccasins than living in a fancy city. While he was a remarkable rifleman, and had formidable skill in the woods, Crockett preferred wearing frock coats, fancy dining, and reading novels in a well-furnished drawing room. He happily embellished, or downright fabricated, frontier exploits to gain fame and favor in urban settings. Selling the image of backwoods affable “Davy” to the voting public, Crockett insisted his friends and colleagues call him David, and always signed his name so. By various modern scholarly accounts, Crockett was either a naïve politician who permitted himself to be used by the Whig Party as their foil against Andrew Jackson, or he was politically unscrupulous,

switching allegiances between “Old Hickory” and his political foes for personal gain.

The modern portraits of these iconic figures from the Alamo are based off differing scholars compilation of surviving letters, diaries, memoirs, newspaper articles, and court records of that era. The scholarly interpretation of archival evidence can hardly be deemed definitive; however, it does serve to put clay feet on the popular view of the heroes from the legendary Disney version on which many rely to *remember* the Alamo. This interpretation produces an image of individuals with competing motives of self-interest that had, until the fall of 1835, overridden any sense of duty to others.

But something happened on their respective journeys to that little Spanish mission in San Antonio de Bexar early in the new year of 1836. Jim Bowie reached the Alamo first, arriving on 18 January with orders from Sam Houston to demolish the hastily constructed fortifications, and shift the current defenders to consolidate in Gonzales (a little over 70 miles to the east). Somehow Bowie could not bring himself to abandon this outpost that stood as the first obstacle to the vast Mexican army’s otherwise uninterrupted pathway to the colonists of Texas. Bowie started fortifying the defenses rather than tear them down, and he prevailed on Houston and Governor Henry Smith to reinforce the garrison.

Bowie was fully aware of the isolated position of the Alamo, and of the threat from Mexico that was looming in the immediate future. His excellent contacts in the area kept him informed of Santa Anna’s troop strengths and positions. Bowie knew that Mexican General Ramirez y Sesma had a cavalry force of over 1,500 troops waiting at the Rio Grande for permission to start the invasion. On 2 February Bowie’s informants

confirmed that Santa Anna had marshaled over 5,000 more troops that were now close behind Sesma's forces, intent on taking San Antonio.<sup>54</sup> Rather than consider reverting to the original intent to abandon the Alamo, Bowie immediately wrote a report to the governor carefully explaining his view:

*The salvation of Texas depends in great measure in keeping Bexar out of the hands of the enemy. It serves as the frontier picquet guard, and if it were in the possession of Santa Anna, there is no stronghold from which to repel him in his march toward the Sabine. Colonel Neill and myself have come to the opinion that we will rather die in these ditches than give it up to the enemy.*<sup>55</sup>

On 23 January 1835 William Barret Travis had been given the order to reinforce the Alamo with his band of 30 men. Travis purposely delayed moving his unit to the Alamo, believing a posting to such an obscure, remote, and insignificant command to be beneath his abilities, and actually wrote to the governor of Texas on 29 January asking to be relieved of his commission rather than squander his talent in San Antonio. The governor never responded to Travis, and reluctantly, he finally dragged himself and his command to the Alamo on 3 February. By 13 February Travis had reversed his opinion on the importance of his assignment and wrote in yet another letter to Governor Smith; "It is more important to occupy this post than I imagined when I last saw you. It is the key to Texas ..."<sup>56</sup>

On 8 February "Davy" Crockett rode into the Alamo with his group of fourteen

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<sup>54</sup> Santa Anna had considered it a personal affront when a "rabble" (as he considered them) group of Texian rebels had managed to force his brother-in-law General Martin Perfecto de Cos, commander of his Texan occupation force, to surrender the Alamo and withdraw to Mexico in early December 1835; and he was set on avenging that insult to his dignity.

<sup>55</sup> From letter dated 2 February 1835, James Bowie to Governor Smith. Army Papers, Texas State Archives, cited by Walter Lord in *A Time to Stand*, p. 79.

<sup>56</sup> From letter dated 13 February 1835, William Barret Travis to Governor Smith. Army Papers, Texas State Archives, cited in *A Time to Stand*, p. 85.

“Tennessee Mounted Volunteers”. He had already caught this fierce brand of loyalty to the cause of Texan independence and the defense of the Alamo; and his arrival electrified the community of San Antonio. As his group reached the town every citizen and soldier jammed into the Main Plaza, clamoring to see the famous figure. Crockett might have committed to the Texian cause, but he could not resist such an adoring audience. He was easily induced to climb on a packing case to say a few words, and the entire square erupted in cheers. This was a more receptive audience than he had spoken to in the entire last election campaign; and Crockett gave them his best stump speech, concluding, to thunderous applause, with his “you can go to hell – I’m going to Texas” line. But then he added a special postscript in a rather uncharacteristically soft and somber tone.

*I have come to your country, though not, I hope, through any selfish motive whatever. I have come to aid you all that I can in your noble cause. I shall identify myself with your interests, and all the honor that I desire is that of defending as a high private, in common with my fellow citizens, the liberties of our common country.*<sup>57</sup>

For any who might have reason to question the sincerity of such a “heartfelt” declaration from a smooth politician used to telling his constituents what they want to hear; Crockett actually delivered on this vow. Despite his obvious popularity with the citizenry, the volunteers, and the regular soldiers, Crockett never made any attempt to challenge the authority of the command structure at the Alamo; which was already split between the equally popular Bowie and the young upstart Travis. When the first Mexican troops arrived on the afternoon of 23 February, Crockett went to Travis, like a

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<sup>57</sup> The speech as reconstructed by Walter Lord in *A Time to Stand*, p. 82.

high private, to ask for an assignment for his Tennesseans in the defense of the perimeter.

By 23 February the Alamo garrison had grown to 152 men, a significant increase from the 30-man detachment that had greeted Jim Bowie less than 40 days previously, but still seriously under strength to defend the Alamo against the number of troops Santa Anna was marshalling. During that month men had come to “join” the band at the Alamo, but many more had drifted through, tarrying for a while to make bold talk before moving on to greener pastures. Texas had attracted many opportunists, men who talked about independence but were only adventurers and overnight patriots or fortune hunters – ones who followed Plato’s magical spell of pleasure or fear that entices them from belief in the “noble lie” to pursue self-interest; just like Bowie, Travis and Crockett had all lived before coming to that little mission.

*Many it is true have left the country and returned home to their friends and pleasures, but of such Texas has no use ... we want men of determined spirit that can undergo hardships and deprivation.*<sup>58</sup>

The ones who stayed in the Alamo were determined and committed to a cause bigger than their individual selves. They had bought into the “noble lie”, placing the independence of their fledgling *republic* of Texas over their own self-interest; but still more would have the chance to either follow duty or, as Plato described, fall under the magical spell of pleasure or fear that entices one from belief in the “noble lie”.

The siege started on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with slightly less than 500 Mexican cavalry troops, Santa Anna’s advance guard, entering the outskirts of San Antonio. While additional

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<sup>58</sup> Letter dated 14 February 1836 from David Cummings [Alamo defender] to father. Court of Claims Vouchers, 4271, File A-C, cited in *A Time to Stand*, p.83.

brigades continued to arrive over the next ten days, reinforcing the Mexican army, Travis was still able to send messengers out daily to the surrounding countryside. In fact, for the entire siege it was relatively easy for men to enter and leave the small mission. Travis immediately and repeatedly sent appeals through the province of Texas for men to come and join the stand against tyranny at the Alamo.

Gonzales, roughly seventy miles to the east, and Goliad, nearly ninety miles to the southeast, were the two closest communities to San Antonio, and both attempted to send a relief force to supplement the defenses of the Alamo. Goliad was larger and had an impressive armed force of about 500 men under the command of Colonel James Walker Fannin. On the afternoon of 26 February Fannin set out for San Antonio with a volunteer force of 320 men and four canon. Yet as soon as they started, Fannin found reasons to delay and chose to stop after crossing the San Antonio River, barely out of eyesight of Goliad. The next day, the group found reason to delay starting, and after a “council of war”; Fannin was able to justify abandoning the relief effort due to the *enormity* and *insurmountable* challenges of moving some eighty more miles along the road to the Alamo. The column returned to Goliad on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and Fannin wrote a letter to Lieutenant Governor Robinson justifying the decision for his “retrograde” movement to Goliad. Somehow, the “magical spell” he bought into was strong enough to fabricate the moral outrage to vilify Texans who would not come to the aide of other Texans.

*What must be the feelings of the Volunteers now shut up in Bexar [the Alamo]  
... will not curses be heaped on the heads of the sluggards who remained at*



*home?*<sup>59</sup>

While the men of Goliad were eager to find excuses to avoid their “duty” and not come to the aide of their fellow Texans in Bexar; there were some who still had the resolve to answer the call of duty to the “noble lie”. Travis’s messenger arrived in Gonzales on 24 February and galvanized the community to action. Virtually every able bodied man in the tiny town volunteered to augment their small home guard unit and ride to the support of the defenders of the Alamo. They took two days to equip for the expedition and to put their affairs in order to look to the welfare of the wives and children they would leave behind, recognizing the fact that they might never return and that their families would have no defense with them gone. The conviction to their belief in the “noble lie” of Texian Independence, and the irresistible and terrible bond of loyalty to men who were only distant neighbors were stronger than their natural self-interest to protect their own families and even their own lives.

On 27 February thirty-two men comprising the “Gonzales Ranging Company of Mounted Volunteers” rode out of town, bound for San Antonio. They purposely timed their journey to arrive at the outskirts of Bexar after nightfall on the 28<sup>th</sup> so they would have cover to slip past the growing number of Mexican troops surrounding the Alamo. They managed to pass unnoticed through the enemy lines and entered the fortified mission around 0300 on the morning of 1 March. The Gonzales detachment brought the total number of defenders inside the Alamo to 184. The Alamo celebrated their arrival and morale soared, but these would be the last Texian reinforcements.

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<sup>59</sup> Letter dated 28 February 1835, Fannin to Robinson, as recorded by Foote, Henry Stuart. *Texas and the Texans*, 1841; p. 225-226.

Meanwhile, Santa Anna had a seemingly endless supply of reserves arriving daily. On 4 March, the generalissimo had at least 4,000 troops in the San Antonio area, enough for him to begin planning for a final, grand assault on the perfidious rebels who dared to rise against him. By the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup> the Texian forces knew the end was near. They could see the vast array of Mexican units rehearsing and preparing for a big attack, making a show of establishing assault positions opposite each wall of the mission.

That afternoon Travis called an assembly of all the command and gave an eloquent speech detailing the precariousness of their position. Santa Anna had sufficient force to overwhelm their position in the next 24 hours and would not entertain any talk of accepting an honorable surrender; the Mexicans would take no prisoners. Travis quietly stated his reasons for remaining in the Alamo to defend it with his dying breath; but gave his leave for any who desired to attempt to break out and escape from the Alamo, to try to live and fight another day.<sup>60</sup> The entire garrison publicly resolved to stand, and die, with Travis, with one notable exception who stepped out of the ranks and solemnly bade his brothers-in-arms goodbye and departed over the wall that night with the well wishes of his former comrades.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> This is according to the account given from Mrs. Susannah Dickinson, the widow of Captain Almeron Dickinson, a non-combatant occupant and survivor of the Alamo. She thought the name of the Texian who chose to flee the Alamo was something like "Ross"; however, there were no fighters by that name ever recorded on any of the rolls at the Alamo. There was a certain Louis Rose who, while on the rolls of defenders, was never accounted for after the battle on 6 March.

<sup>61</sup> There is no certifiable "truth" to this claim. However, Nacogdoches County Courthouse records show that a local Board of Land Commissioners accepted the testimony of one Louis Rose, as a credible witness who had been in the Alamo during the siege, in deciding land claims filed by heirs on behalf of six different Alamo victims in 1838. Louis Rose was apparently good friends with Jim Bowie,

At 0500 on 6 March over 6,000 Mexican troops stormed the fortifications of that little mission. Ninety minutes later as the smoke was clearing 183 Texian fighters lay dead inside the Alamo, killed in fierce fighting that ultimately came to Mexican bayonets against Texian long knives and empty rifles used as clubs. Conservative estimates place Mexican losses at over 600 casualties.

Why would so many men choose to stand and die rather than escape, as Louis Rose suggested, to fight another day? Obviously, escape was a viable option as messengers still made it out of the Alamo on the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> carrying the last letters of those that stayed behind. The arrival of the Gonzales contingent four days earlier even demonstrated that it was possible for larger groups to pass through the Mexican lines; and yet, almost to a man, they chose to stay and defend the little Spanish mission to the death.

Doubtless there were countless factors that contributed to each individual's decision to stay; but a common uniting theme was their all-in commitment to the cause of an Independent Texas. I would suggest that equally strong was a bond to the "mutual acquaintanceship", as described by Keegan and Marshall, that this group of strangers had built as fellow freedom fighters. Only a handful of the 183 rebels had lived in Texas for over six years, and most of them had been at the Alamo for less than two weeks before the siege began; thirty-two of them voluntarily entering after the siege had begun. The Gonzales contingent had already joined this "group of friends" before they left their town, united by the "noble lie" for Texas independence and by the code formed by

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but he was also a veteran of the Napoleonic wars who believed from his prior experience in warfare, when things go wrong, live to fight another day; which he applied in this case.

loyalty to their fellow Texian freedom fighters.

These men had united in common and mutual acceptance of the “noble lie” mixed with something I believe closely resembles Royce’s concept of *loyalty to loyalty*, that most powerful and terrible of all virtues. This is a *loyalty that’s deeper than mere sentiment*, a loyalty that can bind like-minded people together with *a love that is fiercer than the love between friends* and at the same time *gentler than a mother with a newborn baby by her side*.<sup>62</sup> Their conviction to this “true belief” was stronger than any self-interest, even eclipsing their duty and responsibility to their own families. One can debate the merit of this conviction, but not deny its tangible effect. No wonder the question: “Is there a more treacherous and ambivalent virtue than that of loyalty?”<sup>63</sup> I believe that this analysis of the siege of the Alamo suggests that it is indeed possible for soldiers to willingly adhere to belief in the “noble lie”, even when duty calls for the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefield.

Furthermore, the personal history of Jim Bowie, William Barret Travis, and “Davy” Crockett demonstrate that it is possible for flawed characters with strong tendencies to pursue self-interest to buy into the “noble lie” to the extent they would willingly make the ultimate sacrifice. This suggests that even less than perfect leaders, who never quite realize the Platonic ideal of virtuous activity, can act in accordance with the Platonic Grid. However, the example of James Walker Fannin and the Goliad

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<sup>62</sup> Words in italics are from the song “If I Stand”, written and sung by Rich Mullins, from the album *Songs*, 1996 Arista Records.

<sup>63</sup> John J. McDermott, in his “Introduction to the New Edition” of Josiah Royce’s *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. What greater love has any man than to give up his life for his friend; but what a treacherous virtue this love, if it is given in sacrifice for an unworthy cause or for a friend who turns out to be disloyal to the very friendship that cemented that bond of loyalty to begin with.

contingent demonstrate that, while some choose to follow and act in accordance with the Platonic Grid, there are others who, for one reason or another, will find a justification to fall for that magic spell that encourages self-interest over the demands of the “noble lie”.

So, with these perhaps ambiguous conclusions, just what insights can be used from the study of these three battles to apply for the development of future leaders? Studying military history is only advantageous if, like Ulysses S. Grant, one can form valuable tools such as the Smith Test, which contribute to future operational success; and avoid using the information gained to make decisions that contribute to operational failure, as George B. McClellan used his recollections of the Crimean War.

I am not maintaining that leaders who fail to act in accordance with the Platonic Grid will always experience operational failure as the “four horsemen of the calamity” did in Balaclava; nor am I suggesting that leaders who act in accordance with this system will always have operational success as Joshua Chamberlain did at Little Round Top. There are too many dynamic variables that combine to contribute to the outcome on the field of battle. However, I believe that this analysis shows that by using the Platonic Grid as a guide for decision-making, the military leader will place himself, and his organization, in the best position to maintain a healthy functioning collective whole; thereby placing that leader in the best possible position to promote operational success, which is the purpose of leadership development. The study also demonstrates that it is possible for even less than perfect leaders to buy in to the “noble lie” and stand in accord with the grid. I suggest that this makes a reasonable case for a junior leader to accept the Platonic Grid coupled with the “noble lie” as a true belief, by which to live their lives

until they have accumulated the experience necessary to recollect the truth and justify that belief.

However, I think this study also exposes another vulnerability to implementing Plato's theories in military leadership development. While our army does not permit leaders to buy their commissions and command positions like Lord Lucan and Cardigan did in the Crimean campaign, the military does still have some soldiers, and even commanders, who are as incompetent and flawed as the four horsemen from Balaclava and as James Walker Fannin from the Alamo. A leader acting justly and following the "noble lie" could find herself compromised by a commander who is pursuing self-interest.

Today, general officers urge junior leaders to do what's morally right, even if it means sacrificing their career to do so. Such a situation can be far more threatening and demanding than the physical danger of the battlefield, casting a more powerful magic spell to entice the unwary from the harmonious balance of the Platonic Grid with the "noble lie". The imperfect quality of the military environment can still place leaders in Lucan and Cardigan's position of choosing the morally right action over their professional reputation and career. Is it reasonable to expect our modern day "dogs of war" to accept Plato's conviction that it is better to be just and thought unjust, than to be unjust and thought just?

## CHAPTER IV

### A NEW MILITARY PEDAGOGY

*There is a way which seems right  
to a man,  
But its end is the way of death.*<sup>64</sup>

In 1802 President Thomas Jefferson founded the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, New York to produce leaders for a professional corps that would function as the *guardians* of the army. Cadets would go there to be shaped to become the leaders who would form the nucleus of the fledgling army; the core that would maintain the standards and discipline to ensure the military could serve the needs of the new democracy as it grew and matured. Upon graduation these leaders would serve as “dogs of war” who would move upward through the ranks to fill the higher positions of responsibility.

After the War of 1812, the government decided that USMA required some innovations to help focus it on this task of educating an officer corps that would embrace the call to duty to serve the needs of the rapidly growing country. The military chose Sylvanus Thayer, who graduated from West Point in 1808 and served with distinction in the War of 1812,<sup>65</sup> to be the next Superintendent of USMA. Before assuming that

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<sup>64</sup> Proverbs 16:10, *New American Standard Bible*.

<sup>65</sup> Before entering West Point, Thayer had already graduated as the valedictorian from Dartmouth College, having matriculated through their curriculum from 1803 – 1807. He did not get to give the valedictory address, having to depart early from Dartmouth to accept his appointment from President Jefferson to attend West Point. Thayer graduated from USMA in a single year, gaining a commission as a second lieutenant, at which grade he served until the War of 1812. He served with distinction in that war, winning promotion from second lieutenant to brevet major during the conflict. Thayer was a brilliant engineer, and also had a remarkable service record as a soldier. After he retired from the military, Thayer continued in service with the Corps of Engineers, founded the Thayer School of Civil Engineering at Dartmouth College, and also founded the Thayer Academy in his hometown of Braintree Massachusetts.

position, Thayer was first sent to Europe for two years to study the latest advances in military doctrine, fortifications, and civilian education in order to modernize the training at West Point. Thayer returned to USMA in 1817 with an extensive library and a plan for curriculum renovation to improve leader development. He served as Superintendent until 1833, implementing sweeping reforms that are still manifest in today's system. He thoroughly restructured the administration and curriculum, completely transforming West Point by expanding and strengthening the military training and introducing academic instruction in liberal arts. In 1831 Thayer had formed USMA as the first civil engineering college in the nation.

It is important to note that Thayer did not adopt Plato's education system. Although Thayer was perhaps an excessively demanding taskmaster of both instructors and cadets, he could not, and did not, attempt to implement the absolute totalitarian control of Plato's educational environment. Thayer did develop a new military grid calling for the proper balance of three virtues, including a version of the "noble lie", but they did not exactly correspond with Plato's system. However, I do think it is fair to say that Thayer shared some of the major themes of Plato's theory, even if he might have applied them in different measure or proportion.

Like Plato, Thayer placed a strong emphasis on having a curriculum that stressed both mental (academic) and physical (military training) integration to fully develop and prepare his cadets for the stress and trials of a life of service to their nation. Thayer also believed in the need for cadets to develop a strong level of self-discipline in order to

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Like Joshua Chamberlain, he was able to successfully transition from scholar to soldier, and return to scholarship, continuing to serve his country.



meet the demands required to live a duty bound life.<sup>66</sup> Thayer established two key positions to facilitate his goals, that of a Commandant of Cadets with a staff to regulate discipline and military education, and a Dean with an academic board of faculty and administrators to take charge of the liberal arts education that counterbalanced the physical activities. The Commandant and Dean had independent offices that reported to the Superintendent, who theoretically united the two separate parts in a harmonious balance that turned the complete curriculum into a unified whole. Thayer was also committed to a belief in the necessity of Plato's "myth of the metals" that birthed the "noble lie". Leaders must serve the best interest of the nation; but Thayer extended the concept of duty to be equally binding for serving the best interest of one's military organization, both to the superior command and to the subordinates under one's responsibility. His emphasis on personal honor reinforced the duty concept. Honor demands that a leader serves to the best of her ability; regardless of whatever task she is assigned. Eventually, Thayer's focus on honor developed the first honor code, stipulating, "A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate those who do."

Also like Plato, Thayer was committed to each cadet being evaluated and promoted on the basis of merit alone. While he could not take the drastic measures Plato proscribed in the *Republic* for elimination of the family and establishment of communal living for the guardian class; Thayer's first, and lasting, reforms were to radically change the evaluation and promotion of cadets to be based solely on merit according to measurable academic and performance standards. His innovative creation of a system to

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<sup>66</sup> Plato's theory describes the harmonizing of the reason and spirit elements of the soul producing self-discipline, *Republic*, 410e.

objectively track and compare cadet progress succeeded in overthrowing the prior standing system of cronyism and promotion based on political and familial connection.

Finally, Thayer also had a vision that the education at USMA would be the start of a cadet's life long dedication of service to country. His particular concern was the need to produce leaders and civil engineers capable of introducing all of the infrastructure development the nation would need in order to expand through the next century. Thayer's immediate purpose was to create military leaders for the army, but his intent was for those army officers to continue in service to the nation after their official tours of military duty were over. His vision was for West Point graduates to start as "dogs of war" but to continue to acquire skills and knowledge to matriculate into the civilian leaders of the future. His efforts turned USMA into the nation's premiere engineering school, serving as the model for every American engineering school founded prior to the Civil War. West Point graduates gained recognition for engineering the bulk of the nation's initial railway lines, bridges, harbors, canals and roads; some even applied their civil engineering skills learned under Thayer's system to envision and forge the communications network supporting America's developing industrial network.

The reforms that Thayer implemented and the system for leader development that he constructed at West Point had a tremendous impact on not only the nation's military leaders, but also on its civilian leaders of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The weight of that leadership influence was almost immediately felt in the moving powers of the government. President Andrew Jackson was greatly disturbed by the growing *force* USMA graduates were exercising in the young republic; he accused

Thayer of acting like a young Dr. Frankenstein, turning West Point into a type of science laboratory to bring a military aristocracy to life.<sup>67</sup> Thayer was incensed by Jackson's allegations and refused to contemplate any changes to the curriculum despite the President's orders; their feud reached its zenith in 1833 when Jackson fired Thayer, who returned to service in the Corps of Engineers.<sup>68</sup>

Of course, there have been many changes at West Point since Thayer's removal in 1833,<sup>69</sup> but the framework for the curriculum and the principles that he established remain basically unchanged. Even though USMA was officially founded six years before he graduated, and fifteen years before he became Superintendent, Sylvanus Thayer is acknowledged to be the Father of West Point.<sup>70</sup> Currently USMA produces less than ten percent of the officer corps of the U.S. Army; but all the other

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<sup>67</sup> Jackson's protest could equally be leveled against Plato, after all the *purpose* of Plato's education system is to produce an elite class of guardians. Plato's guardians and Thayer's "military aristocrats" were both educated to serve the best interest of the nation, by inculcating an unflinching and unswerving conviction to the "noble lie", for Plato, and duty, for Thayer. Jackson did not level any charges that Thayer was producing *corrupt* "aristocrats" pursuing selfish interests at the expense of their charges, and, in fact, one of Thayer's many reforms was to implement promotion by merit providing equal opportunity for advancements through the ranks, rather than promotion by aristocracy. Jackson's attacks actually seem to have been motivated by a perceived challenge to the power enjoyed by the political cabal he led. If that is the case, Thayer found himself in the position of choosing between his career and reputation and his principles for what he believed to be right, similar to Lucan and Cardigan.

<sup>68</sup> In an interesting twist of fate, Congressman "Davy" Crockett, then still a political ally, strongly supported Jackson's sacking of Thayer. Part of Crockett's public identification with the common man was to vocalize contempt for professional soldiers by attacking Thayer, even going so far as to recommend the abolishment of the USMA at West Point. Crockett aided and abetted Jackson's political assassination of Sylvanus Thayer in 1833. Less than two years later "Davy" ran afoul of Jackson by opposing the Indian removal policy, and lost his seat in congress to a Jacksonian challenger, which set him on the path to Texas and his appointment at the Alamo.

<sup>69</sup> It is important to note that there is no good biography of Sylvanus Thayer. His reforms and curriculum at USMA are virtually the only reliable facts known about him, other than the rather vitriolic letters he wrote in protest to any and all attempts to change the "perfect" system he had developed.

<sup>70</sup> Every year since 1958 the Association of Graduates has presented the Sylvanus Thayer Award to an outstanding citizen of the United States whose service and accomplishments in the national interest exemplify personal devotion to the ideals expressed in the West Point motto, "DUTY-HONOR-COUNTRY."

commissioning sources follow the same basic formula that Thayer developed at West Point. The specific ratio of academic classes to physical and military training has varied over the years, as well as the specific classes or training programs offered; but Thayer established the formula for the core curriculum, still used today, from which cadets *learn* to internalize that balance between mental and physical activities that Plato thought so important in the first tier of his education system.<sup>71</sup>

As the army slowly grew and became more established a form of Plato's second tier of education evolved as a way for the career managers to receive continual periodic evaluations of all serving officers, and provide those officers with professional development courses; both of which would be used as tools for the managers to plan future assignments and promotions as each serving officer progresses through her career. A central component to Plato's second tier, adopted by the army, is for guardians (officers) to fill positions throughout the army that serve numerous functions of varying responsibility; from commanders through service and support functions, including staff officers, logistical support, and administration specialists. Sharing an element of Plato's totalitarian control of the citizens in the just state,<sup>72</sup> the army attempts to match officers with the types of jobs they are best suited for. Simultaneously the army needs officers to incorporate a version of Plato's One-Man One-Job Principle to ensure that each officer concentrate only on the tasks necessary to complete her assigned job, and not be distracted from worries, concerns, or envy of other officers filling differing

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<sup>71</sup> See previous chapter *The Platonic Grid* for my description of the three tiers of Plato's education system.

<sup>72</sup> What Nicholas P. White refers to as the Principle of Natural Division of Labor in his book, *A Companion to Plato's Republic*.

assignments.<sup>73</sup>

This process is complicated by the requirement for each officer to have a broad range of experiences across the spectrum of army jobs in order for each officer to be qualified to ascend to higher levels of responsibility. This means the career managers will have to rotate each officer periodically through all the varying job positions, as well as duty locations in order to provide this depth of experience required for each individual's career progression to higher levels of responsibility. The problem is most officers naturally want to be commanders, very few desire to be on staff or in support positions; and yet, the health of the collective organization depends on each individual fulfilling her duty to the best of her ability, to serve selflessly when appointed to thankless jobs of support and staff.<sup>74</sup>

Perhaps this is why Thayer chose to highlight duty and honor, giving these two driving factors for acceptance of the "noble lie" a more prominent role in his system while Plato chose to spotlight the balance of reason and spirit elements of the soul. Honor coupled with duty compels an officer to always do her best regardless of the perceived level of importance of the assignment. The service rendered is more important than the position occupied; regardless of the particular location, task, function

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<sup>73</sup> In this army version of the One-Man One-Job Principle the officer is not restricted to one job for his entire lifetime. Periodically, normally every one to three years, officers are rotated to differing jobs and duty locations; but in each assignment, it is vitally important to the unity of the organization as a whole that each officer focus exclusively on the tasks of his current job just like the citizens of Plato's just city to ensure a continued healthy self-sustaining community.

<sup>74</sup> Captain Nolan's lack of selfless service in the Battle of Balaclava is an excellent example of why it is critical for the health of an army to have staff officers who diligently perform their duties to the best of their ability. There is no such thing as an insignificant job in the army – some jobs might be unpleasant at times, but the health of the whole organization depends on the sacrificial service of each individual member.

or even individual preference, the priority is for each individual to do her best to selflessly serve. It is not necessary for each officer to be the next MacArthur or Patton; it is more important that each officer buy-in completely to the concept of selfless service, applying herself to the best of her ability regardless of whether acting as commander or as staff officer.

With duty and honor as two of the cornerstones of leadership development, the army can implement an assignment and evaluation policy based on what Aristotle called the principle of reciprocity. Aristotle's reciprocity is designed to promote the type of unity in variety required for Plato's vision of a healthy community.

*... but the elements out of which a unity is to be formed differ in kind. That is why the principle of reciprocity, as I have already remarked in the Ethics, is the salvation of the states ... for they cannot all rule together, but must change at the end of a year or some other period of time or in some order of succession ... at the same time it is just that all should share in the government ... thus, the one party rules and the others are ruled in turn, as if they were no longer the same persons. In like manner when they hold office there is a variety in the offices held. Hence it is evident that a city is not by nature one in that sense which some persons affirm ...*<sup>75</sup>

Thayer's concentration on duty and honor links back to Plato's original version of the "noble lie" by adding the third element of country; forming almost a reverse Platonic Grid, having the three elements of Duty–Honor–Country solidified by the proper link to and balance with the harmonious union of reason and spirit of the soul, cultivated through the correct mixture of mental and physical training from Thayer's innovative and new curriculum for developing military leaders.

Plato never volunteered any specifics on how precisely to reach that proper

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<sup>75</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*. II.2.1261a30 – 1261b8.

balance of mental and physical training other than a somewhat vague notion of mixing academic and physical activities, adjusting as necessary to bring the soul in harmonic balance. The army also seems to be constantly revising the ratio and mixture of these activities, however, I can outline some more general guidelines for this process that balances the virtues of the soul and binds it to duty, honor and country. The key for this “educational” process has to do with some very counter-intuitive aspects related to the leadership principle of tension, which Heraclitus captured in his fragment:

*They do not understand how, though at variance with itself, it agrees with itself. It is a backwards-turning attunement like that of the bow and lyre.<sup>76</sup>*

An accomplished archer or musician can create beautiful results with a properly functioning bow and guitar; but for either instrument to be used effectively, it must have a string, or chord, that connects all the requisite parts of the instrument with the tension required to place it in harmony. Preparing the respective instruments for use can be described in a two-step process. First, the tuner has to establish a base line tension of the string that is sufficient to place the necessary parts in correct alignment.<sup>77</sup> The parts connected in sufficient tension form the framework from which the instrument can be fine-tuned to produce the type of “unity in variety” that constitutes Dewey’s old formula for beauty.

*There is an old formula for beauty in nature and art: Unity in variety ... the formula has meaning only when its terms are understood to concern a relation of energies ... but they have esthetic quality, as in the richness of a musical phrase, only when distinctions depend upon reciprocal resistances. There is*

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<sup>76</sup> From: Hippolytus, Refutation 9.9.5 = 22B51.

<sup>77</sup> For the bow, this would entail connecting the two halves of the bow-staff; for the lyre (guitar) the strings would connect the bridge and the bridge bone on the body with the nut and tuning pegs on the neck; for the soul, this would be the reason, spirit, and appetitive elements coupled with the “noble lie”.

*unity only when the resistances create a suspense that is resolved through cooperative interaction of the opposed energies. The 'one' of the formula is the realization through interacting parts of their respective energies. The 'many' is the manifestation of the defined individualizations due to opposed forces that finally sustain a balance.*<sup>78</sup>

The internal harmony that produces *the richness of the musical phrase*, only comes from *reciprocal resistances* – or tension that unites the individual parts as they interact with each other to form the whole. Without the tension that links the “many” parts into “one” whole, there is no unity, only random elements that are disconnected and isolated. This holds for Plato’s harmony of the soul, as for Dewey’s definition of beauty – a soul united in Platonic inner harmony is beautiful indeed.

Once the base tension is established, the musician\* is ready to fine-tune the instrument to the particular requirements necessary to bring it to the proper balance. Archers have a specific string tension that optimizes their shooting ability and efficiency; their pull is based on a combination of variables, including arm strength, distance of the target, and wind conditions. Musicians might require a capo, or other device, to alter the string tension just enough to harmonize with a unique vocal or acoustic condition. The guardian must adjust, or fine-tune, this tension that connects the moral sensibilities of the Platonic Grid when needed, so that it stays attuned to the environmental conditions in which the subject is flourishing.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 167.

\* or archer, guardian, or officer.

<sup>79</sup> Plato acknowledges that sometimes the reason element of the soul must take the lead, at other times the spirit element must step forward and take command of the situation, and there are still other times when the “noble lie” should trump the other parts of the Platonic Grid and direct the guardian’s action. For example, Raglan was distracted by the physical activities and failed to have his reason element lead in writing his orders, Lucan failed to have his spirit element take charge to overcome his fear with



The first tier of Thayer's education system<sup>80</sup> provides the framework from which cadets can establish this base tension. The beauty of the system is that the design of the curriculum itself establishes the requisite pressurized environment to realize internal tension. The competing demands of mental and physical activities are heightened by limited time constraints for cadets to perform all assigned tasks and responsibilities. For instance, the normal required academic course load averages over 20 credit hours per semester. Add on the physical activity requirement for each cadet to either play a varsity sport or participate in intramurals and drill and ceremony for six days a week, and then tack on additional requirements for military leadership development. The interaction of the "many" competing parts of the system necessitate an internal alignment of the mental and physical elements with a guiding motivation to unite all the individual parts into "one" cohesive whole; in order to pass all the tests, the cadet will, through an internal *recollection* process, focus the appropriate element (mental or physical) for the appropriate task, at the appropriate time to complete assignments to the required standard. The motivation to achieve this *oneness* is also internally driven; the cadet has to buy-in to the conviction to follow her duty with honor to do her best, at whatever task is currently in front of her.

To compliment this tension between reason and spirit, the cadre balances the academic classes and physical training by inserting requirements for cadets to memorize

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moral courage to stop the senseless attack, and Bowie, Travis, and Crockett followed a conviction in the "noble lie" to make a final stand in the Alamo.

<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that there is no actual *Thayer education system*. When I refer to this program, I am actually constructing my version of what I think Thayer would have envisioned as a comprehensive system, based on my *recollection* of my education, after reading the *Republic* some twenty odd years after my experience at USMA.

“knowledge” about current events and historical facts, and “heritage” of past leaders and military tradition. Cadets also must, upon demand, demonstrate familiarity with this “knowledge”, by conversing about the news articles on the front page of the *New York Times* and by reciting from memory selected bits of “heritage”. These bits of *heritage* range from mindless trivia such as “the definition of leather”, “how is the cow”, and “where plebes rank”; to fundamental *knowledge* that, if incorporated into the psyche, helps bolster the bonds of “mutual acquaintanceship” and loyalty that unites cadets of today with past leaders from the *Long Grey Line*;<sup>81</sup> this includes such information as Schofield’s Definition of Discipline, Worth’s Battalion Orders, and excerpts from MacArthur’s Duty-Honor-Country speech. A slogan for cadet life is to “always choose the hard right over the easy wrong”; most of the *knowledge* cadets are forced to *learn* reinforces this mantra that is a staple of Thayer’s triadic foundation of Duty-Honor-Country.<sup>82</sup>

These academic and physical activities complemented by the *heritage* and *knowledge* requirements are fused together in the furnace of the curriculum; their union forms the base-line tension for producing harmony of the soul. These varied parts of the system interact in a dynamic and curious way. While participating in the program, the cadet is consumed by the academic and physical aspects; she must pass all the tests that are used to evaluate her aptitude in these activities in order to graduate; whereas she

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<sup>81</sup> General Douglas MacArthur used this term to describe the unending chain of past graduates of USMA linked through the years to the current cadets, joined by tradition in their conviction to live by this new version of Plato’s “noble lie”: DUTY-HONOR-COUNTRY.

<sup>82</sup> See Appendix C for these selections from the list of “heritage” and “knowledge” as required in *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, New York, United States Military Academy.

views the *heritage* and *knowledge* requirements as annoying distractions that have to be endured, but are not really relevant or applicable to the *real* tests she must pass. The tradition and values of the *heritage* and *knowledge* get stirred around and percolate through the entire *education* process; as the semesters change, new classes have new subject matter and testing requirements, while the same “tidbits of trivia” continually orbit in the changing academic environment.

Something unusual happens at the conclusion of the programmed instruction and courses, something that has to do with the fine-tuning of Heraclitus’ bow and lyre. The particulars of the academic and physical activities, that were so vital to the cadet during the process, blur and meld together into past experience. However, the *heritage* and *knowledge* that the cadet had kept on the back burner of consciousness actually became seared onto the core fabric of her being. Over twenty years after the conclusion of my *education*, I cannot remember any details of any course I took; I could not pass a test on any of the academic material covered. I vividly remember the *activity* of the classroom, but none of the facts presented there; having successfully passed the challenging courses helps sustain the conviction to the duty to apply one’s best effort to every assigned task or job, but I do not use the information from those classes on a daily basis.

But even today, I vividly recollect most of those trivial bits of *knowledge*. While there are many times when this information might only be anecdotally relevant to the situation, such as referencing the definition of leather when I forget an umbrella and wish I had *a non-putrescible substance*, that is *impervious to and insoluble in water* to shield me from the rain; there are more significant times when Worth’s Battalion Orders

strengthens, or resolves, my self-discipline to faithfully discharge my assigned duties, *notwithstanding it occasionally wars with my private feelings*. As the base tension of Heraclitus' instrument is *backwards-turned* to bring into fine attunement; the academic and physical *activities* which furnished the foundation for the cadet education are wound by the curriculum in such a manner that the *knowledge* that appeared as trivial during the testing process emerges as the fine tuning mechanism which brings the soul into harmony with itself and aligns it with the call of duty.

Using army officers as instructors and cadre assists the cadet in her journey to internalize these principles and reach this inner harmony, in another *backwards-turning* fashion. These officers' primary duty is to teach academic classes or to conduct military training. However, they serve an auxiliary function that is, in a sense, more important than their assigned duty. As professional leaders who have, presumably, already mastered this internal harmonic tension, they are able to function as guides or mentors to facilitate cadets realizing their own internal harmony; in much the same way as the drill instructor *teaches* Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) to the trainee.<sup>83</sup> For this reason, instructors and cadre are assigned additional duties as cadet sponsors, assistant sports coaches, and advisors for cadet club activities. The parts of this *education* process that endure and stay with the young officer as she matures come from the relational bonds formed; from her interaction with the more experienced officers, the cadets are shown how to *see* with the available sunlight. Instructors' help their cadets acquire a type of *recollective* sight picture with which to view the proper internal balancing of the soul, in

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<sup>83</sup> See reference for *BRM* in *The Platonic Grid* chapter.

the way the drill instructor assists trainees to acquire their individual sight picture in BRM.

Once the cadet internalizes this harmonic balance of tension between the moral sensibilities of the soul and the “noble lie”, it is essential to maintain that tension. If the tension is relaxed for any reason, the elements of the soul lose their tune, which would turn Heraclitus’ lyre discordant and thereby useless for the musician, while the bow without proper tension is useless for the archer who is ambushed by an unexpected enemy. I call this the rubber band principle of leadership.

In 1845 Stephen Perry, of the Messer’s Perry and Co. rubber manufacturing company, invented and patented the rubber band, which he created to hold papers or envelopes together. Rubber bands are used today for projects as simple as a children’s wind-up airplane to tasks as technically detailed and demanding as completing computerized systems for satellites and space shuttles. The key property for a rubber band is that it must be placed under tension in order to be useful; as soon as the tension is released it no longer serves any purpose and limply lays idle until it can be recharged with tension. To maintain usefulness, the rubber band must remain under tension; one must take care not to stress the band past its pressure limit to the point of breaking, and take equal care not to relax the tension to idleness. Likewise, an officer desiring to follow the modern version of the Platonic Grid must find, and maintain, the proper tension between the elements of the soul and the call of duty. If the officer relaxes this tension in quiet times of peace, it is impossible to maintain the harmonic balance of the soul required to make even simple decisions off the battlefield.

For example, David was the second king of the nation of Israel, and perhaps the greatest ruler in its history. He was called a “man after God’s own heart” in the scriptures. David was one of the greatest warriors in Israel and one of her greatest musicians.<sup>84</sup> Plato viewed music and poetry as part of the academic instruction necessary for development of the reason element; by that standard David would have been an individual of inner harmonic balance of the soul.

*If you want my opinion then, the two elements for which some god has given mankind two arts – one musical and poetic, the other physical – seem to be not the mind and the body, or only incidentally, but the spirited part of their nature and the philosophical part, so that these can be brought into harmony with one another through the appropriate tension and relaxation ... describes as perfectly musical and harmonious the person who best combines physical with musical and poetic education, and who introduces them into his soul in the most balanced way. Far more musical and harmonious than the person who tunes the strings of an instrument.<sup>85</sup>*

David became king of Judah when he was thirty years old, and reigned for forty years. He rose from the lowly position as the seventh son of a remote shepherd to be an accomplished musician, fighter, and eventually ruler of his nation, with a reputation for zealously following his conviction to serve his God. But when he relaxed the tension that united the varying parts of his Platonic Grid, David shamelessly broke the bond of loyalty he shared with the soldiers he commanded.

After David had been king for twenty years and was in his fifties, he chose to relax from the duty he was charged with as Israel’s military leader. David sent his

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<sup>84</sup> David actually wrote many of the Psalms and was an extremely gifted musician. When Saul, Israel’s first king, was tormented by an “evil spirit sent by the Lord”, the boy David was called out of the fields where he tended sheep to play the lyre for Saul – it was the only remedy to calm his spirit (1 Samuel 18:10). Also while a small boy, David challenged and killed the Philistine giant Goliath in single combat on the field of battle (1 Samuel 17).

<sup>85</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 411e–412a.

second in command out with his army to war with neighboring nations, and he remained in the capitol taking his leisure. Somehow he justified remaining behind, perhaps because he was no longer in his fighting prime and would just be directing his soldiers, not leading them into battle. Surely it would be appropriate to relax a little, after all his prior service just a little rest would not hurt. But it was in this relaxed position while his army was in the field fighting that one night David saw a beautiful woman, and he could not regain the proper harmonic balance of the soul in time to stop himself from perpetrating one of the worst crimes possible against a soldier under his command.

*Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed in Jerusalem. Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, 'Is it not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' And David sent messengers and took her; and when she came to him, he lay with her ...*<sup>86</sup>

It would have been a serious offense if David had just slept with the wife of one of his soldiers while that man was serving in harm's way on the field of battle; but when David learned that he had gotten Bathsheba pregnant, he plotted with Joab, the commander of his army, to have Uriah killed in battle to cover up the incident. By relaxing the unifying tension that places the various elements that comprise the Platonic Grid into harmonic balance, the most virtuous military leader in Israel's history made himself vulnerable to the magic spell of pleasure that distracted him from his duty and led to one of the most heinous offenses a commanding officer could perpetrate on those

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<sup>86</sup> 2 Samuel 11:1-4; *New American Standard Bible*.

who trust and serve under him. There never is any “easy” right choice; when a leader chooses the easier, gentler, innocuous option, he takes the first step on a slippery slope to relaxation.<sup>87</sup> Once started down the path of least resistance it is hard to overcome the inertia of relaxation to regain the proper tension required to maintain the Platonic Grid.

Tension is a critical element required to unite and maintain the healthy internal harmonic balance necessary for the Platonic Grid to function properly. The application of the rubber band principle of leadership makes it conceivable that Thayer’s new military pedagogy could educate a modern day “dog of war” to recall the golden nature Plato sought in his education system in the *Republic*. In this version the Platonic Grid shifts to emphasize the Duty-Honor-Country triadic nature of Plato’s “noble lie”, which motivates the formation and application of the harmonic balance of the three elements of the soul. In theory, at least, this could work; however, Thayer’s program lacks all the totalitarian measures that Plato built into his education system to *guarantee* golden natured guardians, the ones who were bred from before birth as the best candidates to accept the “noble lie”. Since Plato admits that even his foolproof control mechanisms will not always work, there is reason to doubt that every graduate of this new Academy curriculum will realize this harmonic balance and internalize the necessary conviction to the “noble lie”.

Plato warns that some golden natured candidates will be ensorcelled by the seductive magic of pleasure and fear, some will have their golden nature stolen by faulty

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<sup>87</sup> I am not suggesting that every choice has to be made in anguished conflict, such as Lucan and Cardigan’s choice between self-interest and duty in the Battle of Balaclava; but there must be some internal tension involved, a tension that causes the person to check the balance of his moral sensibilities to ensure the proper element of the soul takes the lead in resolving what action to take.



memory or manipulative deceivers, and some will be forced by the grief of life's hardships, pain, and trials to turn from their "true belief" in the "noble lie".<sup>88</sup> If one views this new military pedagogy as planting seeds to harvest a crop of modern "dogs of war", the parable of the sower can also explain this symptom of *guardians* failing to follow duty to the "noble lie".

*Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.*<sup>89</sup>

The inability to guarantee total compliance with the "noble lie" is problematic for the effectiveness of Thayer's education system. It seems like a lot of work and effort to dedicate to educating leaders for the army, which, by the very nature of the system, could only ever be partially successful, at best. If the parable is accurate, it suggests that some souls will not be receptive to form a "true belief" in the "noble lie", and others who might initially accept it will not consistently live by it. Out of the three battles analyzed in the last chapter, only one leader, Joshua Chamberlain, came close to the ideal of maintaining the Platonic Grid for an entire lifetime of experience.

Most of the leaders studied in the last chapter appear to have fallen into one of

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<sup>88</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 413a-e.

<sup>89</sup> Matthew 13: 3-8; *New American Standard Bible*. In this application I suggest the following meanings for this interpretation; *sower*: signifies USMA; *seed*: signifies the "noble lie" *sown* in the curriculum; *soil*: signifies the souls [internal harmonic interaction of the three elements of the soul] of the cadets who receive or reject this *seed*. This passage provides some interesting insights into both how Plato's education system takes root in the soul of guardians, and how some guardians fall away from their true belief in the "noble lie".

the categories of unfruitful soil for cultivating the moral sensibilities required for the Platonic Grid. The numerous “opportunistic overnight patriots” – fortune-hunting adventurers such as Bowie, Crockett, and Travis prior to their existential connection to the “noble lie” on their journey to the Alamo – who talked of independence but left the Alamo at the first signs of real danger are like the soil that never received the seed, but had birds eat it before it could take root.<sup>90</sup> The soil composed of rocky places that joyfully receives the seed, but has no depth of soul refers to leaders like James Walker Fannin; he knew what duty demanded, and even felt inclined to believe in it, but lacked the depth needed to let the seed take root in his soul.<sup>91</sup> Still others, like the “four horsemen of the calamity” of Balaclava, have the seedlings of their belief in the “noble lie” choked out by the thorns that are the worries of the world.

However, there are also leaders like Jim Bowie, William Barret Travis, and Davy Crockett, who, while naturally inclined to follow self-interest, were actually moved to accept the “noble lie” and follow duty. According to S.L.A. Marshall and John Keegan, only a few “natural leaders” are needed to cement the bonds of “mutual acquaintanceship” that are needed to motivate an army fight. It would be very interesting to examine how a few duty bound “natural leaders” could motivate others to follow the “noble lie” through these bonds of loyalty. If this were possible, what ratio of

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<sup>90</sup> I would equate these with the sensible knaves Glaucon refers to in Book II of the *Republic*, who would use the ring of Gyges to appear just but reap the spoils of acting unjustly.

<sup>91</sup> Out of all the military leaders in the Texian cause for independence, James Walker Fannin actually had the most formal training. He was the only one who had attended West Point. However, he left USMA before graduating, not being comfortable with the demands of duty. Exposed to the harsh reality of direct sunlight, his seedling conviction in the “noble lie” was scorched, withered and died – leading to his lackluster attempt to reinforce the Alamo.

leaders committed to this “true belief” would be needed to motivate an army to put the best interest of their nation over their individual self-interest?

For now I will assume that the education system could be effective, even with only partial success in “educating” leaders with an inner harmonic balance aligned with the “noble lie”. I will concentrate on the question of why a leader would be motivated to embrace the Platonic Grid, knowing other opportunists could be in the organization seeking to exploit her selfless sacrifice to act by her duty. It sounds noble when a general officer tells junior leaders to take a stand and do what’s morally right, even it means sacrificing their career; but the physical danger of combat is much less frightening than the threat of losing a career. Both Lord Lucan and Cardigan were more than willing to risk their own lives in the Charge, rather than risk their career and reputation by taking the morally right stand to not attack. Is it really worthwhile to act in accordance with the Platonic Grid and the “noble lie” if it means suffering unjustly? It might be better for the collective whole, but is the individual who loses her career really better off too?

It seems like Plato wants to say that it is better for the individual to act justly, even if the consequences of that action are unpleasant and appear to be detrimental to her own interest. Early in Book II of the *Republic*, Socrates tells Glaucon his opinion of the value of justice.

*‘In which of these classes,’ he asked, ‘do you place justice?’ ‘In my opinion,’ I replied, ‘it is in the finest class, which is to be valued by anyone who wants to be happy, both for itself and for its consequences.’<sup>92</sup>*

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<sup>92</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 357d – 358a.

This appears to be a contrary idea, one that is hard for us to understand; an idea that, as Heraclitus points out, is at variance with itself. It becomes even more backwards-turning when Plato seems to suggest that it is harmful to the individual to pursue self-interest but beneficial to the individual to act in the best interest of the city-state, as is implied by the way that Adeimantus frames the issue he wants Socrates to address early in Book II of the *Republic*.

*That is the praise of justice I want you to make. Just by itself, how does it help – and how does injustice harm – the person who possesses it ... so please don't just demonstrate to us by argument that justice is something more powerful than injustice. Tell us the effect each of them has, just by itself, on the person possessing it ... the effect that makes one of them good and the other bad.*<sup>93</sup>

As Heraclitus' fragment claims, it is hard to understand Plato's position, which seems to be at variance with itself.

Extending the example of David and Bathsheba might help demonstrate this counter-intuitive claim. It is obvious that David's act of adultery with Bathsheba, and subsequent cover-up was harmful to Uriah; but it was not obviously harmful to David himself. Even after the scandal was made public, David remained a popular and successful king for close to twenty more years. David also married Bathsheba, possibly the most beautiful woman in the nation, and eventually they had a son named Solomon, who turned out to be David's heir, successor, and the allegedly wisest ruler of recorded history. It appears that David did rather well for himself, even at the expense of Uriah's

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 367d-e. I am perhaps oversimplifying the definition of justice and injustice by equating the pursuit of self-interest with injustice and duty to serve the best interest of the whole community as justice. But there is a suggestion that by serving to preserve the unity of the whole, the individual preserves not just the health of the state, but also his own individual health; and conversely, the individual who places self-interest before the interest, and health, of the collective whole, creates a dysfunctional whole – one no longer *united in variety* by the many individual parts – which ultimately harms the health of the individual himself.

life and a national scandal.

The rest of the story, however, shows that Plato's argument might have merit after all. When the prophet uncovered this horrid sin, Nathan also proclaimed the consequences of David's self-interested action.

*Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'*<sup>94</sup>

Immediately after this proclamation David's "house" started disintegrating. The son born of the adulterous tryst sickened and died, causing David immense grief. Shortly after that, David's firstborn son, Ammon, devised a plot to rape and discredit his half-sister and David's first daughter, Tamar. David was sorry for his daughter, but refused to punish his son; which caused Tamar's brother Absalom to devise a plot to kill his half-brother Ammon. Grief-stricken again after Ammon's murder, David could not bring himself to punish this son either; which gave Absalom the opportunity to plot a coup against David to usurp his throne. In dismay, David fled out of Jerusalem taking most of his household, but leaving ten concubines behind to keep the king's "house".

Absalom then had a tent erected on the roof of the king's house.<sup>95</sup> In broad daylight and in front of the anxiously watching people of the nation, he then had public

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<sup>94</sup> 2 Samuel 12: 9-12; *New American Standard Bible*.

<sup>95</sup> This was the same rooftop from which David spied Bathsheba and committed adultery with her during the nighttime.

sex with his father's wives, discrediting David, and garnering some popular support. Absalom then marshaled a rebel army and chased David down in the wilderness to have a battle to the death with the troops remaining loyal to his father. Despite David's instruction to his forces not to harm his son in the battle, Joab killed Absalom and cut off his head, thereby saving David's life and his kingdom, but leaving him brokenhearted over the death of yet another beloved son.<sup>96</sup>

David followed the path of least resistance that fateful night when he spied Bathsheba taking a bath. If he had denied himself the instant gratification of the moment, he could have saved himself the misery that his self-interested action cost – having to watch his children kill and maneuver against each other as they vied for his succession. I think this demonstrates what I call the Fram oil filter principle of justice. A 1981 television commercial features two mechanics. One is selling Fram oil filters, one is repairing a blown motor; the Fram oil filter costs maybe twenty-five cents more than competing filters, the blown motor cost several thousand dollars to repair. The suggestion is that the more expensive Fram filters prevent engine damage; use Fram and your motor lasts forever, don't use Fram and end up with major headache and expense down the road. The first mechanic says, "You can pay me [a few cents] now," and the other mechanic finishes with, "Or you can pay me [thousands of dollars] later!"

I think this is the effect Plato has in mind when Adeimantus demands to know the consequences of justice and injustice on the person possessing those respective

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<sup>96</sup> This soap-opera saga was just the first act of a familial drama that continued past David's death into the reign of Solomon; the story would be comic-tragedy, if it were not real history. Conservative estimates credit David with having at least ten wives, by whom he had at least twenty children, not counting the vast number of concubines and their children.

virtues. This is what makes justice good and injustice bad; this is “the effect each of them has, just by itself, on the person possessing it.”<sup>97</sup> Acting in accord with the tension required to maintain inner harmonic balance of the soul in conjunction with a “true belief” in the “noble lie” can be uncomfortable and unpleasant, sometimes drastically so; but doing so leaves the person [individual part] in healthy relation to the community [collective whole], and thereby with the best possible effect that individual can hope for. Placing self-interest before one’s duty to protect and serve the best interest of the collective whole, causes a discordant relation of the elements comprising the Platonic Grid, which, after sufficient mileage, will result in a blown engine of the soul; and, “what price can a man give in exchange for his soul?”<sup>98</sup>

It seems this is what Plato is suggesting from his recitation of the myth of Er, the hero of Pamphylia and son of Armenius, a hero killed in battle, who witnessed souls of the dead in a kind of afterlife waiting room where they had the opportunity to see the events of the possible lives they had to choose from for their pending rebirth. Some of those chose a life based on amounts of fame, fortune or power accumulated over the future lifetime, only to find that life ended in brokenness of spirit. Plato concludes the myth with the observation that a life lived in self-interested ambition leads to the pollution of the soul, but that just living is of greater benefit to the self.

*And so it can be our salvation, since if we believe it we shall pass the river of Forgetting in the right way, without polluting our souls. And if we take my advice, we shall believe that the soul is immortal and capable of coping with all evils and all goods, and we shall keep always to the upper way, doing whatever*

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<sup>97</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 367d-e.

<sup>98</sup> This is my paraphrase of Mark 8: 36-37; *New American Standard Bible*.

*we can to practice justice with wisdom. That way we shall be friends to ourselves and to the gods, both while we remain here and when we carry off our prizes afterwards ...*<sup>99</sup>

Of course, this counter-intuitive defense of “justice” does not prove Plato’s claim that serving the best interest of the collective whole of the community is better for the individual than serving his own self-interest. But I believe it does provide an account sufficient for a junior leader to accept this claim as a “true belief” to live by until she has accumulated the necessary experience to recollect the truth that justifies the belief; that by striving to serve the best interest of the community before self, this “true belief” also serves the best interest of the individual. When each individual part focuses on the task at hand that contributes to the functional health of the collective whole, each individual part is also contributing to its own health and wholeness.

This would mean that the “noble lie” is not really a lie at all, rather it is just another of those *backwards-turning attunements* that just happens to appear *at variance with itself*, but has been in agreement with itself all along. Belief in the “noble lie” is then actually as beneficial for the guardian *educated* to “naturally” accept it, as it is for the collective community the “noble lie” is intended to serve. This study also suggests a way in which Plato’s counter-intuitive theories could conceivably be applied to *educate* modern day “dogs of war” to buy-in to this “true belief”. The previous chapter indicated that leaders who act in accordance with the Platonic Grid aligned with the “noble lie” are better prepared to achieve operational success on the battlefield than those who act in self-interest, and that it is possible for soldiers to be willing to risk their lives to fight,

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<sup>99</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 621c-d.



and even die, in battle through their conviction to follow the “noble lie”. In order for this new military pedagogy to be effective, leaders will have to buy-in to the call for selfless service mandated by the Duty-Honor-Country triadic nature of the “noble lie”. Not all soldiers will accept this responsibility when presented with the challenge. But I believe this study provides a rational justification for leaders, whose hearts respond in harmonic sympathy when exposed to the “noble lie”, to respond by faith and accept this call to duty.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

Thank you for joining me on this adventure through the confluence of military and academic activities. My intent for this study is to provide fresh insights for both physically active military leadership students and more cerebral philosophers with which they can approach the arguments and theories that motivated Plato's discussion of an education system to produce an elite class of guardians that would serve the best interest of the citizens rather than exploit them for self-interested gain. This study is not intended to answer all the questions pertaining to the education of leaders. Rather its purpose is to provide a fresh perspective for continuing the conversation regarding the composition and implementation of military leadership programs.

This thesis is designed to familiarize military personnel not conversant with philosophy to Plato's theories regarding justice so they can acquire an informed opinion on the relevance of incorporating the Platonic Grid<sup>100</sup> to their daily actions. Hopefully, the process of applying Plato's thoughts to military situations will also offer some fresh perspectives for modern philosophers to evaluate their beliefs regarding the *Republic*. By applying the notion of the Platonic Grid aligned with the "noble lie"<sup>101</sup> to modern leadership development programs, I have found an intellectually compelling argument to justify my belief in the efficacy of teaching military ethics, and to defend what the army calls "character" development programs.

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<sup>100</sup> The Platonic Grid is the harmonic balance of the moral sensibilities of wisdom, courage, and temperance that guide the reason, spirit, and appetitive elements of the soul.

<sup>101</sup> The "noble lie" is the "true belief" that it is better to serve the best interest of the state than to pursue personal self-interest.

However, I realize that everyone will not buy-in to Thayer's triadic Duty-Honor-Country<sup>102</sup> take on the "noble lie" as a guiding force for the interaction of the moral sensibilities comprising the Platonic Grid. Some will not accept this "true belief" as a viable tool for *forming* modern day "dogs of war". At best, an education system based on this formula would be imperfect and flawed, even cadets who graduated with an internalized conviction to follow the tenets of the Platonic Grid would be vulnerable to lose that "true belief" through what Plato lists as the triple threat to duty – ensnarement in magic spells of pleasure or fear, forgetful memory coupled with manipulative deceivers, and the force of life's hardships, pain and trials. At worst, the call to duty will only grow to maturity in a partial segment of the population of cadets, the way only certain portions of the soil produced a healthy yield of crops in the parable of the sower.

A new military pedagogy aligned with Plato's theories might, at its most efficient best, only ever be not quite perfect. But there is still a reasonable expectation that professional soldiers receiving this *education* can be motivated to follow duty and embrace the "noble lie", and that at least a remnant will remain faithful to their "true belief". Even partial success of such a program could be sufficient to provide a handful of "natural leaders" who, according to the "mutual acquaintanceship" model of S.L.A. Marshall and John Keegan, could be sufficient to unite their small units to stand and fight in accordance with the moral sensibilities of the Platonic Grid guided by the "noble lie". This "new" education system might be flawed, but in another backwards-turning

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<sup>102</sup> Thayer's contribution to the "noble lie" transfers the notion of serving the best interest of the nation to include, or to be manifested by, faithful execution of one's assigned tasks that support the superior and subordinate levels of command – serving the state through performing one's assigned job, in accordance with the Principle of Natural Division of Labor, and the One-Man, One-Job Principle.

attunement, those same shortcomings enable the system to interact with the mixed-metaled<sup>103</sup> nature of individuals who are themselves flawed – as when the tarnished-metaled souls of Bowie, Travis, and Crockett embraced the “noble lie” to stand at the Alamo. This provides hope for flawed characters like me to be able to follow this “true belief”.

It is certainly still possible for reasonable persons to not accept this vision for a new military pedagogy. This study clearly shows that it is possible for leaders educated in this type of system to break faith with the “noble lie” and with their bond of “mutual acquaintanceship” with their fellow soldiers, as David violated Uriah’s trust and loyalty. But if one rejects the notion that it is possible for leaders to be self motivated to live by a “true” belief in the “noble lie” then the question remains of how to compel those with a monopoly on power to act justly towards the vulnerable segments of society and not exploit them in the pursuit of self-interest. The physical application of pressure to the fourth point of contact can serve as an effective force for attitude adjustment, but punishment loses its effectiveness when it is the only motivational tool employed.

I am now incapable of falling back to my physical arguments to compel others to accept my belief, and I admit the tensions involved with following this call to duty can be unpleasant and even painful at times. But anyone willing to embark on a life of selfless service will find there is “nectar in the journey” that sustains and strengthens the inner harmony of the soul to interact in healthy balance with the collective whole. The

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<sup>103</sup> This reference is to Plato’s myth of the mixed metals; see Chapter II for a more detailed account of how the mixing of the metals describes the possibility of properly *educated* guardians not realizing their expected potential of a lifetime of loyal and selfless service to the state.

Duty-Honor-Country nature of the “noble lie” can actually help build courage, regain faith, and create hope during the stressful times, when the bonds of loyalty that cement friendship unite the individuals into one collective whole.

I acquired this new internal motivation through the adventure of writing this thesis. This *intellectual* compulsion now guides my approach to teaching military ethics and my views on “character” development programs. If the parable of the sower holds true, only a few will share this belief. I trust that you will be one of those few and choose to join me. If not, we can at least continue the conversation.

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## APPENDIX A

### THE FIRST REPORT OF THE BATTLE OF BALACLAVA

The following is a partial transcript from the first news report representing the actions of the Light Cavalry Brigade at Balaclava on 25 October 1854. The article appeared in *The Times* of London on Tuesday 14 November 1854, written by William Howard Russell, war correspondent throughout the Crimean War. Russell witnessed the action first-hand as one of the official party of international observers with Lord Raglan's command post, he was close by Raglan's position on the Sapoune Heights, with an unimpeded view from directly behind the Light Cavalry Brigade as they made their charge down the North Valley.

### THE CAVALRY ACTION AT BALAKLAVA

October 25

If the exhibition of the most brilliant valour, of the excess of courage, and of a daring which would have reflected lustre on the best days of chivalry can afford full consolation for the disaster of today, we can have no reason to regret the melancholy loss which we sustained in a contest with a savage and barbarian enemy.

I shall proceed to describe, to the best of my powers, what occurred under my own eyes, and to state the facts which I have heard from men whose veracity is unimpeachable. Before I proceed to my narrative, I must premise that a certain feeling existed in some quarters that our cavalry had not been properly handled since they landed in the Crimea, and that they had lost golden opportunities from the indecision and excessive caution of their leaders.

And now occurred the melancholy catastrophe which fills us all with sorrow. It appears that the Quartermaster-General, Brigadier Airey gave an order in writing to Captain Nolan to take to Lord Lucan, directing his Lordship 'to advance' his cavalry.

A braver soldier than Captain Nolan the army did not possess. He rode off with his orders to Lord Lucan. He is now dead and gone. God forbid I should cast a shade on the brightness of his honour, but I am bound to state what I am told occurred when he reached his

Lordship. I should premise that the Russian cavalry retired, leaving men in three of the redoubts they had taken. They had also placed some guns on the heights over their position, and about 30 guns were drawn up along their line. Our cavalry had moved up to the ridge across the valley. When Lord Lucan received the order from Captain Nolan and had read it, he asked, we are told, 'Where are we to advance to?' Captain Nolan pointed with his finger to the line of the Russians, and said, 'There are the enemy, and there are the guns, sir, before them; it is your duty to take them,' or words to that effect, according to the statements made since his death.

Lord Lucan, with reluctance, gave the order to Lord Cardigan to advance upon the guns, conceiving that his orders compelled him to do so. The noble Earl, though he did not shrink, also saw the fearful odds against him. Don Quixote in his tilt against the windmill was not near so rash and reckless as the gallant fellows who prepared without a thought to rush on almost certain death. It is a maxim of war that 'cavalry never act without support,' that 'infantry should be close at hand when cavalry carry guns,' and that it is necessary to have on the flank of a line of cavalry some squadrons in column, the attack on the flank being most dangerous. The only support our light cavalry had was the reserve of heavy cavalry at a great distance behind them, the infantry and guns being far in the rear. There was a plain to charge over, before the enemy's guns were reached, of a mile and a half in length. At 11.10 our Light Cavalry Brigade rushed to the front. They numbered as follows, as well as I can ascertain: 4<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons 118 men; 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars 104 men; 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars 110 men; 13<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons 130 men; 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers 145 men; Total 607 sabres.

As they passed towards the front, the Russians opened on them from the guns in the redoubt on the right, with volleys of musketry and rifles. They swept proudly past, glittering in the morning sun in all the pride and splendour of war. We could scarcely believe the evidence of our senses! Surely that handful of men are not going to charge an army in position? Alas! it was but too true – their desperate valour knew no bounds, and far indeed was it removed from its so-called getter part – discretion.

They advanced in two lines, quickening their pace as they closed towards the enemy. A more fearful spectacle was never witnessed than by those who, without the power to aid, beheld their heroic countrymen rushing to the arms of death. At the distance of 1,200 yards the whole line of the enemy belched forth, from 30 iron mouths, a flood of smoke and flame, through which hissed the deadly balls. Their flight was marked by instant gaps in our ranks, by dead men and horses, by steeds flying wounded or riderless across the plain. The first line is broken,

it is joined by the second, they never halt or check their speed an instant; with diminished ranks, thinned by those 30 guns, which the Russians had laid with the most deadly accuracy, with a halo of flashing steel above their heads,, and with a cheer which was many a noble fellow's death-cry, they flew into the smoke of the batteries, but ere they were lost from view the plain was stewed with bodies and with the carcasses of horses. They were exposed to an oblique fire from the batteries on the hills on both sides, as well as to a direct fire of musketry. Through the clouds of smoke we could see their sabres flashing as they rode up to the guns and dashed between them, cutting down the gunners as they stood.

We saw them riding through the guns, as I have said; to our delight we saw them returning, after breaking through a column of Russian infantry, and scattering them like chaff, when the flank fire of the battery on the hill swept them down, scattered and broken as they were. Wounded men and dismounted troopers flying towards us told the sad tale – demi-gods could not have done what we had failed to do. At the very moment when they were about to retreat an enormous mass of Lancers was hurled on their flank. Colonel Shewell, of the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars, saw the danger, and rode his few men straight at them, cutting his way through with fearful loss. The other regiments turned and engaged in a fearful encounter.

With courage too great almost for credence, they were breaking their way through the columns which enveloped them, when there took place an act of atrocity without parallel in the modern warfare of civilised nations. The Russian gunners, when the storm of cavalry passed, returned to their guns. They saw their own cavalry mingled with the troopers who had just ridden over them, and, to the eternal disgrace of the Russian name, the miscreants poured a murderous volley of grape and canister on the mass of struggling men and horses, mingling friend and foe in one common ruin. It was as much as our Heavy Brigade could do to cover the retreat of the miserable remnants of that band of heroes as they returned to the place they had so lately quitted in all the pride of life. At 11.35 not a British soldier, except the dead and dying, was left in front of these bloody Muscovite guns. Our loss, as far as it could be ascertained, in killed, wounded, and missing at 2 o'clock today, was as follows: 4<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons 79 lost; 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars 66 lost; 11<sup>th</sup> Hussars 85 lost; 13<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons 69 lost; 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers 110 lost; Total lost 409. The ground was left covered with our men and with hundreds of Russians, and we could see the Cossacks busy searching the dead.

All our operations in the trenches were lost sight of in the interest of this melancholy day, in which our Light Brigade was annihilated by their own rashness, and by the brutality of a ferocious enemy.

- as reprinted by Terry Brighton in *Hell Riders*, p. 198-201.

**APPENDIX B****THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE**

Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  
'Forward the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns!' he said.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward the Light Brigade!'  
Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

Canon to right of them,  
Canon to left of them,  
Canon in front of them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell,  
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
Flash'd as they turn'd in air,  
Sabring the gunners there,  
Charging an army, while  
All the world wonder'd.  
Plunged in the battery-smoke  
Right thro' the line they broke;  
Cossack and Russian  
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
Then they rode back, but not  
Not the six hundred.

Canon to right of them,  
Canon to left of them,  
Canon behind them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
While horse and hero fell,  
They that had fought so well  
Came thro' the jaws of Death,  
Back from the mouth of Hell,  
All that was left of them,  
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?  
O the wild charge they made!  
All the world wonder'd.  
Honour the charge they made!  
Honour the Light Brigade,  
Noble six hundred!

- Written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson on 2 December 1854, first published in the *Examiner* on 9 December 1854, as reprinted by Terry Brighton in *Hell Riders*, p. 230-231.

## APPENDIX C

The following is a partial list of “heritage” and “knowledge” requirements for the plebe class of 1987, as printed in *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*. West Point, N.Y., United States Military Academy Press, 1983.

### **I. Heritage:**

*What is the definition of leather?*

“If the fresh skin of an animal, cleaned and divested of all hair, fat, and other extraneous matter, be immersed in a dilute solution of tannic acid, a chemical combination ensues; the gelatinous tissue of the skin is converted to a non-putrescible substance, impervious to and insoluble in water; this sir, is leather.” from *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, N.Y. 10997, p. 240.

*How is the cow?*

“Sir, she walks, she talks, she’s full of chalk, the lacteal fluid extracted from the female of the bovine species is highly prolific to the nth degree.” from *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, N.Y. 10997, p. 240.

*What do plebes rank?*

“Sir, the superintendent’s dog, the Commandant’s cat, the waiters in the Mess Hall, the Hell Cats, the Generals in the Air Force, and all the Admirals in the whole damned Navy.” from *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, N.Y. 10997, p. 241.

## **II. Knowledge:**

### Schofield's Definition of Discipline.

“The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army. It is possible to impart instruction and to give commands in such a manner and such a tone of voice to inspire in the soldier no feeling but an intense desire to obey, while the opposite manner and tone of voice cannot fail to inspire no feeling but an intense desire to disobey. The one mode or the other of dealing with subordinates springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of the commander. He who feels the respect which is due to others cannot fail to inspire in them regard for himself, while he who feels, and hence manifests, disrespect toward others, especially his inferiors, cannot fail to inspire hatred against himself.”

Major General John M. Schofield, in an address to the Corps of Cadets, August 11, 1879, from *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, N.Y. 10997, p. 235.

### Worth's Battalion Orders.

“But an officer on duty knows no one – to be partial is to dishonor both himself and the object of his ill-advised favor. What will be thought of him who exacts of his friends that which disgraces him? Look at him who winks at and overlooks offenses in the one, which he causes to be punished in another, and contrast him with the inflexible soldier, who does his duty faithfully, notwithstanding it occasionally wars with his private feelings. The conduct of one will be venerated and emulated, the other detested as a satire upon soldiership and honor.”

Brevet Major William Jenkins Worth; from *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, N.Y. 10997, p. 236.



Excerpt from “DUTY, HONOR, COUNTRY” – A message delivered to the Corps of Cadets on 12 May 1962, by General Douglas MacArthur – his Farewell address.

“Duty-Honor-Country. Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.”

General Douglas MacArthur; from *Bugle Notes, 1983-1987*, West Point, N.Y. 10997, p. 238.

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