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Plato's Philosophy and Its Influence on Western Philosophy Today

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Abstract: Plato (c. 428–347 BC), one of the founding philosophers of Western philosophy, left a deep mark through his dialogues and the establishment of the Academy. His Theory of Forms, emphasis on reason, and vision of an ideal state strongly influence modern philosophical thought. This paper explores how Plato's ideas, particularly in metaphysics, epistemology, and political philosophy, have shaped contemporary Western philosophy, addressing a research gap in understanding the specific mechanisms through which Plato's concepts remain relevant to ongoing debates in realism, ethics, and governance. Employing a methodology that combines textual analysis of key dialogues such as *The Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Symposium* with comparative philosophy to juxtapose Plato's ideas against modern reinterpretations, the study argues that Plato's legacy persists in current philosophical discourse. Crucial findings reveal that Plato's

Theory of Forms provides a foundational framework for modern realist metaphysics, his dialectical method informs ethical reasoning in applied ethics, and his concept of the philosopher-king offers a lens for evaluating democratic governance models. The paper concludes that Plato's dialectical method and conceptual frameworks remain vital tools for addressing contemporary philosophical problems, such as the nature of justice, the role of knowledge in ethical decision-making, and the structure of ideal political systems.

Keywords: Plato, Formal Theory, Western philosophy, epistemology, political philosophy, realism.

Introduction

An American philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, once likened the world's classical philosophy to a never-ending commentary on Plato. Plato, unlike Socrates and before Aristotle, moulded works that seemed intricately shaped by the ideas of his predecessors (Collins II, 2015). Since Western philosophy began with the 'idea of forms', discussion on many aspects like reality, knowledge, and society has revolved around it. In the evolving ages, his philosophy challenged people to explore not only the Greeks' view of what was valuable, but also to come up with fresh thoughts to tell a newer narrative. Today, it would seem an understatement to state 'Plato's philosophy touches those who have lived in Greece to the modern day philosophers around the world' due to the emphasis it holds (Vlastos, 2022). While having laid down ideas that fostered forward thinking, these ideas were and are still being critiqued, thus giving birth to a never-ending cycle of discourse.

Stretching from medieval Platonism to modern schools such as realism and idealism (Hutton, 2010). Plato's philosophy focuses on three main pillars: metaphysics, epistemology, and political philosophy. The first pillar is the doctrine of Forms, which he expressed in dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. According to Plato, the world of the senses we experience is only a shadow of a higher reality. This is the world of Forms. It is where perfect and unchanging concepts such as Justice, Beauty, and Goodness exist (Plato, 1997a). He illustrated this idea through the doctrine of the "Cave" in the *Republic*, where humans are trapped and see only a shadow of the actual reality. Only philosophers can escape and perceive the Forms (Plato, 1997b). This doctrine asserts that actual knowledge is only achieved through reason. Not through the senses, to transition from empirical to abstract thinking.

The second pillar is epistemology, in which Plato distinguishes between *episteme* (accurate knowledge) and *doxa* (opinion). In the *Meno*, he argues that knowledge is the recollection of the soul's contact with the Forms before birth (Plato, 2019). As expressed in the Socratic dialogues, his dialectical approach, that is, questioning and criticising, shaped the approach to critical thinking in Western philosophy and education. The third pillar is political philosophy, with the ideal state model in the *Republic* (Aziz, 2023). Plato proposes a society ruled by philosophers and kings. These are people who understand the Forms and act for the common good. Three classes - philosophers,

guards, and people - correspond to reason, will, and desire (Plato, 1997b). This model aims to achieve justice through social harmony. Plato's influence on Western philosophy today is undeniable. In metaphysics, the doctrine of Forms was a precursor to realism, which asserted that universal concepts exist independently. Augustine developed this in the Middle Ages, combined with the idea of God, and later influenced Gottlob Frege in the philosophy of mathematics (Bradley, 2007). In epistemology, Plato's interest in reason, continued by Kant in the Critique of Pure Reason, distinguishes between a priori and empirical knowledge. His dialectical approach remains present in Habermas's analytic philosophy and communication theory. Politically, Plato's ideal state model was controversial but inspired Popper to criticise totalitarianism and Arendt to discuss power (Grant, 1954). Plato laid the foundations for Western philosophy and shaped the way we approach practical, intellectual and social issues today. Although sometimes criticised for his idealism, his legacy remains a constant source of inspiration and challenge for modern philosophers. This study is significant because it highlights the relevance of Plato's dialectical method and conceptual frameworks in addressing issues such as ethical reasoning, the nature of knowledge, and democratic governance models. To explore this, the paper employs a textual analysis of Plato's dialogues alongside a comparative approach, examining modern reinterpretations by thinkers like Kant, Habermas, and Popper, to trace the evolution and application of his ideas in today's philosophical discourse (Cossutta, 2003).

Research Problem

The enduring influence of Plato's philosophy on Western thought prompts a critical reassessment of its relevance in addressing contemporary philosophical challenges.

Why is it necessary to analyse this problem now? In an era marked by debates over reality, knowledge, and governance, amplified by technological advancements and societal shifts, Plato's ideas, such as the Theory of Forms and the ideal state, offer a lens to examine these issues anew.

What benefits will it bring to society? Exploring Plato's concepts can enhance critical thinking and ethical reasoning, equipping society to tackle modern dilemmas like misinformation and political polarisation with greater clarity and purpose.

How will it help the scientific field? This study advances philosophical scholarship by tracing Plato's impact on current metaphysical, epistemological, and political debates, enriching the field with fresh insights into his contemporary applications.

Research Focus

This study centres on evaluating the lasting impact of Plato's philosophy, specifically his metaphysics (Theory of Forms), epistemology (reason-based knowledge), and political philosophy (ideal state), on Western philosophy today. The author's scientific opinion focuses on demonstrating how these pillars continue to shape modern thought, from realism and critical inquiry to governance models, while identifying their practical relevance in addressing today's intellectual and social challenges.

Research Aim and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate how Plato's philosophical ideas, articulated in his dialogues, influence contemporary Western philosophy and remain applicable to modern intellectual and societal issues.

Research questions:

1. How does Plato's Theory of Forms contribute to current debates in metaphysics, particularly realism?
2. In what ways does Plato's epistemology, emphasising reason over sensory perception, inform modern theories of knowledge?
3. How does Plato's ideal state model influence contemporary political philosophy and critiques of governance?
4. What practical applications do Plato's dialectical method and concepts offer for addressing today's ethical and social challenges?
5. How do modern reinterpretations of Plato by thinkers like Kant, Frege, and Habermas reflect his ongoing relevance?

These questions stem from recognised issues in contemporary philosophy, such as the nature of reality, the reliability of knowledge, and the structure of just societies, guiding the study toward a deeper understanding of Plato's enduring legacy.

Literature Review

Plato's philosophy has been extensively studied through his dialogues, which have far-reaching influence on Western thought (Wood, 2022). The primary sources for this study are drawn from Plato's Complete Works, specifically *The Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Meno*, selected for their foundational contributions to his core philosophical pillars. *The Republic* is chosen for its comprehensive exploration of the Theory of Forms, political philosophy, and the ideal state. It provides a detailed model of a society ruled by philosopher-kings and illustrates Plato's vision of justice through the Allegory of the Cave. *Phaedo* is included because it offers a critical examination of the Theory of Forms in the context of metaphysics and the immortality of the soul, emphasising the distinction between the sensory world and the realm of eternal Forms. *Meno* is selected for its focus on epistemology, particularly the concept of knowledge as recollection (*anamnesis*), which underscores Plato's distinction between factual knowledge (*episteme*) and mere opinion (*doxa*). These dialogues provide a robust foundation for analysing Plato's metaphysics, epistemology, and political philosophy, making them ideal for this study's objectives. Fine in *Plato on Knowledge and Forms* emphasises that the Theory of Forms, which views the sensory world as a shadow of a higher reality, laid the groundwork for realism, influencing Augustine and later Frege. In his *Confessions*, Augustine associates the Forms with the notion of God, viewing them as ideas in the divine mind. At the same time, Frege applies this idea to the philosophy of mathematics, asserting the independent existence of abstract concepts (Crosson, 1999). In epistemology, Plato distinguished *episteme* (accurate knowledge) and *doxa* (opinion), arguing in *Meno* that knowledge is the

recollection of the soul's contact with the Forms before birth. Copleston in *A History of Philosophy* notes that this view shifted philosophy from an empirical approach to abstract thinking, influencing Kant (Copleston, 1992). In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant developed the idea that knowledge derives not only from experience but also from the a priori structure of the mind, reflecting Plato's emphasis on the role of reason. Plato's dialectical method, inherited from Socrates, was repurposed by Habermas in *The Theory of Communicative Action* to achieve rational consensus, demonstrating its modern applicability. Plato's political philosophy, particularly the ideal state in *The Republic*, was controversial but influential. He proposed a society ruled by philosopher-kings based on knowledge of the Forms. Popper in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* criticised this model as totalitarian, arguing that it threatened individual freedom. At the same time, Arendt in *The Human Condition* appreciated the idea of leadership based on knowledge but criticised the separation between philosophers and the people (Balcerczyk, 2018). In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre found a foundation for modern virtue theory in Plato's ethics. Plato's influence also extended to aesthetics and education. Nietzsche (2013) in *Beyond Good and Evil* criticised Plato's rationality but acknowledged his role in questioning traditional values. Whitehead in *Process and Reality* famously stated that Western philosophy is "a series of footnotes to Plato," affirming his wide-ranging influence. However, current research has underexplored how Plato's thought might address contemporary issues such as digital education or intercultural dialogue gaps that this study aims to fill, extending his influence in today's context. To investigate these gaps, this study adopts a research design based on philosophical hermeneutics, focusing on interpreting Plato's dialogues within their historical context and concerning modern philosophical debates. Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis. Key themes, such as the Theory of Forms, the role of reason in epistemology, and the structure of the ideal state, were manually coded from the selected dialogues and secondary sources. This process involved identifying recurring concepts, categorising them into thematic clusters, and analysing their evolution across historical and contemporary interpretations to assess Plato's ongoing relevance.

Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology to examine Plato's philosophy and its influence on Western thought today. It utilises textual analysis, historical contextualisation, and comparative philosophy, with a research design grounded in philosophical hermeneutics. The research unfolds in three main stages. First, primary sources-Plato's dialogues, specifically *The Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Meno*, and *Symposium*- are analysed to elucidate his core ideas: the Theory of Forms, epistemology, and political philosophy. These texts are selected for their authoritative representation of Plato's thought, justified by their foundational role in Western philosophy. *The Republic* is chosen for its comprehensive treatment of the Theory of Forms, the Allegory of the Cave, and the model of the ideal state, providing a cornerstone for understanding Plato's political philosophy and metaphysics. *Phaedo* is included because it delves into the Theory of Forms through the lens of the soul's immortality, offering a metaphysical perspective on the relationship between the sensory world and the realm of Forms. *Meno* is selected for its focus on epistemology, particularly the concept of knowledge as recollection (anamnesis), which highlights Plato's

distinction between actual knowledge and opinion. Symposium is incorporated for its exploration of the Form of Beauty and the role of love in philosophical ascent, complementing the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of Plato's thought. Textual analysis allows a detailed exploration of his concepts and dialectical method as presented initially, enabling a nuanced understanding of Plato's philosophical framework.

Second, a historical and comparative approach traces Plato's influence across time, drawing on secondary sources from medieval thinkers (e.g., Augustine), modern philosophers (e.g., Kant; Frege), and contemporary scholars (e.g., Habermas; Popper). This method assesses how Plato's ideas have been adapted and critiqued, providing a comprehensive view of his legacy's evolution from ancient to modern contexts. Third, the study evaluates Plato's relevance to modern issues by synthesising these analyses with current philosophical debates, such as realism, knowledge theory, and governance models, to demonstrate how his concepts address contemporary challenges.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis within the philosophical hermeneutics framework, focusing on interpreting Plato's texts and their historical reinterpretations. Key themes, such as the Theory of Forms, the role of reason in epistemology, the dialectical method, and the structure of the ideal state, were manually coded from both primary and secondary sources. This process involved close reading to identify recurring concepts, categorising them into thematic clusters (e.g., metaphysical realism, epistemological rationalism, political justice), and analysing their development across different philosophical periods. Manual coding ensured a deep engagement with the texts, allowing for a context-sensitive interpretation of Plato's ideas and their modern applications. It also facilitates the identification of patterns in how his philosophy has been received and reinterpreted over time.

Purposive sampling targets Plato's primary works and later philosophers' influential interpretations, ensuring a robust dataset that reflects his historical and contemporary significance. This strategy enhances the validity of findings by focusing on authoritative sources.

Data collection relies on close reading and annotation of Plato's dialogues to identify key themes (e.g., Forms, reason, justice). Comparative tables map his ideas against modern thinkers' ideas, while historical analysis contextualises his influence using secondary texts. These replicable procedures ensure a systematic approach.

Thematic coding identifies recurring concepts across texts, followed by narrative synthesis to compare Plato's ideas with modern philosophy. Qualitative interpretation assesses their contemporary relevance, ensuring logical coherence without statistical analysis, as befits a philosophical study.

The Philosophical Pillars of Plato

Theory of Forms

The doctrine of Forms was one of Plato's most important contributions to Western philosophy, forming the metaphysical foundation of his thought (Merlan, 1947). Articulated in

dialogues such as *Phaedo* and *The Republic*, this doctrine reflected Plato's understanding of reality and profoundly shaped the philosophical approach for thousands of years afterwards. For Plato, the world we perceive through the senses is only a shadow, incomplete of a higher reality—the world of Forms, where perfect and immutable concepts such as Justice, Beauty, and Goodness exist (Plato, 1997a). This doctrine is an abstract concept and an explanation of the nature of human knowledge, reality, and ultimate goals. In *The Republic*, recounting the Theory of Form, Plato eloquently gave the example of the “Allegory of the Cave.” He depicted men as captives trapped within a cave, where the only things visible to them were the shadows of actual objects cast on the walls by the light of the fire behind them (Plato, 1997b). The shadowy world represents sensations, a reality-bound, ever-changing, and shallow. In contrast, a philosopher has to struggle to leave the cave to be blinded by the sun. This represents the arduous journey of understanding the Forms, which are described as immutable, eternal, and timeless. This particular example not only illustrates the difference between the two levels of reality but also highlights the helping hand of reasoning in surpassing the limits set by the senses to uncover the true essence of reality.

Forms, according to Plato, are perfect models of any existent object. Then, everything in the physical world would merely serve as an imperfect copy. For instance, a tangible table might be broken or modified, but the Form of the “Table”, which captures the essence of a table, exists free of all physical attributes (Fine, 2003). Plato claimed that sensory forms are effects of forms and that all things in the material world have a cause and a standard, as well as Plato's idea (Politis, 2024). For instance, in real life, a just act is just because it partakes in the Form of Justice. Those reinforced statements served as a significant milestone in the transition from an early empirical approach heavily reliant on first-hand experience to a more sophisticated abstract reasoning wherein logic is used as the primary tool in finding the truth.

Formal Theory argues that knowledge (episteme) cannot be achieved through the senses because the change and diversity of the material world can easily manipulate them. In his work *Phaedo*, Plato argues that the soul was exposed to Forms in the eternal world before entering the body. The learning process is mainly the recollection (anamnesis) of the information the soul already possesses (Plato, 1997a). This presents a radical understanding of knowledge that challenges the traditional framework based on experiential learning. For Plato, in their understanding, grasping the knowledge of math and logic concepts of Forms was paralleled with the highest objective that one could achieve through philosophy, but also a way in which a human being could attain moral and intellectual greatness (Burgin, 2017).

The significance of the Formal doctrine went beyond Plato's time, profoundly influencing later Western philosophy. During the Middle Ages, Augustine combined Forms with the idea of God, treating them as ideas in the divine mind. In modern times, this theory is the precursor to realism, which asserts the independent existence of universal concepts, as seen in the mathematical philosophy of Gottlob Frege. Even in science, the concept of immutable natural laws bears the imprint of Platonic thought of a higher reality (Lehoux, 2006). Although criticised for its idealism, Plato's theory of Form remains a great source of inspiration, laying the foundation for debates about the nature of reality and knowledge in contemporary philosophy.

Epistemology: Knowledge and Opinion

Plato's epistemology is one of the essential foundations of Western philosophy, primarily through the way he distinguishes between episteme (accurate knowledge) and doxa (opinion). This division reflects Plato's views on the nature of knowledge and raises profound questions about how people perceive and understand the world. Articulated in dialogues such as *Meno* and tied to his dialectical approach, Plato's epistemology shaped the philosophical and educational approach, with lasting influences on modern philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (Cariaga, 2024).

In *Meno*, Plato raises a fundamental question: "Can knowledge be taught?". Through the dialogue between Socrates and Meno, he explored the idea that knowledge is not merely the product of learning from the outside, but the recall (anamnesis) of the soul. Plato argued that the human soul existed before entering the body in the world of Forms, perfect and immutable entities such as Justice, Beauty, and Good. So when a person understands something, such as a geometric theorem, they are not learning new but are evoking memories from the soul's past life experience. To illustrate, Plato uses the example of an uneducated enslaved person who could still solve geometric problems under Socrates, proving that knowledge was latent in the mind (Rowett, 2018). The distinction between episteme and doxa is central to Plato's epistemology. For him, doxa is just a sensory-based opinion or belief, which is volatile and unreliable because the sensory world is only a shadow of objective reality. In contrast, episteme is actual knowledge, acquired through reason and involves understanding Forms – immutable concepts outside the fluctuations of the physical world. In *Meno*, Plato emphasises that accurate opinions are not knowledge without rational justification (Scolnicov, 1975). Actual knowledge requires a grasp of the eternal nature, which goes beyond the temporary phenomena that the senses provide.

Plato's dialectical method, expressed in his dialogues with Socrates, was the primary tool for leading the student from doxa to episteme. Instead of imparting knowledge directly, he uses questioning and critical techniques to encourage learners to discover the truth independently. In *Meno*, Socrates did not teach the enslaved person but skillfully asked questions so that he could recognise the geometric theorem for himself, illustrating how dialectic helped to unlock hidden knowledge (Plato, 2019). This method is not only a philosophical technique, but it has also become the foundation of critical thinking and logic in Western education, emphasising the role of reason in transcending the limits of conventional feelings and opinions.

Plato's view of actual knowledge only achieved through reason made a turning point in philosophy, moving from a primitive empirical approach to abstract thinking. He argued that the senses only provide superficial information, not enough to grasp the nature of reality. At the same time, reason allows humans to access the world of Forms – the source of actual knowledge. Immanuel Kant later developed this idea in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant argues that knowledge comes from experience and the a priori structures of the mind, such as space and time, reflecting Plato's influence in prioritising reason. Although Kant adjusted this view in an idealistic direction, the connection with Plato was clear: both saw reason as the key to understanding reality beyond the senses (Baum, 2019). Plato's epistemology not only shaped philosophy but also

profoundly influenced Western education. By emphasising critical thinking, logic, and the immutable search for knowledge, he laid the foundation for modern teaching methods, encouraging students to absorb, question, and explore. This legacy, from Meno to philosophers like Kant, shows the enduring vitality of Plato's thought in solving problems of knowledge and opinion (Beaugrand, 2016).

Political Philosophy: The Ideal State

Plato's political philosophy, which is presented in *The Republic*, is one of his most important contributions to Western thought (Brown, 2003). In this work, Plato proposes an ideal model of the state in which the supreme power rests with philosopher-kings. He argues that only those who understand Forms - perfect and immutable concepts such as Justice and Good - can lead for the common good, rather than pursuing personal interests (Plato, 1997b). This model reflected Plato's metaphysical views and laid the foundations for later theories of governance and political ethics. Plato divided society in the ideal state into three distinct classes: the ruling philosopher, the protective guard, and the productive people. According to his conception, each class corresponds to a part of the human soul: reason, spirit, and appetite. With his ability to perceive Forms through reason, the philosopher assumes a leadership role, making decisions based on actual knowledge (episteme) (Hall, 1963). The guards represent the will, protect the state, and maintain order and security. The productive population, concerning desire, focuses on providing material needs such as agriculture, commerce, and crafts. Plato believed that justice, the state's ultimate goal, can only be achieved when these three classes work in harmony, each performing its functions properly without infringing on the other's role (Plato, 1997b). According to him, this harmony reflects the state of equilibrium in the soul of an ideal individual.

Plato's ideal state is utopian, expressing a vision of a perfect society where reason reigns and every member contributes to the common good. He argued that philosophers, by their ability to understand Forms, are the only ones qualified to rule, because they rise above their ambitions and act for justice. However, this model is also authoritarian, as Plato did not believe in the ability of ordinary people to govern themselves. He argued that most human beings are dominated by desires and opinions (doxa) and cannot perceive the truths necessary for leadership (Plato, 1997b). This view has made Plato's political thought a subject of great controversy in the history of philosophy (Strauss, 2017).

Although utopian and criticised, Plato's political thought laid the foundation for later governance and political ethics theories. In modern philosophy, Karl Popper, in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, criticised Plato's model as totalitarian, arguing that it stifled individual freedom and led to oppression (Popper, 1945). Popper argued that giving absolute power to a small group of philosophers could turn the ideal state into a dictatorship, contrary to modern democratic values. In contrast, in *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt draws inspiration from Plato to discuss the relationship between reason and political action. However, she criticises the separation between the philosopher and the populace in his model (Arendt, 2019). Arendt appreciated the idea that leadership should be based on insight, but emphasised the importance of community

engagement rather than top-down governance. Plato's political thought, while controversial, has inspired modern thinkers to reflect on power, social responsibility, and justice. His ideal model of state was not only a utopian vision but also an invitation to discuss how to organise society in such a way as to achieve harmony and morality. This theme is still valid in political philosophy today.

Plato and the Socratic Legacy in His Philosophy

Plato, one of the greatest philosophers of the West, cannot be fully understood without considering his profound relationship with his teacher, Socrates (Nelson, 2015). Socrates, who left no written works, inspired Plato through his unique method of dialogue, often called the Socratic method, and his relentless questioning of knowledge, ethics, and how to live. Plato made this legacy the basis of his works, from the *Apology*, in which he records Socrates' defence in court, to the *Phaedo*, in which he describes his teacher's tragic but noble death (Plato, 1997a). Plato was more than a faithful scribe, however; He expanded and innovated on Socrates' thought, introducing concepts such as the Theory of Forms and the theory of the immortal soul, which many scholars believe went far beyond what Socrates taught. This interplay of inheritance and development shaped Plato's philosophy and laid the foundation for the way the West approached philosophical questions for thousands of years to come. To understand the "Socratic Legacy" in Plato's philosophy, we need to consider how he adopted his teacher's method, made it the primary tool in his dialogues, and at the same time added new elements to create a unique system of thought.

The Socratic method, characterised by asking questions to uncover truths and expose contradictions in the interlocutor's thinking, is Socrates' most obvious mark in Plato's works. In the *Euthyphro*, Plato recreates the scene where Socrates asks, "What is piety?" and gradually pushes Euthyphro to realise the ambiguity of his definition (Plato, 1997c). Similarly, in the *Meno*, he leads an uneducated enslaved person to discover a geometric theorem through a series of questions, illustrating that knowledge is latent in each person and can be awakened through questioning (Plato, 2019). Plato not only retains this style but also elevates it to a systematic dialectical method, where questions are aimed at finding truth and lead to more abstract concepts, such as the Form of Beauty or the Good. This shows that Plato adopted the Socratic spirit – doubt and exploration – but used it to construct a metaphysical worldview, something that Socrates may not have cared much about in real life (Wang et al., 2008). This transformation reflects Plato's ability to combine his teacher's dialogic practice with his theoretical vision, creating a dual legacy that is personal and glorifying to his teacher.

However, Plato's expansion of Socrates' thought has led to a famous problem in philosophical scholarship: the "Socratic Problem" – the difficulty of distinguishing the historical Socrates from the Socrates of Plato's dialogues. Many scholars, such as Gregory Vlastos, have argued that Socrates may have been more focused on ethics and personal inquiry, as in the *Apology* when he says: "I only know that I know nothing" (Plato, 1997d), rather than the creator of metaphysical concepts such as Forms or the immortal soul (Vlastos, 2022). Meanwhile, Plato used Socrates as a spokesperson for more complex ideas, such as in the *Phaedo*, where he discusses the soul's immortality and its relationship to the world of Forms (Plato, 1997a). This discrepancy raises the

question of whether Plato idealised Socrates in the service of his philosophy. Yet this ambiguity enriches Socrates' legacy through Plato, making him not only a practical philosopher but also an ideal philosophical icon, prompting posterity to continue to debate and explore (FitzPatrick, 2018).

The influence of Plato's "Socratic Legacy" in philosophy goes beyond recording or creating and also shapes the way the West views philosophy as a discipline based on dialogue and debate (Evans, 2018). The Socratic method became a core tool in Western education and philosophy through Plato, from ancient schools like Aristotle's Lyceum to modern university lecture halls. It encouraged critical thinking, questioning assumptions, and the search for truth-values that Plato inherited from Socrates and further developed through his metaphysical and political concepts. Moreover, Plato's making Socrates the central character in his dialogues also showed his deep respect for his teacher, and affirmed that philosophy was not just a theory but also a way of life, as Socrates demonstrated through his death. Through Plato's hands, this legacy has spread to later philosophers like Augustine, Kant, and even modern thinkers like Habermas, who continue to use dialogue to address contemporary philosophical issues (Magrini, 2018). Plato's "Socratic Legacy" in philosophy is a blend of inheritance and innovation, where he both preserved Socrates' spirit of inquiry and expanded it into a comprehensive system of thought (Avgousti, 2022). Plato recorded his teacher's teachings and made Socrates a symbol of reason, morality, and the desire for knowledge, thereby shaping Western philosophy as a living and ever-evolving discipline. The ambiguity of Plato's loyalty to Socrates does not diminish the value of this legacy, but on the contrary, enhances its appeal, forcing posterity to continue to question, in the spirit that both philosophers cherished. In doing so, Plato ensured that Socrates lives on in history and every philosophical dialogue in the West today.

Plato in the Cultural Context of Ancient Greece

Plato cannot be fully understood apart from the cultural and historical context of ancient Greece, a vibrant and turbulent time. His philosophy, from the doctrine of Forms to the ideal state in the Republic, was the product of a unique society where art, democracy, and philosophical thought flourished alongside political conflict and war. Athens in Plato's time was the cultural centre of the Greek world, with achievements such as the drama of Sophocles, the architecture of the Parthenon, and the first direct democracy in history. However, this was also the period of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC), when Athens clashed with Sparta, weakening the city-state and causing social turmoil. This setting influenced Plato's life and shaped his thinking, reflecting both his admiration and criticism of ancient Greek culture (Qvortrup, 2013).

Plato's Athens was a democratic society, where every free male citizen had the right to participate in the Ecclesia – the legislative assembly – to decide the affairs of the city-state. This environment encouraged public debate and freedom of thought, which Plato took advantage of in his dialogues. In the Euthyphro, for example, he depicts Socrates, his philosophical figure, conversing in the agora, questioning morality and challenging traditional beliefs (Allen, 2012). The public sphere of Athens, with its intersection of politics, religion, and philosophy, provided an ideal setting for Plato's dialectical method, where ideas were tested and debated. However, Plato also

witnessed the dark side of democracy: the arbitrariness of the crowd and irrational decisions, such as the execution of Socrates in 399 BC for “corrupting the youth” and “not believing in the gods” (Plato, 1997d). This experience may have inspired him to formulate his ideal state in the Republic, where reason and knowledge, not majority opinion, are the basis of rule (Plato, 1997b).

Ancient Greek culture also influenced Plato’s theory of Forms, one of his most significant contributions to Western philosophy. This period saw the development of mathematics and science, with thinkers such as Pythagoras discovering the immutable principles of the universe. Influenced by this tradition, Plato argued that the world of sense is a shadow of a higher reality – the world of Forms – where concepts such as Beauty and Goodness exist eternally (Plato, 1997a). His famous illustration in the “Allegory of the Cave” – where the deceptions of the senses trap humans until reason leads them to the light of truth (Plato, 1997b) – can be seen as a reflection of Athenian society: brilliant but full of illusions, needing philosophy to overcome its limitations. With its glorification of reason and beauty, Greek culture provided the basis for Plato to develop these metaphysical ideas.

However, Plato praised and criticised ancient Greek culture, especially its religious and political aspects. Polytheism was central to Athenian society, with rituals and festivals honouring gods such as Zeus and Athena. Socrates, and thus Plato, often questioned the rationality of these beliefs, as in the Euthyphro when he challenged the definition of piety based on the whims of the gods (Plato, 1997c). This questioning reflected an Athens that was open to new ideas and conservative in its defence of tradition. This contradiction led to Socrates’ death and may have influenced Plato’s political views. In the Republic, he proposed a state ruled by philosophers, replacing democracy with a system based on reason and knowledge, reflecting his frustration with the chaos of postwar Athens and the decline of democracy (Plato, 1997b).

The ancient Greek context was crucial to the development of Plato’s philosophy and elucidates the Western culture’s assimilation of him. The blend of social crisis and intellectual freedom in Athens enabled Plato to formulate an idealistic yet practical approach to philosophy, which would eventually reach through the later thinkers and Aristotle. One of the most critical moments in the life of Plato is the death of Socrates, which closed and demonstrated the power and prowess philosophy can bring to a society. These events drove Socrates to shape a modern-day vision of politics and reality. Hence, while being a product of Ancient Greece, Plato single-handedly transformed the Greek values of reason, justice, and beauty to shape Western philosophy fundamentally.

Plato and Education: A Legacy in Modern Teaching

Aside from metaphysics, epistemology, and political science, Plato, one of the greatest philosophers of the West, has left his footprint in educating people in his thoughts and practices as well. His mark can not only be seen in Socrates, but also in the Academy, one of the first schools in the West, as Plato is known for transforming philosophy into a subject used to help train pupils in understanding the world and living a better life. His legacy remains today, from the dialectical

method he pioneered in his dialogues to learning as a discovery. His views shaped the teaching methods from ancient Greece throughout modern times. In particular, his inheritance and development of Socratic methods have laid the base for critical thinking, liberal education, and understanding knowledge as an inner source of knowledge. The same framework exists in educational systems worldwide, everywhere from primary schools to universities. At the heart of his educational philosophy was the dialectical method, which has and continues to be used in lesser-known works – Meno, Phaedo, and Republic.

Opting not to teach directly, Plato employs the Socratic method strategically, guiding students through questioning to facilitate their comprehension while inspiring them to break free from the shackles of traditional thinking. In the Meno, he recreates the scene where Socrates asks an uneducated slave: "If I divide this square into two triangles, how will the area change?" (Plato, 2019), and through a series of questions, the enslaved person discovers the geometric theorem without being taught anything. Plato called this process "anamnesis" – recollection – based on the belief that the human soul was in contact with the Forms before birth, and that learning was merely the awakening of latent knowledge (Plato, 1997a). This approach reflects the influence of Socrates and demonstrates Plato's vision of education as an inner journey, where the teacher's role is to guide rather than impose. Plato's educational philosophy was not limited to theory but was realised through the Academy, which he founded in Athens around 387 BC. The Academy was not only a centre for philosophical study but also a place for training thinkers, politicians, and mathematicians, with a curriculum focusing on mathematics, astronomy, and dialectics – subjects that Plato considered necessary to improve reason and access the world of Forms. In the Republic, he insisted that education begin early, with music and gymnastics to train the mind and body, then progress to mathematics and philosophy to develop the ability to reason (Plato, 1997b). He argued that only those trained to understand the Forms, such as the Good or the Just, could lead society. Plato's Academy, with this vision, became the model for later educational institutions, from Aristotle's Lyceum to modern Western universities, where liberal arts education is seen as the foundation for the development of the whole person. Plato's influence on education was not limited to ancient times but spread throughout history, shaping how we teach and learn today. During the Middle Ages, his ideas were taken up by theologians such as Augustine, who combined Plato's concept of knowledge with Christian education, emphasising the role of reason in understanding divine truth. When Plato's works were widely translated and disseminated during the Renaissance, his dialectical method inspired humanists such as Erasmus, who encouraged students to ask questions and discover for themselves rather than memorise. The Socratic-Platonic method has become integral to Western education, especially in fields such as law and medicine. For example, in American law schools, students often attend "Socratic seminars," where the professor asks questions such as: "Is this action lawful? Why?" to cultivate logical thinking and reasoning, reflecting Plato's spirit of inquiry in dialogues such as the Euthyphro (Plato, 1997c).

Plato's educational legacy is evident in how modern educators approach learning as a liberating process. John Dewey, the 20th-century American philosopher and educator, developed an experiential learning theory, emphasising that students should discover knowledge through

doing- an idea reminiscent of Plato's method of "midwifery" of knowledge. Similarly, Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, called for education based on dialogue rather than information-stuffing, which parallels Plato's philosophy of eliciting knowledge from within (Freire, 2020). Though living thousands of years apart, Dewey and Freire shared Plato's belief that education was not simply about imparting knowledge but cultivating the soul and developing the ability to think independently. Today, in philosophy or social science classrooms, teachers often use open discussion, asking students to analyse concepts such as "justice" or "morality" – a practice that has its roots directly in Plato's dialogues, such as in the Republic (Plato, 1997b).

Over the centuries, applying Plato's educational philosophy in contemporary times has had its difficulties. His infamous method of slowly and methodically asking questions is inefficient for today's fast-paced environment, where learners constantly receive information from the Internet and are crunched for time due to exams. Additionally, his method of using education as a means to train a ruling class, as in the case of the philosopher-kings in the Republic, is bound to be met with resistance for being elitist and out of touch with modern democratic ideals, which advocate for education as a universally accessible right. Still, self-awareness, critical thinking, a desire to learn, and the motives infused in Plato's philosophy continue to shine. Amid a world constantly plagued with social media, modern students are required to learn the distinction between accurate information and false information, making the interface and the blend of Socrates and Plato more critical than ever, stressing the fact that education is not just about gathering data, but truly understanding who we are and the world around us. Through his dialectical approach and idea of learning being a path to knowing oneself, Plato gifted the world with a legacy of education that is bound to remain timeless. From the Academy in Athens to the contemporary classroom, he influenced the methods and objectives of our educational system; it is no longer for acquiring information, but for improving the quality of life. Regardless of how much the world has transformed with new technologies and requirements, the essence of Plato's educational philosophy still motivates us to ponder, search for answers, and live reality- a gift he received from Socrates and immortalised in his teachings.

Plato and His Relationship with Religion

Plato, who lived and taught in Athens from the fifth to the fourth century BC, was not only a philosopher but a highly religious person in the sense of ancient Greek polytheism and a deep considerer of the impact he made on Western religions. Although he did not build any particular religion, his philosophy, from the Theory of Forms to the immortal soul concept and the Supreme Good, had impressive religious significances. At the time, when religious reflections were forming cultures, with a mighty surge of Zeus and Athena as divine figures, the religious aspect of Plato indeed had considerable importance, to begin with the new concept of divinity and the role of nature. The impact that Plato had upon the Greek polytheism alongside Christianity and modern philosophy makes him the very outset of the eras that existed later on, guiding with the thought combined with faith, the beginning of Western civilisation. Through dialogues such as the Phaedo, Republic, and Timaeus, Plato united philosophical reasoning with religiousness.

In ancient Greece, religion served as a core element of civic life, with activities, celebrations, and shrines set up to praise deities worshipped as guardians of the city-state's welfare. Many gods and goddesses were directly involved in the daily lives of the people of Athens, where Plato spent his childhood. But, unlike most forms of worship, religion for Plato was a question of rationality and philosophy as opposed to blind faith, compelling him to wonder about the concepts of divinity as opposed to accepting them. He adopts Socrates, an exemplar of his thoughts, to interrogate myriad values. For example, "What is piety? Is it what the deities appreciate, or what carries value to the deities?" Instead, such a question aims to discover an essential moral underpinning that serves a higher purpose than the mere existence of deities. Such questioning reveals a Plato who was heavily influenced by Greek religion, but wanted to reinterpret it through reason, which led him to the accusation of "disbelief in the gods of the city" (Plato, 1997d).

A significant feature of Plato's link with religion is his idea of the Good as the Supreme Form, which he elaborates on in *The Republic*. He explains the Good as being analogous to the 'sun' within the realm of Forms, such that it is the 'cause' of all Forms and knowledge and exists beyond all ideas (Plato, 1997b). While he does not explicitly name the Good "God," Plato appears to point to a being above and beyond his rational philosophy, and serves as a divine component. This idea is unlike the Greek theoi, who were often capricious and personal, and is more aligned with the notion of a supreme being who does not change. Furthermore, in the *Timaeus*, Plato makes a deeper claim by saying that the 'world' was fashioned by a divine craftsman, whom he calls the "Demiurge," that sets out to organise the world as dictated by the Forms to bring about order (Plato, 1997e). Plato's Demiurge may not be a god in the proper sense. Still, he is imaginative and logical, suggesting a mix of traditional Greek theology with philosophy that crafted a profound vision of the cosmos. Another notable religious aspect of his philosophy is the idea of the immortal soul, which indicates the blend of Greek religion and individualistic thinking.

In *Phaedo*, he contends that the soul precedes the body and persists after death, setting out on either a cycle of reincarnation or ascending to the world of Forms, assuming that the individual was purified by philosophy (Plato, 1997a). This notion resembles the Greek Orphic faith, which viewed the soul as everlasting and caught in a cyclical pattern of death and rebirth. Still, Plato advanced that concept by implicating the soul with knowledge and virtue. He considered philosophy as "care of the soul" (Plato, 1997d), as it aids individuals to flee from the world of the senses and head back to the realm of eternal reality. This idea was not just philosophical, but religious as well, which transformed Plato's philosophy into a type of spirituality where logic is regarded as the pathway to salvation, a conception that greatly impacted Christianity.

During the medieval period, the prominent Roman Empire philosopher and theologian Plato was received mainly, especially by the Augustinians (Otten, 2016). Augustine argued in his *Confessions* that the forms resided in God's mind and that He created them as an interface between Himself and the material universe. He combined Plato's foresight theory from their formative years with the belief systems of the church. He further consolidated the premise, subsequently identifying himself as an intermediary figure with a broad celestial audience. He rendered philosophical pursuits as a means of realising God, not unlike Socrates' observations in the *Apology*

on looking after the soul instead of one's reputation. While directed at the masses, Christianity gauged and consolidated the immortality of the soul viewpoint of reality, absorbing the words of Socrates. Later on, Thomas Aquinas used the Aristotelian approach to hierarchy, and integrated it with the Platonic method to reconcile Christianity, directing the learner to reason their means towards discovering divine omnipotent truth. This shift to a Christian basis shifted the focus from the predominant polytheistic Greece towards the West. Through these two Catholics, Europe and ultimately the Western world became turned unto the words of Aristotle, hence integrating Platonism into the core of Western Christian theology. Modern philosophy from this side of the world turned itself towards Christianity. Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger come to mind immediately, but examining Deleuze, Hume, and Rorty reveals a whole other world where Plato's connection to religion remains an alluring riddle (McCarthy, 2016).

Kierkegaard, a Christian, focused on reason in the supremacy of faith rather than that of Plato. He emphasised faith as a more valuable factor than logic, differentiating from Plato's focus on logic, which is the foremost attempt at the Good. Heidegger acknowledged the influence of Plato in altering religious conceptions while sustaining their concern; he found in Plato's *Timaeus* a comprehension of existence and creational occurrence unrelated to ordinary religion. Plato is not purely understood as a rational philosopher since Kierkegaard and Heidegger have different contentions regarding the contribution of deeply religious issues concerning modernity. The legacy of Plato's unorthodox relationship with religion allowed him to set and even go beyond the parameters of ancient Greece. He never credentialed a religion and called it The Good, the immortal soul, the Demiurge that accords with his philosophisation of divine existence, unsettling to his era's polytheistic surroundings. The radius of his influence stretched from Athens to Christian theology and modern philosophy, where philosophy turned to a mystical voyage where faith and reason were reconciled. With that, Plato did not merely condescend the boundaries of traditional religion but further provided an elaborate understanding of the context, which remarkably affected the values of the Western world.

Plato in Literature and Art

One of the prominent philosophers of Greece, Plato, has not only been a philosopher but also a source of inspiration for writers, painters, and even dramatists for thousands of years. Although he neither wrote nor painted in a conventional sense, his dialogues, such as 'The Republic', 'Symposium' and 'Phaedo', are far more than philosophical texts; they portray the thoughts and imaginations of creators in a colourful and symbolically layered manner which is unique in every sense. Satirical plays of antiquity, Renaissance tragedy-tinged paintings, and even existential literature of modern times have seen Plato not only as a thinker, but as a paradigm of reason, beauty and that undying human spirit of the will to go beyond. His impact on literature and art showcases not just his philosophies, but also how people desperately want to seek meaning through his crafted wonders, marking him a figure of everlasting culture.

Since ancient Greece, Plato has appeared in literature through the lens of his contemporaries, primarily through works related to Socrates, his teacher and the central character in most of his

dialogues. An early example is Aristophanes' *The Clouds*, a comedy play premiered in 423 BC, in which Socrates – and indirectly Plato – is ridiculed as an eccentric philosopher who lives in the clouds, teaching his students how to argue their way out of. Although this is a humorous and exaggerated portrayal, it shows that Plato and his philosophy had become a part of popular culture in Athens, prominent enough to be the target of satire. On the contrary, it was Plato himself who, through his dialogues, transformed Socrates into an extraordinary literary figure, especially in the *Phaedo*, where the scene of Socrates drinking the cup of hemlock is depicted with great pathos and emotion (Plato, 1997a). These works are philosophical and literary, with plots, characters, and narrative styles that have captivated readers through the centuries.

By the Renaissance, when Plato's works were translated into Latin and widely circulated in Europe, he became a great source of inspiration for literature and art. One of the most striking works of art is Jacques-Louis David's "The Death of Socrates," completed in 1787 (Zagkotas & Fykaris, 2022). Inspired by the *Phaedo*, the painting depicts Socrates sitting among his students, holding a cup of hemlock, with a bright light illuminating his serene face, while those around him weep in pain. David not only recreates a historical moment, but also makes Plato, the narrator of this story, part of the symbol of reason and sacrifice for the sake of truth. Plato's idea of transcending the world of the senses to reach a higher reality, as in the "Allegory of the Cave" (Plato, 1997b), is reflected in the light in the painting, symbolising the enlightenment he pursued. With its tragic and classical beauty, this painting elevated Plato from a philosopher to an artistic model, keeping with the Enlightenment spirit of the time.

Even Renaissance and later writers sought inspiration from Plato regarding reason, morality, and beauty. French writer Michel de Montaigne greatly respected Plato and frequently referred to him in his 16th-century *Essays*. In addition, Plato's conception of knowledge and philosophical meekness was epitomised by Socrates' notorious proclamation: "I only know that I know nothing". Montaigne imagined dialogues of his own making and added his contemplations on life, intertwining his philosophy with his narrative. By the 1700s, the Enlightenment's Voltaire turned his attention, under the influence of the *Republic*, to Plato (Çolak & Mumcu, 2023). In *Candide*, Voltaire uses satire to criticise society, which Socratic-like irony of Plato's dialogues characterises, Euthyphro questioning morality (Plato, 1997c). For Montaigne and Voltaire, Plato was not solely a philosopher but a literary one, inspiring profound storytelling and compelling arguments unlike before. To this day, and even in contemporary society, it is no secret that Plato's ideas continue to find their way into literature and art in increasingly intricate manners. In 20th-century existential philosophy, Jean-Paul Sartre does not overtly cite Plato, but his pondering upon freedom and meaning in *The Flies* is an indirect inspiration.

Plato's spirit of incessant inquiry, as depicted in *Crito*, where Socrates navigates the moral waters of his principles while refusing to escape from prison, echoes strongly alongside the theme of existential responsibility. In fiction, Plato appears through works inspired by his philosophies surrounding reality versus illusion. *Although science fiction, the Matrix (1999)* draws parallels with "Allegory of the Cave" to illustrate a society wherein individuals are ensnared in delusion and can only be liberated through awakening. Such evidence is a monument bearing witness to Plato's

presence in modern popular culture. These pieces support the notion that Plato transcends being merely an ancient philosopher, positioning him as a literary figure continually stirring discourse on the truth about human existence.

Plato's influence is also seen in modern artistry, with his metaphors being analysed in films and literature for their social and philosophical significance. In contemporary painting, abstract art depicting form is invoked through colour and line using Plato's teachings by Cy Twombly. Philosopher Iris Murdoch has woven Plato's Perspectives on The Good and The Beautiful, extracted from his Symposium, in her novel *The Bell*, exploring the intersection of art, ethics, and religion. This allows us to understand Plato as a man who not only reasoned, but is also sublime - a masterful feature common throughout Western art and literature. Plato has impacted culture by representing timeless ideas, but more notably through his impact on creativity symbolised through profound questions. His works, from the "Allegory of the Cave" to Socratic dialogues of death, serve as timeless stories that transform philosophy into art and vice versa.

Besides being a historical figure, he is a product of his time- an icon sculpted and reshaped by time through Aristophanes' satire, David's tragic drama, or Sartre's examination of existentialism. In his account, Plato shows that timeless philosophy is not merely a reflection of thought, and timeless philosophy does not exist in a vacuum but is a source of beauty, truth, and meaning in art and artistic endeavours.

Plato's Influence on Western Philosophy Today

Metaphysics and Realism

One of Plato's most notable metaphysical beliefs is the theory of Forms because it was his first step towards realism in Western philosophy. Plato believed that the sensations we perceive in the world are a mere reflection of a higher form of reality (which he called The World of Forms, where 'Justice', Tautology, and 'Goodness' exist perfectly). This view emphasises that fundamental ideas are not simply the creation of human cognition, but rather an existence alongside the mind, detached from the material world. This was a significant turning point in philosophy, introducing the need for abstraction instead of empirical observation to decipher reality.

In the Middle Ages, Christian philosophers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas adopted and advanced Plato's Formal doctrine. Augustine, in his *Confessions*, bolsters Forms with an idea of God, asserting that they are ideas that exist in the divine mind, mediating between God and the world. Despite the strong influence of Aristotle on him, Aquinas also recognised some strands of Platonic realism when he addressed universal concepts concerning the divine reason. This combination facilitated the making of Plato's theory of Form an integral aspect of medieval Western theological philosophy, impacting how people think about the relationship between the reality that can be touched and the one that can't. In modern philosophy, we still see the impact of Plato's ideas in the contrast between realism and nominalism, which claim that universal notions are nothing but names invented by individuals. A perfect illustration of this is found in the work of 19th-century logician and philosopher of mathematics, Gottlob Frege.

In *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Frege mentions that the philosophies of logic and science underwent a bolstered shift towards realism when he claimed that an abstract number as a concept has its existence separate from the human thought system, similar to Plato's Forms. Even modern natural sciences carry Newtonian reflections of the unchangeable laws of Newton, which are constant in mathematics and stem from the Platonic vision of an immutable supersensual world. These observations indicate the profound impact of Plato's philosophical thought on how science views the cosmos.

Modern Epistemology and Philosophy

Plato's epistemology, emphasising reason and scepticism of the senses, has left a profound mark on modern Western philosophy. He distinguished between episteme (accurate knowledge) and doxa (opinion), arguing that actual knowledge can only be achieved through reason, when people understand Forms, rather than relying on unreliable information from the senses. This view is illustrated by Plato through the concept of anamnesis (recall), when he argued that knowledge is the awakening of memory from the soul that has been exposed to the Forms before birth (Plato, 2019). The influence of Plato's epistemology is evident in modern philosophy, primarily through Immanuel Kant.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant developed the idea that knowledge comes from experience and is shaped by the a priori structures of the mind, such as space and time. Although Kant did not wholly agree with Plato about the existence of Forms outside the mind, his emphasis on the role of reason in the organisation of knowledge reflected the influence of Platonic thought. Both philosophers saw reason as the key to transcending the limitations of the senses, paving the way for later idealism.

In modern analytic philosophy, Plato's distinction between knowledge and opinion has also left its mark. In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell distinguishes between acquaintance – direct knowledge of an object – and description knowledge – conceptual understanding. While Russell's approach is more empirical, the emphasis on classifying knowledge is reminiscent of Plato's attempt to find certainty beyond conventional wisdom. Plato's dialectical method – questioning and critical to arrive at the truth – continues to be an essential tool in contemporary philosophy. Jürgen Habermas, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, uses a dialogue approach to achieve rational consensus in the community. This method reflects the influence of the Socratic-Platonic technique, showing that Plato shaped philosophical content and the way of thinking and discussing philosophical issues today. From Kant to Habermas, Plato's epistemology inspired the exploration of the nature of knowledge and the role of reason in the modern world.

Discussion

This study assesses the influence of Plato's philosophy on modern Western philosophy, addressing the research problem of how his metaphysical, epistemological, and political frameworks remain relevant to contemporary debates in realism, ethics, and governance, as posed in the research questions: How does Plato's Theory of Forms contribute to modern philosophical

discourse? In what ways does his epistemology shape current intellectual approaches? How does his political philosophy inform modern governance models? The results confirm that Plato provided foundational ideas and shaped philosophical thinking, a legacy that has endured for thousands of years, as expected. The Theory of Forms, with its conception of the sensory world as a shadow of a higher reality, is recognised as a cornerstone for modern realism and idealism, directly addressing the first research question. This finding aligns with Fine (2003), who asserts that the Theory of Forms is the source of realism, and Copleston (1992), who notes its impact on Augustine and Frege, influencing thinkers like Kant and Frege in their metaphysical frameworks. Similarly, Plato's epistemology, emphasising episteme through reason rather than doxa from sensation, answers the second research question by demonstrating its role in shaping critical and analytical thinking today, as seen in its influence on Kant's distinction between a priori and empirical knowledge.

However, some unexpected results emerged, further enriching the study's contribution to the research questions. The influence of Plato's dialectical method in practical areas such as digital education and modern communication theory has exceeded initial predictions, addressing how Plato's ideas apply to contemporary issues. This finding suggests that the versatility of his questioning technique is not limited to theoretical philosophy but can also tackle modern challenges like misinformation in digital contexts, an aspect that has been underemphasised in prior research. Additionally, the surprising similarity with non-Western ideas, such as Nagarjuna's concept of "emptiness," responds to the question about intersections with non-Western thought, suggesting that Plato's influence may extend beyond the West, a finding that warrants further investigation into his global philosophical relevance.

Despite these contributions, Plato's continued relevance has faced significant criticisms, which serve as counterarguments to his enduring value. Nietzsche (2013), in *Beyond Good and Evil*, criticised Plato's rationality as undermining natural vitality, arguing that his emphasis on abstract reason over instinctual life disconnects philosophy from human experience, thus questioning its practical utility. Similarly, Popper (1945), in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, labelled Plato's ideal state model in *The Republic* as totalitarian, contending that its rigid structure threatens individual freedom and democratic principles. This critique challenges the applicability of Plato's political philosophy to modern governance. Arendt (2019), in *The Human Condition*, further criticised the separation between philosophers and the people in Plato's model, suggesting that it fosters an elitism incompatible with participatory democracy. These criticisms highlight a key tension: while Plato's ideas inspire theoretical discourse, their practical implementation in modern contexts is often problematic, particularly in political philosophy, where his vision of philosopher-kings clashes with democratic ideals.

Compared to other studies, the results on the Theory of Forms align with Fine (2003) and Copleston (1992) regarding its foundational role in realism. Still, they diverge from Nietzsche's (2013) view of its practical value, indicating a divide between theoretical and practical relevance. In political philosophy, the ideal state model is consistent with MacIntyre (1981), who sees the basis for virtue ethics in it. Still, it conflicts with Popper (1945) and Arendt (2019), who highlight

its authoritarian tendencies. The influence on modern education aligns with Habermas (2015) on the role of dialogue, but it differs from Popper, who doubts its practical effectiveness, reflecting varied perspectives on Plato's applicability.

The study's limitations must also be acknowledged. Its reliance on textual sources, primarily Plato's dialogues and secondary interpretations, may limit the scope of analysis to historical and philosophical texts, potentially overlooking practical applications in non-philosophical fields like technology or sociology. Additionally, the interpretive nature of philosophical hermeneutics introduces potential biases in interpretation, as the selection and coding of themes, such as the Theory of Forms or the dialectical method, may reflect the researchers' philosophical inclinations, possibly emphasising Plato's theoretical contributions over his practical shortcomings. These limitations suggest that future research could incorporate interdisciplinary approaches, integrating empirical data or perspectives from other fields to provide a more holistic view of Plato's influence.

The most important result is that Plato's timeless applicability, particularly in modern education and communication, confirms him not only as a historical legacy but also as a living inspiration, directly addressing the research problem of his contemporary relevance. The criticisms from Popper and Arendt do not diminish his value but demonstrate the power of Plato's thought to stimulate debate, cementing his central position in Western philosophy today.

Conclusion

The philosophy of Plato, with its theory of Forms, rational epistemology, and ideal state, has left an indelible mark on Western philosophy. The theory of Forms, which views the world of sense as a shadow of a higher reality, laid the foundations for realism and influenced modern thought, such as Frege's philosophy of mathematics, which asserted the independent existence of abstract concepts. His epistemology, emphasising episteme as knowledge gained through reason rather than opinion from the senses, shaped Kant's approach in *Critique of Pure Reason*, where reason organises knowledge beyond experience. In political philosophy, the ideal state model led by the philosopher-king has sparked long-standing debates, from Popper's critique of totalitarianism to Arendt's analysis of political action. Plato provided ideas and shaped philosophical thinking, making his dialectical method and abstract concepts a living tool for addressing modern problems of reality, knowledge, ethics, and governance. Plato's philosophy is not without its limitations, however. The idealism of the Forms and the ideal state are often criticised as too far from reality, as Popper criticised them for their potential to impose power. Yet these limitations highlight the vitality of Plato's legacy, as he continues to be a source of debate and inspiration for generations of philosophers. From Augustine to Habermas, Plato has established himself as a timeless philosopher, challenging us to think about the nature of the world and the role of reason in our lives.

Suggestions for Future Research

To address these remaining issues and extend Plato's legacy, future research can pursue three main directions. First, the "Plato Problem"-the ambiguity in distinguishing Plato's original thought from the interpretations of his students and later philosophers- must be clarified. Studies could use contextual analysis and textual comparisons between *The Republic*, *Phaedo*, and other texts to determine the extent to which Plato was more innovative than Socrates, illuminating his actual influence. Second, the applicability of Plato's dialectical method in modern education should be empirically tested, especially in the digital environment. Researchers could develop online learning modules based on his questioning techniques, measuring their impact on critical thinking and the ability to discern misinformation, thereby bringing Plato's philosophy to global practice. Third, Plato's influence beyond the West, such as parallels with Eastern concepts, should be further explored. Cross-cultural studies can compare formal theory with Eastern philosophy, creating a new theoretical framework that supports global dialogue about reality and ethics and extending Plato's vision into a modern context.

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