

Republic Bk III–IV 412b–427c¹

After initially sketching the features of the guardians in Bk II (passion, gentleness, love for learning and knowledge), Socrates develops some ideas about the primary education of them. He discusses the content and style of the stories the future guardians should hear, and then their diet and physical training. Roughly speaking, the aim is for the best possible mixture of physical and cultural education (cf. 412a). Socrates now begins the exploration of the guardians' life in the community.

1. What is the 'noble lie' that Socrates introduces at 414b?
2. Briefly explain the purpose of the 'noble lie'. (414b–415d)
3. What feature of the guardians' and auxiliaries' lives do you find most striking? Why?
- 4.★ What is the context and the point of statue analogy? (420c)
- 5.★ What corrupts society most is affluence (πλοῦτος, *ploutos*) and poverty (πενία, *penia*). How? Why? (421d)
- 6.★ At 423d, Socrates again defends a division of labour based on each individual's specific function (ἐκαστον ἔργον, *ekaston ergon*). Compare this passage with the previous one at 370a. What is Plato's point? Do you agree?

Background. (a) When Socrates introduces the 'noble lie' (414b, ψεῦδος γενναῖος), he refers to an earlier passage at 389b: rulers may lie (intentionally) if it is necessary for the good of community. The word *pseudos* may mean 'lie', but it can also mean 'fiction'. This contrast comes out when Socrates talks about two kinds of stories for the young guardians (376e): true (ἀληθές) and false (ψεῦδος). The attribute *gennaios* can mean 'noble', but also 'excellent', 'pure', or 'genuine'; all meanings allude to the source or origin, and hence probably in this context to an intention or purpose.

¹ The Waterfield translation: chapter 5.