

The Ship (Bk VI 488a–489a)¹

Adeimantus’s question (487e): If we agree with the widespread opinion that philosophers are weird and useless, or ‘sky-gazers and idle blabbers’ (489a), then how can we *also* think that philosophers ought to rule the ideal city?

	<i>Ship</i>	<i>City</i>
Shipowner ναύκληρος <i>naukleros</i>	most powerful, but hard of hearing, shortsighted, limited nautical knowledge: the one through which sailors seek power	the many (πολλοί, <i>polloi</i>), the masses (πλῦθος, <i>plythos</i>), i.e. the <i>demos</i> or the assembly of citizens; the city’s people gathered together as one or in one body ²
Sailors ναύτης <i>nautes</i>	engage in factions, persuade, cajole, and threaten the shipowner to surrender control of the helm; lack nautical training but claim that steersmanship is unteachable	<i>Kallipolis</i> : the producers or workers current political rulers (cf. 489c): ambitious, ruthless, power-hungry, reliant on persuasion rather than knowledge (hence denigration of philosophy), skilled in rhetoric and sophistry, short-term thinking <i>Kallipolis</i> : the auxiliaries
Helm πηδάλιον <i>pedalion</i>	rudder	office, power
Steersman κυβερνήτης <i>kubernetes</i>	captain, helmsman, navigator; cf. 341c: captain is ruler of sailors; studies yearly cycle, seasons, heavens, a star-gazer; expert with authority	apprehends the Forms, philosopher <i>Kallipolis</i> : the guardians
Voyagers πλωτήρες <i>ploteres</i>	anyone on board: crew and passengers	the population of the city: women and slaves <i>Kallipolis</i> : society as a whole



1 Roughly after D. Keyt (2008). Plato and the Ship of State. In G. Santas (Ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Plato’s ‘Republic’* (pp. 189–213). Oxford: Blackwell.

2 Picture: detail from the frontispiece of Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651).

Overview: Key Questions Bk V–VII

- (1) What is a philosopher? 474b–475c
- Difference between sight-lovers and philosophers (i.e. sightseers of truth) 475d–e
 - The Forms 476a–d
 - Difference between belief or opinion and knowledge 476d–480a
- (2) Are philosophers fit to rule? 484a–485a
- Qualities of the philosopher 485a–487a: truthful (honest), disinterested in physical pleasure, self-controlled, courageous, generous (not small-minded), easy learner, well-mannered, good memory, and good taste.
- (3) But why do philosophers have such bad reputation? 487b–e
- The Ship analogy 488b–489d
 - The corruption of philosophers 489d–493a: the paradox of the good qualities, plant analogy; bad public influence; philosophers are confused with sophists
- (4) What is wrong with sophists? 493a
- The Beast analogy 493a–e
- (5) How is the philosophers' rule possible? 494a–504a
- (6) What is the most important thing that philosophers should know? 504b–506d
- The Good, or goodness as such 505a
- (7) What is the Form of goodness? 506e–521b
- The simile of the sun 507a–509c
 - The simile of the divided line 509d–511e
 - The allegory of the cave 514a–518e
 - Decent of the philosopher or guardian 519b–521b

The rest of Bk VII is devoted to the (secondary) education of the guardians, in line with the discussion and relevance of Forms: (i) military service, (ii) mathematical sciences (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, harmonics), (iii) dialectic, (iv) official administrative or educational duties for the *Kallipolis*, and (v) guardianship.

