



## A Critical Analysis of Plato's Politics by Specialization

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is a critical analysis of Plato's view that leaders of political states must be specialists/experts for the government to be prosperous. Our endeavour in this paper is to define and critically understand the concept of specialisation in Plato and how it applies to political leadership in the state. This will help us understand what specialisation in Plato entails, the importance of having experts in political societies, and the risks of improper placement of experts in the society.

**Keywords:** *Good Governance, Principle of Specilization, Training, Politikê-technê, Separation of Powers, Ship of Fools Analogy, Epistocracy, Nautikon, Political Organization of State, Political Appetite, Moderation.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The problem of leadership is an age-long problem in the history of humanity. In short, it is as old as human existence itself. At every given time, a society or group of people complains of bad leadership or bad governance and this gives rise to the questions; who should be a leader? Should it be any kind of virtuous human being or should there be a sort of additional quality for such a person? Should he or she come from any class in the society? Should there be a sort of specialization he or she should have? Plato's answer to this is "expertise – specialization." Specialization based on scientific learning and virtue. This helps the leader to study problems and apply remedies efficiently.

### THE ORIGINS OF SPECIALIZATION

Specialization {*Technê*}– skill, craft, expertise, profession, science, knowledge, technical knowledge is a very important term in the Platonic dialogues. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, the word *technê* denotes art or craft; a human skilled based learning with emphasis on general principles and the capability of being taught. The concept of specialisation/ expertise dates before the contributions of Plato. With this in mind, I find it necessary to see the developmental and progressive meaning of the concept *technê* before Plato in the writing of some authors before him. It is pertinent to remind us again that this concept precludes Plato.

#### Technê in the Preliterate Times

Specialisation/ *technê* existed in the preliterate Greek culture where it had a specific meaning. It describes the skill of the woodworker; he who produces something from wood. As the word developed however, its meaning broadened considerably, and eventually as in the Homeric poems it came to embrace productive activities. Homeric *technê* is not restricted to woodworking[1]. *Technê* in the primitive times has the following criteria:

It is the knowledge of a specific field: its subject matter is determinate. The knowledge of the *tekton* is restricted to woodworking. The *tekton* does not know how to forge metal. *Technê* in the primitive times is oriented to a specific goal and produces something useful: the *tekton* builds houses for the members of the community. *Technê* in the primitive era is reliable, rewarded, certified and can be taught[2].

The primitive meaning of *technê* understood as closely related to *tekton* is productive knowledge or craft. It is knowledge of a determinate field, knowledge of how to shape specific material into a useful product[3].

<sup>1</sup>D. ROOCHNIK, *Of Arts and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technê*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Park, 1998). 13

<sup>2</sup>D. ROOCHNIK, *Of Arts and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technê*, 14

<sup>3</sup>Cf. D. ROOCHNIK, *Of Arts and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technê*, 22

## Techné in the Homeric Literature

*Techné* appears only once in the Homeric *Iliad*, where it supports the primitive meaning of the concept as it relates to woodworking when Paris recognizes being raked with insults by Hector for his wayward action in battlefield saying:

Ah Hector, you criticize me fairly, yes, nothing unfair, beyond what I deserve. The heart inside you is always tempered hard, like an axe that goes through wood when a shipwright cuts out ship timbers with every ounce of skill [*techné*] and the blade weight drives the man's stroke[4].

*Techné* in the *Iliad* denotes the concept of making a ship through the skill of woodworking. It is the preliterate meaning of the word *techné*. This is a standing point to the paradigm we see in the *Odyssey*.

Homer's *Odyssey* records eight appearances of the word *techné* – skill. These eight-time appearances of the word skill can be seen in the Books 3.433, 4. 455, 4.529, 6.234, 8.327, 8.332, 11.614, 23.161. Six of the usages makes reference to smithing and warfare severally affiliated with Hephaestus, the god of anvil and metal, who is *klutotechnes* 'famed for his skill'[5].

The remaining two appearances of the concept *techné* in *Odyssey* are quite different for they do not refer to a specific craft like woodworking or smithing which has a tangible product. There, *techné*, applies in the ability to change forms at will as it applies to Proteus[6]. We shall see an elaborate explanation of the listings we have made concerning the usages of the word *techné* in the subsequent paragraphs.

Book 3. 433 uses *techné* as it refers to smithing – the craft of making tools from irons. *Techné* therefore using metals to form tools. It appears in the *Odyssey* in the following wordings:

So, he spoke, and they all set busily to work. The heifer came from the plain and from the swift, shapely ship came the comrade of great-hearted Telemachus; the smith came, bearing in his hands is tools of bronze, the implements of his craft, anvil and hammer and well-made tongs[7].

Book 4. 455 took another dimension, *techné* furthermore means transmutation – the action of changing or the state of being changed into another form. Something transcendental. It presents Proteus the god of the sea as having the craft of changing into different forms. *Techné* therefore also means the ability to change forms according to Homer:

Nay, at the first he turned into a beard lion, and then into a serpent, and a leopard, and a huge boar; then he turned into flowing water, and into a tree, high and leafy; but we held on unflinchingly with steadfast heart[8].

Reading through Book 4. 529, one encounters the possibility of the gods to pass by without anyone noticing possibly because of their ability to be into many forms. They can be in their unseen natures; "lest Agamemnon should pass by him unseen and be mindful of his furious might. So, he went to the palace to bear the tidings to the shepherd of the people, and Aegisthus straightaway planned a treacherous device"[9].

Books 6.234 and 23.161 tell us about the expertise shown by Pallas of Athena and Hephaestus in teaching their crafts: "as when a man overlays silver with gold, cunning workman whom Hephaestus and Pallas Athena have taught all manner of craft, and full of grace is the work he produces, even so the goddess shed grace upon his head and shoulders"[10].

Books 8. 327 and 8. 332 inform us about Hephaestus being praised as a wise god 'famed for crafts' *klutotechnes* and how best he uses crafts. Hephaestus god of metals is known for the good practices of his craft. Although being slow and lame, his knowledge of the use of metals and anvils in war is immeasurable that he catches the swiftest:

But the gods, the givers of good things, stood in the gateway; and unquenchable laughter arose among the blessed gods as they saw craft of wise Hephaestus.....[11]. The slow catches the swift; even as now Hephaestus, slow though he

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<sup>4</sup>HOMER, *The Iliad*, Transl. R. FAGLES, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990). 3. 67-72

<sup>5</sup>D. ROOCHNIK, *Of Arts and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techné*, 15

<sup>6</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, Transl. R. FAGLES, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990)4. 455

<sup>7</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*,3. 433

<sup>8</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, 4. 455

<sup>9</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, 4. 529

<sup>10</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, 6. 234, 23.161

<sup>11</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, 8. 327

is, has out-stripped Ares for all that he is the swiftest of the gods who hold Olympus. Lame though he is, he has caught him by craft, wherefore Ares owes the fine of the adulterer[12].

Book 11.614, understands *techne* as an art or skill of smithing gold to produce devices such as belt. It reads as follow:

Awful was the belt about his breast, a baldrick gold, whereon wondrous things were fashioned, bears and wild boars, and lion with flashing eyes, and conflicts, and battles, and murders, and slaying men. May he never have designed, or hereafter design such another, even he who stored up in his craft the device of that belt[13].

Now *techne* has come to gain variety of meanings. It is the skill of woodworking, smithing, and the skill of changing forms.

We have seen so far, the difference between Homer's *techne* and the *techne* in the preliterate times; a diversified *techne* and a specific *techne*. Before we go to Platonic understanding of *techne*, let us see another pre-Platonic writer who has written on *techne*. Hippocratic writings will be a better option as its debate will show us the progress that has occurred in the identification of skills that qualifies as *techne*. It shows us how the concept of expertise has developed from ordinary wood work to the practice of medicine.

### ***Techne* in the Hippocratic Writings**

Hippocratic writings focus on the question, 'is medicine really a *techne* and if so, why?'

The emergence of medicine in Greece as a "technical knowledge" (*technéiatriké*) – is owed to Hippocrates and the Hippocratic school. Hippocrates, a figure of whom little is known, was born on the Greek island of Kos in about 460 BC, a contemporary of his friend Democritus of Abdera, who developed with particular sharpness the atomistic theory, as opposed to random, and his concept that man is "a universe in miniature (micro-cosmos)." He was also a contemporary of Socrates, although he was ten years younger. Hippocrates was probably trained in the island of Kos by his father, Heraclids, whom Soriano -his biographer 500 years after his death traced back to Asclepius, and his mother Praxitea to Heracles himself[14].

The Hippocratic Corpus founded the "medical knowledge" (*technéiatriké*); so, we must recognize what *techné* was for the Greeks. They used the concept of *techné* to designate the process by which man's thinking could organize ideas and categories that provided him with knowledge of the physis; this word was translated as "art" or "technique" by scholars, and that is how we use it today. But serious doubts are raised as to the accuracy of that translation. Despite debates, there appears to be a fair agreement on some key characteristics of the pre-Platonic concept of *techné*. As a point of departure, the four key characteristics of *techné* are: it is knowledge of a specific field, it is oriented to a specific end, it produces a useful result, it requires mastering general rational principles that can be explained and therefore taught.

Hippocratic Corpus, in the medical field *technéiatriké* is characterized by: the specific subject matter of medicine is the diseased human body; the specific end of medicine is to heal and help the patient, the useful product of medicine is health for the individual patient, medicine investigates its general principles and gives a rational account of its actions[15].

With this in mind we see how medicine has been included as *techne*. The Hippocratic account of *techne* have widened the horizon of the debates of what kind of knowledge qualifies as *techne*. We were able to see the rules or criteria for accepting disciplines into *techne*. *Techne* is virtuous, it is utilitarian, it is just. It is not selfish. *Techne* is ordinary knowledge attained by the recognizable expert; it is determinate, methodical, teachable, noncontroversial, authoritative, purposive, and generally issues in a useful result[16].

Having seen the use of *techne* in the preliterate times, in Homeric literature and the Hippocratic writings, we can now look at its application in Plato.

### **THE PLATONIC UNDERSTANDING OF SPECIALIZATION**

*Techne* for Plato goes beyond woodworking and smithing, it involves the farmers, the physicians, money-changers, warfare and skill of guardians for guarding the state. The farmer is to produce food for his house and the community with

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<sup>12</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, 8. 332

<sup>13</sup>HOMER, *Odyssey*, 11. 614

<sup>14</sup>J.C. ALBY, *La Concepción Antropológica De La Medicina Hipocrática*,(Enghouse: 2004; XVI). 1:5-29.

<sup>15</sup>B. HOFMANN, *Medicine as Techné– A perspective from Antiquity*. (J Med Philos 2003); 28:403-25

<sup>16</sup>D. ROOCHNIK, *Of Arts and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Techne*, 151

his skill of farming[17]. He devotes his time in producing food. The function of farmer as food producers is very crucial in the sustainability of man's society and that is why he or she should devote all his time in doing the necessary:

Will a farmer provide food for everyone, spending quadruple the time and labour to provide food to be shared by them all? Or will he not bother about that, producing one quarter the food in one quarter the time, and spending the other three quarters, one in building a house, one in the production of clothes, and one in making shoes, not troubling to associate with the others, but minding his own business on his own?

Food is one of the basic needs of human society and Plato did not hesitate to recognize it. In fact, food was the first need he treated at the point he started the creation of the state. Recognizing that fact, Plato says: "surely our first and greatest need is to provide food to sustain life"[18]. That is the work of a farmer.

The physician learns about healthcare and in turn, help sick people to be healthy again by counselling and administering proper medication to them: "when a carpenter is ill, he expects to receive an emetic or a purge from his doctor or to get rid of his disease through surgery or cautery"[19]. Giving more reference to the work of the physician or a doctor, Plato in *Laches* says:

When a man considers whether or not he should use a certain medicine to anoint his eyes, do you think he is at that moment taking counsel about the medicine or about the eyes? About eyes[20].

He went furthermore in the *Alcibiades* affirming that the work of healing is meant for the doctor and nobody else is to be consulted when health issues arise. This is because they know it:

When the Athenians are discussing measures for public health, it will make no difference to them if their counsellor is rich or poor, but they will make sure that their adviser is a doctor. I suppose that's because advice on any subject is the business not of those who are rich but of those who know it[21].

The money-changers help in the swift running of businesses by exchanging their money for the good from producers[22]. The money-changers for Plato are the wholesalers and retailers who exchange money for goods. The farmers and other producers come to the market with what they have produced (food, fruits, animals, vegetable and oil in the case of the farmer) and in turn meet with the wholesalers and retailers who take their products and give them money in exchange. Plato presents this view in the following wordings:

If a farmer or any other craftsman brings some of his products to market, and he doesn't arrive at the same time as those who want to exchange things with him, is he to sit idly in the marketplace, away from his own work? Not at all. There'll be people who'll notice this and provide the requisite service in well-organized cities they'll usually be those whose bodies are weakest and who aren't fit to do any other work. They'll stay around the market exchanging money for the goods of those who have something to sell and then exchanging those goods for the money of those who want them[23].

The guardians in the state learn and practice the arts of leadership and military services[24]. The guardians are introduced to defend the state against enemies.

### **Techne in the State**

Plato uses the concept *techne* in the planning and arrangement of the state. *Techne* in the state is analogous to justice, virtue and utilitarianism. Plato divided craftsmen into three classes or groups based on their specialities in the State, they are:

- a) The class of Producers {artisans};
- b) The class of Auxiliaries /Guardians {Soldiers}
- c) The class of Guardians – Ruling class /The Philosopher King – The Philosopher King who excels as the political expert, manages the knowledge and skills of other experts.

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<sup>17</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). Bk. II. 372b

<sup>18</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 369

<sup>19</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 406c-d

<sup>20</sup>PLATO, *Laches*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). 185c

<sup>21</sup>PLATO, *Alcibiades*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). 107c

<sup>22</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 371b-c

<sup>23</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 371c-d

<sup>24</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 374d

### **The class of Producers**

The major skill of this class is the production of necessities of their families and the state ranging from food, shelter and clothing to the production of tools needed for work. This is made clearer in Socrates words to Adeimantus:

Therefore, our citizens must not only produce enough for themselves at home but also goods of the right quality and quantity to satisfy the requirements of others. You may be right, but we must look into it and not grow weary. They'll produce bread, wine, clothes, and shoes, won't they? They'll build houses, work naked and barefoot in the summer, and wear adequate clothing and shoes in the winter. For food, they'll knead and cook the flour and meal they've made from wheat and barley[25].

There is no motivation needed in joining this class. People go into different crafts depending on their families and ability to learn whatever is in their capacity. This class as recorded in the *Republic* Bk. II involves the farmers, the cobblers, money exchangers, medical practitioners, carpenters, metal workers, importers and exporters, businessmen, builders and tool makers. The first thing to notice about the characterization of this class is that no desires are attributed to its occupants except appetitive desires. These people work, feast, and have sex, but they neither fight nor philosophize[26]. The occupants of this class are appetitive and money-loving, no honour lover or philosopher lives in this class. This class of citizen live in the luxurious city. Its luxurious nature emerges when unnecessary appetites are included in the motivational apparatus of the members of this class"[27]. The emergence of the unnecessary appetite will lead to the cleansing of the city[28].

### **The class of Auxiliaries {Soldiers}**

The desire for the protection of products in the city and the quest for the enlargement of the city to fill it with a multitude of things that go beyond what is necessary for a city gave rise to the institution of soldiers[29]. Since enlargement of the city is being thought of, the next thing will be to seize the land of the neighbour and the neighbour will in turn want to claim what belongs to him; the result will be war and the army is needed[30].

The appetitive class wanted to enlarge the city to unnecessarily accommodate the hunters, for example, and artists or imitators, many of whom work with shapes and colours, many with music, poets and their assistants, actors, choral dancers, contractors, and makers of all kinds of devices, including, among other things, those needed for the adornment of women, more servants, tutors, wet nurses, nannies, beauticians, barbers, chefs, cooks, and swineherds[31].

The function of the auxiliaries is the protection of the city from enemies. This is the spirited class. To be an auxiliary material a person must be naturally quick to see things, naturally fast and strong, and naturally brave and high-spirited. He must, in other words, have all the natural aptitudes of a good soldier. These aptitudes will enable him to be appropriately harsh to enemies and gentle to his friends. Otherwise, the soldiers "will not wait for others to destroy the polis but will destroy it themselves first"[32]. Other characteristics of the auxiliaries are:

First, none of them should possess any private property beyond what is wholly necessary[33]. Second, none of them should have a house or storeroom that isn't open for all to enter at will[34]. Third, whatever sustenance moderate and courageous warrior-athletes require in order to have neither shortfall nor surplus in a given year they'll receive by taxation on the other citizens as a salary for their guardianship[35]. The good soldier must be steadfast and unchanging of character. They must be brave. They must be loyal to their fellows without being over attached to them and given neither to extremes of lamentation nor of mirth. They must be truth-loving, moderate, and neither avaricious nor corrupt. They must "attain to the greatest degree of gentleness towards each other, and those whom they are protecting"[36]. Fourth, they'll have common messes and live together like soldiers in a camp[37]. They will not form traditional family units, the women [the female soldiers] shall all be common to all the men [the male soldiers], and none

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<sup>25</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 371a – 372b

<sup>26</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II.372a

<sup>27</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II.372e

<sup>28</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II.399e

<sup>29</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II.373b

<sup>30</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II.373d-e

<sup>31</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II.373b-c

<sup>32</sup>C.D.C. REEVES, *Philosopher King: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006). 196

<sup>33</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 416d

<sup>34</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 416d

<sup>35</sup>C.D.C. REEVES, *Philosopher King: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, 201

<sup>36</sup>C.D.C. REEVES, *Philosopher King: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, 197

<sup>37</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 416e

shall live privately with a man, and the children too shall be common, and no parent shall know its own offspring nor any child its parent[38]. They do not choose their own sexual partners; their sexual and reproductive lives are governed by the eugenics policy of the rulers. We'll tell them that they always have gold and silver of a divine sort in their souls as a gift from the gods and so have no further need of human gold[39]. Indeed, we'll tell them that it's impious for them to defile this divine possession by any admixture of such gold, because many impious deeds have been done that involve the currency used by ordinary people, while their own is pure. Hence, for them alone among the city's population, it is unlawful to touch or handle gold or silver. They mustn't be under the same roof as it, wear it as jewellery, or drink from gold or silver goblets. In this way they'd save both themselves and the city[40]. But if they acquire private land, houses, and currency themselves, they'll be household managers and farmers instead of guardians' hostile masters of the other citizens instead of their allies. They'll spend their whole lives hating and being hated, plotting and being plotted against, more afraid of internal than of external enemies, and they'll hasten both themselves and the whole city to almost immediate ruin. For all these reasons, let's say that the guardians must be provided with housing and the rest in this way, and establish this as a law[41].

Another important factor concerning the natural soldiers is the education and training they receive. The soldiers are meant to pass through rigorous and lengthy training on gymnastics and music[42]. This physical training starts when they approach adulthood between the age of ten and above while other kinds of learning start from infancy. They needed to be guided on poetry. The stories they are to be told are to be courageous one and not the ones that brings hates and fearfulness. Not stories that will present the gods as weak. They also learn other crafts imitating their masters[43]. They are to be taught about calculation, geometry and all the preliminary education required for guardianship in mild way and not in the shape of compulsory learning either because no free person should learn anything like a slave. Children are not to be forced in these subjects; use play instead. That way you'll also see better what each of them is naturally fitted for. Those who succeed from the training and are old enough, passes to the class of guardians[44].

#### **The class of Guardians – Ruling class**

This class is identified with wisdom or reasoning. It is called the ruling class. It is made of the best guardians. The complete guardian- those who have done well with the study of calculation and geometry. The statement below is a reference to the establishment of complete guardians and their qualities;

Then, is there some knowledge possessed by some of the citizens in the city we just founded that doesn't judge about any particular matter but about the city as a whole and the maintenance of good relations, both internally and with other cities? There is indeed. What is this knowledge, and who has it? It is guardianship, and it is possessed by those rulers we just now called complete guardians. Then, what does this knowledge entitle you to say about the city? That it has good judgment and is really wise. They have political courage[45].

The best of the class of guardians becomes the Philosopher King. The Philosopher is the lover of wisdom, he has the ability to apprehend forms and the capacity to pilot the affairs of the state.

All these specializations require a sort of training or education for no tool makes the user a specialist unless he has a requisite knowledge[46]. Plato defines *techne* as crafts or skill which does not provide for its own advantage, rather, the advantage of the subjects or beneficiaries. This definition is made clear in Plato's Socrates' debate with Thrasymachus on the features of *techne* while trying to understand if justice is part of it. It thus reads:

Then, it is clear now, Thrasymachus, that no craft or rule provides for its own advantage, but, as we've been saying for some time, it provides and orders for its subject and aims at its advantage, that of the weaker, not of the stronger. That's why I said just now, Thrasymachus, that no one willingly chooses to rule and to take other people's troubles in hand and straighten them out, but each asks for wages; for anyone who intends to practice his craft well never does or orders what is best for himself—at least not when he orders as his craft prescribes—but what is best for his subject[47].

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<sup>38</sup>Cf. C.D.C. REEVES, *Philosopher King: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, 201

<sup>39</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 416e

<sup>40</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 417a

<sup>41</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 417b-e

<sup>42</sup>C.D.C. REEVES, *Philosopher King: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, 197

<sup>43</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. III. 412c

<sup>44</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. VII. 536d – 537a

<sup>45</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. IV. 429a-430c

<sup>46</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 374d

<sup>47</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. I. 347

The Philosopher King for Plato is a man of art or science, he has a *techne*[48]. He is the highest of all the craftsmen. What distinguishes him from other craftsmen is that he knows forms, he combines *techne* {crafts, skill, expertise} and *episteme* {science}.

In the above debate we see Socrates making analogy of the crafts using the concept of justice. For him, the virtue of Justice is exactly analogous to crafts such as medicine or shepherding, so that if crafts have a particular feature, the virtues must have it as well; a genuine virtue must be always good. Justice is both a virtue and a craft. The major aims of specializations are good in themselves, although they are liable to flaws but virtue do not derail only when the knowledge of the craft leaves the craftsman; no craftsman makes mistakes. It is when the knowledge of his craft leaves him that he makes mistakes, and at that time he is not a craftsman. No craftsman, wise man, or ruler is mistaken at the time when he is a ruler in the precise sense. However, everyone will say that the physician or the ruler is in error. Take it then that strictly speaking, the ruler, insofar as he is a ruler, does not make mistakes, and does not make mistakes about what it is best to decree, and this his subjects must do[49].

The principle of specialization was used by Plato to separate individual according to their expertise. This placement of specializations according to Plato aids true civilization in the state. He argues that the whole structure of a state is defined by the principle of specialization with each citizen playing a specific role which he/she is best suited for or born with. Each citizen stays in one specialization; no one does better when he has more than one craft. That's because the thing to be done won't wait on the leisure of the doer, but the doer must of necessity pay close attention to his work rather than treating it as a secondary occupation[50]. This is what C.D.C Reeves identifies as the *Doctrine of Unique Aptitude* and *Prescriptive Principle of Specialization*. The former holds that each person is born with a natural aptitude for a unique craft or type of work, whether it is carpentry, pottery, medicine, guardianship, or ruling; the latter asserts that each member of the state must practice exclusively throughout life the unique craft for which he has a natural aptitude[51]. This principle of specialization is the definition of justice. It is when all the citizens of the state follow and maintains their crafts that the manager and head of crafts the Philosopher have a perfect rule. It does not imply that the Philosopher king should rule a perfect state. His work involves directing all other craftsmen.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIALIZATIONS IN PLATO'S POLITICS

The importance of specialization to the practice of politics in Plato cannot be overemphasized. Plato holds specialization to esteem in his discussion on governance. It may not be wrong to hold that he uses it to checkmate the citizen of the state with regards to power, bureaucracy and also a way of removing the idea of numbers with reference to democracy.

### Specialization entails Expertise and Reduces the Possibility of Failure

It is no longer a news to say that a person who is a certified specialist is an expert and do not easily fail. When we say that a hospital is a specialist hospital, it means that those who are there are certified experts beyond doubts. This is the work of specialization and that is why Plato requires the specialist to be at work in Politics. For him, a man who has skill would suffer no harm at the hands of a single opponent, nor even perhaps at the hands of a larger number, but he would have the advantage in every way[52]. Not a man who claims to be a specialist, such a man fails and becomes a laughingstock[53].

Determining a specialist is by what he or she does and not by what the majority say. Majority can be bought when Politics is involved. So, in this present case it is also necessary to investigate first of all whether any one is an expert or not. And if one is, then we should listen to him even if he is only one, and disregard the others[54]. But if no one of us is an expert, then we must look for someone who is. We investigate the experts and fix them to do the better job. If a person is an expert in matters of Politics, why not engage him or her? When a man considers whether or not he should use a certain medicine to anoint his eyes, he consults a doctor and not a woodworker, then too, whenever a man considers whether or not and when he should put a bridle on a horse, I suppose he is at that moment taking counsel about the horse and not about the bridle[55]. This is a recommendation from Plato for an expertise to do every work. It does not mean that non-experts should not act, they can but as apprentices and students who are on the process of becoming experts. Many among men are the crafts experientially devised by experience, it is experience that causes our times to march

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<sup>48</sup>R.K. SPRAGUE, *Plato's Philosopher-King: A Study of the Theoretical Background*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1976). XIV

<sup>49</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. I. 340c6-341a4

<sup>50</sup>PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 370b

<sup>51</sup>C.D.C. REEVES, *Philosopher King: The Argument of Plato's Republic*, 172

<sup>52</sup>PLATO, *Laches*, 182b

<sup>53</sup>PLATO, *Laches*, 184.b-c

<sup>54</sup>PLATO, *Laches*, 184.a

<sup>55</sup>PLATO, *Laches*, 184c

along the way of craft, whereas inexperience causes them to march along the way of chance[56]. An inexperienced person is bound to fail.

An expert sees dangers and obstacles on time and then prepares for them on time; a non-expert follows things the way they appear at the moment. We have seen one of the importance of specialization as expertise and lower exposition and expectation to failure.

### **Efficiency, Separation of Powers and Limitation for Operation**

Specialists are more efficient. The more you specialize, the more educated you are about the craft you have. The result is less of a need for research when a client comes to you with a problem. You can identify and address the situation faster. You get things done in less time and at a higher quality level as a specialist. The woodworker knows the measurement and the amount of wood needed to produce a ship or a door and when given the required, he produces at an expected time. He does not start learning at that time. This is efficiency. It is expertise.

Before we go to how separation of Power and Limitation for operation applies to Plato's politics; I would like to digress a bit to the work of Montesquieu for clearer understanding of the concept of separation of Power. The term 'Separation of Power' was coined by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Philosopher Montesquieu. Separation of power is a model that divides the government into separate branches, each of which has separate and independent powers. By having multiple branches of government, this system helps to ensure that no one branch is more powerful than the others[57]. In Montesquieu's view, concentration of power in one person or a group of persons result in tyranny. He therefore asserts that the best form of government is one in which the legislative, executive, and judicial powers were separate and kept each other in check to prevent any branch from becoming too powerful. Therefore, governmental power should be divided and vested in three different organs, that is Executive, Judiciary and Legislature. Montesquieu goes on to say that constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it, and to carry his authority as far as it will go[58]. If the legislative and executive powers are combined in the same organ, the liberty of the people gets jeopardized because it leads to tyrannical exercise of these two powers. If the judicial and legislative powers are combined in the same organ, the interpretation of laws becomes meaningless because in this case the lawmaker also acts as the law interpreter and he never accepts the errors of his laws[59]. If the judicial power is combined with the executive power and is given to one-person or one organ, the administration of justice becomes meaningless and faulty because then the police (Executive) become the judge (judiciary). If all the three legislative, executive and judicial powers are combined and given to one person or one organ, the concentration of power becomes so big that it virtually ends all liberty. It establishes despotism of that person or organ. Power ought to serve as a check to power[60].

Plato's concept of specialization in the polity of the state is not quite different from Montesquieu's view. Plato introduces the separation of powers and limitations for operation to all political actors and citizens in the state. The concept of Separation of power in Plato's politics is seen in his theory of one man one craft and no encroachment in crafts. Socrates and Adeimantus on the description of the existent crafts in the state made the above statement clear and it reads;

Then, Adeimantus, we're going to need more than four citizens to provide the things we've mentioned, for a farmer won't make his own plough, not if it's to be a good one, nor his hoe, nor any of his other farming tools. Neither will a builder—and he, too, needs lots of things. And the same is true of a weaver and a cobbler[61].

Supporting the argument on separation of crafts or what I see as separation of power, Socrates continues;

Now, if cobblers become inferior and corrupt and claim to be what they are not, that won't do much harm to the city. Hence, as far as they and the others like them are concerned, our argument carries less weight. But if the guardians of our laws and city are merely believed to be guardians but are not, you surely see that they'll destroy the city utterly, just as they alone have the opportunity to govern it well and make it happy. If we are making true guardians, then, who are least likely to do evil to the city, and if the one who brought the charge is talking about farmers and banqueters who are happy as they would be at a festival rather than in a city, then he isn't talking about a city at all, but about something else[62].

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<sup>56</sup>PLATO, *Gorgias*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).448c

<sup>57</sup>C.B. MONTESQUIEU, *The Spirit of Laws*, Transl. F. NEUMANN, (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1949). 134

<sup>58</sup>C.B. MONTESQUIEU, *The Spirit of Laws*, 138

<sup>59</sup>Cf. C.B. MONTESQUIEU, *The Spirit of Laws*, 150

<sup>60</sup>Cf. C.B. MONTESQUIEU, *The Spirit of Laws*, 152

<sup>61</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. II. 370d

<sup>62</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. IV. 430d

Separation of powers gives limitation to what every craftsman can do. Once there is meddling, the state will not have peace and stability. It brings chaos. If a carpenter attempts to do the work of a cobbler, or a cobbler that of a carpenter, or they exchange their tools or honours with one another, or if the same person tries to do both jobs, and all other such exchanges are made, if someone, who is by nature a craftsman or some other kind of money-maker, is puffed up by wealth, or by having a majority of votes, or by his own strength, or by some other such thing, and attempts to enter the class of soldiers, or one of the unworthy soldiers tries to enter that of the judges and guardians, and these exchange their tools and honours, or when the same person tries to do all these things at once, then I think you'll agree that these exchanges and this sort of meddling bring the city to ruin. Meddling and exchange between these three classes, then, is the greatest harm that can happen to the city and would rightly be called the worst thing someone could do to it[63].

## **THE RISK OF IMPROPER PLACEMENT OF SPECIALIZATION**

### **Rise to Inexperienced Political Leadership and Failure in State Affairs**

The constant rise to inexperienced political leadership and failure in state affairs in the world today cannot excuse improper placement of specialization as the primary cause. It is no longer an essay that demands references to assert that different countries today are flooded with experts that are not placed according to their skills; some are placed according to their unnecessary appetites while others accept their placements because they do not have option. Since we are talking about politics, let us use a case of ambassadorial appointments for example. Imagine appointing a farmer who knows nothing about international relations and diplomacy as an ambassador. What would such a person do? Either he grows as a tyrant seeing those with the knowhow as competitors or he makes policies based on persuasion from those who claimed to know but have no teachers. This is why a farmer should be in the farm or work with the ministry of agriculture and contribute to the polity of the state from his expertise. To understand this clearly, let us look at the allegory of the ship as presented by Plato in the sixth book of the *Republic*.

### **The Ship of the State Analogy**

The ship of fools or allegory of the ship or the ship of the state metaphor is an illustration from the Book VI of the *Republic* using picture of the ship with dysfunctional crew to represent the problem of government run by non-experts. A careful reader here may ask, 'why is the researcher talking about non-experts instead of wrong placement of experts? The answer remains that expert placed wrongly is no longer an expert. Assuming a doctor who knows about health is placed to do the work of mechanic, would he remain an expert in mechanics? This doctor does not know anything about mechanics and cannot perform better than a trained mechanic. This is why we are using the analogy of non-experts to understand the problem of improper placement of specialisation in Politics. Let us quickly go into the presentation and analysis of the allegory of the ship to see how it affects the smooth running of government. The allegory/metaphor/ship of fool reads thus:

Imagine, then, that something like the following happens on a ship or on many ships. The ship-owner (*nauklêron*) is bigger and stronger than everyone else on board, but he's hard of hearing, a bit short-sighted, and his knowledge of seafaring is equally deficient. The sailors are quarrelling with one another (*stasiazontas*) about steering the ship (*têskubernêseôs*), each of them thinking that he should be the captain (*kubernan*), even though he's never learned the art of navigation (*têntechnên*), cannot point to anyone who taught it to him, or to a time when he learned it. Indeed, they claim that it isn't teachable and are ready to cut to pieces anyone who says that it is. They're always crowding around the ship-owner, begging him and doing everything possible to get him to turn the rudder (*pêdalion*) over to them. And sometimes, if they don't succeed in persuading him, they execute the ones who do succeed or throw them overboard, and then, having stupefied their noble ship-owner with drugs, wine (*tongennaionnauklêron*), or in some other way, they rule (*arxein*) the ship, using up what's in it and sailing while drinking and feasting, in the way that people like that are prone to do. Moreover, they call the person who is clever at persuading or forcing the ship-owner to let them rule a "navigator," a "captain," (*nautikon*) and "one who knows ships," (*kubernêtikon*) and dismiss anyone else as useless. They don't understand that a true captain (*toualêthinoukubernêtou*) must pay attention to the seasons of the year, the sky, the stars, the winds, and all that pertains to his craft, if he's really to be the ruler (*archikos*) of a ship. And they don't believe there is any craft that would enable him to determine how he should steer (*kubernêsei*) the ship, whether the others want him to or not, or any possibility of mastering this alleged craft or of practicing it at the same time as the craft of navigation. Don't you think that the true captain will be called a real stargazer (*tonhôsâlêthôskubernêtikon*), a babbler (*meteôroskopontekaiadoleschên*), and a good-for-nothing by those who sail in ships (*tônplôtêrôn*) governed in that way, in which such things happen?[64].

On the basis of analysis, let us see how Plato's Socrates interprets his simile. He informs us that the ship symbolizes a city, or polis, the true steersman symbolizes the true philosopher, and that the sailors symbolize "our current political

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<sup>63</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. IV. 434.b-c

<sup>64</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. VI.488a7-489a6

rulers”[65]. The ship-owner symbolizes the body through which politicians seek power. In a Greek city this body was the assembly; and in a Greek democracy it was the *dêmos* (the assembly of all citizens), which was dominated by the *demos* (the workers)[66]. Since the *dêmos* is a font of political power only when sitting as an assembly, the ship-owner symbolizes the *dêmos* in the broad sense of the term. His limited knowledge of seafaring symbolizes its limited knowledge of statesmanship, his deafness and short-sightedness symbolize its ignorance. The *demos* have a problem of choosing because the many are not experts[67].

The sailors on board in Plato’s unruly ship, whom Plato identifies with “our current political rulers”, represent ambitious men, unenlightened by philosophy, who seek political power through their rhetorical skills, the arena for the exercise of these skills being the assembly, the council, and the law courts[68]. Remember that rhetoric as we saw in our first chapter is not a *techne*. Their claim that steersman ship is unteachable mirrors the view underlying Athenian political practices that political art (*politikê-technê*) is unteachable; their idea that the man who is clever in persuading or forcing the shipowner to let them rule is skilled in steering is analogous to the idea of Gorgias that the art of persuasion is the master art[69].

The true steersman in the ship is the Philosopher King, he “pays attention to year and seasons and sky and stars and winds and all that belongs to his art” He is a sky-gazer, not just a star-gazer, since, as befits a steersman as distinct from an astronomer, he gazes at things in the sky (*tameteôra*), not just stars, he apprehends forms[70].

The analysis we have now shows us the importance of specialization in politics and the risk it poses to leadership with regards to improper placement of specialization. We see in the allegory where Plato indirectly faults democracy of neglecting expertise and also how non-experts with the knowledge of persuasion sinks the ship of the state calling the real captain who is the philosopher a gazer. Improper placement of experts is not harmonious to good government.

## CONCLUSION

We have been able to see throughout this study the meaning and application of specialization in politics, the risks of improper placement of experts and the disadvantages of not having experts in politics as shown in the ship of fools’ analogy. Specialization is then an important factor for good and quality governance and leadership in all aspects of life.

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<sup>65</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. VI.489a4–6, 489c4–7

<sup>66</sup>G. SANTAS, *The Blackwell Guides to Plato’s Republic*, (Victoria: Blackwell Publishing Company, 2006). 202

<sup>67</sup>G. SANTAS, *The Blackwell Guides to Plato’s Republic*, 202

<sup>68</sup>G. SANTAS, *The Blackwell Guides to Plato’s Republic*, 203

<sup>69</sup>G. SANTAS, *The Blackwell Guides to Plato’s Republic*, 203

<sup>70</sup>Cf. PLATO, *The Republic*, Bk. VI.488d5–7