

Ringin...

Why do we actually bother?

In Plato's *The Republic* he attempts to discover what it is that makes human beings ultimately happy and from this he puts forward a suggestion as to what would make the best society for us to live in.

He begins by trying to demonstrate that there is a point when an object is either one thing or the other. For example, you see a car and you therefore call it a car. If it had all of its wheels missing though, you still call it a car. If it has no bonnet, windows and roof you would still probably call it a car despite the fact that it now looks very different from it was originally. Plato explains this by saying that the object you see before you still has the "essence" of a car and so therefore that is what the mind interprets it to be.

He says that for every object and concept in the world that has been or ever will be there is a metaphysical version of it, which is essentially perfect, which he calls "the forms." Our minds are capable of then drawing connections between a physical experience of an object and a particular form and so this is what we determine the object to be. Everything in the physical world is therefore a mere attempt at getting closer to a metaphysical perfection.

Plato believed that humans are not satisfied with the imperfect physical world in which they live and are constantly striving in everything that we do to achieve perfection though this can only exist in a metaphysical world. He founds this argument on the basis that we long for the truth over our existence and that we believe the truth to lie in an ultimate reality, which we may get glimpses into in our attempts to strive for perfection.

A similar analogy can be found in ringing. We can draw out the blue line for a method and show it to someone and they'll say "That's Cambridge." But its not is it? What we drew is just a physical representation of something, which doesn't actually exist. You may argue against this, but think about it, show me what IS Cambridge Surprise Major? Even ringing the method itself is just a shadow of what it really is!

Ringing is a fantastic example of Plato's theory in practice. We as ringers have an awareness of something in the rational world and we attempt to achieve that rational concept through empirical means by ringing.

Is this such a ridiculous idea? We all turn up week in week out but all for what? Some would argue it is entirely for the social side but then why do we bother going ringing and why do we all not go straight to the pub? Is it because subconsciously we know there is something greater that we are trying to achieve and by constantly practicing we are ourselves hacking away at the truth and gradually getting closer to it?

And one final thought and one which I think backs up this argument really well. You can be ringing a peal which is churning out musical bits all over the place and for hours no-one may show an awful lot of interest in it despite the fact that the ringing is near enough immaculate. But then just occasionally there is a roll-up or something similar that immediately makes the entire band smile though it may not have appeared any better than any of the others. But why did they smile at that one?

Perhaps it was because just for that split-second they all saw into something which is far better than anything on this earth. Maybe for that fleeting moment they got close enough to perfection to see beyond what is happening before us and into something far greater than we can ever possibly attempt to explain... the perfect, metaphysical world...

I know that there will be people that will read this who will say it is an insane idea and will be completely unwilling to consider the possibility that it holds any truth. To those people, I question *your* sanity since your ultimate end to ringing is purely pulling bits of rope up and down for hours on end and somehow you find this entertaining? There has to be a *reason* for why we bother to go ringing and if it is indeed just for the physical experience of whirling bits of metal around above our heads then I am very concerned for us all...

Ben Carey

