

The use of plato's noble lie as a way to unite society

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



Though his usual studio is in LA, recently, Jimmy Kimmel took it upon himself to visit Brooklyn this week to film his popular nightly show. Personally, I had forgotten that I signed up for a waitlisted spot over a month prior to the show's taping, until I received an email that my waitlisted seats had opened up to being actual, available ones. Upon entering the studio, it became more and more apparent that no longer was I an individual to Kimmel's crew, I was a small component of the audience, a tool used mostly for a laugh track and some kind of approval or reassurance for the various guests, who that night happened to be the actor Bill Murray and a musician, Ryan Adams.

The Noble Lie, as presented in Book 3 of Plato's Republic, is Socrates' description of how an ideal society's social stratification would be divided, and in turn, ideally received by the people. The "Lie" would be the guise that the general public would be taught to believe, over the course of a few generations, that regardless of the thought of being born of equal classification and composition, that the Gods or some force had divided the populace into three social classes in order to best serve their city. The hope was that, through propagandizing this idea, further generations would benefit from the peace of those satisfied with their class, and would prevent muddying the detailed hierarchy Socrates had constructed for a Utopian society.

The actions of Kimmel and his staff prolonged the ranks and presumed roles of those involved in the screening process, including the performative qualities of the talent onstage and the audience members offstage, the crew members working to police and direct the audience, and the interesting role

of the audience's unnamed " warm-up" guy, who all aided in dividing our equal bodies into a hierarchy which we were expected not only to uphold, but adore.

Similar to the Noble Lie, assuming my role as a lowly audience member was to be an agreement between myself and the talent, that I was here to enjoy and to encourage, regardless of the content onstage. The talent, in turn, was to entertain me. Though Bill Murray and I shared similar structures and were created equal, his higher rank, which allowed him privileges such as agency of speech, movement, and other forms of expression, was to be enjoyed and accepted as what was just " better" for the group. The same was seen with performer Ryan Adams, who was expected to be applauded and adored by the eager seats before him. " Applause" signs were hung liberally around the auditorium, those onstage would often lift their hands in order to encourage our noise, and the huge televisions pointed at our faces would replay old Jimmy Kimmel tapes and viral videos in order to prolong the idea that what we were doing, making positive noise and appearing as if we were having the times of our lives, was definitely what our roles were to be.

Interestingly, the roles of the Kimmel crew were not so positive as those portrayed by the talking heads onstage. There were various members of the auditorium's staff who intensely policed the stands for any behavior that would be warranted unwelcome in Jimmy's presence. The behavior included but was not limited to taking photos, standing for too long, not standing for long enough, not looking happy enough in front of the camera, or bothering Jimmy's parents, who happened to be in the audience. Loosely similar to the

rigid expectations of The Republic's society, those who engaged in what was to be unsatisfactory behavior were lesser, as they could not properly balance those actions that would warrant pleasure versus those that would give one virtue. The separation, similar to the class distinctions of the Greeks, would be the separation of knowledge and ability, those in the audience who did not have proper knowledge of how to behave would not be rewarded with the agency or power that the crew possessed. In addition to the crew in the wings of the stage dictating the audience's behavior, those who controlled lights, sound, and set also had agency in determining the actions of the audience, by directing their attention to certain focal points on their crafted set. Their agency, such as dictating where plants were on stage, or pointing a spotlight at a person on stage, directed attention specifically to guide the audience into believing what they were doing was right. Their cumulative actions aided in order to prolong the effect of the separation between audience and the higher " Other". The reassurance of positivity mirrors, once more, the Noble Lie's effect, that there is a benefit to observing what the crew wanted the audience to observe while engaging in the " correct" behaviors to do so.

The final agent in Jimmy Kimmel's show's supply of hierarchal devices was an unnamed man who walked onstage while people were still filing into their seats. As the audience sat down and began to murmur as crowds do, the bald, round, white man in a suit grabbed a microphone and emoted in a part laughing/part yelling voice about topics such as the latest memes, some poor one-liners, and other introductory subjects I can't remember. He

announced his role to “ warm-up” the audience, in order to properly shape them in their role and create a resounding sense of reassurance that their good behavior was reasonable and admirable, at the least. Acting similar to Socrates as he dictated the actions of the masses, the warm-up man demanded approval, never showing his own insecurity, but instead making fun of the various things audience members would say made them “ deserve” a Jimmy Kimmel tshirt. As his tshirt gun reflected the layers inherent in the Noble Lie, the stratifications of higher and lower were clearly defined. Though I am sure that I am not the only audience member who realized the absurdity of the demeaning activities this warm-up man expected members to do, eventually the pressure to either engage or be excluded was just as noticeable as the absurdity, pressing the audience’s more reluctant members to clap, then stand, then cheer on command. The Lie continues as the man actually explicitly asks the audience to laugh at Kimmel’s jokes, even if they might go “ over our heads”, because hey, not even a higher-up understands every joke Jimmy Kimmel’s ever said. The fear of not participating in this Lie, though the fear is not mentioned by Socrates, comes as a product of continuing this hierarchy.

Overall, the use of the Noble Lie, and its classical conditioning is not a theme foreign to many systems of power in use in the West. Ideas of the correct placement of the “ Other” as belonging in their place as the “ Self” belongs in its place because of some Lie contrary to the idea that human beings are created equally and therefore should have equal ability are rampant. Jimmy

Kimmel's show is no different, as an ideal system, comparable to the idealism of The Republic, the cogs must be in the order of their machine.