Plato's Beautiful City and the Essence of Politics

Scott John Hammond

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To the memory of my parents, Neil Russell and Gilberdean Rose Hammond.

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Introduction

Three principal questions drive this study, two of which share a close relationship. First and foremost this inquiry attempts to probe the essence of politics in-itself, the being of politics, or that which is objectively real about political activity. In a word, the root premise of this inquiry holds that there is an essential reality which is at least partially knowable, and that the realm of politics is, naturally, a part of it. The concepts, principles, and arguments discussed and developed in the following pages are grounded in the notion that this objective reality is universal, eternal, transcendent, and yet instantiated in observable phenomena reflecting or manifesting the Forms—the essence of being, what unqualifiedly makes something what it is,[1] "eternally invariant,"[2] "ungenerated and imperishable,"[3] "the unchanging principles of all that exists," "the goodness of all reality"[4]—as Plato understood them.[5]

If Plato is correct and we can speak of reality in-itself, independent of our judgments and preferences, then it is also possible to follow Plato's lead and seek first principles that, once recognized, can inform and govern human conduct, both the conduct of persons and the shaping of communities—our political life.[6] In *Republic*, Socrates speaks of justice itself, and if we are to accept that justice is independent of our various assertions about it, then we can also speak of the political on the same terms. In the same way that justice in-itself (the Form of Justice) provides unity to the actions of moral persons as well as to political communities pursuing just arrangements, so it may be said that politics in-itself (the Form of the Polis) gives unity to those very political communities that we observe, and deem to be more or less just by degrees. This is certainly not new insight, but it is one that does not easily fit into the expectations of our times. "Assume," writes Professor Thakkar, "that what is taken to be 'premodern' about Plato's metaphysics is his view that

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entities have objective essences, and that what is taken to be 'extravagant' is his view that these essences exist independently of the objects that instantiate them. Clearly, one does not have to reject either of these two views."[7] In this "premodern" recognition of an objective reality, we find the nature and truth of a thing or activity, politics included; and it is through what might today be considered an extravagant claim regarding a reality independent of our direct experiences that we can come to understand this essential core of reality. "Essentialist metaphysics," Thakkar continues, "generally inspired by Aristotle," as well as Plato before him, "is thriving in modern philosophy, even if it remains a minority position within academia as a whole."[8] To more fully understand how our own politics succeeds in meeting our purposes, Plato's essentialism proves invaluable—the truest source from which political truth springs.

This has been singularly discerned by Plato in *Republic*, grounded in his theory of universal Forms and gradually but fully developed through an examination of the ideal city, first introduced by Socrates when speaking of a community of the good[9] (*Republic* 347d). As Socrates later summarizes the nature of the Form of Justice in suggesting that justice involves undertaking only those activities for which one is naturally suited, he provisionally connects the nature of politics, as a Form, to this good city[10] (433a-b). This city, recognized through theory—Plato's Beautiful City (*Kallipolis*)—is genuinely intended to convey his understanding of the essence of politics, not simply the arena of political behavior and governance as we have come to know it (although by no means excluding this altogether), but the essence of what politics universally means and what a political community should objectively seek.[11] This ideal city that Socrates and his companions imagine is referred to throughout this text, as indicated earlier, as the Form of the Polis, or that which is essential to politics. Furthermore, following Plato's description of this city in theory as a heavenly pattern, or universal standard, I hold that a close study of the properties described of this paradigmatic city is far more than an academic exercise or a meditation upon abstract examples.[12] Simply put, Plato's Form of the Polis, which he uncovers through the conversation between Socrates and his friends, remains even today an effective pattern and guide that can and should assist our deeper understanding of not only the promise of the political, but even the intrinsic reality of politics, appearances notwithstanding. In a word, politics today and politics in Plato's time are substantively the same thing, even though historical developments, cultural dissimilarity, varieties of innovation, new achievements and recurring disappointments, and the many changes wrought through time may obscure this essential permanency. However significantly the political realm varies throughout history and because of convention, the essence of politics is eternal.

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Second, we will inquire into the way in which the Form of the Polis as discussed in *Republic* is presented and reinforced in other Platonic texts, specifically and primarily the *Laws*, secondarily in *Statesman*.[13] It is here that we are introduced to the Athenian Stranger's "second best city," which is also imagined as a theoretical city in its own right. While the second-best city is prima facie inferior to the ideal city, it is important for us to reconsider it as a genuine attempt to closely approximate the Form of the Polis, and in so doing instantiate its properties. This proposed book project will join others in holding close to the position that views Plato's ideas in both *Republic* and *Laws* as fully compatible and mutually reinforcing; and further, this project hopes to discuss ways in which the Form of the Polis (True City) that Socrates examines re-emerges in the second-best city that the Athenian Stranger imagines. In considering the second-best city (Magnesia) as a variation of the Form of the Polis (Kallipolis), we are in a better position to grasp the lessons offered to us by Socrates in *Republic* through the reforms he applies toward curing the febrile city induced by Glaucon's introduction of unnecessary needs. These reforms stretch credulity, but when considered as delivering inner lessons, they offer a glimpse at the true nature of political activity. In comparing Kallipolis to Magnesia, and both to the political communities that we ourselves inhabit, it is hoped that the essential reality of the political as discerned by Plato becomes more apparent to students of political inquiry.[14]

Third, this project will argue that Plato's familiar critique of democracy also serves an important purpose in understanding the Form of the Polis, even to the point of asserting that, in spite of appearances, Plato's ideal city, ruled by philosophers, does indeed contain noticeable and integral democratic properties. This book is not meant as a contrarian exercise seeking to remold Plato into a great democratic theorists or anachronistic liberal, far from it; but we will nevertheless reevaluate ways in which Plato's ideal city may indeed, for all its unabashedly undemocratic features and aristocratic sensibilities, and its frustratingly collectivist curiosities, contain within it more than a mere trace of the democratic spirit.

In a way Plato's discussion of the City of Speech in *Republic* serves as an example of the deep connection between what Hannah Arendt has described as "great words" and "great deeds."[15] Socrates, in spite of his posture of humility with regard to his capacity for persuasive speech, in fact speaks great words in an effort to understand what is required for great deeds. The Form of the Polis is on one level a city brought into view through words, but a city that can and does live through the deeds of those who are committed to the just and good community, made possible because at the very core of political action, in its essence, we do find justice and goodness. If we find these things lacking in our politics, it is because we have abandoned them within ourselves.

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To this day, Plato remains the truly original political philosopher. There are many great minds inhabiting the history of ideas who have built for us a legacy of foundational and inspiring political ideas and principles, all worthy of transmission to the next generation of eager students; but it is Plato more than anyone who has contributed both the solid underpinnings as well as the elevated apex of serious thinking about political ideas, aspirations, and action, and their concomitant moral principles. This is why Plato's writings have been examined, scrutinized, analyzed, interpreted, dissected, deconstructed, reconstructed, and used and abused in innumerable ways, providing for us an abundance of commentaries about his principles, methods, and meaning, and certainly encouraging questions about why anyone might presume to propose another book returning to what many must consider to be well-covered ground. And yet, it is Plato's inexhaustible profundity and perpetual relevance that generates not only the opportunity for writing yet another book on Plato to add to the many fine volumes that have already found their way into print, but also the need for an ongoing reexamination and reassessment of Plato's work. One part of Plato's legacy is indeed this seemingly ever-broadening scope of secondary literature and commentary, for in reading Plato, we are often alerted to new angles of thinking about politics and morality that add fresh insight into the way of these things, and we are often astonished that new lessons can still be drawn from familiar and ostensibly well-worn texts; well-worn but not worn out, for every time the committed scholar opens Plato, something new stands out, even in those passages that one had previously felt, with false confidence, to be thoroughly understood, utterly raked over, the meaning of which neatly locked and tied-up. It is in this spirit of the enduring originality of Plato that this project is pursued; and we engage in this study in the hope that something both fresh and worthwhile will transpire, and thus further encouraging still another scholar's book about Plato and his ideas.

NOTES

1. Prior, *Unity and Development in Plato's Metaphysics* (New York: Open Court, 1982), p. 18.
2. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 73.
3. Prior, p. 91.
4. Ferrari and Griffith, *Plato: The Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. xxx; and also Dorter, *Form and Good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues: The Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 15–16.
5. Sayers, *Plato's Late Ontology: A Riddle Solved* (Princeton: Parmenides Publishing, 1983/2005), pp. 14–15, and 183–186.

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6. Lane, "Plato's Political Philosophy: The *Republic*, the *Statesman*, and the *Laws*," in Gill and Pellegrin (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), pp. 178–179.

7. Thakkar, *Plato as Critical Theorist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 23.

8. Ibid.

9. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), p. 991.

10. Cooper, pp. 1,074–1,075.

11. Following Thakkar, p. 18.

12. Prior, pp. 18–20.

13. See Laks, "The *Laws*," in Rowe and Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 267.

14. See also Rowe, "The Relationship of the *Laws* to Other Dialogues: A Proposal," in Bobonich (ed.), *Plato's Laws: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 29–50; Catherine Zuckert, "Plato's Laws: Postlude or Prelude to Socratic Political Philosophy?" *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (May 2004), pp. 381–393; Lane (2006), pp. 170–189, Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 217–264; Voegelin, *Plato* (1957; Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2000), pp. 215–268: Stalley, *An Introduction to Plato's Laws* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983); Strauss, *The Argument and Action of Plato's Laws* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975); Benardete, *Plato's "Laws": The Discovery of Being* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

15. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 25 and *passim*.

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Chapter 1

Drawing Further Meaning from Cephalus and Polemarchus

PRELIMINARIES: A QUALIFIED CRITIQUE OF DEMOCRACY?

Readers familiar with Plato's pointed attitude toward democracy may reasonably ask just what could be meant when speaking of a "qualified" criticism of democracy in light of Plato's uncompromising assessment of the character of democratic persons, the efficacy of democratic regimes, and the allure of democratic political culture stridently manifest within his dialogues. A qualified criticism implies some portion of qualified approval, an allowance that some merit may be recognized in democracy. This seems counterintuitive, knowing the relationship between Plato's expectations for politics on one hand, and his disappointments on the other. Does not Plato's treatment of democracy—especially in *Republic*—amount to a thoroughgoing, unqualified criticism and, in the final analysis, unequivocal rejection of democratic constitutions and the leaders, institutions, practices and citizens that they produce? Is not democracy, as studied by Socrates in *Republic*, a step away from tyranny? Plato's reputation as an opponent of democratic regimes has been extensively explored, fully absorbed by his audience, plainly evident among even casual students of political inquiry. The eminent Sir Karl Popper, for example, whose famous charge that Plato's political ideas darkly prefigure totalitarian impulses still files a potent, if incorrect, case against him. Professor Popper's critique of Plato no longer persuades the majority of serious readers, and yet there are still thoughtful critics inclined to locate Plato on the "undemocratic," authoritarian side.[1] There remains a temptation to discard Plato's ideas for allegedly prescribing political autocracy, cultural homogeneity, unremitting exclusivity, and repressive social control.[2]

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Still, by contrast, there are commentators on the other end of the analysis, students of political theory who read Plato as assessing democracy far less harshly than many critics allow. Professor Vlastos, who discerns a plausible separation between the teachings of Socrates and the teachings of Plato, recognizes in at least a portion of Plato's work writings that seemingly convey ideas and methods original to Socrates evincing a favorable attitude toward Athenian democracy, an attitude that partially dissolves as we move into Plato's middle dialogues and, if Vlastos is correct, the emergence of Plato's true sentiments.[3] By contrast, Professor Morrow, in his indispensable study of *Laws*, observes that Plato, while remaining at bottom an "inscrutable" author, nonetheless conveys a more favorable disposition toward democracy—not the corrupted democracy contemporaneous to Plato's time, but rather the mixed and moderated ancient, quasi-democracy established by his ancestor, Solon. Solon's institution of the popular courts embodies the democratic spirit in a way that later institutions would fail to emulate.[4] More recently, Professor Monoson forthrightly argues "for a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between Plato's thought and the practice of democracy," proposing "that the canonical view of Plato as a virulent antidemocrat is not sound. Rather, in his work a searching consideration of the possibilities raised by some democratic ideals and institutions coexists alongside severe criticisms of democratic life and politics."[5] In Monoson's insightful analysis, Plato's context is reconciled with Plato's purpose.

Professors Strauss and Bloom, while assuring their readers that Plato is not a proponent of democracy in any recognizable way, still allow that Plato understands that for all its limitations and flaws, limited democracy can provide tangible benefits, particularly in guarding against the dangers of tyranny, provided that democrats avoid the allure of its demagogic sirens. Or more accurately, democracy is both the shortest, quickest avenue toward tyranny (as in *Republic*) while also simultaneously forming, if properly moderated (as in *Laws*), an effective fortification against it.[6] In looking at these works anew, setting aside for the moment all subsequent conversation about Plato's intent and meaning, we are still struck by his apparent suspicion directed against democracy. Just on the evidence before us, it is clear that in Plato, there is at the very least a persistent and strenuous skepticism regarding democracy's qualities, with more than the occasional hint of open enmity to democratic proclivities and the habits they foster. As with so many features of Plato's philosophy, simple, definitive conclusions fail to encapsulate Plato's precise views and consistent attitudes, falling well below the richer understanding that we seek. In looking through the multi-faceted interpretive lenses that we direct at the substance of Plato's arguments and the shape of Plato's style, and that, in turn, also subtly calibrate our own field of vision when mining Plato's principal meaning, we are accustomed to the expectation of an apparent tension between Plato's reticence to draw readers toward a fixed conclusion on

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the one hand against his propensity to weave a firm and tight central thread of certainty and purpose that, on the other hand, characterizes Platonic dialogues in general. Evidently a coherent refutation of democracy runs consistently throughout Plato's political thought; and yet, given the many complexities and nuances of Plato's overall philosophical approach and the manner in which his teachings unfold, one is prone to eventually unveil other facets that might reveal those aspects of Plato's understanding of democracy that are either overlooked, underappreciated, or misunderstood.

It is still possible to productively examine Plato's conception of democracy for new or renewed insight, peeling away outer appearances so that we can delve into rich, less apparent veins, perhaps unexpected to us when operating under more relaxed preconceptions. We can rely on Plato for his commitment to uncovering the truth about things; but with equal confidence, we know that the power of his insight into the nature of political action and the first principles upon which that action is grounded is often complex, layered, probative, and in many instances, resistant to the kinds of certainties that are too quickly uncovered, too facile and too blithely conveyed. Plato seeks the objective and essential while understanding the subjective and perspectival limitations that color and constrain our various investigations. In examining his views regarding democracy, these same cautions are raised.

Not every reader of *Republic* is bowled over by Socrates's broadsides aimed at the character of democratic persons and the qualities of democratic cities.[7] We are well served to ask ourselves why this is, and to join in those considerations of Plato's criticism of democracy that are not so quickly assured by the evident presence within his writings of aristocratic sensibilities. How then can we more fully equip ourselves in our efforts to gain what we hope is a more thorough and accurate account of Plato's critique of popular rule? Is there anything more about Plato's discussion of democracy and the limitations of political activity in general that can direct us toward a clearer understanding of his definitive views about the essence of politics, about the meaning of political action? Plato's Socrates begins from the assumption of one's ignorance, but does not mean to remain there. To set aside opinion and peer behind appearance, we must follow the leads and clues that Plato provides. For there is truth behind the thoughtful opinion, and reality concealed behind the appearance.

REFLECTIONS ON CEPHALUS

As the action of the *Republic* is set into motion, Plato broaches the nature of democracy and the habits of democratic persons through the attitudes of his characters and the way they interact. Plato implicitly draws our attention to

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democratic sensibilities and their underlying forces. Detained by their friends, Socrates and Glaucon find themselves subject to the compulsion of a numerical majority, quite unwilling to entertain any effort by Socrates at dissuading them from their purpose. Neither side seems open to persuasion until Adeimantus tempts Socrates with the promise of a novel sporting event honoring the goddess, appealing to Socrates's curiosity, further sweetened by the prospect of a pleasant evening of conversation and shared goodwill (*Republic* 327c-e).[8] With Glaucon's assent Socrates complies, and they set off with the others to join a gathering of friends convened off-stage in the home of Polemarchus, an unscheduled although not altogether unwelcome alteration of their plans.[9]

One of the friends joining Polemarchus in detaining Socrates is a fellow named Niceretus, a scion of wealth who in reality would eventually lose his life under the tyranny of the Thirty following the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War. We also know that his father Niceas, in seeking a mentor for Niceretus, had in the past frequently approached Socrates on the matter, only to be repeatedly deflected by the latter's own recommendations of reputedly worthier alternatives.[10] This detail regarding Niceretus may not mean anything in particular, for he plays no other role throughout the remainder of this expansive dialogue; but then again, we know Plato to write with an unusual economy of purpose. We are well-reminded to notice these particulars, for they could supply meaning even when conveyed through the presence of a silent auditor. Niceretus is named as present and accounted for, and unlike those unnamed and unnumbered "others" mentioned by Plato, his participation in detaining Socrates is reported. From what we know of their biographies, both Polemarchus and Niceretus were metic children of new wealth, eventually suffering the same fate—execution under the purge infamously committed by the Thirty—and thus likely to have been sympathetic with or even well-disposed toward the democratic element within Athens. More to the point, Cephalus and his sons, Polemarchus, Lysias, and Euthydemus (all present), were known supporters of Athenian democracy.[11] The third named person in this party of friends, Adeimantus, is familiar to us as Glaucon's (and Plato's) older brother, present here for still more substantive reasons revealed later.[12]

This opening exchange is of particular interest to us. With Niceretus and the son of Ariston at his side, Polemarchus enthusiastically leads the group of friends in the good-natured detention of Socrates, resting his claims to the philosopher's company upon no other grounds than the sheer force of their numerical advantage, the will of the *demos* asserted. Without hesitation, he exerts the strength of the many and refuses to brook any attempt by Socrates to resist. Any confrontation between Socrates and the majority is unfairly tipped to the formers' advantage. The only way to defeat Socrates is to prevent him from speaking. Polemarchus and his cohort press their advantage,

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an advantage attributed to strength in numbers—the rule of their majority—suppressing any alternatives. Nevertheless, sheer numerical influence labors to no avail against the indomitable Socrates, thus Polemarchus's majority quickly abandons force and resorts to enticement, tempting Socrates with the salesmanship of Adeimantus who, advertising the novel attraction of the torch race and subsequent festival, draws Socrates in. As Socrates predictably responds to the promise of friendship in reverse proportion to his usual indifference to the importunities of the crowd, the invitation is accepted and the companions joined. The irresistible force of the majority cannot match the resolve of the philosopher and his young ally; it is only with a more palatable invitation, one that appeals to curiosity and companionship rather than compulsion that the will of the democratic majority prevails over them. And so, to the benefit of those who love wisdom, the democratic impulse moves the philosophic spirit, but only on its own terms, coaxing Socrates to remain among his friends, drawn back down into the cave as it were, with Glaucon, in service to his calling under the irresistible direction of the mixed charms and affinities of the demos.

As the action shifts into the home of Polemarchus, we are introduced to his father, Cephalus, along with his brothers Lysias and Euthydemus, Clitophon, an associate of the oligarchic faction in the city and known for his shifting loyalties, Charmantides of Paeania, an observer and silent auditor who may have been the same age as Cephalus (although other accounts hold him to be younger), and the renowned rhetorician and sophist, Thrasymachus, a friend of both Lysias and Clitophon, who appears well-acquainted with Socrates.[13] We really cannot be fully certain about the meaning behind the presence of silent auditors, such as Lysis and Charmantides, or those who, like Clitophon, participate in the dialogue only briefly, but it is helpful to remain open to the possibility that, as in the case of Niceretus, even the identification by name of a bystander could serve some purpose for Plato.[14] For instance, in the case of Lysias, we know that he was an acclaimed rhetorician. While Plato makes it known to us that he is present, he prefers to keep Lysias in the position of silent bystander, a role that might seem surprising to us, for given the extent of the dialogue and the underlying tension between philosophy and rhetoric that occasionally surfaces in Plato's dialogues, one might expect Lysias to have weighed in at some point with an attempt at a persuasive speech. However, his voice remains silenced throughout.[15]

Perhaps these are too finely grained details to worry over. Or, perhaps, as with an intricate painting, they may in fact serve as small but informative parts that, when included in our consideration, help to add some context and signal nuanced angles important to Plato's meaning. Many of the named participants in Plato's dialogues were in fact real people, people who likely meant something to Plato and other contemporaries in Athens, and what they

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say or not say in the dialogue may assist deeper insight. While we must constrain speculation, we must also remain alert to implicit clues from Plato that, once considered against the background, may prove important to the sense of what he is trying to say. Plato seldom includes or omits anything without good reason, which is why even all participants in the dialogue—even lesser ones—merit some consideration, however brief. Our responsibility is to discern his reasoning as best we can within the limits of our knowledge, to draw inferences based on plausible implications that naturally spring from the context and detail that Plato supplies.[16]

Minding these caveats we can be certain about at least one thing: the early and brief contribution of Cephalus means something unexpectedly important.[17] From the outset Cephalus speaks about a topic of ongoing personal interest to him—pleasure, in particular those capacities for the enjoyment of physical sensation that have long since subsided within him, and the more reliable and comforting pleasures that accompany friendship. Socrates reports his friend's advanced age, a condition welcomed by Cephalus, for age offers relief from once insatiable desire, those mad masters who tug and pull and prod younger men (329c-d).[18] It has been claimed that through these remarks by Cephalus, Plato is subtly planting the seeds of his critique of the democratic person; in this instance, it is not through an allusion to the strength of numerical majorities, but rather in the portrayal of Cephalus, revealed in his frank discussion of the appetites and the tension between gratification and frustration.[19] When Cephalus joins the conversation, he pauses to remark specifically upon the common mean-spiritedness exhibited by families in the shabby treatment of their elderly, at least as reported by his own friends, who, unlike Cephalus, bemoan old age and its unremitting indignities. Cephalus reflects on his peers, their regret over lost youth and its vitality while lamenting the "abuse" now inflicted on them by others, abuse that is unfavorably compared to their erstwhile status in society, an unfortunate and unfair replacement to pleasures they once easily enjoyed, honors they once proudly held, self-respect they once deeply felt.

These dispatches from the aged are shared for a reason. Here we have a character interested in the effects of old age on our desires, and more importantly, our ability to gratify them, on the one hand, and our reputations on the other. In both cases, something dear is lost. Being old, according to these plaintive off-stage friends of Cephalus, means nothing less than having lost the enjoyment of the pleasures and sensations reserved to the young, experiences that are nostalgically remembered and likely embellished. Additionally, the elderly have lost the respect that they collectively perceived as having once been accorded to them, thus they appear to be neither capable of enjoyment nor are they recipients of honor; to the contrary, they enjoy little to nothing, and are further treated with abject dishonor by those for whom

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they should be dear. The loss of enjoyment and the loss of honor foreshadow certain benefits of living that are attached to an identifiable aspect of the soul, and a certain quality of person within a specific regime or type of city. The appetitive part of the soul naturally seeks pleasure and, as it so happens, so do democrats; and the spirited part of the soul loves honor, and as it so happens, so does what Socrates will later call the timocratic city. These issues have lately turned over in Cephalus's mind, explaining his quick, reactive, and detailed response to Socrates; describing the difficulties of that time in life when we spend each day nearer death's threshold, and sharing this report received secondhand from his senescent peers as though it were fresh from recent conversations.[20] (328e) His own account steers free of these complaints. Remarking further, Cephalus candidly admits, as stated earlier, the respite now enjoyed in having shed the insistent desires of youth, admiring a similar testimonial from Sophocles who had once cheerfully celebrated his liberation from the relentless tyranny of unrestrained appetites. Cephalus approvingly endorses the sentiment of the poet, adding the proviso that the manner of one's living, one's habits, are more decisive than the inevitable decline of old age (329d).[21] It is here that Plato reveals the real significance of Cephalus's character, drawing a relevant distinction between what Cephalus reports and what Cephalus himself actually believes. These observations open a helpful angle on Plato's assessment of the democratic person and, by extension, the democratic regime.

When Cephalus appears to focus his attention on pleasure, it could indicate, as some have supposed, his susceptibility to the sway of the appetites, an unflattering propensity that may color the reader's interpretation of the little that he reports regarding how he perceives his own virtues.[22] There may also be something else involved here, which could prompt a more accurate understanding of the meaning of Cephalus's claims. Cephalus hints that those among his companions grumbling over lost youth do so not as a result of their recently diminished capacities, but rather with regret over the lives that they've lived. There is an implication here that these unnamed peers have been shaped, or perhaps misshaped, by imprudent choices and dissipated habits. May it be the case that his friends were at one time too fond of self-indulgence, too disposed to indiscriminately gratify their appetites? Would it then follow that had they instead exerted a degree of self-discipline, their current outlook regarding their enfeebled condition would be different—perhaps less remorseful and anxious given the choices they have made? Indeed, might we imagine that their elderly condition itself would be significantly less feeble if they had adopted the practices of someone like Cephalus? By way of explanation, Cephalus directly draws our attention to the virtue of moderation (or temperance, that is, *sophrosyne*—self-mastery)—a virtue that will become increasingly important as the *Republic* unfolds—*the* virtue

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that most immediately and consistently involves both appetitive urges and the democratic person, a virtue necessary to temper both soul and city. The presence of all the virtues is requisite, in truth it is unavoidable given Plato's views regarding the unity of the virtues. Moderation, in particular, is critical to the health of democrats and democracies.[23]

If only his friends had embraced moderation throughout their lives, Cephalus muses, then their current experience of old age would be less onerous. More to the point, Cephalus reminds us that, absent moderation, both youth and old age would be equally challenging (329d).[24] Beneath these comments is an admonition to train in the virtue of temperance, thus perhaps it is less the case that Cephalus wishes he could regain his vigor so that he could again succumb to the tyranny of those mad masters—an unlikely alternative for Cephalus given his equation of youthful impulses to something akin to madness—than it is the case that Cephalus would not choose indulgence in the indiscriminate pursuit of pleasure, energized with the ardor of the young and impassioned. Admittedly, it could be the case that Plato does want us to deem the character of Cephalus as one who was in his youth prone to indulge his desires, but is now more relaxed only because he has simply lost the ability to enjoy these things due to the depletion of vitality, and therefore is not so much self-controlled as disinterested. Alternatively, and this is what I propose, it may have been the case that Cephalus did in fact exercise moderation and self-control when he was younger, that Socrates is not now being ironic or satirical, that his friend has always been a temperate person, and is therefore now directly benefiting from those good habits acquired through the early formation of his character. When Cephalus first criticizes the many complaints of his peers as a consequence of their lost vitality, he does not number himself among those who lament this circumstance. He refers to Sophocles, not himself, in citing someone who is relieved to be free of the mad passions of youth. Conceding that we are all equally beleaguered by our appetites, he does not join in this common pining for the pleasures of younger men (329c-d). Again, it is a manner of moderate living and not what has been lost to old age which grounds Cephalus. It is not altogether beyond the realm of possibility that Cephalus's relaxation in old age is in fact the long-term consequence of a life shaped by manifest self-discipline, which had been learned when young and practiced into maturation, and not merely the shallow self-congratulatory claims of one who is no longer given to temptation only because he is incapable of being tempted any longer.[25]

If this is so, then it makes sense that Socrates expresses admiration toward Cephalus.[26] It is tempting to ask whether or not this admiration is genuine, especially knowing Socrates's tendency to slip into irony as a means to more subtly convey his real thoughts on a given matter, or about a specific person. Convinced that his compliments are insincere, Professor Gifford draws

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a comparison between Socrates's "laudation of Cephalus" and his feigned "tributes to Euthyphro's wisdom about piety" in the dialogue *Euthyphro* and makes a strong case for this argument.[27] And yet the different contexts behind the two dialogues in the comparison may suffice in denying a resemblance between Cephalus and Euthyphro, for the former recommends clearly reasonable conduct, that is, speaking honestly and meeting one's obligations, and at least appears to appreciate and apply the virtue of moderation; while, the latter's smug self-satisfaction stems not only from troubling conduct, that is, his ill-treatment of his father, but also from bombastic boasting of his own self-ascribed virtue. Additionally, Professor Gifford stresses his conclusion that Cephalus attaches an "inordinate value to the possession of wealth" prior to his passing comparison to Euthyphro, the latter, who we are led to surmise, is guilty of attaching an inordinate value to a sense of piety that is distorted by his own vain self-righteousness.[28] Even so, it remains unclear why we are to ignore Cephalus's own remarks about the importance of virtue for those who do possess wealth. It is obvious to us that Cephalus, a prosperous shield-maker, values wealth; it is less obvious that he values wealth more than self-discipline. Cephalus reasserts his position that wealth is only valuable for the decent and the orderly (331a-b).[29] Wealth in this sense is offered as a qualified good, not for everybody because not everyone possesses those virtues that exceed wealth in value, and thus in-themselves lend true value to the acquisition and use of wealth.

Plato seems to be telling us that Cephalus understands this, and that Socrates admires him for it.[30] If one is not disposed to cheat and lie to others, and if one fails to recognize their obligations to gods and mortals, then one is not properly trained in the virtues necessary for the responsibilities that attend the possession of wealth. Cephalus, Socrates perceives, is already pointing at the importance of a just life, one that can only be achieved by wealthy and poor alike if they are already capable of gaining the requisite virtues[31]. Again, it is the "way we live" that is prior to the things we have, and if we live correctly, in virtue, then regardless of our external circumstances, Cephalus would argue, we will be assured that our lives have moral merit. Cephalus provides a service to Socrates, for he does suggest a prelude to the conversation about the benefits of a just life.[32]

In spite of Gifford's well-argued case, we may plausibly hold that a reading contrasting the headstrong arrogance of Euthyphro against the congenial confidence of Cephalus is correct, suppositions about Cephalus's authenticity aside. It may be that Socrates is being ironic in one dialogue but not the other, or he may be ironic in both, or neither. However, unless Socrates is *always* speaking ironically (which would become tedious to his friends), it appears clear to us that Socrates just might genuinely regard Cephalus's remarks about temperance and old age favorably, perhaps admirably; and if this is the

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case, then Plato must thereby suggest that we may be better served by lending more serious consideration to the patriarch's opinions.[33]

Urging Cephalus to expound a bit further upon the relationship between the unwelcomed constraints of old age and a life formed through self-discipline and the long practice of decent habits, Socrates wonders aloud about old age and the purported consolations of wealth. We know Cephalus to have been comfortably affluent, so any pronouncements about his personal quality have to be informed by his status; his own claims about his character are by default open for inspection, given the clear advantages resulting from his good fortune.[34] In other words, being rich surely softens the troubles of old age. Socrates interrogates his friend by repeating a common perception held by the majority, those who are cynically inclined to adopt the presupposition that it is money and not the practice of any special virtue that accounts for anyone's self-assurance and tranquility of mind in anticipation of the afterlife (329e).[35] As expected by Socrates, the majority of people might respond to these claims by asking questions such as these: So what if Cephalus finds old age agreeable, even appealing? Why, with enough money and friends, who wouldn't? Once again the majority appears on the scene, but this time its influence is not explicitly manifest through the simple force of numbers or the lure of novel entertainment as was the case with Polemarchus and his friends at the opening of Book I—rather in this instance, it is public opinion, a different, less discernible but ultimately more formidable kind of force, which now brings pressure to the issue at hand.[36] (327c-328b)

Cephalus is quick to acknowledge the thrust of such an opinion, knowing full well that his claim will be regarded askance by the majority, and he is ready with a counterpoint borrowed from the revered Athenian hero Themistocles, an interesting choice for Cephalus—and Plato—given that the legendary general and politician was a popular figure among those with less property and, by contrast, perhaps not as beloved among the city's elite.[37] Moreover, Themistocles is a political and military figure through and through, the authority now cited has nothing to do with either poetry or philosophy, but with the strictly active life in leadership. In other words, the authority of Themistocles is emblematic of achievements more visible and familiar to, and generally appreciated by, most citizens, and not the achievements of the life of the mind, which are enjoyed by the leisured. Themistocles, as Cephalus relates the tale, held that one's circumstances—in particular the place of one's birth—are not in-themselves sufficient to guarantee one's standing in the community or to shape one's prospects in life. In answering a nameless critic's assumption derogating his own good fortune of having been born in a great city, such as Athens, and thereby carrying the implication that it is only through that happy circumstance that he gained renown, Themistocles answered with confidence that he would

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have been an equally prominent person regardless of his place of birth. His ill-mannered critic, on the other hand, would have been, by contrast, equally obscure whether he was born in a place like Athens or in some remote countryside. One's affiliations and accidents of birth notwithstanding, a person's character and abilities are in fact the surest foundations for personal achievement and any subsequent enjoyment of public acclaim. The accidents of fortune are in-themselves insufficient to induce ambition or spur a person of character to success, or conversely, to spark inspiration and ability in a person lacking both. Themistocles, by this account, believed that one's character was not merely produced by one's situation; quality will emerge regardless of the advantages or disadvantages wrought by fate.

Cephalus extrapolates from this so that he can apply the same lesson addressing the case arguing the advantages enjoyed due to one's wealth, and in so doing inoculating himself against the charge made against him, even by the good-natured Socrates, that it is easier to appear decent and be assured in one's good habits if one is rich, but much harder for the rest of us, that is, we poorer folk, who lack sufficient means to be good. Just as a man of talent like Themistocles would ascend in life given any circumstance while, conversely, a person of limited abilities and slighter spirits would remain unknown even when enjoying numerous opportunities in a more promising situation, any good person would still struggle with the hardships brought by old age in poverty, and yet a person of bad character would be inconsolable in facing old age even though sustained by the comforts of wealth. Cephalus firmly supports the position that character can be strengthened and virtue practiced under any circumstance, and while one must concede that a good person would struggle in old age without wealth, he would still be, as clearly indicated, a *good* person; and still more to the point, it wouldn't matter to a bad person if he were rich or poor, his lack of character would color either circumstance (330a).[38]

Later in Book Three, Socrates and Glaucon will again consider the relationship between wealth and virtue, this time by reflecting upon the poet Phocylides, who held that once a person secures life's necessities, they are then required to live virtuously (407a-b).[39] The context of this exchange involves a discussion of the weaknesses of the valetudinarian who, distracted by anxiety over health, is compromised in the pursuit of life's duties. Cephalus does not seemed burdened by this character flaw, for unlike his friends, he is unperturbed by the condition of his health; he even enjoys some assurance about the state of both his body and, more importantly, his soul. If we are right to assume that these details are important in Plato's method of explication, then it follows that Cephalus is speaking plainly to us about who he is or at least who he wants to be. In so doing, Plato, at least here in *Republic*, prompts an examination of the influence of wealth on one's character, as well as the

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reverse—the way in which character can be either fortified or corrupted by the pursuit of prosperity and its many comforts.

Is this a better way to understand what Cephalus is saying and who he is? Is Plato's Cephalus really a person of dubious virtue and superficiality easily given to indulging the latest temptation? Or, is it possible to read Plato as depicting Cephalus as genuinely valuing the habits of self-discipline and balanced living? The reading that Cephalus is a self-congratulatory and shallow conformist is not necessarily the only interpretation, or even the best one, but is it a plausible one? After all, Cephalus, when speaking about the depletion of an older man's vigor, is doing so within the context of reporting the complaints of others with whom he is acquainted, and to whom he evidently disapproves. Clearly, Cephalus does not join these complaints about old age, and furthermore, he is now able to relax in life not because he's lost his youthful energy and enthusiasm for life's many pleasures; to the contrary, he can do so because he has always been able to govern his appetites, he has always been a man of "moderation and contentment." Do we have a reason to conclude that he is either not honest about himself, or in kinder terms, unable to gain sufficient perspective about his own character so as to admit his own shortcomings? In a sense, if a reading of Cephalus as a genuinely moderate person is reasonable, we are thereby presented with an example of someone who, however imperfectly, is genuinely attempting to practice a life dedicated to the habituation of virtue through the actual exercise of decent conduct in our everyday activities. In a way, Cephalus, by speaking the truth and doing his best to take his obligations seriously, is supporting these moral dispositions. He may or may not have achieved a life of complete or nearly-complete virtue, but do we know for sure that he has fallen short of it? And if so, how far does he have to go to meet our standards? If habit forms character, then Cephalus's lifelong practice of telling the truth and paying debts represent exercises in training the virtues.

When Socrates first greets Cephalus in the home of Polemarchus, he notices the wreath on his head, indicating to him that the patriarch has properly attended to his current religious obligations, paying his debt, as it were, to the goddess being honored (328c).[40] As their conversation proceeds, Cephalus appears to speak plainly and honestly, and from experience, about his impressions of old age, and sincerely about the importance of right living in accord with the standards that he willingly shares. His proposition about the right way to live is offered with a degree of candor and confidence, he is a man at ease in the knowledge that he has consistently lived by high standards (329d, 331a).[41] Socrates, and Plato's readers, know well that these exercises—that is, telling truth and paying debts—are not the whole of virtue nor even the whole of justice, but we can recognize that these are indeed sensible practices that should in part assist one's efforts in leading a life of justice, qualified goods in pursuit of unqualified good. Cephalus's real error is detected in the

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implication that these things define justice in-itself, but Socrates knows that while these are things that just people do, they do not complete what justice is, nor what it means to undertake just conduct. One can even conceive of a person who tells the truth and who pays his or her debts as still fundamentally unjust owing to other dispositions and actions. Plato does not mean to say that Cephalus has achieved a life of virtue, indeed, compared to Socrates, it would seem that he has far to go toward that end; rather, it is to suggest that in Cephalus, we may be encountering a person more complex than some of Plato's interpreters allow, a person who may be imperfectly virtuous, yes, but also a person who is clearly not vicious and one who indeed values virtue, and is assured of his own merit.

Virtue is, after all, an ongoing striving toward goodness. More to the point, if it is the case that Cephalus does represent in some way the democratic personality as has been argued, then complexity is to be expected; for as Socrates will later tell us, the democratic regime is the most appealing because of these complexities, its fascinating variety, appearing beautiful like an intricately embroidered coat, decorated with diverse characters and personalities (557c).[42] Finally, through Cephalus, Plato initiates an exploration of the meaning of moderation and the dispositions of temperate persons. Cephalus may or may not fall short of the practice of this virtue, but we won't know until we consider Cephalus within the rich context that Plato succinctly and yet somehow thoroughly presents within the compass of a few short lines.

This moderation illustrated by Plato through the personality of Cephalus becomes more perceptible to us as the conversation turns to the subject of the patriarch's ample wealth and the specific manner in which he came into it. Responding to Socrates's somewhat prying question about both the source and the extent of his affluence, Cephalus good-naturedly reports that he both inherited some wealth and then, through his own good efforts, significantly increased it (330b).[43] To explain this further, Cephalus admits that the measure of his success resides within the mean between his father, who failed to sufficiently manage the family's holdings, subsequently deeding a remnant to him, and his grandfather, whose inheritance was the same quantity that he himself now owns and manages. He discloses having earned back the wealth lost by his father, with enough to leave to his sons slightly more than his own inheritance. Socrates reveals that this line of inquiry is prompted by an observation of Cephalus's apparent proclivities. Cephalus, Socrates comments, does not display an inordinate love of money, an observation shared by the philosopher regarding the moderation that appears evident in Cephalus's soul (330b-c).[44] For Socrates, Cephalus appears to have a healthier attitude toward money than his peers—not given to loving money to excess, but also attentive enough to its management to restore his family's formerly compromised affluence. Again, Plato, if we are to read him here as not employing irony or

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sarcasm, seems to want us to know that Cephalus is a man of moderation, an ordered soul; and while he may not claim for himself the full array of virtues that are so clearly cultivated in a person such as Plato's Socrates, his overall character is not to be dismissed as necessarily weak, superficial, self-indulgent, or untested.

Socrates directs his companions toward a consideration of still more important questions about what is truly good, specifically asking Cephalus in what manner his wealth has helped him toward this end.[45] (330d). It is here that Cephalus elucidates his own self-examination, a recent assessment of his conduct that has assuaged feelings of anxiety or trepidation as the long chain of his years draws him toward his soul's final destination. He knows the sweet companionship of hope sung by the poet Pindar, comforted and convinced that the life he has led has been moral and just (331a).[46] Candidly conceding that having wealth is an aid to those who make an effort to live rightly, to do right by others, to treat them fairly, Cephalus concludes that in the final analysis he knows that the measure of his actions is not solely dependent on that one circumstance and its attendant advantages. Wealth does support our efforts to live without needing to resort to deceit, reducing the temptation to cheat or trick our fellow citizens. Cephalus views his prosperity as a haven and redoubt, providing him with a sure defense against the kind of desperate straits that would precipitate a fall from virtue in other men, men of immoderate habits and immodest ways (331b).[47] It is an assurance that reveals Cephalus's honesty about himself while at the same time providing Socrates with an opening to much deeper questions about justice and right living, and ultimately, about the nature of the Good.

Before proceeding, it is to be fairly admitted that one could just as easily interpret these comments as a device for the impugning of Cephalus's character, perhaps exposing a hint of inauthenticity, a lack of integrity. If this really is the case, then it may follow that Cephalus would, when his values and habits were to be more closely scrutinized, lack the real inward temperance that if otherwise present would provide sufficient assurance that he is indeed a good man regardless of his happy circumstance, the fruits of his affluence. And that could, quite plausibly be what Plato is getting at—an interpretation that we admittedly cannot rule out. On the other hand, such a pointed reading of Cephalus's qualities may not be the inevitable one, nor even a better one among many, for much depends on the formation of a set of preconceptions about Cephalus that may have actually been forestalled by Plato through the contextual exposition that precedes this discussion regarding the relationship between wealth and tempered living. Cephalus is clearly aware of the obvious fact that it is more difficult for a person to be good while suffering the hardships of poverty—that the temptation to "cheat" or use deception in order to survive are more constant to a person without their

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own means of security; but he does not accept proof of the implicit corollary that poor people will of necessity be bad, or at least that they are incapable of being fully good on equal terms with their more fortunate neighbors, nor will he concede that he wouldn't make an effort to be decent with less than he has. He is only admitting, with some modesty, that he himself has indeed benefited from his wealth in his effort at living rightly (i.e., justly). For him to argue otherwise, to contend that his wealth had little to no influence in his life and on his character, would indeed be disingenuous, and a feature of his personality that Plato could employ to convey Cephalus in a more decidedly negative manner. However, Plato portrays Cephalus as the kind of man who is willing to apply a sense of proportion as he reflects upon his own character.

Even more to the point, it would appear that his good fortune has not stunted the development of his virtue in the way that Plato has deemed, based on statements in both *Republic* and *Laws*, to be typical of men of affluence; to the contrary, the wealth that Cephalus has at his disposal benefits a person with common sense, because it serves those who are already decent, it fortifies their circumstances so as to better guard one's options. He does not claim, and we do not know from Plato's depiction, whether he would have developed the same character without the comfort and resources provided by his wealth. Remember—as Cephalus himself was quick to point out to Socrates—that a bad person could not find any sustained peace even if he were wealthy. By his own account, which surely could have been verified by Plato's contemporaries, Cephalus claims that over the course of his life he has successfully avoided injustice, and he is honest enough to attribute a part of the credit for this to his circumstances; this does not mean that his wealth should receive all the credit for his character nor that he would have by default become an unjust person, or a less upright person, had he been given a less well-appointed life. To conclude that he owes the whole of his decency to his money alone is to assume more about his inner character than Plato at this point discloses. It is at least equally plausible to see in Cephalus a person who regards doing right by people to be a good in-itself while at the same time frankly accepting the reality that it is, all things being equal, easier for a man of means to sustain good habits than a man grappling with hardship. But Cephalus has already informed us that there are no guarantees in this regard, and that a bad character will show through with or without the resources and comforts of affluence. Plato, who is well-known for having been a firm critic of wealth for its corrosive effects on character, at least in this instance provides an example, in Cephalus, of a person not unacquainted with this caution, and one who may serve as an example of the primacy of inner character over external conditions, whether imposed or accidental.

At this point, an important reminder comes recommended. From what we can discern neither Socrates nor Plato seem inclined to allow that wealth is

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categorically an aid or even a secondary good toward the development of one's virtue; quite the contrary, Socrates, for example, in Book VIII proposes an inverse correlation between the possession of wealth and the pursuit of virtue, for he states that if the two—virtue and wealth—are balanced on the same scale, they would pull against each other, diametrically opposed (550e).[48] In another important example, Plato writes unequivocally in the *Laws* that "virtue and great wealth are quite incompatible," or at least those are words uttered by the Athenian Stranger in Book V (*Laws* 742e), and at this point, there's no solid reason to consider this sentiment at odds with Plato's personal attitudes regarding wealth and its inimical effects, an attitude that is shared with Socrates in *Republic*.[49] For the moment, it is conceded that when we do consider the role and character of Cephalus, we must acknowledge this aspect of Plato's attitudes toward wealth with regard to virtue.

Book VIII of *Republic* is relevant to the interaction between Cephalus and Socrates in Book I, for it is in Book VIII that we are presented with Plato's most thoroughgoing criticisms of democracy and the characteristics of the democratic person. Should we form the wrong impression of Cephalus in Book I, we might be tempted to conclude, upon later receiving Socrates's vociferous objections to democracy, that Plato is subtly pointing back to Cephalus. Such a reading only makes sense if we wrongly assume that Plato is, in Book I, exposing Cephalus as shallow or vain. Readers of *Republic* will recall the unflattering portrayal of both democracy and the democratic person, a portrayal that accuses democracy, and democrats, of superficiality, self-indulgence, indiscipline, self-satisfaction, and moral confusion. As we anticipate the close relationship between democratic politics and the unremitting influence of the appetites, it seems to us that Cephalus—a known democrat and associate of Pericles[50]—somehow embodies through his attitudes and character what will later be explicitly indicted by Socrates. That said, we are also well-reminded that democracy is not strictly one-dimensional, it isn't now for us nor was it then for Plato, but rather also contains other properties and tendencies that provide at least some potential for refinement, but a potential that, as Socrates explains, is frustrated by democratic egotism and inconstancy. Are these criticisms of democratic character in general applicable to Cephalus? Is Cephalus really inconstant, undisciplined, willful, self-satisfied, and self-absorbed? Are these traits more or less pronounced in Cephalus in comparison to the other figures present at the home of Polemarchus?

It is true that Cephalus is by no means the hero of Book I, Socrates is; and Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus are the real pilgrims of this quest. Nevertheless, Cephalus is not necessarily a foil, fool, or villain (or any more of a potential villain than anyone else in the dialogue), and indeed, Socrates is cordial to his old acquaintance and disposed to admire—unless we do assume that Socrates is *always* speaking ironically—some of the statements

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he makes with regard to a life of moderation. Plato may offer Cephalus as a figure more complex than an initial reading will reveal. If he does indeed represent the character of the democratic man as it has been maintained by some scholars, he would thereby resemble its complexities accordingly, if only fleetingly given the amount of lines Plato devotes to his part. Democracy indeed includes many troubling and in some instances unsavory properties, particularly those specific tendencies that are later and bluntly described by Plato through Socrates.

The real problem, as readers of *Republic* well-know, stems from the inability of the democratic character to reliably discriminate between necessary and unnecessary needs, and as it follows, to manage the development of qualities in one's character that incline toward the fine rather than the base. We are too easily seduced by vulgarity, and too ready to dismiss the fine as just one alternative, equal among all others. In a word, according to Plato, the democratic man simply fails to recognize the true, the beautiful, and the good as realities to be discovered rather than feelings or impressions to be aroused or shaped, constructed, and asserted; and this, for Socrates, is one of the serious problems reflected both in democratic regimes and within the democratic soul. It is lack of judgment and control that degrade the virtues of Socrates's democrat and the qualities of the democratic city, a degradation that is characterized as either latently or habitually licentious.[51] Is Cephalus the man really so degraded? Does he typically succumb to the vice of licentiousness? Or, if he does succumb to licentiousness, does he do so in a way that is different from any other character type representative of a given imperfect regime? From what we can read of the encounter in Book I, Cephalus does not seem to strike Socrates as one who is prone to the excesses that realistically are to be found among democrats, and he does at least appear to sincerely aver a lifelong commitment to moderation. Are we to take him at his word or not? Why would we not believe Cephalus's sincerity? Is there evidence that Socrates harbors doubts about it? By and large, Socrates is inclined to question anyone who suggests a definition or makes a meaningful claim, and he typically does so by addressing the problem without impugning, at least openly, the character of the person who provides the opportunity for such investigations. Why would Cephalus be any different? When Plato has something to say about a figure's character, he has been known to reveal it in the action of the dialogue (e.g., in his description of Thrasymachus's behavior). If Plato's aim really is to indict the character of Cephalus, and by analogy, the typical democratic man, would he not provide a clearer indication that Cephalus is a representative of only the worst features of the democratic type and none of the redeemable ones? Granted, for Socrates (Plato), democratic citizens say and do one thing today and then say

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and do the opposite tomorrow, so perhaps we must not rely too much on Cephalus's own account of himself, and that much is to be conceded. We do not really know if Cephalus has achieved his goal of moderation, and we can only take him at his word regarding his intent. It would seem that Socrates does so, and he appears to acknowledge Cephalus as a man who both enjoys and manages his wealth, and by extension his life, with a sense of proportion, and is thereby genuinely interested in his perspective on the relationship between wealth and virtue, the ordered habits of a good person, and what it means to live justly and piously.

This life, that is, a life practiced under the ethic of being honest and paying one's debts, is commonly and rightfully identified with Cephalus; but it is actually put into words by Socrates, bringing the relationship between wealth and rectitude into full view. Moreover, while Cephalus does nothing to either embrace, amend, or disown the definition now offered for consideration, he does not appear to be fully invested in the proposal. Rather, it is more of a hypothesis for the inquisitive Socrates to test than a claim proposed by the elder Cephalus as a general principle. In fact, Socrates's quick and efficient rebuttal of the definition relies on a wild exaggeration visualizing an exceptional case with the intent of disproving the rule, a case that magnifies this suggested definition to an indefensible point: justice cannot be simply paying one's debts (or giving what is owed in every case), for one would not return a deadly weapon owed to its owner if that owner suddenly snaps, signaling homicidal intent. Frustratingly to Plato's readers, Cephalus does not meet this rebuttal, but rather offers no resistance, quickly agreeing with the sense of Socrates's concern. In other words, Cephalus never really explicitly defines or denotes anything, but his understanding of justice is an inference drawn by Socrates who gives it definition and then quickly rejects it, without any evident commitment from Cephalus himself. Indeed, before Cephalus can get in a word, he agrees with Socrates's rejection of the definition that has been attributed to him, it is only his son, Polemarchus, who seems to be invested in it, though somewhat reluctantly in response to this latest imposition from his father (331e).[52] The argument that Cephalus then passes to Polemarchus as he abruptly departs was actually both hastily built and quickly demolished by Socrates himself. Granted, Socrates does not weave this definition out of whole cloth, it is indeed spun from the fabric of the conversation that he and Cephalus have together prepared, but even so, what Polemarchus actually "inherits" is an argument with which Cephalus himself demonstrates provisional interest. Whether he is, consistent with his purported democratic character, unable to sustain his attention long enough to grapple over these matters with Socrates, or whether he is just too vacuous and self-absorbed to be bothered by a deeper exploration, remains speculation.

And yet the question remains, why would we suppose Cephalus's departure to be spurred by an ulterior motive? Perhaps Cephalus actually does need

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to attend to a sacrifice, an obligation that he meets reverently in a way that modern readers might not appreciate.[53] It is at least equally plausible that the early departure of Cephalus in the first pages of Book I means exactly what Plato tells us, namely, Cephalus's services are required at a sacrifice to the goddess (there is a communal religious observance underway), and prompted by the virtue of piety he attends to it straight away, leaving the others to carry on with their inquiries. Perhaps in fulfilling this religious obligation, he is thereby revealed by Plato to be a man who attends to his duties with serious regard, and while he would indeed enjoy further conversation (he does say that he has lately missed Socrates's company), he has important things to do, services to perform, and obligations to fulfill.[54] This would be expected of someone like Cephalus who seems motivated to do things correctly, at least from what Plato reveals through his characterization. It was Cephalus who, after all, drew upon the example of Themistocles, a man who indisputably knew his duty, for rhetorical support. Moreover, in recognizing his obligation with regard to attending the sacrifice, he is following the credo that Socrates has attached to Cephalus's own account of decent conduct, that is, the payment of debts, but in this case, the debt is to the goddess and the sacrifice is the payment. Cephalus as patriarch ensures this payment, thus quitting the pleasantries of conversation among friends and family to fulfill those duties to which he is bound. To do so without delay is a sure mark of an earnest, moderate man, and if indeed his understanding of a just life is in fact partially defined as paying one's debts, then it may also be Plato's hint that Cephalus is at least making the effort. Rather, it is Polemarchus who, in his complaint about having inherited yet another burden from his father, in this case an argument that his father seems not to have really cared to fully develop or defend, begrudgingly meets his presumed filial duty.

POLEMARCHUS RECONCEIVES HIS INHERITANCE

From what Cephalus says and the manner in which Socrates responds to him, we might perceive Cephalus as representative of a democratic sensibility, who, in spite of his flaws, is sincerely interested in the virtue of moderation. Perhaps he embraces this virtue imperfectly; still, he seems to hold moderation worthwhile. Granted, he is self-reporting, but Socrates does not seriously challenge this claim in his typical way, he only expresses his doubts that Cephalus has conceptually grasped the whole of a just life rather than merely a part of it—however reasonable that part is; and Plato does not provide any clear hints or evidence that would cause us to accuse Cephalus of dishonesty about his conduct or inconsistency between his practices and his beliefs. We do know that, in spite of his early departure, together he and

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Socrates have presented an opportunity for a more serious investigation of justice and moral character.

Polemarchus is the first to confront Socrates only because that which Cephalus has suggested is not entirely wrong, indeed, it isn't really wrong at all. Socrates does not reject out of hand the practice of telling the truth and paying one's debts as a way to understand just and moral conduct, he simply does not think that these practices are by themselves adequate to define the whole of justice; namely, as stated above, they do not equate with justice in-itself, but only habits formed by just persons as a matter of course. The extreme exception that Socrates trots out in disproving *the rule* is only meant to alert us to what is really under examination: justice as it is, that is, the essence of justice as an aspect of being itself, not as it is partially revealed through its many parts, personal practices, and variations. Just people do in fact tell the truth as often as they can, and they do pay their debts to the best of their abilities and meet their obligations to others, thus the specifics about a just life that Socrates has inferred from his conversation with Cephalus are not so much in error as they are insufficient.[55] Plato indicates to us that questions about justice are not going to be answered through proposals about governing rules or set principles; there remains something still more fundamental, something substantively antecedent to rule-following. This is not to say that rules and principles are without merit, but rather to recognize that any rule, however reasonable, neither encapsulates justice nor guarantees discrete just action in all cases. It is possible to follow rules of behavior without knowing what justice is in-itself, and it is not surprising that an unjust person could indeed perform specific acts that one would typically consider prima facie just. Indeed, the limits of the first definition of justice—wrought by Cephalus and Socrates together—are a consequence of its phenomenality, for the rules applied are experiential signposts to just conduct and clues to justice, but the essence of justice remains something that can be known in ways other than rule-following or the practice of a set of personal disciplines or socially expected behaviors.

We must look to the quality of the person as a whole. We cannot apply a rule like the one Cephalus consistently follows in all cases without additional requirements, without qualification, and without the understanding that justice is first a matter of the person and more than fixed behavior. Under normal circumstances, the rule under discussion is sufficient, but in those instances when it actually works injustice, namely, paying one's debts or fulfilling an obligation that leads to harmful consequences for others (e.g., one might imagine if paying a debt enables violent intentions as a result of the onset of madness or something similarly disturbing), the limitations of strictly following rules without subtlety or reflection is effectively revealed. No doubt just people recognize the importance of following rules of decent

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conduct, but such recognition is possible through their own virtue, and not because the rule is in-itself the source of that virtue. When we encounter a disordered soul, the limits of the rule interfere with the practice of justice rather than enable it, hence we must go deeper still, and examine the being of the just without which all rules lack both completion and meaning.

In citing Simonides, Polemarchus reasserts the notion already assigned by Socrates to his father, to the effect that just conduct plainly involves nothing less than fulfilling the obligatory, to give what is owed, a clarifying re-phrasing of a not altogether unreasonable position. For further support, Polemarchus confidently cites the authority of the poet as the best evidence against Socrates's seemingly hasty rejection of his father's modest understanding about these matters. Socrates himself refers to Simonides as possessing godlike wisdom, although any comment from Plato regarding the poets requires careful consideration—indeed, in this exchange with Polemarchus, Socrates remarks that it is typical of a poet to speak in riddles—and the sincerity of Socrates in offering such praise cannot be measured either way (331e).[56] It is well-known that Plato considered poetry as inferior to philosophy, and in many cases, the poets are prone to confuse rather than clarify, but are they unwise or lacking insight in all cases?[57] Socrates himself was writing poetry during his final days (*Phaedo*, 60d), and it is hard to escape notice of this small detail given Plato's ongoing criticism of poetry, a detail that appears to be overlooked in passing but which may indeed speaks volumes to us as to the real status of poetry—good poetry, the kind of poetry that someone like Socrates would seek to write or want to read—in Plato's view of things.

After a prickly and hesitant moment upon his father's departure, Polemarchus weighs in. For him, the previously examined exception that in this case appears to disprove the rule fails to seriously rebut his father's position. Polemarchus senses that Simonides meant something else, something that is better understood and hence clarified when placed in the context of one's personal relationships with those to whom something is actually owed. Of course one should not return a borrowed weapon to a friend who has lost his senses, for what is actually owed to one's friends is to do them some good, and in this case, returning what a friend has lent to you would result in harm. We all intend to support our friends; the scruples that attend indebtedness are secondary considerations. Having thus clarified his father's meaning with the aid of the poet, it now follows that we owe something different to those who are not our friends—and specifically, we owe the direct opposite to those we regard with enmity, that is, we only owe them our disdain and our wrath (332b).[58]

Why then does Socrates read the account of justice attributed to Simonides as a kind of riddle? To sort his out, Socrates begins to consider justice as an

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activity, and thereby tries to flesh out the sense of this by examining the nature of *technē* (craft, art, skill) through a set of comparisons between different kinds of skills with the intent of discerning what they hold in common, for example, medicine, cobbling, and piloting. And yet both Socrates and an increasingly confused Polemarchus soon realize that the performance of just actions cannot be so easily compared to other kinds of crafts, other kinds of intentional pursuits; upon closer scrutiny, justice appears "useless" in the sense that it is not something used so much as something done. If justice were really something *useful*, then it can be used, like any tool or function, without discriminating between varied purposes—good or ill—and thus can be employed without contradiction as a tool to either cause harm to one's enemies or to help one's friends, like a hammer that can both drive a nail or remove it, a tool that can do one thing and then its opposite, equally facilitating either construction and destruction (334b).[59] What the poet has riddled to us is a thing at once useless in that it cannot be described as used or implemented in the same way that a purposive skill such as piloting is used for safely steering a ship, and yet potentially endless uses are promised by the tool justice since it can be all at once two things that are the direct opposite. With such a tool, we can do both helpful things and harmful things, even simultaneously. Polemarchus, who now admits to serious doubts about his original claim, nonetheless continues to hold that it is quite natural to both help friends and harm enemies in one stroke and be just provided both the intent and the result properly fit the underlying relationship between those involved.

In some ways, Polemarchus is offering a reasonable rule and a plausible scenario, for we can easily imagine how some actions could indeed benefit a friend while harming an enemy. However, for Socrates, it is not clear that understanding justice as relationally ascribed utility elucidates the question with regard to its essence any more than defining justice as telling the truth and paying debts; in a word it is not clear that the son has successfully improved upon his inheritance. Socrates wants to find justice in-itself, to do so, it must be unraveled from the entanglements of situation, scenario, feelings, and allegiance. Justice as it really is cannot be served in terms of direct utility and pure rule-following, nor is the idea of justice accurately depicted as simple desert in reaction to external conditions or internal affections and animosities. Socrates explains that a definition of justice conflating it with a skill (*technē*) and described by what is useful or useless is fundamentally incorrect; thus Socrates does teach us that we can rule out any assertion that justice is somehow shaped in terms of utility, or that justice is strictly about consequences. For example, if as Polemarchus proposes, justice is reduced to matters concerning enemies and allies during war, who we protect and who we attack, then, perversely, justice can only be practiced when we are at war, and thereby useless in times of peace (332c-333e).[60] As with any tool, it is

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thus something that is only useful under specific circumstances, and is not of any use the rest of the time.

Additionally, justice is only indirectly related to codes of conduct among associates. What if our associates are not just and we still come to their assistance? Moreover, if the justice of an act is indeed determined by one's relationship to another, that is, if justice is relative to the person under the rule distinguishing friends from enemies, then what we call justice is effectively nothing more than a matter of preference. If this is the case, then there is no such thing as justice or right, but only contingent obligations attached to various allegiances without regard to the character of the persons to whom we remain loyal, at least as long as it serves our interests. Granted, people who are just do pay their debts, and people who are concerned about principle do seek to do the right thing by their friends, but paying debts and helping one's friends does not guarantee just outcomes even when the intent is pure. Of course just people help their friends, and however constrained by necessity, are in some cases justified in so doing. It is plain that we haven't made any headway with Polemarchus, the same problem persists: the nature of justice in-itself is either incompletely understood (Cephalus), or possibly concealed behind a fundamental error. And Socrates does detect two serious errors, the one having to do with knowing, the other with being, that reveal the source of Polemarchus's confusion.

In the first place, it is possible that we could hold mistaken assumptions about our friends, and that there are those who are true friends and those who only seem so. Furthermore, it follows that one could unwittingly be aiding a false friend who is in reality an objectively bad and unjust person, a situation wherein one cannot be assured of the justice of their own conduct measured from either intent or consequence—a realization that in-itself elucidates the inadequacy of understanding any ethical action by simply reducing it to either intention or consequence, or even both together without taking additional measures. Followed through to its logical extreme, Socrates suggests that Polemarchus's pointed definition holds fast to an utterly irrational position, namely, we can injure the just and remain just ourselves because we wound an enemy (334d).[61] If justice is to be a thing that can be understood and not merely asserted, then such a proposition is false, and to arrive at any reliable understanding of the essence of a thing requires the excision of those qualities that deviate from or are in opposition to what we are examining.

To really get to the essence of something, we must avoid the distractions of perception, the limitations of perspective. Specifically, in the case of justice in-itself, we know that it has nothing to do with utility, and while it is related to rule-following on one level, it cannot be reduced solely to it, and ultimately only poorly understood if entirely conflated with it. Both Polemarchus and

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Cephalus conceive of justice as somehow premised on either utility or rule-following; but for the philosopher, justice in-itself is something else altogether, neither pure deed nor simple device, inseparable from what it means to be a person. Finally, Socrates reveals Polemarchus's moral confusion through the illustration of opposites, which begins reasonably enough with the example of a good boxer being able to both land and guard against a blow, but then leads to wrongheaded admissions that a musician can be unmusical, a horse trainer can cause some to become unhorsemanlike, and that a clever guardian is simultaneously a clever thief (333e, 334a, 335c-d).[62] Those who are just the best and most trustworthy guardians of all when it comes to protecting one's money and valuables are also equally good at being unjust. By illuminating the utter lack of moral clarity characteristic of Polemarchus's position, Socrates deflates any attempt at defining justice in relation to our preferences and aversions—who our friends and enemies are—and as simply a matter of conduct in the pursuit of some specific goal—doing "A" well and then being prepared to succeed equally at doing "not A" well. Justice cannot be influenced by preference, nor can it be a matter of desired consequences (a desire for guarding money or a desire for stealing it), and thus has little, if any, direct relationship to the pressures of one's immediate circumstances or the designs of one's selected ends. For Polemarchus, justice is utterly neutral, and therefore, Socrates cautions, it is a construction of justice bereft of any virtue, deprived of any meaning.

And so Socrates initiates his teaching about justice as a virtue of the soul, and thus not something that can be reduced to or simply equated with rule-following or the heteronomous application of a situational code of conduct variable as a function of case. For it is correct, in a sense, to describe justice as a function, but only as a function of the autonomous and eternal soul, and not a function or consequence of a specific relationship refracted through preference or system framed by phenomenal need and want. Socrates, in asking Polemarchus to reconsider the character of a potential friend or enemy, invites us to regard the primacy of virtue and to reconsider the limits of a given condition, the constraints of context, and the ambiguities of variance. In a way, it is Socrates who unexpectedly completes at least in part what Cephalus was trying to bequeath—that just persons are just *regardless of their circumstances*, whether or not those circumstances are of good or ill fortune; and further, that good people are good (and bad people are thereby bad) regardless of any specific relationship to us or any conclusions about them that may have been drawn by us. In other words, as Cephalus might hold, and to an extent in agreement with at least part of what Socrates is arguing, the question of whether you are a just person is not dependent upon whether you are rich or poor. If justice is a virtue—and Socrates is convinced that it has to be if it is to be anything real at all—and further assuming virtue can be understood as resembling a function, then it becomes clear to us that being

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just and intending harm to another person, regardless of what they may mean to us or how they advance our own interests, are dispositions utterly foreign to each other. Just persons know, Socrates avows, that it is never just to harm others, to meet injustice with injustice in kind. While one could extrapolate from this the recognition that a person under assault is, naturally, right to harm an enemy in self-defense, and out of allegiance be compelled to lend assistance to a friend, these choices in-and-of themselves do not constitute justice in-itself, in its essence, for the former is irrelevant to the notion of just conduct, and the latter is insufficient to fully explain the innermost qualities of the just person (335e).[63]

Polemarchus, being a companion to decency by virtue of his inheritance, is thus easily brought over to the position so forthrightly affirmed by Socrates, and willingly accepts conscription as a partner with Socrates in the fight to restore the reputation of wise men—like Simonides—who have been unfairly associated with the assertion that intent to harm can be justified in a qualified way. Moreover, Socrates speculates that the saying previously attributed to the "godlike" Simonides must have in truth been coined by a man of wealth, and not a man of wisdom, one who believed himself to have possessed real power. Drawing a distinction between wise men like Simonides, Bias, and Pittacus on the one hand—a grouping assembled by Socrates that might assure Plato's careful readers that neither he nor his teacher were speaking ironically when Simonides was mentioned so favorably—contrasted against men of wealth and power like Xerxes et al., on the other hand, Socrates and Polemarchus now as allies join battle to answer the slur against wisdom that has been committed in this counterfeit quote and, in so doing, unequivocally reject the view that justice can be identified as something qualified by a specific perspective, attitude, or preference (335e-336a).[64] This passing swipe at the wealthy and their confusion about injustice might be read as another implicit albeit ham-handed dig at Cephalus—a possible interpretation reinforcing the view, held by some, that Cephalus's buoyant self-assessment is without merit and thus further evidence that Cephalus is portrayed on the whole unfavorably by Plato. For it to be a convincing interpretation, an interest in possessing real power would have had to be evident in the depiction of the character of Cephalus as conveyed throughout the exchange with Socrates. Such evidence is wanting. Cephalus's practice of moderation, if we are to accept its sincerity, works the opposite argument, that is, the patriarch as a man of moderation would be disinterested in power—for what would that be but just another "mad master" goading the soul with ambition—and instead would work toward bequeathing a sound legacy, both material and moral, to his family.

It is soon revealed that the person who claims to be possessed of great power is the one perched on the verge, ready to pounce into the conversation,

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changing both its tone and direction, and vehemently offering an alternative of a decidedly more distasteful—and disturbing—kind. And while Socrates is more than up to the task of deflecting this next challenger, it is evidently too much for Polemarchus to handle. A new ally for Socrates will step forward, and the real defense of the wise, the just and the good unfolds.

NOTES

1. E.g., Prof. Meital, in examining Plato's treatment of slaves in the *Laws*, sides with Popper's critique. See Meital, "Slaves in Plato's *Laws*," *Philosophy of Social Sciences*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (2007), pp. 315–346.

2. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: Volume One, The Spell of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962). See also Stephen B. Smith, "Leo Strauss's Platonic Liberalism," *Political Theory*, Vol. 28, No. 6 (December 2000), pp. 787–809, and C. C. W. Taylor, "Plato's Totalitarianism," in Richard Kraut (ed.), *Plato's Republic: Critical Essays* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, Co., 1997), pp. 31–45.

3. Vlastos, *Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 46–47. See also Ober, *Political Dissent in Democratic Athens: Intellectual Critics of Popular Rule* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 156–152. Elsewhere Prof. Vlastos writes, "Although his [Plato's] hatred of democracy abated in his later years, he continued to oppose it on principle and tolerate it only as a lesser evil to lawless despotism." Gregory Vlastos (ed.), *Plato II: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. ix.

4. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of Plato's Laws* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 74–83.

5. Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 3.

6. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 131–132; Smith, pp. 803–805; Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* (Basic Books, Inc., 1968), pp. 421–422.

7. See Recco, *Athens Victorious: Democracy in Plato's Republic* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 85–86. See also Roochnik, *The Beautiful City: The Dialectic Character of Plato's "Republic"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 2; and Cooper in "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Vol. I (1984), pp. 3–21.

8. Cooper, pp. 972–973. See also Mark Gifford, "Dramatic Dialectic in Republic Book I," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. 20 (Summer 2001), pp. 35–106; and Steinberger, "Who is Cephalus?" *Political Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (May 1996), p. 183. See also Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics," *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Spring 1990), p. 79.

9. Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 160; Ferrari's *City and Soul in Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 11 and p. 22; Harrison, *The Law of Athens*, Volume One (Indianapolis:

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Hackett Publishing, 1998), p. 74; Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005); and Steinberger, pp. 176.

10. Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2002), pp. 211–212. See also Frede, "Plato's Arguments and the Dialogue Form," in Klagge and Smith (eds.), *Methods of Interpreting Plato and His Dialogues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

11. Steinberger, pp. 183–189.

12. Nails, p. 155 and p. 2.

13. Nails, pp. 89–90.

14. Monoson, pp. 212–213.

15. Gifford, p. 52, and Nails, p. 19.

16. As Professor Strauss explains, "Nothing is accidental in a Platonic dialogue, everything is necessary at the place where it occurs. Everything which would be accidental outside of the dialogue becomes meaningful within the dialogue." Strauss (1964), p. 60.

17. Steinberger, pp. 172–174. Along with his account of the importance of Cephalus, Professor Steinberger provides a useful summary of various interpretations of Cephalus and his role in the *Republic*, ranging from Professor Annas's reading of "malicious touches" that prejudice us against the character of Cephalus, to Professor Reeve's conclusion that "Cephalus is an attractive character, portrayed with delicacy and respect. …," and also that to the "unbiased reader" Plato's portrayal of Cephalus is neither favorable nor unfavorable, but "equivocal." See also Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1988), p. 6, and Reeve's *Blindness and Reorientation: Problems in Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 45.

18. Cooper, p. 974.

19. E.g., see Steinberger, *passim*.

20. Cooper, p. 973.

21. Cooper, p. 974.

22. Gifford, pp. 62–66 and *passim*. See also Lycos, *Plato on Justice and Power* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987), pp. 82–83; Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 18–22; and Irwin's *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 170–171. Professor Irwin alertly notes that "some of Cephalus's views are close to the views of Socrates in the *Gorgias*," and helpfully explains the similarities shared between Cephalus who, in *Republic*, values "orderly and calm" people, and who draws a connection between justice and temperance, and Socrates, who in *Gorgias* rebuts Callicles's willfully intemperate and brazenly autocratic assertions. But in the end Irwin concludes that Cephalus's views of justice are "frankly instrumental," and that his commitment to justice "seems rather unstable." Is this the case?

23. See Rosen, p. 26.

24. Cooper, p. 974.

25. Gifford refers to Cephalus as embarrassingly self-congratulatory and prone to award himself with a "moral pat on the back." Gifford, pp. 65–66. Is this what Plato intended?

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26. Plato uses the term *agastheis* to describe Socrates's feelings, which is translated as "admiration" by Professor Shorey in the Loeb edition as well as Professor Sachs and Professor Waterfield separately in their more recent editions; and with the phrase rendered as "I admired him" opening Socrates's response in the Grube & Reeve version. Others select "impressed" (Griffith), "wonder"—which, admittedly in this case, could be viewed as a satirical accent (Bloom), "delighted" (Lee) and "charmed" (Cornford) to depict Socrates's reaction to Cephalus's explanation. In addition to the Grube & Reeve translation (Hackett, 1999), see also Bloom (Basic Books, 1968), Cornford (Oxford, 1941), Griffith (Cambridge, 2000), Lee (Penguin, 1955), Sachs (R. Pullins, 2007, Shorey (Harvard/Loeb, 1930), Waterfield (Oxford, 1993).

27. Gifford, p. 68.

28. Gifford, pp. 68–69.

29. Cooper, p. 975.

30. Reeve (2013), pp. 41–42.

31. Cashen, "Cephalus and Euthydemus," *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*, 2011, 45, p. 18.

32. Cashen, pp. 13–17.

33. Gifford, p. 69.

34. See Nails, p. 84, and Gifford, p. 53.

35. Cooper, p. 974.

36. Cooper, pp. 972–973.

37. Athens eventually turned on Themistocles, first ostracizing him and later indicting him for treason. He was only universally appreciated and admired after his death.

38. Cooper, p. 974.

39. Cooper, p. 1,043.

40. Cooper, p. 973.

41. Cooper, pp. 974–975.

42. Cooper, p. 1,168.

43. Cooper, p. 974.

44. Cooper, p. 974.

45. Cooper, p. 975.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Cooper, p. 1,162.

49. Cooper, p. 1,423. Professor Pangle's translation reads "it is impossible that those who become very rich become also good, at least if by 'rich' is meant the same thing that many mean." See Thomas Pangle (trans.), *The Laws of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 130.

50. Nails, p. 84.

51. Prof. Strauss assures us that this critique of democracy and the democratic character voiced by Socrates is an exaggeration. Strauss (1964), p. 139.

52. Cooper, p. 976.

53. Reeve (2013), p. 44.

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54. See Benardete (2000), p. xii.

55. This is a familiar observation among Plato's commentators. For example, as Prof. Julia Annas writes, "Cephalus has not mistaken the nature of the enquiry, only given an inadequate answer." Annas, p. 23.

56. Cooper, p. 976.

57. See A. E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Works* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1926), p. 254.

58. Cooper, p. 976.

59. Cooper, p. 979.

60. Cooper, pp. 976–977.

61. Cooper, p. 979.

62. Cooper, pp. 978–980.

63. Cooper, p. 981.

64. Ibid.

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Chapter 2

Making Thrasymachus Blush

THRASYMACHUS AND "NOBLE TYRANNY"

Why does Thrasymachus object so strenuously? Why would any reader take him seriously? Does Thrasymachus take himself seriously? Why do Socrates and his friends patiently suffer his ill-mannered presumption, his unvarnished conceits? Combative, insolent, rude, and abusive, he springs into the conversation with a forcefulness suggestive of a wild animal, sneering at the exchange between Socrates and Polemarchus, reproving as childish prattle their reflections on the nature of justice and accusing them of idiotic behavior (*Republic* 336b-e).[1] He insultingly impugns their motives, declaring that they are only invested in casually indulging themselves like friendly contestants rather than trying to learn anything substantive about the question at hand—all the while simultaneously complaining, and without admitting of any contradiction, that they are meekly yielding to the other while acting the part of ingratiating simpletons (336b-c).[2] He indicts Socrates for habitually refusing to provide any definitions of his own, preferring the ease of negative criticism to the harder task of actually taking an honest position in the matter of justice.[3] He is intimidating, sarcastic, domineering, and bordering on the bellicose; it is clear to the reader that the smirking manner in which he comports himself stirs an uncomfortable dismay among those present. Worse still, expressing a surge of disgust with Socrates, Thrasymachus steps into him, abrasively reproving the philosopher with an accusation of underhanded tactics—deploying his customary tricks to drill into an argument where it is most vulnerable (338d).[4] He startles Socrates and his companions, treats them roughly, and causes at least one of them to tremble under the onslaught.[5] Through all of this drama, the sophist changes the direction and mood of the

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conversation without having contributed to it in the slightest way. He will subsequently alter its nature.

What had been a natural, agreeable conversation among friends suddenly lurched toward adversarial debate. Socrates was effectively sucker-punched by Thrasymachus, caught flat-footed by the sophist's belligerence. The contrast against Cephalus could not be sharper; this difference is more plainly discerned if one compares what transpires in *Republic* to the notable passage in *Phaedrus*—a passage wherein Socrates mentions Thrasymachus and describes the sophist as one who is good at "making speeches bewailing the evils of poverty and old age" (*Phaedrus*, 267d)."[6] By contrast, Cephalus with a confidence grounded in his own experience—the advantages of his wealth notwithstanding—rejects the claim that old age is necessarily an evil to bewail, to the contrary, he finds relief from the evils that bombard the character of younger men. Additionally, the opposition between Cephalus and Thrasymachus is still more evident in their comportment; from the former Socrates meets a courteous reception and hospitable response to his public (and persistent) habit of asking questions and testing claims; but from the latter, the sophist, Socrates, and his friends are brow-beaten and set back on their heels. With the coarse entrance of Thrasymachus, Plato sends us a signal that the conversation among friends has been suspended; the contest of irreconcilably antagonistic principles now begins.[7]

Right from the beginning Thrasymachus submits a curious claim. Through his insistent objection to the conclusions that Socrates and Polemarchus have drawn and the agreeable manner in which they have reached an accord on the nature of justice, Thrasymachus—claiming and complaining that Socrates has typically preferred the easier path of merely asking questions without providing answers—presumes to expose this alleged ploy; one which he claims to have already anticipated by having earlier announced to all present a derisive prediction that the typically evasive Socrates would dodge rather than answer any questions (337a).[8] Here again Socrates is criticized for resorting to his customary irony, failing—or refusing—to teach his friends anything useful about justice and the just life. Nevertheless, in spite of his insistence, it's obvious that Thrasymachus's reaction is groundless.[9] By contrast, Socrates has in fact already established an unambiguous position, teaching that justice is more than following rules or producing desired outcomes. Socrates has unreservedly defined justice as human virtue, and thereby a function of the soul (335c).[10] Living a just life is thus something more than following specific behaviors (Cephalus) or reacting to pre-conditions in accordance with our own preferences or in service to our own advantage (Polemarchus)—but instead, living a just life is an activity of the soul. This is a central lesson, one that Socrates provides up-front following from the substance of his earlier rebuttal to Polemarchus's initial readiness to compare a just person to a thief, when

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in reality, we know that any discrete thing or concept is not well-understood when confused with that which it is not, namely, in the same way that heat is not applied to cool something, nor is genuine goodness capable of anything deliberately wicked or evil (334a-b, 335c-e).[11]

Thrasymachus is thereby demonstrably wrong; it is almost as if he were so anxious to state his own case that he was only half-listening to what was being said in the conversation between Socrates and Polemarchus, something not uncommon among those who clamorously argue rather than fairly converse. Plato offers a clue about Thrasymachus through the depiction of his frustration, agitation, and impatience, his determination to say something impressive and to be loud and provocative about it, just as people often do when they are more interested in scoring their own point than they are in carefully listening to another position, thus tuning out the conversation as they are busily organizing and preparing their own proclamations. In spite of Thrasymachus's claim, Socrates *has* already provided an answer to the question about justice—namely, *justice is a virtue*. As such, it cannot be what it is not—first and foremost it cannot be involved in the commission of injustice, giving us reason to modify Cephalus's definition and reject Polemarchus's. Thrasymachus either missed hearing it, or didn't care to acknowledge it.

Polemarchus, recognizing the confusion in his initial thesis, is now won over to Socrates's position on the nature of justice. In her reading of Book I, Professor Annas detects a moment of revelation in Polemarchus's reassessment of his original claim. He is, according to Annas, suddenly repelled, and rightly so, by his own argument once Socrates explains that the justification of causing harm to one's enemies could in fact result in harming good people. For Prof. Annas, Polemarchus is "shocked by the idea of harming someone who is in fact good, even if on the other side"; thus, it is evident that, when pressed on the issue, he in fact "does instinctively think of justice" as something independent of the influence of antecedent qualifiers, and therefore as something neither subjective nor merely situational.[12] Polemarchus admits that there cannot really "be one set of standards for one group of people and another set of standards for another group of people"; for ultimately "justice is not dependent on or created by social position or relationship to one's group."[13] That Polemarchus is able to be steered to the right position prompts the inference that Plato is actually speaking to the character of the younger man, rather than as someone who was simply undermined by, what Annas calls, apparent "incoherence in his moral point of view."[14] However, it would seem that the point of view that Polemarchus has initially adopted is actually coherent in its own way, wrong and immoral as it surely is. Indeed, it is almost too clearly drawn and exceedingly cohesive: help friends and harm enemies, be loyal to those you love or favor and prepare to strike those who oppose you; open and shut—case closed. It is not

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incoherence that Socrates has exposed in speaking with Polemarchus; rather, he has proven that Polemarchus can be brought to understand justice more deeply, and with some degree of ease through honest conversation. Naturally Polemarchus wants to join Socrates in defense of those wise sages whose teachings about justice have been misunderstood.[15]

It is therefore somewhat puzzling when Thrasymachus sniffs that Socrates is up to his old tricks and predictably refuses to provide any real answers, to teach any substantive lesson. As stated earlier, to say that justice is a virtue *is* a meaningful answer, and a very good one, a serious lesson clearly offered without any hesitation or subtlety—almost as a matter of fact. If Socrates had not given such a clear answer, why would even Polemarchus, who gives us the impression of not being easily swayed, thereby assent to drop the definition, *mutatis mutandis*, inherited from his father, and now throw in with his guest? Unless Plato means for us to assume that Socrates's friends are either stubborn or simple, there is no firm reason to believe that they are incapable of listening to reason, and receiving a lesson that Thrasymachus willfully missed.

Moreover, Thrasymachus arbitrarily presumes to levy a preemptive and unilateral mandate prohibiting various ways in which someone like Socrates might describe the qualities of justice. Thrasymachus forbids Socrates from describing justice as including certain qualities; Socrates is not to define justice as being the right, or the beneficial, or the profitable (336d).[16] To do so, Socrates would again be talking nonsense, failing to speak seriously about the subject. While at first astonished at both Thrasymachus's behavior and his domineering interdictions, Socrates regains his good humor, poking back and remarking that, given Thrasymachus's mandate, it then follows that the sophist would apparently brook no comparison between the number twelve and the product of six times two, or three times four, and so forth. In other words, while the number twelve is factually and indisputably equal to six multiplied by two, or three by four, Thrasymachus will have none of it; he banishes any appeal to objective principle or logical proof. Socrates knows that justice is identified with both what is right in principle as well as beneficial to one's interest, and Thrasymachus forecloses even the entertainment of this truth. Undaunted, Socrates deftly points out how Thrasymachus has proscribed acknowledging the self-evident, thereby censoring any description of justice or moral principle that rests on realities that cannot be reasonably debated. In the same way that one cannot really debate that six times two equals twelve, one cannot really debate that justice is the right, or "that which ought to be" (Shorey translation) or advantageous, or perhaps more revealingly, "what's good for you" (Griffith translation).[17] We say more revealingly as it is hard to imagine an understanding of justice that refuses to entertain the thought that it is *essentially* "good for you" or good for each of us. And yet, Thrasymachus prevents any description of justice that relies on that which is conceptually incontrovertible.

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By exiling the incontrovertible, Thrasymachus exerts strength against truth, against the very principle that is under discussion. Thrasymachus even refuses to admit that there is any resemblance between the mathematical equations that Socrates has provided and those considerations on justice that Thrasymachus has forbidden (337c).[18] Socrates continues to question whether the imposition of such a prohibition upon those who are genuinely in pursuit of the truth of the matter is even possible, but Thrasymachus is preparing to answer differently, distinct from the rest, an answer that is purportedly better (337b-d).[19] From the perspective of Thrasymachus, who unabashedly exerts power to manipulate concepts, his alternative answer is in its own way indisputable, but for different reasons, and designed for contrary purposes. Justice is nothing other than what is beneficial to the stronger, under this account—even though Thrasymachus has just insisted that one should be forbidden to define justice in terms of advantage, benefit, or gain, an inconsistency that Socrates himself openly observes at 339a.[20] But Thrasymachus is not now engaging in rational inquiry, he is asserting his will; he is not applying his intellect but relying upon the force of his reputation. It is he who is the stronger for it is he who is the sophist; it is he who now assumes the task of imposing his will-to-truth. Thrasymachus speaks without any nuance, and certainly without irony: for him justice is not a function of the person or a quality of the soul, but rather a simple byproduct of power. Severing all other lines of inquiry; power overrides virtue, and the will has seized and subjugated the mind.

Before proceeding, it might be helpful to consider for a moment a possible connection to another dialogue, *Clitophon*. We do so with some qualification given that Plato's authorship of *Clitophon* remains in question—as recently as 2002 Professor Nails described it as "pseudo-Platonic"—but whether or not Plato is the author, and several scholars seem to think that it is authentic, the dialogue does have a close, conceptual connection to the proceedings in Book I of *Republic*.[21] In this dialogue, Clitophon, an associate of Thrasymachus and among those present in the home of Polemarchus in *Republic*, is explaining to Socrates why rumors about his own opinion of the philosopher are misrepresentations.[22] Socrates has caught wind of a previous conversation involving Lysias in which Clitophon criticized Socrates's speeches about virtue—especially the virtue of justice—while simultaneously lauding the wisdom of Thrasymachus. Clitophon seeks to disabuse Socrates of this misrepresentation while signaling his admiration for Thrasymachus. Clitophon insists that he has admired what Socrates has been saying about virtue and justice, but he remains unsatisfied with Socrates's alleged inability, or perhaps unwillingness, to prove his credible authority on the issue of justice. For Clitophon, either Socrates truly does not know justice in its essence, or he really does know but cagily withholds this knowledge beyond the simplest

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preliminaries. And so, since Socrates is not forthcoming, Clitophon turns to Thrasymachus, or to anyone, for deeper understanding (*Clitophon* 410d).[23] What Socrates does provide, according to Clitophon, is the stimulus to convert others to seek justice, but to anyone who is already a convert, Socrates is more obstacle than guide in the quest for happiness and virtue (410a-e).[24] Clitophon does not say that Thrasymachus has helped him in this pursuit, but from what is said it is reasonable to infer that Thrasymachus has neither impaired Clitophon's somewhat self-conscious (and maybe presumptuous) quest. Socrates, on the other hand, is dismissed by Clitophon in this dialogue as the shallower thinker by comparison.

Clitophon, whether it is authentically Plato's own work or the product of a related author, still serves as a suitable companion to *Republic*, for the notion of justice as a virtue and its connection to friendship is conveyed through the speeches that Clitophon quotes alongside his own commentary. Socrates may not be the hero in this dialogue, but the themes are presented, and the connection to *Republic* is evident. This, along with the mood induced by the unresolved issue, points directly to the conversation in the Piraeus. Additionally, Clitophon reports that some of the companions of Socrates have already attempted to define justice in terms of benefit, suitability, use, and advantage[25]; hence it is clear that this conversation about justice had already been well underway prior to Polemarchus's servant tugging at Socrates's cloak. Significantly, justice is here examined in terms of virtue and friendship; it is proposed in *Clitophon* that at least one reason to participate in a discussion of the nature of justice is to, for practical purposes, foster just souls (409c).[26] Equally importantly, it is clear that Socrates's companions, before the conversation in *Republic*, have already interpreted justice through its parts (e.g., use and advantage), well before Socrates begins to dig deeper into the question of justice as a thing in-itself (409b-c).[27] Finally, Clitophon implies that he has been converted to the pursuit of justice and has now, as he assures us, surpassed Socrates in understanding this matter (410e).[28]

Professor Nails describes Clitophon as an oligarch and notorious political "flip-flopper," important information when comparing him to Socrates and Thrasymachus.[29] Socrates seeks truth and might appear to change his position, but in reality is fixed in his quest for objective knowledge. Thrasymachus appears equally fixed; however, he is not fixed on truth but is instead fixated with power. While we can, using contemporary terms, loosely describe Thrasymachus as a kind of relativist, he does in fact commit himself to what at least appears to be a sort of objectivism in his assertion that justice is universally a function of power—common to all cities (338e-339a).[30] (This theme will be abandoned when he redirects the conversation toward the question of the advantage of injustice.) So while Thrasymachus does speak of law and justice as determined relative to the regime that produces them

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(there being even "tyrannical law" and thus, impossibly, tyrannical justice), he claims the presence of one constant in all cases; and for this reason Thrasymachus does, in this one sense, appear to suggest a kind of trans-situational pattern, namely, that power is the universal dynamic behind all political institutions, principles, and acts. But this may simply serve as further proof of the impossibility of a purely relativistic perspective, which, if embraced, weirdly becomes its own objective structure, an objectivity that rests on spurious assumptions, distortions or misconceptions.

With regard to the figure of Clitophon, his commitment to relativism is even more radical than what we find when examining the claims of Thrasymachus. When Clitophon offers his assistance to Thrasymachus in defense of his proposition that justice is the advantage of the stronger, he assures us that Thrasymachus really means only what the stronger believe to be to their advantage (340a-b).[31] For Nails, this extends Thrasymachus's relativism further than the sophist himself had intended. While appearing to seek answers, Clitophon seems to be telling us that the only answer is the one that the strong *believe* to be right. This might explain Clitophon's disappointment with Socrates. Clitophon, congratulating himself for his advanced understanding of justice, has acquired the nerve to offer his alliance to Thrasymachus. But there is another way to read it as well. In a way, Clitophon may be clearing an escape route for Thrasymachus; one that might allow him to elude Socrates's entangling questions. Plato, through Clitophon, has framed the conversation about justice and power against the concomitant question raised within the contextual difference between having a belief and knowing a truth. Following Nails's reading, we can say that the thing that matters to Clitophon is pure belief. Thrasymachus appears to be interested in establishing the facts behind his assertion; but the method that he employs, the production of justice as a function of power, will prove untenable. Clitophon's attempt to ground the argument in belief may be cleverer, but it is equally problematic in that it reduces any definition about anything to unsubstantiated belief.

Thrasymachus commits a similar reduction, dismissing the very question of belief in favor of performance; justice is a function of power, and those who hold power therefore define justice in direct correlation to their performance as rulers. If failing to perform they commit error, their legitimacy is revoked; and consequently their pronouncements about justice are exposed as meaningless. Thrasymachus appears convinced that justice is ultimately reduced to power and thus all other ways to describe justice (e.g., advantage, benefit, and the right and the good) are automatically eliminated. We are led by Plato to conclude that Thrasymachus only understands domination, which is precisely why he forbade Socrates from describing justice in terms of qualities such as right (i.e., first principle) and benefit (i.e., utility) in the first place. In the end, Thrasymachus has committed himself to

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the proposition that justice is not real, but just a self-righteous, or naïve, way of expressing hard realities about power.

Nor is truth real for Thrasymachus. What we call truth or justice, or qualities, such as expertise or credibility, are simply the determinations of rulers grounded in the power that they enjoy, the wants that they seek to gratify, the things they desire to possess. By this logic the powerful are beyond reproach. There is no wisdom here, nor divine sanction of any kind, or even the presence of some sort of gifted insight or charisma, but simply the ability to acquire, retain, and exert power for one's own purposes. In the precise account of ruling mandated by Thrasymachus, the rhetorician well known for being a hairsplitter,[32] experts and rulers are deemed impeccable and unimpeachable before the polis. As conceived by Thrasymachus, all authority supportive of any claim, proposition, principle, or conclusion rests firmly upon the substructure of power.

In effect, Plato is allowing Thrasymachus to not only assert a vehemently contingent view of justice, but he is also providing us with one model with which we can choose to frame our understanding of the political, one that Plato opposes while recognizing its force.[33] If we unequivocally assert that justice is, at bottom, nothing more than a function of sheer power, then can we say that there is *anything* in our understanding which is independent of its influence? Through Thrasymachus, Plato provides both the first irredeemably wrong answer to the definition of justice (Cephalus's definition being insufficient, Polemarchus's being incorrect but redeemable in the sense that Polemarchus, being a person capable of friendship, understands what it means to be good to others and is open to the suggestion that choosing to be selectively good is an untenable position) and the first model, however warped, for comprehending the political community. Thrasymachus equates politics with power. Everything independent of power is eliminated: by his account, "what is right" is conflated with might, what is beneficial, or what could be prescribed as being for one's good, are all considered epiphenomena of power. In the end, justice itself is discarded, as can be seen in what transpires next.

TWO QUESTIONS AND TWO MODELS

Socrates takes Thrasymachus at his word, and assays what it means to speak of a precise account of ruling (341b).[34] It is here that Plato compares governing to medicine and horse-breeding—namely, to activities that are aimed at the achievement of specific and worthwhile goals. When properly pursued these goals are accomplished without regard to the immediate needs of those engaged in the requisite practices. A true doctor places the health of the patient above all else; the trainer refines the horse, both benefit from their

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art only indirectly, through satisfaction in accomplishment and remuneration earned. At the core of these comparisons is the suggestion, by Socrates, that governing in the true sense—which involves a kind of skill or expertise rather than the unalloyed exertion of power as asserted by Thrasymachus—never seeks its own advantage. In essence, Socrates teaches, the art of governing is solely directed to the advantage of the governed. In the same way that a doctor treats a patient for the sake of finding a cure, a true ruler governs for the good of the city, not for personal gain or some other motivation. Thrasymachus is eager to disprove this teaching. Those who govern, he claims, like those who tend sheep or cattle, are not really concerned about the best interest of their charges, appearances aside. Rather, they are only motivated by their raw self-interest; they only tend their flocks or herds so as to serve their own needs and wants. Shepherds and cattle-drivers may diligently and even gently tend their flocks and herds but in the end coldly take what they want. Hence, even though they assiduously care for their livestock by feeding, watering, sheltering, and protecting them, they do so only for their own benefit, to fill their own bellies, clothe their own bodies, or make money at market.

This is a challenging rejoinder to Socrates, one that will require far more effort to answer than the remarks of Cephalus and Polemarchus; but it is not only the force of Thrasymachus's argument that draws our attention. Thrasymachus abandons any further attempt to define justice, and in so doing dramatically shifts the direction of the conversation; indeed, he now sets in motion an argument that compels an examination of human nature. It is not simply that Socrates is pitifully wide of the mark in his claims about justice, but more importantly, Socrates fails, according to Thrasymachus's complaint, to recognize the real question to be addressed: whether or not a person honestly *should* be just rather than unjust (343c).[35] If we extrapolate upon Thrasymachus's analogy, governing, like herding livestock, in reality has nothing to do with justice. Whereas before Thrasymachus had defined justice as the advantage of the stronger, now he dismisses justice altogether, what really matters is how one can prosper in pursuit of injustice. Going further still, those who govern cities, just like those who handle livestock, should not only be indifferent to justice, they should commit themselves to complete injustice. This is far more than resignation to the uncomfortable necessities of worldly politics that on occasion require us to resort to distasteful tactics otherwise contrary to moral principle; this is a total dedication to injustice as a way of action, as the pattern from which all political activity is to be designed. Sheep and cattle contribute to the comfort and happiness of the herdsman, for that is their purpose. In the same way, cities serve the pleasure of the ruler, and it is for pleasure or from personal need that those who rule assume the mantle of government.

For Thrasymachus, a ruler who tries to be a statesman disregards this lesson to his own detriment, resulting in a relationship between ruler and ruled

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in which the ruler in the ends finds himself "getting less" than he otherwise could. The unjust ruler is a powerful person surpassing all others, one who knows that the only worthwhile goal in life is to secure and increase one's power only for the sake of private gain (344a).[36] This surpassing, which describes someone who shamelessly appropriates more than a fair share of those things that they desire within their grasp (*pleonexia*), is the mark and privilege of the superior person. They rightly command the simpletons who are truly just at their own expense. Thrasymachus's superior type is never timid, never shrinking from what is necessary to obtain what they want (343e-344d).[37] The ruled serve the rulers; this is how one achieves the best kind of life, and the best kind of city. It is the unjust person, Thrasymachus claims, who is exemplary, for only the unjust refuses to submit; it is the unjust who commands circumstances, who sets the conditions for himself and for others, and who dominates the city for the sake of his own gratification. It is this unjust type who has fearlessly taken the risks necessary to the achievement of admirable pre-eminence, eager to ensure that they will unhesitatingly inflict rather than suffer injustice. Those who claim to be just, who rebuke injustice, are in truth those who fear subjugation, and are unwilling to do the unpleasant to gain any advantage, or even to protect themselves against the designs of the more powerful (344c).[38] They do not really love justice; they only embrace justice so as to shield themselves against the injustices of others. Thrasymachus asserts that what we presumably call just behavior is itself motivated by raw self-interest. He concludes his wild and warped argument by inundating those present with a brazen celebration of the greatest injustice, tyranny.

Thrasymachus constructs one possible framework encompassing our question about the substance of ruling; he has provided one possible model for the activity of political rule. In this model, power is the essence of politics, its acquisition, exertion, nature, and purpose. Even ostensibly noble concepts, such as justice, are at bottom shaped by power in service to the desires. Within this model there are no independent, objective principles to discern or consult, no disinterested rules under which we are required to act in all cases, no universal right reigning in the particular force of might; but only the conditions established by necessity generated from the dynamics of power. Socrates now understands all too clearly: Thrasymachus is proposing a life shamelessly committed to power and its uses for the sake of sheer self-indulgence and unapologetically celebratory injustice (344e).[39]

This is all the more astonishing if we compare what Thrasymachus claims to a similar position advanced by Callicles, the antagonist in *Gorgias* (*Gorgias* 481b–492c).[40] There Callicles scolds Socrates, accusing him of cynically inverting justice and convention. Socrates, Callicles claims, has indulged in unseemly grandstanding and pandering vulgarities by adopting a

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conventional view of justice, one that inverts nature, enabling the many who are inferior to subdue and harness the naturally superior, suppressing those who, according to the law of nature, deserve a larger share (481b–482c).[41] Callicles claims that nature's justice rules in favor of superior men, rejecting as unnatural the crowd-pleasing position held by Socrates. Those laws that Socrates foolishly admires are enacted, Callicles asserts, by the many who are weak, who, discovering strength in numbers and force in their mediocrity, overturn the natural order of things to their own undeserved advantage. These popular conventions to which Socrates bows are unjust, according to Callicles. Under this account, our civil order in reality is disordered, implanting a deep injustice in the city by subverting nature itself. Nature creates the superior person to live unrestrained, for restraint of any kind, whether imposed from without by law and social convention, or from within through the practice of temperance, makes slaves out of the best and masters out of the weak. Having more, as Callicles explains, means never having enough, and the superior man is in fact naturally entitled to expand and multiply his appetites, indulging them without limit. Who are we to resist nature's commands (481–484)?[42] In effect, Callicles perceives the power and privileges of superior persons to be an example of true justice contrasted against the artificial justice imposed by the multitude. This subjugation of the superior few is deemed by Callicles to be a serious injustice that Socrates wrongly defends to his own advantage. It is Socrates, according to the ultimately untenable position staked-out by Callicles, who is the one actually arguing *for* injustice, and only from the embarrassingly vain motive of playing to the crowd. While it is plain to readers that the argument asserted by Callicles is unjust, he nonetheless seems to sincerely believe it to be just, and indicts Socrates with the charge of underwriting a kind of disingenuous injustice. It is a potent, altogether perverse teaching.

In contrast to Callicles, Thrasymachus forsakes the idea of justice altogether, brazenly proclaiming injustice to be admirable. In his thinking, it is the truly just person who suffers a life of deprivation; only those who are unjust can gain any happiness in life. Unlike Callicles he does not appeal to nature and its laws or any sense, explicit or implicit, of a natural justice, for that would strike him as preposterous. Our conventions do not indicate an inversion of values, according to the logic of Thrasymachus, but rather are driven and produced by power alone. The ruling quality in the human person is the unabated desire to dominate. Those who are simplistic enough to prefer justice are choosing for themselves a lesser position in the community and a life of loss, of choosing to be good and losing out, settling for the smaller portion, and for this reason, they are pitiable. Persons who choose injustice are strong and free, laudable for their unremitting willingness to dominate. Thrasymachus assumes that this view is universally held, even if secretly.[43]

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Injustice, Thrasymachus holds, is the natural master of the just, and always more profitable. No self-respecting man would choose to lose out in life; rather, one should unapologetically strive to win, and this means the readiness to commit injustice, and to spurn the naïve high-mindedness of the just (343d-344d and 348c-d).[44]

If both the concept of justice and the activity of governing are substantively about, respectively, the advantage of the stronger and the self-interests of the ruler, and if politics and all things political—notably justice—are functions of power, then those who are capable of gathering and exerting unrestrained power are the exemplary rulers. This is what Thrasymachus asserts. It is the tyrant who more than anyone exerts the greatest power, and who commits the most thoroughgoing and consequently—if we are to believe Thrasymachus—profitable injustice, and therefore serves as our exemplary figure when thinking about politics and acting politically. Having opened the dialogue with two *questions*, or lines of inquiry, namely (i) "what is justice?" and (ii) "is it more advantageous to be just or unjust?," that is, the "what" and "why" of justice initiated by an investigation into the nature of just and unjust lives, Plato in addition proposes two *models* for the study and activity of politics. The first model is initially hinted at by Socrates in his comparison between governing and other goal-oriented professions like medicine, and the second is provided by Thrasymachus in his assertion that injustice is superior to justice, and that the tyrant, who only desires power for himself, is the paragon of the best kind of life and the only model for the best kind of city.

Thrasymachus considers his teaching to be the model that would interest mature thinkers. Those who, like young children, depend on a nanny's coddling, or those benighted fools who need a hard lesson in the ways of the world, still believe in justice. In committing to this sequence of arguments, Thrasymachus now overwrites his earlier and somewhat casual effort at defining justice. It is really injustice that works to the advantage of the stronger; justice has nothing to do with it. Injustice may be dressed behind the façade of a sham justice asserted by those in power, but substantively it is in fact injustice, not justice, that we are now talking about and that we now promote. For the sake of maintaining appearances, those who hold power may give ample lip-service to the ideal of justice, but they only know and want injustice, they can only think and act unjustly. This is to their benefit; injustice securing for the unjust person the best kind of life, a life "freer, stronger and more masterly" than the just life that Thrasymachus now openly belittles. Operating under this logic, injustice is the excellent life, and it is through a noble tyranny that we win it. From this, Thrasymachus obliges himself to go beyond the identification of justice with power. He has elected to defend the life of injustice as the only sensible course of action for those who have any choice, and for those who possess enough nerve. It is the only sure way to avoid "getting less," to steer away from the

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losing side and to "have more" than everyone else; to "outdo" any and all. We are charged to believe that if Socrates and his ingratiating friends cannot see this, they are to be treated with contempt by people with superior virtues, like Thrasymachus, who know better; they are to be held in low esteem as immature men lacking resolve and share the unmanly habit of "giving way" to each other like imbeciles. It is an unpleasant portrait that Plato paints of Thrasymachus, and the reader is meant to be put off by it in the same way that Socrates is thrown by Thrasymachus's bellicosity. Nevertheless, it provides the first opportunity for Socrates to begin his refutation of injustice as well as an avenue for the building of a model for politics that is about something decidedly different from power, perhaps radically different.

SOCRATES CATCHES A FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE FORM OF THE POLIS

Socrates digs in. Even though Thrasymachus has raised a compelling point, that is, the proposition that those who rule are really only in it for themselves regardless of how they may mask their motives and interests, Socrates holds firm, defending his position that those who undertake a profession or a skill do so for the sake of something other than their own advantage. Shepherding, as Socrates understands it, is like anything else, practiced only in service to its craft.[45] And it follows that the craft of ruling, whether in the direction of private affairs or in properly governing the public, aims at the good of the governed, and never the interest of those who do govern (345d-e).[46] A true ruler or governor, one skilled in what Socrates understands to be a genuine craft and not merely the exertion of power for its own sake, in reality assumes the mantle of leadership unwillingly, purely from duty, and never acts out of a baser motivation, governing without expectation of personal reward (347a).[47] Neither acclaim nor wealth are appropriate incentives for ruling.

By contrast, the tyrant exceeds all in the pursuit of glory and wealth, the antithesis of the true ruler who is described by Socrates as characteristically decent. Their only motivation is an aversion to submitting to someone worse (347d).[48] That is to say, the decent among us are not driven by ambition or want, but are spurred to govern by necessity so as to prevent an indecent person from assuming the responsibilities of office. There is something fundamentally natural about this, and there is also a degree of symmetry in this observation that speaks to common sense. A person who is skilled at a given activity or craft would rather undertake that activity or craft than defer to someone with less skill or experience, the only possible reason for such a deferral would be the instruction of the less experienced, and in that situation, the deferral would not be complete. For example, it would be only natural for

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the best musician to want to play the complicated solo, or the best pitcher to want to take the mound in the clutch moment, or the best sculptor to seek the most prestigious commission. Moreover, those who perform in a band or who are members of a team would naturally (and symmetrically) seek to be led by the best, and would support the assignment of the most skilled to those roles that require an exceedingly high level of excellence, especially during critical moments. Otherwise delivering a good performance or winning the game is less likely. Socrates demonstrates that governing is more skill than not, the same could be said for those who follow sound leadership, and cities that are keen to support rational government.

Why is this important? Why does Socrates brush aside Thrasymachus's claim that any ruler, even those who care for their cities with the same kind of diligence and commitment that we find among shepherds, are at bottom only acting in their own interests, spurred by their irresistible appetites? It is a distasteful suggestion, but many clear-eyed students of politics might nod approvingly, or at least reconsider the concealed ambitions that lead a certain type into public service. Thrasymachus lobs an accusing salvo against government, reminding us of the seemingly ineradicable force generated by those ignoble impulses that everyone feels. One could argue that by our own standards today, Thrasymachus is only speaking realistically in framing a political model that begins and ends with the obsession over power, the desire for illimitable gain. And yet Socrates does not flinch in the barrage of Thrasymachus's *homo homini lupus est*. He stands firm and again rebuts—however his second rebuttal does little if anything to modify his initial response (345d, 342e).[49] Later, while meeting Thrasymachus on his own terms, Socrates will explain that a just person never seeks to outdo an unjust person; but this is merely a corollary to the proposition—earlier averred in response to Polemarchus—that a just person always acts justly and cannot emulate the unjust, the very statement that provoked Thrasymachus in the first place. Why does Socrates insist on restating unmodified his original proposition without strengthening its defense? Why do Socrates and Thrasymachus continue spinning their wheels? The philosopher and the sophist reach an impasse, and are unable to employ a common vocabulary toward its resolution.

Perhaps our answers can be found wrapped inside the observations about the essence of political activity that Socrates shares. As stated earlier, Thrasymachus has described one model that we can follow in order to better understand and more realistically practice politics, a model equating politics with power; but he goes much further in his assertion, stating that the unjust city is realistically the best city (351b).[50] Plato here supplies an example of how politics is commonly perceived. This model advanced claims that politics *is* power, and equally important, politics at its best operates *unjustly*. Plato's Thrasymachus introduces an archetype for a particular understanding of what

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politics is and what it contributes to social order. Injustice is, for Thrasymachus, fine and strong, the one thing that is indispensable to the formation of his best polity (i.e., tyranny), an assertion that we know Socrates would immediately condemn as the direct opposite of the truth of things, not simply what should be but also what is, and an assertion that if found persuasive would lead to the utter destruction of the very thing it tries to describe, political activity itself.

Socrates suggests an alternative model to explain the essence of political things, one that reflects objective reality rather than any particular preferences and desires, unaltered by our own individual attitudes and self-satisfied opinions about the way of things, a model transcending all perspective and yet intuitive for everyone. Socrates introduces this model in teaching that those who truly rule do not seek office or govern others for their own personal benefit, but commit to political leadership from necessity. The best rulers are those who try to avoid political power, for "in a city of good men, if it came into being, the citizens would fight in order *not to rule*, just as they do now in order to rule (347d)."[51] *Pleonexia*, the desire to indiscriminately surpass others and to claim what is more than their fair share, is an impulse foreign to those who would inhabit the good and true. This city is advanced as the Socratic principle and standard for all cities and for politics itself, grounded in and aimed at what is unqualifiedly good for human beings.

Moreover, it is helpful to remember that Socrates is speaking of leadership from "the best people" and "the most decent," those who assume political positions because they recognize that the order of things prevents them from submitting to the rule of the unqualified, the less virtuous. This Socratic model for the study and practice of politics rests upon the premise that we want to live not just in cities with rational governments, but among good citizens. Such a city is untainted by the desire for power. If we are to answer the claim from Thrasymachus that the polis is at bottom a manifestation of will, then we must conceive its opposite—the city in which power is at best an afterthought, wherein one's will is aligned with what is required of the best and decent. Again, neither honor nor money—commonly accepted as realistic incentives for those who participate in public life—are sufficient for motivating good people. Rather, it is the revulsion at the thought that one might be ruled by the indecent combined with the aforementioned commitment to the interests of others—the good of others—that prompts Socrates to explore, and uncover, the nature of politics as it is, not as it appears (347a).[52]

The contrast between Socrates and Thrasymachus could not be more extreme. Thrasymachus teaches that politics is exclusively about power, providing a model for political rule that will eventually raise up tyranny, the life of the tyrant his recommendation to those who incessantly fight to have more. Opposed to this, Socrates views politics as essentially something other than

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power, and when this quality of politics is realized, those who are responsible for governing the city will only seek the good of others, the good of all. It is the unjust city of power imposed by Thrasymachus against the just city of good men discerned by Socrates; two models for the measurement of inhabitable polities and the practices that occur within them, related to two opposing principles prescribing, on one hand, commitment to life in the service of justice and, on the other, subjugation under injustice. Plato presents the first, elementary description of the Form of the Polis, the essence of political action understood simply as seeking the good of those who are governed, sharply contrasted against what political actors at present undertake for the sake of power and for the promotion of their own interest (347d).[53]

This account of the Form of the Polis will be developed further as the dialogue proceeds, but not with the help of Thrasymachus who, dismayed, is uninterested in understanding Socrates's position. Thrasymachus is not even invested in his own arguments; he casually asks Socrates if it makes any difference whether or not he really believes his own assertions, thus separating himself from his own account (349a-b).[54] In other words, his assertion that the best life is an unjust one, and that the model for politics is constructed upon power and shaped by desire, is not so much a truth for Thrasymachus, or even a value to be believed, but rather something useful in his attempt to exert his dominion over the conversation, to defeat Socrates and his naïve nobility, and thus embarrassing him before his friends. We are offered a choice between knowing the Form of the Polis, and the equation of politics to power that is preferred by Thrasymachus, however invested.

Such a choice is conceived within the context of Plato's overarching project—the development of a political ontology that will enable us to comprehend first principles of politics in being itself. Interestingly, both Thrasymachus and Socrates are, although in different ways, engaged in this project, for the former claims that politics is ultimately and universally about power, while the latter recognizes in the nature of things the essential reality that politics is not exclusively about power but about something else entirely. A city of good persons, should it appear before us in our experience, would be led and populated only by those who are not motivated by power, not limited by interest—those who do not compete for office and never seek their own advantage. In the first book of *Republic*, Plato not only broaches the subject of the nature of justice, but he begins to lay the foundation for a political ontology that not only provides the framework from within which we can begin to answer questions about things like justice and right, but one that also serves to elucidate the nature of politics, disclosing the objective model by which we can measure the shape and purposes of our own principles, institutions, and practices. Socrates admits that the model that most regimes now follow is more akin to what Thrasymachus maintains, but if we are to

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take seriously the thought that politics is about something other than power, we must inquire into its nature, the essence of the political act, the purpose of the political community.

Toward the end of Book I, two things happen that reveal something about the character of Thrasymachus and the origin of his arguments. Socrates—in working through his analysis of *pleonexia* and the difference between the just who surpass only the unjust and the unjust who seek to indiscriminately "outdo" everyone—proves that a just person is "clever and good" in comparison to the unjust, now revealed as ignorant and bad. Ignorance cannot be to any person's advantage, thus the claim from Thrasymachus that injustice is always beneficial meets further rebuttal. At this moment, Socrates is surprised to see Thrasymachus blush. We can only speculate as to why Plato adds this personal detail.[55] Perhaps he blushes in embarrassment in reaction to the correlation that Socrates draws between injustice—which Thrasymachus had been brazenly promoting—and ignorance. Socrates does stress that injustice knows nothing, and is especially oblivious to even the most minimal of limits. For the unjust nothing is known, and nothing is prohibited. Because of its blatant perversity, the argument that Thrasymachus has so arduously thrust upon us has collapsed (352a).[56] Or perhaps he is suddenly ashamed by his wrongheaded claim that an unjust life is better than a just one, suddenly mortified by the realization that he has so vehemently argued an ignoble case, fervidly praising, of all things, injustice. Or he may have simply been frustrated by the course of the conversation in general and vexed by what he might have perceived to be Socrates's own limitations in having failed to recognize insight in the candid, blunt and, at least in Thrasymachus's mind, realistic assessment of human nature underlying his claims. He might have even blushed as a consequence of realizing that an over-the-top attempt at being ironic was actually mistaken for a genuine argument, leaving no way to repair the damage without making things worse. His relentless promotion of injustice as the better choice in life seems to be an honest proposition, at least up to the moment of his physical reaction.

Were it the case that Plato intended to write irony in Thrasymachus, he would not have receded from the conversation so abruptly—and so completely—after presenting to Socrates his banquet gift (354a).[57] Instead, it seems more likely that he would have at some point re-entered the dialogue to reveal his hand, or at least better explain what he was up to in building such an erroneous and reprehensible argument. Or perhaps he is blushing for another reason that only someone with the sensibilities of Plato's direct audience would detect and appreciate. In any event, there is no mistake in observing that Thrasymachus's emotions have changed from aggressive, impatient, scornful, and disdainful to an awkward state of discomfort and embarrassment, perhaps even shame or humiliation, any one of which is more plausible than a simple

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physiological reaction to summer heat. In this context, a blush signals discomfiture stimulated by the realization that one has done something embarrassing or disgraceful, or perhaps his unease exhibits a repressed modesty now pushing back against his immodest claims. But then again, Thrasymachus does not appear at any moment to be even remotely modest.[58]

Following this, Thrasymachus unexpectedly resigns. From this point (350d) to the end of Book I, Thrasymachus has simply abandoned his argument, hiding behind sarcasm, churlishly bidding Socrates to enjoy his banquet, and surrendering his theoretical position, yielding, as it were, in sardonic emulation of the congeniality exhibited by Socrates and Polemarchus which he had earlier derided.[59] It could be that he is simply fatigued—Socrates has a way of wearing people down—or, again, embarrassed in reaction to Socrates's correlation between ignorance and the thing that he has been so stridently endorsing, injustice. Or it may be that in surrendering to Socrates and failing to achieve a convincing counter-argument, Thrasymachus himself is shown to be the embodiment of injustice, one who is incapable of even insufficiently grasping the qualities of the just man. We cannot positively know Plato's intent when he wrote these passages, but we do know that Thrasymachus's emotions as described expose vulnerability, and that his actions reflect either the inability to press forward for whatever reason (exhaustion, embarrassment, frustration, contempt, shame, exasperation, etc.), or from lost interest.

Plato concludes Book I with additional statements from Socrates affirming his premise that questions about the nature of justice and the essence of politics are fundamentally ontological questions. Justice is a virtue of the soul, and the good soul is that which rules and lives well. As one would expect, Socrates does not trumpet his success in the taming of Thrasymachus; instead, he typically admits his familiar uncertainty of knowing nothing about justice, even blaming himself for failing to exercise the proper discipline needed to answer the question—instead behaving intemperately, even gluttonously, eagerly seeking to indulge in any suggestion or idea that is trotted out before him.[60] (354b) Nevertheless, Socrates really does know, and he is prepared to share that knowledge given the right companion to encourage him along, to more effectively press Socrates into the service of truth. Glaucon, Plato's brother and Socrates's traveling companion, steps forward to succeed where Thrasymachus failed, providing the kind of interlocutor and partner indispensable to the Socratic method of discovery.

All that which has transpired to this point is but a prelude, so defined by Plato himself (357a).[61] We have been given an important introduction and foundation, but preliminary and inchoate, necessary to establish the conceptual framework but insufficient to understand justice in either city or soul. Glaucon offers Socrates the opportunity to plumb the depths of the question that has been raised about the incontrovertible advantages of a just life, a

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life that is in every dimension superior to the specious attraction of a life of injustice. To reach these depths, Socrates needs to map unseen terrain, to peer behind appearance and see the essence of the thing sought, an effort that can only be undertaken among the companionship of friends in conversation, secure from the animus of those who seek to outdo without discrimination. That which will lead Socrates and those gathered in the home of Polemarchus toward the Beautiful City has been present from the opening sentence, the friendship and partnership of those who seek to really know, and in so doing, come to understand that this is learned once one discerns the conceit behind special claims to enlightenment. Their trust is now placed in the guidance that comes not in the having, but rather in the loving of wisdom.

NOTES

1. Cooper, pp. 981–982.
2. Cooper, p. 981.
3. Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 20.
4. Cooper, p. 983.
5. Strauss (1964), p. 74.
6. Cooper, p. 544.
7. Professor Nails, who considers the passage in *Phaedrus* to be important, provides additional and useful background information, informing us that Thrasymachus was not only a renowned teacher of rhetoric, something for which he is more commonly known, but that he was also a diplomat from Chalcedon, and in that capacity he served during a dangerous period of crisis—around 407—between his home and Athens and suffered as a consequence of a Chalcedonian revolt suppressed by Athenian forces. For Nails, this historical event gives "potency and poignancy not only to Thrasymachus's position in *Republic* . . . but to the fervor with which he defended it."
8. Cooper, p. 982.
9. Strauss (1964), p. 75.
10. Cooper, p. 980.
11. Cooper, pp. 978–981.
12. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 29.
13. Ibid.
14. Annas (1981), pp. 29–31.
15. Annas describes the poets herein mentioned as promoting a "crude view" of justice, but it may be helpful to here remember that Socrates objects to this unfair description of the poet, at least at this point in *Republic*, an objection that given the content of what the poet has said—that justice is giving to each what is owed to him—seems sincere.
16. This is according to the Grube translation in the Cooper collection.

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17. Plato, *Republic*. Edited by Ferrari and translated by Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 13.

18. Cooper, p. 982.

19. Ibid.

20. Cooper, p. 983.

21. E.g., while Prof. Nails considers the attribution of *Clitophon* to Plato to be spurious, Prof. C. Zuckert, on the other hand, attributes it to Plato himself. See Zuckert's *Plato's Philosophers*, pp. 332–335. Taylor includes it among the apocryphal writings, noting that there would "be no linguistic difficulty in admitting Plato's authorship." Taylor, pp. 537–538. See also Orwin in Pangle (ed.), *The Roots of Political Philosophy: Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues* (Cornell: Cornell University Paperbacks, 1987), p. 117.

22. Cooper, pp. 966–970.

23. Cooper, p. 970.

24. Cooper, pp. 969–970.

25. Drawing from the translation by Francisco Gonzales in the Cooper anthology.

26. Cooper, p. 969.

27. Ibid.

28. Cooper, p. 970.

29. Nails, p. 102.

30. Cooper, p. 983.

31. Cooper, pp. 984–985.

32. Nails, p. 288.

33. One could reasonably describe Thrasymachus's definition of justice as conventionalist, but I wonder if it is better than "relativist." Professor Piper, for example, argues that Thrasymachus "has rejected the conventionalist view of justice," an interpretation that Piper develops in direct contrast to Professor George Hourani, who does view Thrasymachus as hewing to "conventionalism or legalism." Piper conceives conventionalism as "obeying the laws of one's state, whatever they are," but for Thrasymachus the laws of a state could work against one's interest in some cases and would be disadvantageous. Piper also interprets Thrasymachus's "repudiation" of Cleitophon as a rejection of conventionalism. Finally, Piper notes that Thrasymachus does not reduce questions of justice and injustice to "relations between rulers and their subjects." If conventionalism means, more broadly, any given position that rejects a trans-legal source of justice, then we might be able to properly refer to Thrasymachus as a kind of conventionalist. But if, as Piper points out, conventionalism is a tighter concept than this, then we might have to concede that Thrasymachus rejects conventionalism and thus, in this one small way, shares one thing in common with Socrates, however indirectly. See Piper, "Doing Justice to Thrasymachus," *Polis*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2005), pp. 27, 29, 41. See also Annas, who writes that "Thrasymachus has been seen as holding that justice and injustice do have a real existence independent of any human institutions" Annas (1981), p. 36; and Arp in "The Double Life of Justice and Injustice in Thrasymachus' Account." Paper delivered at the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Boston, Massachusetts from August, 1998.

34. Cooper, p. 985.

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35. Cooper, pp. 987–988.
36. Cooper, p. 988.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Cooper, p. 989.
40. Cooper, pp. 826–835.
41. Cooper, pp. 826–827.
42. Cooper, pp. 826–829.
43. See Piper, p. 33.
44. Cooper, pp. 988, 991–992.
45. Cooper, p. 989.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Cooper, p. 991.
49. Cooper, p. 898 and p. 987.
50. Cooper, p. 995.
51. Cooper, p. 991.
52. Cooper, p. 990.
53. Cooper, p. 991.
54. Cooper, p. 992.
55. "Thrasymachus begins with insults but ends with blushes. The irrationality of shame and pride no less than the rationality of knowledge belongs to man as man, and its bursting in as it does suggests that the price one pays for the departure of Cephalus, which freed the discussion from the hold of the sacred, is the unleashing of Thrasymachus." Benardete (1989), p. 20.
56. Cooper, pp. 995–996.
57. Cooper, p. 998.
58. See Gooch, "Red Faces in Plato," *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 2 (December 1987–January 1988), pp. 124–127.
59. Cooper, p. 994.
60. Cooper, p. 998.
61. Ibid.

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Chapter 3

Sons of Ariston

RECAPITULATION AND REFLECTION

If Book I of *Republic* is a prelude to the rest of the dialog, it is by no means a simple one. As we have covered in the preceding chapters, it is here that we are introduced to the characters of the dialogue in a way that meaningfully reflects not only their personal mannerisms, attitudes, and presuppositions, but more significantly, concepts and principles that will be further developed throughout the text. We encounter the struggle between the moral certainties of Socrates and the immoral conceits of Thrasymachus, and most importantly, it is in Book I that Plato locates the entire dialogue at the coordinates indicated by two principal questions, that is, the inquiry into the nature of justice, which is quickly displaced in importance by the inquiry into the possible benefits or potential liabilities of leading a just life, and the two models for political thought and activity.

One model reduces all political principle and practice, and thus all governing, to a single function—the function of power. The model suggested by Socrates demonstrates that political things and concepts are about something other than power; while Thrasymachus, for reasons that are and most likely always will remain open to varied interpretation, commends the unjust life while cynically introducing a conceptual model presuming to expose all political activity as at root the selfish exertion of will. While sober reason and decency preclude our following recommendations of the unjust life, the assertion that politics, both as practice and in principle, is essentially about power remains a potent argument, one that has continued to stalk the analysis of political behavior to this day. Plato, who is often associated with unrealistic and abstract idealism, through the voice of Thrasymachus has provided a teaching about politics that trenchantly anticipates the attitudes and opinions that many of us would find familiar, absent the celebration of injustice and

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self-aggrandizement evident in the arguments made by the irascible sophist. What is politics but the accumulation and exertion of power? What is political science but the study of it? The voice of Thrasymachus reverberates in our own time; his is a voice that we find uttered anew, *mutatis mutandis*, in Machiavelli, a voice anticipating Hobbes, sounding a compelling tone to certain intellectual dispositions. Socrates unequivocally adheres to the idea that justice—being nothing less than a virtue, an enduring, transcendent quality of the eternal soul, and thereby clearly more than a set of high-minded principles or externally imposed rules directing personal conduct—is in fact beneficial to every human being, appearances notwithstanding (*Republic* 335b-e).[1] This is evident to us through his response to Polemarchus, wherein Socrates defines justice as a human virtue, and concludes that it is inconceivable that a just person would intentionally cause another harm, or act unjustly in any way (335e).[2] Justice is a virtue, not a rule or set of rules, or part of an external scaffolding of laws and mores that support citizens in their efforts to behave. As it is never the function of justice to act unjustly, it is thus a constant throughout all human activity. Justice is a part of human excellence, common to all souls whether or not it is realized in practice. To lead a just life, one must be just—a criterion for the fulfillment of human goodness.

Things political must somehow be grounded in goodness rather than power. Justice is one of the goods of the soul, untouched by the forces and vectors of power and interest. The principles advanced through this discussion are held in an irresolvable tension, inevitably bringing Socrates and Thrasymachus to an impasse, one that only appears to have been surmounted in the latter's insincere resignation. For it is evident that Thrasymachus not only feigns assent—and not very subtly at that—he remains obdurately incapable of comprehending Socrates's position, his disagreement with Socrates not being the result of any intellectual shortcoming, for he is clearly a man of pointed intelligence, but rather a negative, visceral reaction that comes quite naturally to him as a result of personal proclivities forged out of old prejudices and stubbornly unreflective presuppositions about human character.

It is as if the two thinkers do indeed operate from antithetical perspectives, existing in different moral worlds, understanding their respective worlds through attitudes springing from disparate virtues. That Thrasymachus may have blushed upon realizing too late the perversity in his argument in behalf of injustice is a reassuring prospect for Plato's readers, one that might partially redeem the sophist through the revelation of hidden qualities that he could not completely suppress in spite of himself. Here we would be relieved in the depiction of Thrasymachus as a hot-headed, stubborn but ultimately reasonable person, his true colors revealed in the heat of argument. It is a reassuring and yet not entirely convincing interpretation of his character. There are some clues provided by Plato that might support this reading, for

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we are able to observe Socrates's own reaction to Thrasymachus. Socrates will later refer to Thrasymachus as a friend, able to disassociate the shameful argument from the man himself, a generous assessment that may have been prompted by the sophist's red-faced unease, telling the tale that reveals the man behind the bluster.[3] Had Thrasymachus been incapable of blushing, Socrates may not have sustained his good will toward him as the conversation proceeded. Plato offers within the action of this scenario reason enough to conclude that Socrates can see through Thrasymachus on more than one level. What Socrates does not seem to notice is the dissatisfaction that lingers among the rest of his companions, and especially the brothers of Plato, following his own reaffirmed and yet unsurprising admission that, after all that has been said, he doesn't know anything about justice. It is left to his traveling companion, Glaucon, to redirect our full attention to what remains unresolved.

GLAUCON'S SPIRITED COMPANIONSHIP.

Glaucon's importance has been evident from the opening of *Republic*, inversely proportionate to his minimal remarks in Book I. In going down to the Piraeus with Socrates, he is in reality accompanying the philosopher on his return to the Cave, encouraging the inference that he is in some capacity already outside the Cave as the companion of Socrates, drawn upward toward the things-themselves.[4] Among others, Professor John Sallis argues that the descent that opens *Republic* represents "Socrates's descent into Hades" which is retold in Book X—whereas my position holds that Socrates and Glaucon are not descending into Hades, as did the hero Odysseus, but rather that they are going down into the Cave, that is, they are descending from knowing and being into opining and becoming where they will meet their friends and undertake an inquiry that begins with questions about justice, develops into an investigation into the nature of politics and morality, and proceeds into the heart of Plato's philosophy in an exposition of his theories of knowing and being.[5]

Socrates, of course, is our principal figure, but Glaucon plays a decidedly significant part. As the spirited youth acquainted with the passions of the world, he knows better than his teacher the shadowed terrain of the Cave. Between two realms, the intelligible realm of reason, owing to his friendship with Socrates, and that of the phenomenal world of the passions in which his own desire for honor pulls him away from philosophy, Glaucon supplies Socrates with a touchstone to the instincts of the worldly while also sharing with that world a sample of the conversation of friends in the pursuit of the true, the beautiful, and the good, a manifest contrast to the kind of unyielding debate that degenerates into a contest between rival factions, such as the one

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just witnessed. As indicated earlier, Thrasymachus and Socrates do not speak the same conceptual language and do not seek the same ends or even share the same way of knowing what ends are worthy of being sought. Socrates and Glaucon, by contrast, are men of different but not necessarily opposing desires—the desires of the intellect in contrast to the desires of the heart—but they share enough in common to together achieve their goals; they both seek knowledge, and are convinced truth can be found. Socrates is initially caught flatfooted by Thrasymachus, unable to convince the impassioned sophist that there is an objective standard for justice and for political life in general that has absolutely nothing to do with the will and that is quite apart from interest and appetite. One would think that Socrates would have little trouble disproving Thrasymachus. And yet Socrates stumbles during this debate, fumbling for an even foothold, not unlike a man moving from brightness into shadow, unable to find a sure way to connect what he himself knows to be true to the appetitive nature of Thrasymachus's teaching. The lover of wisdom (Socrates) and the lover of opinion (Thrasymachus) are natural antagonists. Glaucon, however, who inhabits that region between knowing and opining, between the love of wisdom and the desire for honor, knows well how to bridge that connection, how to somehow transmit the philosopher's quest for the Good to that part of us which nurses its own pride in "knowing" better than others, in being superior to others, in winning arguments—a pridefulness that won't allow any concession to the insight of others, or to those who might be good in a way that we can only at best emulate.[6]

Readjusting to the dimmed light in the Cave, Socrates relies on the worldly sensibilities of his friend. Displeased with the lack of resolution in the conversation between Socrates and Thrasymachus, Glaucon affirms his desire to "know what justice and injustice are" beyond the preliminaries already discussed (358b-c). Glaucon believes Socrates, but he is not content with settling on merely well-formed persuasion underpinning a convincing opinion.[7] He seeks knowledge of the nature of justice, wanting to be meaningfully taught rather than persuaded or charmed.

Significantly, Glaucon removes the consideration of consequences from the discussion in order to better understand justice as a thing in-itself, involving an examination of the soul and not of any rewards received owing to one's behavior (358b).[8] It is Glaucon who initiates this deeper inquiry by situating the question of justice within an investigation of the nature of the good (357b-d).[9] Earlier Socrates had introduced the concept of the good through his statement about a good, decent city, and before that, in teaching Polemarchus that the just (and good) person will not act to the contrary, circumstances notwithstanding (347a-e).[10] In this way, Plato signals early in the dialogue that justice, which we must always remember is in its essence a virtue of the soul, is rooted in some notion of what it means to be good.

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Thrasymachus, who persists in his claim that justice is entangled with power and shaped by the preferences of appetitive self-interests, persistently exhibits a willful inability to distinguish between the good in-itself and the objects of our desires, and consequently commits his argument to futile subjectivism. Glaucon understands at the outset what is at stake, raising questions about the nature of the good, provisionally suggesting the following distinctions: (i) things that are good because we deem them to be desirable in-themselves, (ii) things we find desirable both in-themselves and for their expected consequences, and (iii) things that are good only because their consequences are desirable, they do provide benefits, but because they impose burdens or are achieved with much difficulty, they would not be chosen for their own sake, but only for the rewards that they promise (357–358).[11]

Glaucon reasonably launches his inquiry by attempting to understand the essence of the thing-itself, namely, to investigate the nature of justice by measuring it against the standard of good. He recognizes that this standard is in practice intermingled with considerations of what is or is not advantageous, thus including the epistemically objective, for he speaks of both that which is good in-itself (ontologically) and that which is perceived to be good. This taxonomy of the good introduces identifiable species, namely, what is desirable in-itself (e.g., joy), what is desirable only for anticipated consequences (i.e., the securing of something advantageous or the avoiding of something disadvantageous), and what contains properties of both, thus serving as a kind of median between things desired for what they are and things desired for what they do.

For Socrates, the finest goods are found among the things and activities that we find desirable both in-themselves as well as for their consequences, that is, for what they are and what they do. Justice, according to Socrates, is found among these finest goods, and is desired because it is good in-itself (justice in its essence rather than its appearance) but also because it really is to one's advantage to be just (justice as a consequence of the inculcation of a virtue). By drawing this connection, Socrates once again reaffirms his conclusion that justice can be no less than a virtue of the soul, and thus is a good in-itself. Additionally, he further reiterates his argument holding justice to be unqualifiedly beneficial, and is thereby desirable for what it does as well as for what it is. This is not to be confused with a vague consequentialism, for it is clear that the anticipated consequences are informed by the a priori Good, and that the benefits achieved are worthwhile in-themselves.

Glaucon, however, in his determination to improve Thrasymachus's argument, provocatively employs a ring myth to illustrate the point that justice is neither a good in-itself nor even a good for the consequences that it may bring.[12] Indeed, it is not even something desirable, for according to the story of the ancestor of Gyges as recounted by Glaucon, no human being is, in spite of reputation, willingly "just"—that is, there is no such thing as justice, only

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behaviors that project the image needed to preserve one's reputation and to meet social expectations (359d–362d).[13]

Glaucon's argument, which he hopes will prompt Socrates into affirming a stronger case in behalf of justice, begins with the claim that in the opinion of "most people," justice is numbered among those things and activities that are judged as either good or bad measured solely against any of their consequences, and is therefore among things that are "onerous but beneficial (357e–358a)."[14] Clearly, Glaucon is not endorsing this position; it is apparent that he is contemptuous of the very idea.[15] Glaucon is really searching for a definition of justice that is not dependent on externalities, such as padding one's public record and sculpting an agreeable image. What is needed, Glaucon insists, is an understanding of the concept of justice that does not account for *any* social benefits nor motivated by their promise, one that is substantively internal, indifferent to public approval. Here Glaucon, who possesses the kind of insight apparently absent in Thrasymachus, hints at the Form of Justice itself, at what justice is in its essence, seeking real knowledge and not simply adopting an unsupported opinion or accepting an insufficient definition. Glaucon wants to understand why justice is a virtue of the soul, something in and of itself, and not simply a political determination situated in the context of pure social convention (358b-c).

Since Glaucon's pursuit of the essence justice is earnest, he is well aware that Socrates is the one person present who can bring the Form of Justice to light. Determined to get to the essence of justice and knowing that only Socrates is the man for the job, he encourages him in the praise of justice by cutting a better template through the inverse defense of its opposite, injustice, hoping that through this negative image, the real answer will emerge (357a).[16] He puts Socrates on notice; through his feigned endorsement of injustice, he will indicate to him the improved method that is now required for properly supporting justice while reproving injustice (358d).[17] By building the best possible case for injustice—something that Thrasymachus for all his blustering overconfidence failed to do—Socrates will have to respond in kind with the best possible case for justice, and it is the best possible case that will promote the view that the unqualifiedly just life is more beneficial than the unjust life that Thrasymachus shamefully applauds. It is because of this effort by Glaucon that Socrates begins his analysis of justice as both substantively internal and objectively universal, namely, justice as a Form.

Having initiated this deeper inquiry in his role as mediator between the love of wisdom and our attachments to adopted opinions, Glaucon, like Thrasymachus before him, begins with a flawed definition of justice and then promptly proceeds toward a protracted defense of injustice premised on the immoral claim that only injustice is truly beneficial for the individual, leaving justice to be numbered among those things that are simply onerous.

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Justice in Glaucon's analysis is an artificially established mean between the seemingly most alluring scenario for an individual, wherein one commits injustice with impunity, and the most repellent scenario, wherein one suffers injustice without recourse or relief. This proposition is preceded by a jarring assertion: that committing injustice is *naturally* good (359a-c).[18] In Glaucon's contrived account, no rational, mature person would choose the suffering of injustice over the commission of injustice, and we all know it whether or not we choose to admit it. This could be seen by some as anticipatory of Aristotle's ostensibly similar view, developed in Book V of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, describing justice as an intermediate between committing all manner of injustice with impunity and suffering injustice without recourse, but the resemblance between what Glaucon entertains in *Republic* and what Aristotle would later teach is a superficial one. As with Socrates and Plato, Aristotle understands that justice is at root a virtue, and in his estimation, like the other virtues he describes, it is properly discerned as some kind of intermediate—a mean between extremes. It may indeed be a different kind of virtue than say courage or temperance (e.g., one cannot have an excess of justice), but it is a principal virtue all the same. Glaucon baits Socrates by asserting that justice is the very opposite of a virtue, that in all candor what the high-minded call justice is really a vice. Moreover, those who behave justly in truth do so unwillingly, submissively choosing the just life and the practices of the law-abiding citizen because they are not strong enough to be unjust, to commit injustice for their own gain. Here Glaucon as Devil's Advocate presents much more than a definition of justice merely for the sake of argument or an examination of the benefits and costs stemming from our decisions to either act justly or unjustly, he is floating an uncompromisingly pessimistic theory of human nature. He tenders this wild claim so that Socrates will have no choice but to answer with a truly instructive case for the opposite view, that is, the essential goodness of human beings. Plato, first through Thrasymachus and now still more seriously through Glaucon, probes the implications of pure, uncompromising conventionalism and the inevitable capacity for injustice that lies at its center.

THE INVERTED WAY

By way of comparison, as noted earlier, the supercilious Callicles in *Gorgias*, although manifestly wrong, aggressively argues that his position—that the superior should seize what they want without submitting to any kind of restraint—is in fact truly just without deliberately defending the unjust, even though his principles by any reasonable standard in effect rationalize injustice (*Gorgias* 481b-493d).[19] In *Gorgias*, when Callicles contemptuously rejects

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Socrates's teaching that, absent an alternative, it is better to suffer than to commit wrong—an immoderate rejection that Socrates wastes no time to refute—he nonetheless argues from the premise that there is indeed a natural "justice" enjoining illimitable and exploitative hedonism to the benefit of the superior few; a natural justice that should guide men of ability and genuine virtue but that is typically repressed by the many who, lacking such capacious appetites, are weak, stupid, and envious. Instead of listening to the likes of Socrates who seems more interested in dodging adult responsibility than supporting the right order of things, we should admire our indulgent superiors and yield to their will. Unfortunately, Callicles complains, we instead expect our natural betters to yoke themselves under constraints imposed by polite convention, thereby denying the free-wheeling gratification of their expansive and naturally healthy appetites, voluntarily forcing themselves to become "slaves" to moderation when they should be increasing their desires and accumulating unimpeded what they want, unbound by tempered counsel. Great in numbers only, the weak find their strength in the crowd. Arrayed against what is natural, deploying conventional laws and customs in the inversion of the natural order, they suppress nobility and elevate the common. Callicles accuses the majority of subverting the laws of nature and committing injustice through the self-serving conventions they impose (481c).[20] Pandering to the *hoi polloi* are talented crowd-pleasers like the grandstanding Socrates, able men who foolishly deny their natural dispositions and become allies of the vulgar in their efforts at thwarting the laws of nature (482e-483a).[21] Phenomenal nature is the true foundation of the just order of things; not the concept of nature denoting transcendent, objective principle, but rather material nature, which consists of an observable and contingent order wherein those of ability and quality are entitled to the lion's share, provided they can keep it (483d).[22]

Through the voice of Callicles, Plato introduces the kind of wrong-headed intelligence that confuses and conflates the universal first principles of natural law, which are understood by Plato (and Socrates) to be substantively moral, intelligible, and immaterial, with observable nature, adopted by figures, such as Callicles, as a phenomenal matrix of material bodies reacting on impulse, prefiguring ideas that would later be explored by a different kind of philosopher.[23] Callicles commits a basic error by conflating the concept of intelligible objective moral principles of natural law with the mechanisms of phenomenal nature, and yet he remains firm in his belief that the laws of nature are just, the statutory enactments of the many contrary to nature and consequently unjust. From the perspective of Callicles and those of like mind, what Socrates claims to be true is in opposition to not only the way things really are, but the way things should be, how we should act if we are to abide by nature's justice rather than those customs that flip the

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natural order of things and elevate the many who are inferior at the expense of the superior few, those who are naturally dominant and entitled to gratify all pleasure[24] (481c). Most readers would recoil from these suggestions, and yet Plato seems to write Callicles as being dead serious in his position and unabashed in stating it, one who is goaded by Socrates's "unmanly" notion that suffering wrong is more choice worthy than committing wrong, a proposition that, according to Callicles, subverts nature itself, and is thus merely an apology for the vulgar injustice of the many. Socrates's rebuttal is persuasive to everyone except Callicles, for as misguided as he may be, he holds his ground unblushingly (unlike Thrasymachus) and does not yield. For Callicles, Socrates should be embarrassed, even punished; it is he who should be the one blushing (485c-d).[25]

Thrasymachus, by contrast, is not in the least interested in law natural or conventional. For him, the irreducible agent of all human institutions, laws, mores, practices, and principles is power, and power by its very nature is involved in the exertion of self-interest. Power as Thrasymachus understands it is most effectively acquired and best asserted by those who openly reject justice and embrace injustice without compunction. It is always in one's interest to exploit the system to one's benefit, leading inevitably to the commission of injustice—the larger the scale, the better. Thrasymachus makes no attempt to argue that his promotion of injustice and tyranny is based in any way upon a just order of things. Thrasymachus, after first defining justice following the pattern established by Socrates, Cephalus, and Polemarchus, dispenses with it altogether. At bottom, there is power and power alone; and it is injustice and not justice that always serves power, thus making it the better choice for a serious man, and not one who, like Socrates, is either acting childishly or ensnared in the briars of his own irony. Deliberately provocative, Glaucon boldly revives and fortifies the argument of Thrasymachus, using premises perversely contrary to not only Socrates, and thus further misaligned to all decency, but even distinct from the twisted assertions of Callicles in *Gorgias*. Our Devil's Advocate asserts that people, without admitting it, generally view *injustice* rather than justice as naturally good, or at least hold fast to the warped assumption that "it's a fact of nature that doing wrong is good and having wrong done to one is bad" (Waterfield translation).[26] In this way, Glaucon follows the disorienting algorithm set earlier by Thrasymachus, first defining justice, in this case not so vulgarly as the advantage of the stronger but somewhat more palatably as first a good that is onerous and beneficial; and then, second, as an agreement on a mean between the extremes of committing wrong with impunity and suffering wrong without any prospect for rectification.

Having done all this in a few quick and decisive brush strokes, he deftly moves, as did Thrasymachus, to reject justice altogether, describing it as not

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simply onerous but also never to one's benefit. Thrasymachus, it turns out, was correct according to Glaucon's re-launch: *pleonexia*, the desire to surpass others by taking what is more than one's fair share, is the driving force, the prime motivator, the only realistic explanation of human conduct. Glaucon goes still further, in a passage reminiscent of Callicles, claiming that *pleonexia* is, frankly, natural to anyone, therefore laws and customs unnaturally restrain us from following our true desires (359c).[27] While this portion of Glaucon's argument does appear to reiterate Callicles, the upshot of Callicles's argument, that there is a kind of natural justice—just not the kind a virtuous person would recognize—is inverted by both Thrasymachus and Glaucon, the parallel being betrayed by the inner premise, that is, for Callicles, the order of nature, while unpleasant to most, is just; for Glaucon, the order of nature is unjust, and we must discreetly leverage that to our advantage. Our true nature, according to Glaucon's account, explains why no one is willingly just, why no one voluntarily obeys the laws for their own sake or follows any rule as a matter of principle. We may make a fine show of being just, Glaucon suggests, only because the laws and norms of our political institutions and social expectations force us to do so, we are obedient only insofar as we need to protect ourselves from the discipline of the state or the reproach of society. Operating under these assumptions, life in the polis is compelled and coerced, infused with deceit, self-promotion, and self-concealment; genuine virtue a fancy of the imagination. Human beings, Glaucon hypothesizes, feign rectitude in order to gain something that will gratify a desire; ultimately, rectitude itself is a mere desire, a means to conceal still stronger desires that we value more than any pretense to virtue.

In sum, those who are assumed to be "just" will commit injustice if allowed the opportunity; under the right circumstances, no one chooses to fetter their real and unjust desires (359c).[28] Glaucon confronts Socrates with the claim that, regardless of appearances and the way in which we dress our behavior, human beings will only willingly do things to indulge their desires or improve their status, and the best way to satisfy those desires and to angle for position is to find a devious means to commit injustice while screened behind social decorum. Most clever people lacking real power find ways to hide their injustice behind the façade of what appears just; no one wills what is just and hence no one is just. It is the willing or the lack thereof that is the key to Glaucon's uncompromisingly pessimistic hypothesis. The will cannot satisfy itself by being just; it can only be satisfied by somehow finding a way to commit the injustice behind the sustained ruse of apparent justice, and this appearance is insubstantial, a thin but opaque veil. Given the opportunity to cloak its crimes, the purported will can't resist choosing injustice.

Glaucon's argument actually abolishes the will, for where only the rule of desire is left, the will is extinguished, and an aggressively pessimistic species of determinism waits adoption: we just can't help ourselves; not only will we

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be bad when the occasion presents itself, we are at bottom bad, and it is not only right to admit it, it is good to embrace it.

This message is conveyed through the familiar story of Gyges's shepherd-ancestor and the power of invisibility, or more specifically, Glaucon's interpretation of it. This ring myth teaches the generic and unvarnished pessimist's version of human nature. Establishing that the shepherd is deemed upright but nonetheless harboring the same impulses to wickedness found in anyone regardless of a good or bad reputation, the argument for injustice is fortified with an air of plausibility through a borrowed and familiar tale. Stumbling into a command of limitless power, resisting its temptations proves impossible. Instead, our shepherd easily succumbs to the kind of wickedness that no one familiar with his character would have expected. Glaucon tells us that the reactions of the shepherd are the reactions that would occur, in all frankness, to any one of us, it is simply the way human beings are, and above all—and this is the perversity of it—this is the way it should be. One should take advantage of power for their own purposes, even if the use of that power is wicked, provided such wickedness is well-hidden. This ring fable, as told by Glaucon, is meant as both a description of the way people are in their most genuine and unguarded moments, and the way people should be if they want to achieve the kind of success that at once secures political renown while enabling the free gratification of each desire without discrimination and in defiance of self-restraint. An invisibility ring is an apt metaphor for the temptations and dynamics of tyranny, the very thing that Thrasymachus celebrated earlier, but less compellingly, less adroitly.

Perhaps more significantly, this story of a ring of power starkly illustrates that which Glaucon pretends to claim, that justice is a pretense, and consequently, there really are no just people. To argue this is to abandon free will—for there can be no will if we are instinctively compelled in one direction or another. As Professor Strauss allows, even Thrasymachus recognized that there are just, albeit contemptible human beings, but genuinely just persons nonetheless.[29] There is still a choice. In the rhetorical gauntlet thrown by Glaucon, justice is at best identical to legal convention, and at worst an illusion concealing a person's true motives and real nature. Glaucon insincerely argues that we are all insincere, and willfully argues that there is no such thing as the will. Consequently, that which we take to be "decent" conduct is at bottom nothing more than a tool for scamming our way to the top. Gyges's shepherd-ancestor as depicted by Glaucon is the tyrant imagined by Thrasymachus fleshed out and foisted upon us as both a description of what we are and a prescription for what we should do.

Assuming this cynical pose, Glaucon as Devil's Advocate constructs an argument claiming that conventional laws and customs erect a thin yet surprisingly sturdy scaffolding of nominal justice and procedural legality upon which we slyly hang our masks of false decency; behind those masks

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lies concealed the real injustice that purportedly exposes our true nature. In this way, Plato's Glaucon effectively fuses the contextually independent positions held by Thrasymachus and Callicles, and having done so, targets the heart of Socrates's concept of virtue, providing a way for Plato to test, against the counterfactual, the knowledge that virtue, particularly the virtue of justice, is a quality of the human soul. To the contrary, Glaucon argues, the virtues that Socrates seeks to understand are far from being qualities of the human soul, but rather virtues like justice are cosmetics that conceal our inner propensity to selfishness and vice, a superficial sheen of pretended decency hiding our real indecency and injustice. Those who embrace the folly of actually being virtuous, especially those who seek to cultivate the virtue of justice, are doomed to a life vulnerable to ridicule and prolonged suffering.

While Glaucon protests that he does not believe it, he concludes that for most human beings, injustice is the rational path (361e).[30] In his summative remarks, Glaucon seems to recapitulate earlier comments voiced by other participants: the unjust ruler profits from his iniquity (Thrasymachus), and by indulging the vice of *pleonexia*, the unjust becomes wealthy, uplifting purported friends and ruining enemies (Polemarchus). Impiously, Glaucon describes the unjust man as one who succeeds at further concealing his injustice by superficially attending to religious ritual, marked by sacrifices and offerings, theatrically playing at a false devotion that appears to surpass the genuine piety of a just person. Through the insolent claim that the unjust person is more attentive to the gods than to human beings, and that the divine, displaying an all-too-human attitude, will as a result grant favor to the unjust while spurning the just, Glaucon now infects his argument with blasphemy: not only can the gods be manipulated, he swears, but they are at their core unjust, and thus incapable of sensing or appreciating authentic piety (362c).[31] There is more than a hint in Glaucon's exaggerated commendation of the unjust and impious life to the effect that were we to live in a world that fundamentally favored the unjust, then to live the kind of life celebrated by Thrasymachus would be tantamount to living life as a god. For Socrates, such a concept of the divine can only be regarded as utterly false.

IMMODERATE ADEIMANTUS AND THE FLIRTATION WITH IMPIETY

In spite of the force of the argument, Adeimantus considers Glaucon's case for injustice unfinished, and is thereby moved to add what he considers to be the more important matter, indispensable to undertaking the life of masked injustice so vividly recommended by his brother (362d).[32] Specifically, he is keen on emphasizing the importance of "reputation" and "consequences," and

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in particular, the paramount obligation of winning the approval of the gods themselves (363a).[33] Joining Glaucon in the effort to induce the best possible defense of justice from Socrates equal to the task of muting the siren-song of the unjust life, Adeimantus complains that the routine of praising justice in the standard education of children is little more than indoctrination. Whether they admit it or not, what fathers really teach their sons has nothing to do with justice as Socrates wants us to understand it. Rather, the lessons that are typically conveyed to the young are openly concerned about winning a desirable reputation; justice, or more precisely, the appearance of being a just person, only serving as a necessary means toward that end. It is reputation that will secure the results one seeks in the pursuit of a successful life, both publicly and privately, questions about justice are either irrelevant, or they are made relevant only insofar as the appearance of justice is necessary, but the virtue of justice, that is, the personal quality of really *being* just and not simply appearing to be just is, according to this attitude, incompatible with the more practical interest in approval and acclaim. Adeimantus stresses the importance of ensuring that a person appears just to others, within the polis and among one's friends, for it is in assuring this reputation for justice that one will enjoy the rewards of not only men but also the gods. As Adeimantus develops this expanded coda to Glaucon's argument, he recapitulates important themes while adding new textures, and in so doing, draws the developments that first stirred in Thrasymachus's declamation to their inexorable conclusion.

Returning to the initial classification of goods first proposed by Glaucon, Adeimantus reassesses the onerous nature of virtues such as justice, moderation, and piety, noting that while the poets are quick to condemn the impious and unjust to the tortures of Hades while crowning the just with wreaths and plying them with merry drink, they nonetheless acknowledge the sweetness, the allure of licentiousness and injustice, singing of their charms as well, admitting that injustice is the profitable way, dishonoring and disregarding the poor and vulnerable who they condescendingly admit to be truly, although although naively, virtuous (363a-e).[34] Finally, Adeimantus casts poets in the worst possible light by describing their rousing exhortations in behalf of injustice, exposing the gods themselves for knowingly rewarding the wicked while troubling the good with misfortunate, torment, and sorrow (364a).[35]

What Adeimantus adds is often viewed as a secondary embellishment to Glaucon's argument. Professor Annas, for example, remarks that Adeimantus's additions are "relatively minor," not warranting "the length of his speech." Annas does consider it noteworthy that Adeimantus seems to place justice in "the second class" of goods (which measures the good by consequences), whereas "Glaucon's demand is really the deontological one, that justice be put in the first class" of goods.[36] If it is the case that Adeimantus

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adds only that which is relatively minor, why does Plato devote so much attention to it? Why does Socrates praise both brothers for their arguments, observing that they "must indeed be affected by the divine"? Socrates could be using irony, or exaggerating the impact of their statements. Then again, Plato could be employing Adeimantus's voice as a means to exhibit conceits far more disturbing than even those ingrained within Glaucon's ring story. Adeimantus is in truth actually enhancing Glaucon's argument in a significant way. His contribution will require a serious response from among those who genuinely seek to recommend the just life. Plato has, through Adeimantus, brought us to an important moment, commanding Socrates's attention before proceeding.

By singing blasphemous songs about unjust gods and their vices, the poets have had a deleterious effect on the impressionable souls of the young. Adeimantus appears anxious about the corrupting influence of those who so irresponsibly and superficially describe the gods as possessing the same wicked attributes found in flawed human beings. This is shallow thinking, trotted out by those who, for the sake of self-promotion, are clever enough to recite select, popular passages of the poets out of context without any real understanding of meaning or any regard for truth. Such a mind is naturally drawn to a self-satisfied assurance in the intelligence of one's own injustice wrapped behind the manicured reputation for being just (365a-b).[37] Pindar himself, Adeimantus intones, would endorse the view that even though a reputation for justice can be useful to those who are inclined to injustice, there is in all frankness no profit whatsoever in actually being just (365b).[38] It is only the appearance of it that matters. Those who presume to treat virtues as ornaments to mask their vices seek to emulate the gods, suppressing truth with their well-crafted and self-serving opinions about life's hard requirements, and concealing their degeneracy behind an artifice of illusory virtue (365c).[39] No virtuous person would recognize such behavior as genuine, Adeimantus knows this and he knows full well that Socrates holds this same position, but he needs a commitment from Socrates toward building the best case for virtue. As with Glaucon, he seeks to spin the most effective argument for injustice in order to force Socrates to respond in kind in behalf of justice. In doing this, Adeimantus raises the stakes even higher, going beyond Glaucon by abandoning all modesty and moderation in the haughty presumption to speak as an equal to the gods.

Professor Bloom once reasonably observed that Adeimantus is presented in *Republic* as being "much more moderate than Glaucon," and as far as anyone can tell this may have been Plato's intention. Throughout *Republic*, the spirited Glaucon is associated with the virtue of courage more than moderation, although certainly not incapable of the latter. As a general observation of the separate personalities, Bloom's interpretation is a sensible one.[40] Nonetheless, Plato in at least one instance depicts Adeimantus as decidedly

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more immoderate than Glaucon. While Adeimantus himself may indeed possess a personality that is more moderate than the high-spirited Glaucon, his enhancement of Glaucon's Devil's Advocate case is exceedingly intemperate. Through his impious slander that the gods either can be fooled into rewarding the unjust, or that they might even deliberately seek to reward injustice for their own purposes, Adeimantus demonstrates a degree of immodesty, even, indecency, inconsistent with the habits and qualities of any person of genuine moderation, or virtue as such. To say that the gods somehow reward the unjust—either by being persuaded (or fooled) by supplication or simply for inscrutable reasons of their own—Adeimantus is emulating a kind of pridefulness through this misguided assumption that mortals can not only understand, but even dare rebuke the behavior of divine beings, even to the extent of presuming to judge the gods.

Adeimantus affectedly entertains the possibility that the gods don't exist at all, providing still further license for the unjust person to mold the world to his or her preferences, all neatly tucked behind declarations of "principles" that are showcased by shallow but nonetheless persuasive, attractive cleverness. If the gods don't exist, Adeimantus seems to be asking, then what does it matter? What's the difference? Moreover, if they do in fact exist, then how can the unjust undertake manipulating the gods by winning them over with a thin façade of piety? Adeimantus is not criticizing piety here, only those who abuse piety through despicable attempts to manipulate the esteem of the gods. In Adeimantus's mock analysis, the gods either don't exist, or if they do, they share our imperfections. They are either irrelevant, or they are but means to our ends, rendered subordinate to human things, not really divine at all, more powerful and dangerous than human beings but certainly not wiser. Filed in tandem by Plato's brothers, the case for injustice now demands of Socrates a convincing reproof, supplanted by a teaching in behalf of the just life, aware of its divine connection, knowing that divine things are always just, that divine wisdom is superior to human wisdom, and divine will is incontrovertibly good (*Apology* 23b).[41]

What if Plato is up to more than this? What if Adeimantus is asking us to more carefully consider the motives of those who appear to be just? If justice is only a good for the consequences that it delivers, then the best possible outcomes would be the rewards of the afterlife. What if the just act as they do with the principal reason of securing themselves for eternity, and thus are only pursuing their own interests even when they behave, in the nominal sense, "justly" to the benefit of others?[42] By this account, those who trumpet their virtues must work assiduously to fully convince the gods of their sincerity so that the anticipated rewards of the afterlife will meet all expectation. Justice, that virtue which is directed toward the good of others, becomes an utter sham under these premises. If this analysis by Adeimantus is correct, then what we call justice is motivated only by self-interest, and consequently

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is not real, it is rendered as meaningless as the concept of will under Glaucon's treatment. There is no justice if what we perceive to be just acts are simply stratagems to outwit the gods. But this is merely another layer to pull away; only the cleverest at being unjust would think to cover all bases so effectively, hanging a convincing façade of justice only for the sake of currying the favor of the gods. Moreover, a genuinely pious person, a truly just person, would neither have formed such a low opinion of the gods nor would that person have entertained the very idea of treating the gods so unjustly through deception, selfish insincerity, and by using the benevolence of the gods as a cynical means toward selfish ends.

Adeimantus well understands the power of appearances and the immediacy of the consequences that follow when considering the ends of a just life. Socrates must take these things seriously if we are to discover the nature of justice in-itself, he must detach the virtue of justice from all exogenous factors, contingent definitions, quasi-universalistic deontic directives, conventional expectations, bad logic, and ulterior motives. To hold, as Adeimantus pretends, that the gods can be either bamboozled by sham piety and injustice wrapped in faux justice, or that the existence of divine things can be questioned, is to incite sacrilege. Socrates knows this. Not only would a person who regards the virtue of justice as a good exclusively for its consequences, and who employs the practices of a just life as a complex maneuver to secure one's reward in the afterlife, demonstrate an absolute failure at knowing both the essence of justice and piety as well as the meaning of the divine, but would also lack the capacity to think beyond themselves, to comprehend an objective moral order that exists independently of their own self-absorbed prejudices, opinions, and conceits. Justice, if it is a thing in-itself, can only be a virtue that is oriented toward the order of being and not the preferences of the self. If treating the gods with superficial piety out of ignorance or selfishness while arranging a display of justice is motivated by some longer view of one's self-interest, then neither the virtues nor the gods exist. Virtue would not allow it and that which is divine would be untouched by it.

Plato understands that the divine will is immune to the influence of human cajoling, persuasion, self-promotion, badgering, and most importantly, deception. Plato is not claiming that the gods are indifferent to human beings, but rather that the gods, or that which is divine, are neither constrained nor impressed by human charms and entreaties; nor is the divine limited by the features of a given situation as perceived by the human mind within a specific context, and from an identifiable perspective. The divine is beyond all context and perspective; and as Socrates will soon demonstrate, it is context and perspective that we must somehow remove from our vision if we are to get to the truth of justice or goodness or any thing, quality or activity considered in and of itself. Even though the speech that Adeimantus delivers is meant to build

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the case for injustice even to the point of hazarding sacrilegious beliefs about the gods, Adeimantus does in at least one instance reveal an aspect of the just person's character by correctly observing that a person who has gained some understanding of justice would respond to the unjust person's loutish mockery of justice not with anger, but rather mercy and forgiveness. In responding to this indecorous behavior in the way that the just would treat the unjust, Adeimantus offers a glimpse into his own true character, which in this instance does exhibit a moderate sensibility. This speaks to Bloom's reading, and in so doing reminds us of Adeimantus's real agenda: the challenging of Socrates so that justice will eventually prevail over shameful injustice (366c).[43]

This insight, that is, the recognition that the just can only respond in limited ways, such as forgiving their opponents, recalls the approach that Socrates uses in his instruction of Polemarchus (and Crito in the *Crito* at 49a-e) in the character of the just person, one who reliably responds to misdeeds and injustices as only a just person can. In other words, a just person can't be otherwise, even when feigning injustice the just character will somehow reveal itself. This also recalls the way in which Socrates himself patiently answers the unjust and vicious. During the course of his response to Thrasymachus, it is plain to us that Socrates prefers to answer questions about justice and the way toward a just life in the conversation of friends rather than the verbose and swaggering lectures endured in Thrasymachus's "flood of words" (344d).[44]

Adeimantus, like his brother, believes that Socrates understands justice far better and more deeply than anyone else, especially Thrasymachus. For Socrates knows that it is good both in-itself, as a virtue, as well as for its consequences (and significantly, it can never be simply good for its consequences alone), as something conducive to the happier life. It is a virtue first and foremost related not only to that which is good for oneself, but it is also a virtue that is always intended toward the good of others. All the virtues benefit both self and other, even those virtues that seem to focus primarily on the self. Few would argue that those who are wise, or courageous, or temperate, or pious do not benefit others through their conduct; quite the contrary, if they are to be virtues, wisdom, courage, temperance, and piety cannot simply be only about the state of the soul. Justice is a special case not because it is the only virtue that involves the good of another, but because it is that virtue that begins from the premise of directly intending another's immediate good. In Socrates, we witness a discussion of justice, virtue, and goodness led by a person who promotes serving others. In Thrasymachus, we encounter remarks about those same things that are ultimately about self-promotion. Adeimantus has observed both the angry, reactive bluster of Thrasymachus and the patient examination of Socrates, who, angular to the conventions of his contemporaries, reminds us that the good person dampens anger and does not answer injustice with further injustice. Anger will not turn the souls of the unjust, but forgiveness may.

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In the end, the brothers challenge Socrates to prove that not only is the life of justice better than a life of injustice, but to also prove that there are, in fact, genuinely just people. They are just because justice exists independently in the order of things. If Glaucon's Devil's Advocate argument reflects the way things really are, then a just person, and justice itself, could not exist, any claim to living justly rendered false; for by definition, the just are always just willingly, the good are good of their own volition. Consequences and conventions alone, while not unimportant, are not sufficient to assess the justice of an action. Were that the case, then what we call justice at any given time (T1) is just only insofar as we deem it so. The move from T1 to T2 would also entail a move from X-definition of justice to X(+/−)-definition of justice, and so on, until X inevitably mutates to not-X. In the final analysis, there is a fundamental difference separating those who act justly and those who behave appropriately. Under the argument clumsily delivered by Thrasymachus and fortified by Glaucon and Adeimantus, were there a world where the temptations of power and the desire for esteem affect everyone in the same way and direct all of us toward a life of self-serving injustice, justice would then be at best an illusion, or a childish fantasy.

Through his argument, Adeimantus explains to us about the need for the inwardly unjust to deceive even the gods, if one can imagine such a thing. Injustice profits all of us in this world, according to this account, and skilled persuasion ensures divine clemency in the next (366a).[45] Adeimantus claims that prayer and offerings are motivated by desire and fear—desire to have one's way with impunity, and fear of being caught. To say such a thing, that prayer is motivated only by impulses, such as pleasure or fear, is the false insight of the willfully ignorant, at once small-minded, conceited, and profane. Adeimantus knows this. He also knows that Socrates will aim to refute it. Adeimantus, like his brothers, is hoping to "hear the opposite" from Socrates, that justice is superior to injustice, and that good is something in-itself, apart from and superior to evil, and furthermore that it requires a kind of wisdom to know this, and a loose sophistry to dismiss this. Requisite to knowing justice is realizing that it is *both* intrinsically good as well as consequentially good, the former aligning justice with truth, and the latter implementing justice in practice.

One passage in particular illustrates the difference between those who understand politics as fundamentally about power and those who understand the essence of politics to be about something else entirely. Well into his protracted coda, Adeimantus responds to an imaginary objection about the difficulty in hiding one's vices throughout one's life by replying that "nothing great is easy" (365d).[46] He expands upon that statement by recommending that we seek the path opened by his account—namely, the recommendation of the unjust life cloaked by phony justice, injustice hidden from both

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men and gods. Such concealment is further enabled by forming exclusive clubs for social and political gain (365d).[47] At this point, it is evident that Adeimantus has rooted his argument in the premise that politics enables the secretive and deceptive in the pursuit of injustice behind the false-front of a reputation for justice.[48] Even more to the point, Adeimantus, in his phrase, "nothing great is easy," draws a connection between the behavior of the unjust and wicked to what might be understood as nothing less than great deeds while demanding ample reward in this life and, once the gods are either hoodwinked or bribed, the life after (365c).[49] There is a striking difference between this remark and what Glaucon, with Socrates's assent, will say later in *Republic* at 435c-d (a statement found in at least two other dialogues) that "everything fine is difficult."[50] Adeimantus speaks of what appears to us as great, and follows that remark by explaining that if we are to secure happiness, we must tread the impious path. After Glaucon quotes this maxim about the fine and difficult, Socrates considers another road, longer and richer, that must be tracked in order to find the answers about justice in both the city and the soul for which we have been hoping (435d).[51] More may be said about this later, but for the moment, it could be of some benefit to us to consider the difference between the great thing spoken of by Adeimantus and the fine things raised by Glaucon while under the guidance of Socrates. Adeimantus is fixed on the idea of greatness, and detects greatness in the practices of injustice carefully disguised. In the same passage, he mentions secretive and political clubs, joining these forms of association to the need for experts in rhetoric to train us in the cunning ways necessary for successful oration before the assemblies and in the law courts, and drawing the conclusion that persuasion and force in the right combination are the basic tools enabling us to outdo others with impunity. Picking up on Glaucon's cue about fine things, Socrates speaks of that other path, which will reveal the nature of justice in both polis and soul. The fine is not necessarily great; both require determination and effort in their pursuit, but they are distinguished by the virtues of their ends, and only one will bring our souls and our cities into the correct order.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND SELECTED REITERATIONS

Remember, throughout the discussion that occurs within the first book of *Republic* Plato raises two principal questions about justice: (i) what is justice? and (ii) why should we be just? or more completely, which is the more advantageous, a life of justice or a life of injustice? Running parallel to these questions, Plato sets the cast for two political models: the first, declaimed

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by Thrasymachus and further explored by Glaucon & Adeimantus, asserts that politics is essentially about the acquisition and exertion of power for the gratification of one's desires and the promotion of one's self-interest. The second model, discerned by Socrates, is grounded in a different premise suggesting that politics is essentially about something different and far more complex. Plato knows that there is an inverse correlation between the expansion of power and the fixation upon one's self-interest on the one hand, and the health and purposes of the polis on the other. These two questions of justice and these two models for the understanding of political activity, while parallel to each other as lines of inquiry, nonetheless in practice share a corresponding and intersecting relationship. Those who believe that the just life is better than the unjust life are also likely to be those who believe that politics is not exclusively identified with power and self-interest. Those who argue that politics is in a relationship of identity with power are also those who argue that justice, along with all other political principles and virtues, is consequently a function of power. In the reduction of politics to power, we find the answer to questions such as "what is justice?" in the disturbing doctrine that justice is what the "stronger" or the "more superior" or the "more numerous," whoever it is that happens to hold power, are pleased to say it is. Justice and similar principles and ideas are erected on will and preference, or at the very least those convictions supported by and supportive of the structure of power. In this model, everything hinges on the preferences and impulses, opened and closed through the exertion of the will. Even our agreements on a reasonable mean between extremes, Glaucon argues, are but further variations of this theme, a kind of will to power that conflates truth and interest, right and desire, justice and advantage, what the will needs to be true—and even the gods, Adeimantus interjects, are subject to this dynamic.

Definitions of justice, species of things that we deem good, blueprints and models for the institution of political establishments that provide us with guidelines for political action are really only what we want them to be, what serves our interests, what we declare to be true according to our will, what enables the outdoing of our rivals so that we may have more than we would ever need. It is the voice of a fallen nature, a shadowed perception of the way things present themselves to our immediate, unreflective experience, a presentation that does not come from the things-themselves so much as it is interpreted through our constricted perceptions. It is concentered subjectivism driven to its extreme, personal self-experience usurping transcendent truth, perspective pitted against knowing, intelligence in service to the vanities of the ego, a triumph of willfulness bereft of heart.

Socrates cannot allow these misconceptions. He knows that failure to defend justice while one is still able would serve only slothful resignation (368b-c).[52] Moreover, Socrates reiterates that his initial defense against Thrasymachus in

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behalf of justice was sufficient, and yet we remain at that previous impasse, owing to the unjust speeches trumpeted almost a little too skillfully by Plato's brothers, so effective that Socrates suspects that the "Sons of Ariston, godlike offspring of a famous man" are "affected by the divine, for within them there truly is justice," but they are nonetheless capable of arguing a convincing case for the very thing that they must, as companions of Socrates, find reprehensible. They have mastered rhetoric far beyond the prideful art of Thrasymachus. The other son of Ariston, the one who is neither a named participant in nor witness to the conversation, but who knows and sees Socrates as he is, enjoins us to seek other sources, to peer beyond the play of shadow and light before us toward purer light undetected by the squinting eye. Socrates and Glaucon have together gone down into the Cave, and now must regain their vision, to wake up, as it were, so that they can again recognize that light which will lead them upward, to help us find our way out (520c-d).[53]

Before proceeding, let us once again recall the conversation between Socrates and Cephalus, the exchange that tunes up the whole of the *Republic*. Cephalus appears to be a good man to Socrates, assuming that Socrates regards him without irony, and while careful readers discern Socrates's dissatisfaction in his discussion with the patriarch, one can still conclude that Cephalus is a person of merit, a person who's opinion, while perhaps incompletely formed and insufficiently rigorous, does provide an important entrance to the consideration of the just life. As with the democratic city, the democratic man that Cephalus embodies is at least provisionally correct about some things, and thus like the city that he supposedly represents, he is both partially just as well as concomitantly unjust. Cephalus is not misguided, for speaking the truth and returning what is owed are things that just people do. For a complete definition of justice, these benchmarks are insufficient, but their use as markers of just activities is evident. Unlike his self-assured son Polemarchus or his irascible friend Thrasymachus, Cephalus understands just action without respect to persons (e.g., do good to your friends and commit harm to your enemies) and absent considerations of one's interest (it is in one's interest to be unjust, not just); he is serious about honesty and duty. The suggestion to favor one set of people over another, or to always put one's own interest ahead of everyone else, appears foreign to Cephalus.

Similarly, democracy and democratic persons also seek justice without favoring persons or groups, but democracy can be careless in considering all cases, insufficiently resolute in what is truly right or wrong, easily charmed by pleasing novelty, given to unrealistic abstraction, and ever distracted by the garish and the bombastic. These shortcomings noted in the conversation between the patriarch and the philosopher—the former representing the legitimate authority of the household even though that authority may be only partially informed, the latter representing the only authority capable of guiding the polis,

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even though that authority is likely not to be recognized—the attitudes of the democratic person manifest in its good intentions, hindered by its lack of focus and rigor, are nonetheless brought before us as the sensible way into the analysis of the just life, the requisites of a just polis. A democratic regime is an imperfect regime, of that we will later be fully apprised, but even if imperfect, it is not without quality, and it provides, as does Cephalus, the most reliable platform upon which we can begin working toward that city which is just in and of itself.

We must avoid hopeful exaggerations overstating the case for positive remarks about democracy in Plato's writings, and by the same token, we must not be indifferent to those elements of Plato's political thought that see truth and value in familiar aspects of democratic politics, aspects that help to reveal something about the best possible political community. Democracy's principal pitfall, its neglect of universal first principles even in those moments when it attempts to embrace them, trouble Plato and cause him to withhold his endorsement. Were we to find a way to ensure that the democratic city and person were equally attuned to the antecedent order of things and not afflicted by democracy's congenital tendencies toward disorder, we would establish a newer and happier politics. In the end, however, it is not the "new" and the "happy" that will sustain our search for a just polis, but rather the eternal and the Good. Socrates must now address Glaucon's false template, disprove Thrasymachus's distortions, and commit the full powers of his intellect to commend justice and condemn injustice (358d).[54] Glaucon, the philosopher's spirited companion, aided by his brother Adeimantus, has spurred Socrates forward by showing him "the way" to disprove the sophist's shameful teaching, one that directs Socrates to a fuller examination of the meaning of politics through the knowledge of its beautiful form.

NOTES

1. Cooper, p. 980.
2. Ibid.
3. See 498c-d in Book VI.
4. For more about the theme of descent, see Rosen, p. 19, and Brann *The Music of the Republic: Essays on Socrates's Conversations and Plato's Writings* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2004), pp. 117–118.
5. John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975; 1996), pp. 314–315. See also Patrick Deneen, *The Odyssey of Political Theory: The Politics of Departure and Return* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), pp. 128fn77.
6. Recall the insight shared by Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, Chapter Thirteen, wherein he observes that it "is the nature of men that howsoever they may acknowledge many others to be more witty, more eloquent, or more learned, yet

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they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves." See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. Edited by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), p. 75.

7. Cooper, p. 999.
8. Ibid.
9. Cooper, pp. 998–999.
10. Cooper, pp. 990–991.
11. Cooper, pp. 998–999.
12. Cooper, p. 999.
13. Cooper, p. 1,000–1,003.
14. Ibid.
15. See also Ferrari, pp. 15–17.
16. Cooper, p. 998.
17. Cooper, p. 999.
18. Cooper, p. 1,000. Robin Waterfield's translation seems to encourage the view that the concept of the social contract is present in Plato's Glaucon, "once people have experienced both committing wrong and being at the receiving end of it, . . . they decide that the most profitable course is for them to enter into a contract with one another, guaranteeing that no wrong will be committed to received." Waterfield, p. 46.
19. Cooper, pp. 828–836.
20. Cooper, p. 826.
21. Cooper, pp. 827–828.
22. Cooper, p. 828.
23. E.g., "But whatsoever is the object of any man's appetite or desire that is it which he for his part calleth *good*; and the object of his hate and aversion, *evil*; and of his contempt, *vile and inconsiderable*. For these words of good, evil, and contemptible, are ever used in relation to the person that useth them, there being nothing simply and absolutely so, nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves, or (in a commonwealth) form the person that representeth it, or from and arbitrator of judge whom men disagreeing shall be consent set up, and make his sentence the rule thereof." – Hobbes, pp. 28–29.
24. Cooper, p. 826.
25. Cooper, p. 829.
26. Waterfield, p. 46. See also Griffith's translation, "Doing wrong, men say, is by its nature good." Ferrari and Griffith, p. 38. See also Cooper, p. 1,000.
27. Cooper, p. 1,000.
28. Ibid.
29. "Glaucon denies that anyone is genuinely just, whereas Thrasymachus does not have the slightest doubt that there are many just men whom he despises." Strauss (1964), p. 87.
30. Cooper, p. 1,002.
31. Cooper, p. 1,002.
32. Ibid.
33. Cooper, p. 1,003.

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34. Cooper, pp. 1,003–1,004.
35. Cooper, p. 1,004.
36. Annas (1981), pp. 65–66.
37. Cooper, p. 1,005.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. See Bloom, pp. 345–346.
41. See, Cooper, p. 22.
42. See Rice, pp. 37–38.
43. For further insight, see Annas (1981), p. 64.
44. Cooper, p. 988.
45. Cooper, p. 1,005.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. It must be noted that Professor Bloom does not include the word "political" in his translation, thus reading Plato as saying "secret societies and clubs." See Bloom, p. 42. Professor Shorey translates this passage as follows: "For with a view to lying hid we will organize societies and political clubs, and there are teachers of cajolery who impart the arts of the popular assembly and the court-room." See Shorey, p. 137. Professor Griffith follows Bloom, but in Profs. Ferrari and Griffith note that "private clubs" [in Athens] "were important in launching the politically ambitious," thus drawing our attention to the political function of these private organizations. Ferrari and Griffith, p. 46.
49. Cooper, p. 1,005.
50. Cooper, p. 1,067. Additionally, Professor Avi Mintz identifies three places in the Platonic dialogues where Socrates uses this phrase: *Republic*, *Cratylus* and *Hippias Major*, the authorship of the latter dialogue in dispute. See Avi Mintz, "*Chalepa ta Kala*," "Fine Things are Difficult": Socrates' Insights into the Psychology of Teaching and Learning," *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, Vol. 29 (2010), pp. 287–299.
51. Cooper, p. 1,067.
52. Cooper, p. 1,007.
53. Cooper, p. 1,137.
54. Cooper, p. 999.

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Chapter 4

The True City

Politics begins in friendship and has as its end the good in-itself. All things worthwhile are inspired to goodness, and every activity that is undertaken for the sake of the good is an activity that springs naturally. Plato affirms the true, the beautiful, and the good to be that which all souls pursue, for the good, being divine, is that which is most real, and most dearly sought (*Republic*, 505e).[1] It is unreasonable to expect dispassion from a human being with regard to what is good and what is evil; rather, it is through our affirmation of the good that we fully realize human potential, that we actualize the inward essence of our being. If we presume to purposively dissolve the moral structure of our nature, if we operate under the illusion that we can reach beyond good and evil so that we can then come to know ourselves again, we work a folly and condemn ourselves to shadow, we exchange the substance of our reality for the illusions that spring from our varied circumstances and learned preferences. In Socrates's estimation, we cannot know ourselves without knowledge of the Good, and this knowledge is not asserted so much as it is discovered. It is in reaching beyond perspective and preference that we find the essence of the thing, beyond will and power that we find the truth of our nature, a truth that can only be formed in the knowing of the Good as keystone of the Forms. It is under this assurance that Socrates expands his inquiry into the virtue of justice, the truths about just and unjust lives, and politics as it is and as it ought to be. To begin our understanding of both what is and what ought to be, Socrates knows that our starting point must be freed from the particular, without location, independent of perspective. To know justice and to explain why we not only should be just, but to affirm our capacity for justice, and to further know what it means to be a political being, we are best served by beginning from a position unclouded by point of view, uncoupled from circumstance and convention. For Socrates, the only sure path upward is

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a way claimed by none but known by all, opened by the mind not the senses, marked by objective qualities and not subjective entanglements. If it is a way claimed by none but known by all, then the *Republic* is a book for all without qualification, unburdened by paradox. Glaucon and Adeimantus seek the rational, and Socrates recognizes that this rationality relies upon knowledge that is not dependent on the convincing assertion of opinion, but rather that comes in the turning away and the moving upward, it is not in the descent but in the ascent that we find ourselves.

To understand justice as it is and the benefits that it truly provides remains the quest toward which Socrates and his friends are committed (368c).[2] Socrates knows that Glaucon and Adeimantus are not arguing from their hearts; for he measures their arguments against the virtues behind their pretense, recognizing the dissonance between the values currently espoused and the virtues evinced through their character, known to Socrates through their friendship (368b).[3] This passing recognition by Socrates distinguishing purported values from evident virtues is an important remark. Socrates understands that it is in the qualities of the person that we find the virtues, not necessarily in the announcement or adoption of a set of estimable values. Values can be adopted or renounced, modified or crystalized, clarified and codified, claimed or practiced, and yet they are but empty conceit absent personal virtue. Socrates knows the virtues of Glaucon and Adeimantus from his familiarity with their genuine character, who and what they truly are through their habits; and for this reason, he is able to continue their mutual investigation into the essence of justice and the nature of politics, among other things, in the confidence that a truth will be discerned and a real principle, a principle grounded in the unreflective practice of virtue and not simply the self-satisfied claim to it, can be understood (368b).[4]

Owing to virtue in the sons of Ariston, as well as in others among Polemarchus's guests, Socrates is able to begin his inquiry into the nature of the political through an examination of the city of good men first mentioned in Book I. A city of good men is possible because of our capacity for virtue; all cities measure themselves by standards, and some of these cities are genuinely good. The "advantage of the stronger" and the "mean between extremes" are values, but their merit depends upon the virtues that ground them in the qualities of persons. Any city can operate under the rule of Thrasymachus, most cities so doing spiral into tyranny, all decline into a measure of injustice. Were we to replace the rule of Thrasymachus with the qualities requisite to a city of good men, the prospect of tyranny would become utterly alien, disappearing without notice. While no political community is good in every aspect, the potential for goodness in all persons illustrates the *essential* reality of this community. As with all of us, Glaucon and Adeimantus are not perfectly virtuous, but their capacity for virtue and the good qualities that they

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do exhibit in spite of what they are proposing encourages Socrates to return to the city of good men, and to specify its properties. Once again Socrates reminds us of the importance of connecting justice in the person to justice in the city, noting that if we are to know the qualities of the smaller thing, we are well served in the examination of the larger. First, we must be certain to examine the city in its essence, which means for Plato that we must not begin with a particular city—a visible city—but with the city in theory, for it is there that justice is disclosed, and ultimately what it means to be political by nature and not convention, and good through virtue rather than abstracted values.

THE TRUE AND JUST CITY COMES INTO VIEW

Any inquiry into the true form of the political requires suspending perspective, at least as far as humanly possible. The essence and meaning of the political in-itself, and not simply politics in Athens or Corinth, or justice in Sparta or Persia, can only be discerned conceptually; any phenomenal example distracts our understanding of political meaning by fixing our focus onto observable specifics. Socrates seeks the essence in the intelligible alone, thus he cannot begin by dissecting the familiar features of any polis available to experience. An account of the institutions, practices, and principles of his Athenian home would cloud and constrain a discussion of the essence of politics. Those same limitations would obscure our efforts should we begin our study with a discussion of the political and social institutions and practices of, say, Renaissance Florence or eighteenth-century Poland, or of perhaps more direct interest for us, modern France, Kenya, Japan, Argentina, Kazakhstan, or the United States. Comparative studies are indispensable components of political inquiry; Socrates, however, only seeks comparison with the Heavenly paradigm. In reflecting upon the intrinsic, the study of cases will not enable our understanding of justice in-itself, only justice as it is incompletely understood. Justice, being a virtue, is only manifest externally as a result of the quality of our own characters, the fairness of our institutions, the decency of our decisions, and the goodness of our actions. Were we to exclusively examine the laws and customs of any specific case, we would be oriented to one direction, toward the image of the just rather than toward its form. The Form of Justice is only discerned once we turn around, away from those images of it that incompletely represent the essence. Even if we were to conclude that Athens is just—a study of Attic justice and its attempts to apply just practices within its institutions would only lead us as far as Athens itself could take us. But Athens is not the exemplar of justice any more than Sweden or Singapore could be deemed

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exemplary of the just city. The just city—the real city—is discovered in the conversation between mature minds.

Problematically, Socrates later concedes to Glaucon's biased assumption that the city that is now being founded in theory would be a Greek city, incongruent to the universality of the Form (470e–471b).[5] Naturally it is Greek, Glaucon assents and asserts; further reinforcing the contextual origin of the conceptual frame (470e).[6] Having arduously labored to discern the universal, the companions, through their grounded assumptions, remind all of us of our own cultural constraints. Neither Socrates nor Glaucon (or for that matter, Plato) are omniscient, nor are they bloodless, abstract consciousness detached and hovering above the phenomenal plane. Their shared quest for the Form can only begin from within their own context, building upon their own experiences, through the conversation made possible to them through their own language and within their own conceptual structure erected upon life within Athens. Plato works from within the familiar, for the familiar is the first frame—not unlike the shadows on the cave wall—that allows us to begin to sort out the features of our world. From this first frame, he is able to build out and upward, not detaching himself from his initial ground but rather boosted forward from it. The universal will be discovered, and it is not Athenian, nor is it alien to the case from whence he proceeds. If it were, it would not be universal.

Socrates's preference for things Greek may supply rhetorical ammunition for a case against Plato's moral and political objectivism. Then again, it might also be viewed as a recognition that the Form of the Polis, while belonging to no one, can and perhaps must be reached from somewhere. Remember that those shadows on the cave wall are cast by objects passed before a fire, objects that themselves resemble the real things found outside under full light of day. Any *political* community will in some aspects resemble the Form of the Polis, thus we can begin our exploration of the essence of politics from within any context, but we cannot remain within that context any more than we can remain in shadows. We must use our immediate experiences as a springboard to reach beyond ourselves. What Socrates seeks in his ideal is a good, decent and unified city, one in which friendship forms and endures among those of like mind. We are not going to find in the writings of an ancient author the multicultural sensitivities appreciated among our own contemporaries. Aristotle's claim, for example, that Greeks should rule barbarians was likely an attitude commonly shared among the educated and leisured. Socrates is not building his city with components supplied by Sparta or Athens—although resemblances are evident and unavoidable—but rather by discovering within ordinary conversation what is essential through the application of the intellect ungoverned by phenomena. By beginning outside—or perhaps beyond— any specific city, we are simply recognizing that there is no single, particular city,

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regime or polity that is more suitable as a starting point from which we can begin our exploration and eventual discernment of the nature of politics. We might recognize elemental features familiar to any regime, but no phenomenal city as such is sufficient to realize the end toward which we are aimed. If it were the case that we could discern the essence of the political in examining a city or cities in our immediate experience, Socrates would choose to begin his conversation by directing his friends to first consider justice in Athens, or even Sparta. That he does not do this is more revealing than the presumption admitted at 470e; Socrates is demonstrating the most reasonable way toward the discernment of a political essence, one that avoids beginning within a particular case like Athens, Sparta, or Corinth, but one that can be appreciated from a perspective firmly enclosed within any given case or context.

In seeking some insight into the universal form, the essence of a thing, state, property, or act, we must begin with a featureless framework, one that is necessarily intelligible. Just as no specific city that we can observe is sufficient to supply adequate context, no particular kind of regime is offered as the template for such a discussion. None of the typical regimes embody the Form wholly and as it is; no complete pattern or blueprint is available to us from within the various species of the phenomenal cities that we together inhabit; the city of speech is independent of category. It has to be this way if we are to understand why justice is a human virtue and not a Greek, Persian, or Egyptian virtue. Additionally, to assume that either democracy or autocracy in any of their variant types will provide an effective launching point for our investigation is an assumption that will ensnare us within our perceptions, presuppositions, and expectations.

And so Socrates, with Adeimantus, works to lay the foundation for this imaginary city. Significantly, Socrates expects to see both justice and injustice emerging through this theoretical exercise. He is imagining the city so as to find the principles of justice as well as the symptoms of injustice that could manifest therein should disorder be introduced. Socrates seems to anticipate that even a city in theory as well as the soul of exemplary virtue will know both justice and injustice, for the conversation with Glaucon, Adeimantus, and Thrasymachus has uncovered the strange magnetic attraction of the unjust life in spite of his ongoing belief that justice is more natural to the human person. This attraction, while potent, is not the aim of a life well-lived, nor a city fully affirmed. What are the virtues but functions of the soul perfected? What are cities but communities of embodied souls?

Two natural factors are at work in revealing the city in theory, and by extension, all cities in general. These two factors, need, or necessity on the one hand, and variation of function in addressing those shared needs on the other, both stem from one root fact, namely, no single individual is naturally self-sufficient. It is from the want of personal self-sufficiency that the city

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originates; thus human beings are by nature political, for politics springs from our needs and our needs cannot be met without cooperation, shared talents and resources, and the requisite friendship. This is joined with the fact that even though we all do share common needs, each person is by nature in some aspects different, at least in the quality of our talents and bent of our proclivities. To supply all of our needs, the most basic community requires division of effort based on the natural functions and inclinations of different persons (370a-b).[7]

Nature sets its own conditions. Human beings, while each born with different talents, nevertheless share common need, and can only address that need by committing what makes each of us different to the operation of the political community. Were we required to secure all of our needs absent partnership with others, we could not live a life that would enable us to actualize our natural potential to the fullest, and thus we would not only live with our needs perpetually unsatisfied, but also we would remain in a state wherein the fullest realization of our abilities would be thwarted.

Hence, the polis is the means to help us accomplish both, that is, to meet all of our basic needs and to engage life in accordance with our personal nature. If we were to claim that politics is primarily about interest, Socrates would then respond by explaining that the foundation of our interests rests upon what is natural to us, and that which is naturally in our own interest also relies upon the free pursuit of the natural interests of all others. If this is correct, then politics is not about interest in the way we typically think about it; nonetheless we are vested in sharing and cooperating, and we know our true selves in terms of what nature has arranged for us. It is in our interest to align ourselves with nature, and it is nature that first tunes the scale of those interests. This is not to argue that other interests may stir beyond the first design established by nature, but rather to admit that what we call nature prepares us in a way that we ourselves cannot select. If I happen to be naturally good with numbers or skilled at accurately delivering a fast ball, these talents rest on some natural abilities that, while education and training may cultivate and hone, are present at birth, not selected or planned. I may not even have an immediate desire to use these latent talents, but they are mine nonetheless, and one could say that a deeper, pre-conscious interest in developing them somehow explains certain proclivities that I might have, even if they are not evidently related to calculating or pitching. Our free will may seek to defy our natural capacities, but it cannot override them completely, and one can imagine that in most circumstances, it is in our interest to choose not to override them. Those inherent qualities that I might, for whatever reason, choose to ignore or undervalue will likely emerge through other endeavors. Our freedom entails mastering our appetites without repressing or abolishing them, if that were not the case, freedom would be reduced to a meaningless

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abstraction. We are not free to abolish those natural capacities, they remain because they are innate; we are free to work toward their realization, or risk their distortion through choices irrationally preferred.

Self-interest impairs our efforts to understand what it means to live in a political community. If we are better served by dedicating our abilities to the community as a whole, then there is no clear separation between the interests of the self and the interests of others. The idea of interest washes out within a community designed to both affirm the innermost potential of each person and, simultaneously, assign each person to that function, which most effectively and fairly serves the whole. Plato's vision of the True City is one in which there is little distinction drawn between the immediate interests of the self and the larger interests of the polis. Plato is not seeking to altogether extinguish the person, he is not suggesting the strange doctrine of "no self" or entertaining the wrong-headed and self-annihilating aspiration of becoming a "nobody"; to the contrary, for Plato, the person is the beginning and the end of our examination of the just order of things, the setting within which that order of things is discerned. Conversation itself can only occur between persons who are distinct selves contributing their own ideas. The True City is that city wherein we are able to make choices that do not conflict with the needs and wants of others, and the choices made by others do not frustrate our personal capacities. Interest loses its meaning once the person and the city are attuned to the natural composition of things. This is a significant step for Plato in that he is committing his conception of the essence of the political to a conceptual framework that either reduces interest to a minor component of political action, or pushes it out of the city altogether. This can only make sense if we understand that we are speaking now of a natural political community and not a political community that has been influenced by factors contrary to human nature. And it is beneficial to our understanding that we again remember that Plato's conception of human nature depends upon the proposition that every soul seeks the Good. As the Good is not a function of self-interest, preference, or even the individual's perceptions about immediate goods, it cannot be confined by individual will or decision. Nor can it be eliminated through fantasies of immoderate and self-indulgent renunciation. If we are to speak clearly about political interest, our examination is governed by the Form of the Good and our longing to know it. What will become known to Socrates and his companions as the True City only makes sense to the student of politics if the Good, and not narrow self-interest, is its ruling principle.

At its simplest, a True City is a community of helpful partners supporting each other, who together realize the self-sufficiency that eludes those separate individuals who alone are unable to supply all their needs (369c).[8] The goal of mutual self-sufficiency is the original impulse animating all cities; we can

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discern this intelligibly and confirm this empirically through our experience as real citizens participating in any given polity. In supplying our common needs, Socrates relates, the city arises theoretically, in the realm of the intellect, hence Plato joins idea and action right at the beginning. Operating under this premise, we are naturally suited to gathering into cities, living cooperatively as partners for the sake of meeting common needs by performing those tasks aligned with our natural abilities. Owing to our very nature, living in a polis is a good in-itself, and it is also a good for the numerous benefits that result, as Socrates explains when he notes that each person in a community of partners "believes that this is better for himself," that living in a community sharing mutual responsibilities and motivated by a common purpose is preferable to living apart and chasing the impossibility of doing everything for oneself. Politics is a natural good both for its own sake and for its consequent benefits, springing from the existential fact that the human person not only desires the company of others, but needs the company of others. It is in these few short but important observations that Socrates commences his exploration of the True City.

As Socrates and his companions discover, the intelligible city as initially conceived is strikingly lean, rustic, and rudimentary. This first iteration of the city of speech, described from 369a–372d, emphasizes the predominance of necessity and the aspiration for self-sufficiency through the cooperative effort described earlier, occurring spontaneously in response to nature's requirements, bound by nature's limitations.[9] In its sparse beginnings, the city in theory is populated by those who are capable of addressing our minimal needs: farmers to supply what sustains and nourishes us, those who supply other necessities by shielding us against harsh elements, namely, builders who erect our shelters, weavers and cobblers to clothe us, followed by those who are skilled healers (369c-e).[10] The size of this minimal city is actually impossible, for it consists of a community of merely four to five persons who specializing in the one skill in which they are most naturally suited freely contribute their talents to the common good (369e–370a).[11] In fleshing this out, Socrates and Adeimantus soon recognize that such a city pushes the minimum to its extreme, and that if farmers, builders, weavers, cobblers, and physicians are to undertake their functions successfully and efficiently, they need still further support from those skilled in carpentry and metal work, along with a variety of additional skills needed in fashioning the instruments necessary to these fundamental crafts.

On first impression one might conclude that the True City of Socrates is more concerned with the "administration of things" than the government of persons. Prof. Schofield calls this initial iteration of the True City an "economic community," and wonders if what has been so described could really be "an ideal city." He draws the conclusion that "the notion that the economic

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city was a model of rustic simplicity and a paradigm of moral health is fantasy." Rather, Socrates's "economic community" is "artificial" and one dimensional, "ill-designed to function as an ideal to which we should try to conform ourselves: [articulating] a limited system of relationships, not an imitable pattern of living."[12] This interpretation is further supported by the observation that there is very little that we would expect to be "political" in this initial, ideal polis. If we direct our attention to the activities mentioned by Socrates and Adeimantus as they lay the foundations of the imaginary city, we can't help but notice that the principal concerns appear to be with the provision of the means of life, and the management of those materials that will secure it. Prof. Reeve labels this iteration of the True City as the First Polis, which will evolve into a Second Polis followed by a Third and final stage. He describes it as "the Kallipolis of money-lovers," which, if this were accurate, would foreclose any discussion of what Socrates describes between 369a and 372d, centered around the premise that this city is the True City. Professor Rosen refers to this as the "neediest city," which was "founded with the assistance of the austere Adeimantus . . . a kind of caricature of his nature."[13] I argue that there is no reason to assume that the citizens of what Prof. Reeves calls the First Polis love money in the vulgar sense implied by the term "money lovers." Certainly, we can assume that the introduction of retailers and merchants also means the presence of money, but why then are we to conclude that the mere use of currency would inevitably convert ideal citizens to an inappropriate love of money? The use of money does not in-itself stimulate the love of money. Nor is the term "neediest," as applied by Rosen, necessarily applicable to that city, which has the fewest needs, and in which these needs are natural and easily supplied. Rather, the label "neediest city" seems counterintuitive. Such conclusions require an additional ingredient, namely, the appearance of intemperance, and its companion, injustice. Glaucon recognizes this, and obliges Socrates by introducing both into the True City, thus enabling Socrates to push further into his examination of both justice and injustice. For this reason, we might reasonably conclude that political institutions don't appear in the True City until we move from the necessary to the luxurious, just to the unjust. However, if we are to take Socrates at his word, that the True City has just been described and completed with Adeimantus and without any assistance from Glaucon, we must therefore look for the political within that ideal polis.

Socrates is not shedding governance for the administration of things; rather, he seeks the natural ground of the polis. His primary focus is not directed toward the material and the temporal, he means to find the nature of political activity in the sense of first principles, not the commonplace perception of nature understood as phenomenal background. He opens with the observation regarding self-sufficiency, recognizing that it is in the want of it

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that we realize our existential reliance upon each other. Our relations with one another are not solely driven by desire or preference; they are even more deeply rooted in need, in what we are and not as we sometimes appear. Any community is therefore a partnership. Human beings, being embodied souls, have many physical needs. We can meet those needs together, according to Socrates and Adeimantus, through mutual effort in weaving the fabric of relations within which we manifest political being. Socrates is speaking here of the natural and spontaneous cooperation, which is certainly concerned with the provision of material needs, but more importantly, a feature that exhibits the existential qualities of our interdependence.

What is really under examination here is the manner in which human beings can supply those basic needs fairly and effectively, and in a way that encourages the development of our inward capacities through their actions as a community of associates contributing their natural gifts to the common wealth. This point is clarified later in *Republic* Book IV when Socrates begins rounding out his ongoing examination of the nature of justice by alerting his friends to the realization that a definition of justice has already surfaced. Justice, Socrates will observe, is the very thing that we have been examining from the beginning, what has been unfolding during our conversation about the ideal city (433a).[14] That is to say, when the members of a community undertake the one skill for which they are naturally suited and not arbitrarily assigned, justice is present in the city as a whole. The True City as described between 369a and 372d, the simplest of cities, is just because it allows each person in the city to live according to their nature. The administration of material things, while certainly not inconsequential, is decidedly secondary to this fulfillment of one's potential. Moreover, since interdependency cannot be separated from the nature of the person, managing shared resources and talents is a human priority. We need each other so that we can become who we are, and we accomplish this through our natural interaction in political communities.

Significantly, this city in theory does not exist in an autarkic bubble. Instead, he speaks of interaction with other cities, for even after identifying occupations essential to the operation of the True City, it becomes immediately apparent that still more is required to supply all common needs. This simple polis, originally designed to address shared needs through realizing distinct talents, while not being large, will neither be too small (370e).[15] It is a city resting in the mean between the extremes, balancing the complexities of ordinary life with the simplicity of theoretical truth. Even though this city reaches equilibrium in terms of its size, Socrates notes that it cannot sustain itself in isolation, certain needs will still be imported from cities that exist elsewhere (370e).[16] Plato's True City is a political community that by its nature needs to interact with others. Plato is not indulging in the high-minded

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planning of some self-contained utopia, but rather discerning the Form of the Polis and how it is manifest, and as the essence of the political, would emerge in various ways through the components of the phenomenal cities that we daily inhabit in spite of their myriad flaws. This is not simply a domestic dynamic, but one that requires looking beyond the narrow boundaries of one's own home and city. No city, however wealthy in resources or efficient in design, can survive and sustain itself in isolation, some resources will always need to be imported, and other cities will be connected to and invested in its interests. And so other professions must be inserted into the city of speech, importers who travel to and from the city, additional farmers and "other craftsmen" to increase the volume of goods to a level necessary to sustain healthy trade with foreign markets, merchants to "travel between cities," and pilots & sailors for conducting maritime commerce (371b-d).[17] All told, intrinsic to politics is an ongoing and mutually beneficial interaction among disparate communities, dynamic associations between cities and states autonomous and apart.

Socrates also notes that domestic retailers managing the marketplace are required so that farmers and other producers will be free to engage in their specialized craft and not preoccupied with having to worry over exchanging their goods. It is clear that this theoretical city as Socrates first imagines it is deeply rooted in the material world and interdependent with other communities; it is not fanciful and insular after the fashion of the garden variety utopia as we now often imagine it, but a city that in significant ways involves connection with others both at home and abroad, interaction with those who have different qualities and inclinations designed after nature's pattern so that everyone's common needs can be fairly and efficiently met. Plato is not engaged in an academic exercise in engineering an idyllic community out of whole cloth, but rather in discovering the cooperative basis of political purpose and action. Far from fancy, the True City first envisioned by Socrates embodies practicality and economy, it is a city that is built on the premise that nature's requirements are sufficient for decent human life, and that nature's gifts, when rightly developed, enable each person to realize their virtues and harmoniously interact within the broader world.

The polis aims principally at aligning the social order with the nature of persons. In addition to the deep connection Socrates explicitly makes between justice and our natural talents, we also know that he will say later in the dialogue that the art of politics is disconnected from the maintenance of wealth; thus while Socrates begins his discernment of the city in theory with the rational and fair management of material resources requisite to healthy living, he does so with the proper relationships between human beings in mind. If it were otherwise, Socrates would not worry over the task of finding the specific nature suitable to a given function, but rather would simply

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describe the way in which things were to be made and shared. However, Socrates describes the ideal city as an association based on natural abilities and directed toward ensuring that each person has access to what necessity imposes upon us, it is a relationship of persons committed to their talents that is the goal of this community, the sharing of needs is but a means, what really matters are the connections between persons and their distinct talents. It is through these connections that common resources are identified and better managed. Socrates understands that these connections which foster partnership not only among citizens but also with fellow cities, and with citizens of other regimes, are a necessity. Clearly, in Plato's True City autarky, or any policy mandating isolation, is indeed impossible; even the ideal city, the one that fosters genuine self-sufficiency, relies upon a condition of comity with foreign polities.

And yet, Socrates at 372e assures us that what he has just described is in fact the True City, a paradigm through which we are able to understand the political in its essence and not simply the economic.[18] Politics is present in this first iteration, politics in its essence—what it is and what it ought to be according to its nature, prior to the institution of conventions and the addition of constructs that spring from newer needs and diverted aspirations; but we will not see it if we think of politics in terms with which we are more familiar, more comfortable, terms that, for Socrates, are in truth contrary to the nature of the thing.

RULING AND BEING RULED, SERVING AND BEING SERVED

Perhaps the most meaningful lesson drawn from Plato's True City as originally presented is signaled implicitly, not explicitly described. Curiously, Socrates and Adeimantus, in their description of the city in theory, omit any reference to statesmanship, or those who rule on the one hand, and further, any direct reference to slaves, or those who are ruled without ruling, on the other. Now it is admittedly the case that slavery is mentioned later in *Republic* (viz., at 433d)[19], but it is also a fact that it is clearly absent in the description of the Form of the Polis as developed by Socrates with Adeimantus in its initial iteration, and it also seems plausible that, while some variation allows a narrow enslavement of war captives even in the ideal city, Plato understands slavery to be unjust in-itself, and therefore no part of the True City.[20] In other words, masters and slaves are alien to the essential meaning of political community. After Socrates and Adeimantus identify the various and specific functions in the city, from farmers and builders through retailers, those who have weaker bodies, and all of those other occupations mentioned earlier,

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Socrates, in rounding out the city of speech adds one more type of individual who he refers to as others who, while strong in body, do not possess the kind of intellect which *by itself* would meet the qualifications of citizenship (371c-e).[21] Socrates identifies these persons as those who freely earn wages, an important difference setting them apart from slaves who do not own their own strength and who are consequently not permitted to negotiate wages. This addition of wage-earners, Socrates concludes, provides the finishing component of the True City (371e).[22] No other types are added, and it is plain that those who are characterized by their bodily strength and described as suitable for physical labor are not deemed slaves, they are rather autonomous persons who freely exchange their services for a wage. Moreover, as there is no evident hierarchy in the True City as originally conceived, wage-laborers are set on an equal footing with everyone else. If they weren't, they would be identified as slaves or servants, or as resident non-citizens. Unlike slaves, these wage-earners are included in the *polis*, for even though their minds alone might be considered insufficient to qualify them for full citizenship, their bodies, which are capable of arduous physical labor, which is needed in any community, provide them with the talents sufficient to merit citizenship (371e).[23] After all, this iteration of the city in theory is governed by role and function, with no specific type of person singled out as superior or inferior, with all contributing their natural abilities to the common wealth, whether we are speaking of the qualities of the mind or the qualities of the rest of the body. Prof. Reeve observes that in Kallipolis, everyone lives justly and completely owing to Socrates's "principle of prescriptive specialization," or "PS," a principle grounded in nature itself. Under this principle, wage-earners equally enjoy the benefits of the True City, and are in no sense at a disadvantage, or advantage, compared with anyone else as a consequence of their status. Even if there were slaves in the True City (and I argue that there are not, while Reeve argues that there could be, but not of necessity), Reeve writes that if slaves were a group in the city of speech, they would be "legally and constitutionally on a par with every other member of the Kallipolis. The polis craft he practices, the social role he occupies, and consequently the degree of happiness he achieves will be determined by his natural talents only, not by his status as a slave."[24] Slaves would be "legally, constitutionally, and eudaimonistically on a par with nonslaves,"[25] if there were in fact slaves in the True City—which, again, Reeve argues is not essential, but still possible if there are captives taken in battle. What would apply to slaves, assuming that I'm wrong and they are a part of Kallipolis, would equally apply to wage-earners.

Does Socrates consider this last group discussed, the wage-earners, to be citizens? Even though Socrates does pause to note their limited intellects, he does not subsequently exclude them from the city, but rather affirming without qualification that they are members of the community. To be a

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member of a community implies that one is not a slave; or, that one is only a member of a community of slaves. Slaves and masters are not associates, they do not share in community. A True City as envisioned by Socrates is a whole without parts, a real unity. Slavery divides the city into asymmetrical parts, compromising both its justice and its beauty. Hence, those who earn wages for their labor can in no way be considered slaves in this just city, the only just city as Socrates understands justice.

In light of the conventional views held in his times, one would half expect Plato to explicitly introduce slavery into his model city as a necessary institution for the provision of service and physical labor. Socrates certainly allows that some tasks in the ideal city will involve the kind of physical exertion and repetitious toil typically associated with tedious, unskilled work, or of the kind of person who would otherwise have served as a slave in the ancient city. Given the context from which they are familiar, it would seem a merely ordinary observation at this point in the dialogue to mention a kind of natural slave, a type of person suited by their nature to fulfill the role of laborer and servant and consequently sanctioning slavery even in the perfect city. One might conclude that Plato's omission of slaves in his first iteration of the city in theory is an oversight, a consequence of taking slavery for granted—it doesn't need to be said that there would be slaves around, for of course, there would be. However, as Prof. Calvert notes, Socrates mentions the kind of work that would be typically performed by slaves in the ancient city; but in the True City envisioned by Plato, Socrates explains that these activities would be undertaken only by those who would earn a wage, free persons who are not slaves, but citizens—for they finish the city, complete it and contribute to it.[26] Slavery was, of course, integral to life in the ancient world; and yet here, in Plato's ideal city, the Form of the Polis, slaves are not mentioned, or more accurately, they are not mentioned at this point in the dialogue when Socrates and Adeimantus reflect upon the details of the True City. By noting that wage-earners complete the city of speech, and by not explicitly excluding them, Socrates's political paradigm radically departs from expected customs and institutions common to the inhabited cities of his time.

As stated earlier, the political order is, according to Plato, determined by the conditions set by nature; and it seems clear that for Socrates, nature does not establish slavery. If this interpretation is valid, then this is a radical proposal within the larger context of the dialogue, and, one would anticipate, given the practices and expectations of the day, a remark upon the True City that will require an immediate defense from criticism. But neither Adeimantus nor Glaucon, nor anyone present (not even Thrasymachus who had previously introduced that model of the city which in its essence consists of masters and slaves—or more accurately a master who is a slave), raises any objections to this characterization of the Form of the Polis, which means

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that Socrates is therefore not placed into a position to rebut any arguments against imagining the True City without slaves. Compare this to the moment in which Polemarchus and Adeimantus, noticing a lacuna, insist that Socrates discuss the matter of spouses and children in his ideal city. They raise no such objection to the absence of any discussion of slaves in this same ideal. Those present accept that the perfect city is a city absent the institution of slavery or any other kind of involuntary and uncompensated servitude. It is therefore apparent that slavery does not fall within the compass of what is natural or essential to human life, and thus does not fit into the structure of the best possible political community.

Additionally, the absence of slavery from the Form of the Polis as imagined in theory is still further reinforced by Plato later in the dialogue, in Book VIII, at 547b-c.[27] Socrates describes the process in which the True City, once manifest, begins to decay into imperfect types. At this point, Socrates reveals further evidence that he understands the city of speech to consist only of free persons. Should the Form of the Polis be inserted into the phenomenal world and thereby vulnerable to decay, an internecine war would erupt between those identified as iron or bronze in their nature and who are inclined to drag the constitution of the city downward in the pursuit of material gain, and those described as possessing predominantly the gold and silver qualities, and who are oriented toward virtue in pursuit of the Good. As the perfect regime deteriorates, a consequence of being introduced into the realm of becoming, that is, inserted in time, the polis is as a matter of course reconfigured with different institutions and practices supplanting the timeless nature of the eternal form. An intermediate is reached between those who covet wealth and those who aspire to virtue that includes not only a new approach to the distribution of property, but also, and significantly for our argument here, the *introduction* of slavery. The rulers of this imperfect city having declined from the perfect regime, now enslave those who they once guarded, their fellow citizens who had freely served to provide for them, but are now subjugated, deprived of their freedom (547b-c).[28] Governing in the visible imperfect regime, in contrast to the intelligible perfect city, requires that those who hold power must now guard themselves against those whom they have enslaved. It would appear that here Socrates again implies that slavery is not a feature of the perfect city, it only appears as the city moves from Form to phenomena, from perfection to imperfection, from justice into injustice.

To be fair, one might argue that Socrates is only speaking of citizens in a technical sense when he refers to those free friends who were once under their guidance and protection, neglecting to mention the presence of slaves assuming that his audience would simply expect slaves to be in the city as a matter of course. Granted, this interpretation is plausible, for it is possible that Socrates would not feel the need to even mention slaves; but it is equally

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possible—and I think more likely—that Plato deliberately makes a point of not adding slaves to the True City, and in Book VIII, the absence of slaves remains noteworthy.

When Socrates, in Book II, states that wage-earners, or those whose minds are of a different caliber but, notwithstanding, whose physical abilities qualify them for citizenship in the True City, perform a fundamental function for the city, he is describing not only a type of person who might be considered a slave in the culture that Plato himself lived in, but he is also informing us that the wage-earner, who might be a slave in an imperfect city, *completes* the city, rounds it off, is thereby an integral part of it—a citizen. Reeve reminds us that if there were to be slaves in Kallipolis—and he asserts that slavery is not necessary within the True City—they would only be non-Greeks captured in battle, a consequence of war, the occurrence of which in-itself could contribute to the ideal city's decline.[29] Slavery appears only when the ideal begins to disintegrate, and it seems to plague not only those who were once wage-earners, but now everyone. Those free friends who are served by the guardians necessarily imply all citizens without qualification, not simply one segment of the city, for were it to be otherwise Socrates would have been more discerning in his description. In the True City, every function is described, every necessity met, and every role assigned according to one's natural abilities. There does not seem to be present any type of person whose natural ability is suited to provide the function of the slave.

Nature provides our innate gifts and marks the boundaries of our condition, not society. There is no place in the True City for the slave—namely, masters are alien to the political space. The polis exists only in that space shared between free persons, and there is no private space separating master and slave, for the slave is treated as merely an extension of the master. Those dispossessed from their freedom are also deprived of private life. Similarly, without free agency—the potential to act independently in pursuit of one's own purposes—one is thereby also deprived of admission into the public space. The slave is neither a private nor a public person, reduced to living as an instrument to be used, a means to another's ends.[30] In Socrates's city of speech, such a person does not exist, one is either a public person (the guardians) or a private person (producers/distributors), and even the latter supply resources and skills in public service to the state.

Those who are called other servants in the Form of the Polis are first mentioned immediately after Socrates's introduction of retailers, who are also identified as a kind of public servant in that they undertake purchasing and selling at market, while merchants are those traders who travel abroad seeking goods for import (371e).[31] These types also serve the city, alongside those who are identified as those physically robust citizens suited to manual and more strenuous labor. The laborers are servants in the same sense as the

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retailers and merchants, for that matter, in the same way as any citizen committed to their natural role. The wage-earner is one who, like the retailer and merchant, serves the city in a specific way, but clearly not as slaves for they are able to command remuneration. This kind of person—the wage-earner—possesses natural physical properties needed in the city, and thus merit the appropriate reward; they are not to be called slaves as they are free to earn payment for their services in the same way that retailers and merchants also have earned a stake in the city for their particular kind of service. Plato appears to be telling us that in a perfectly balanced, simple city, everyone's task is determined by nature, and that when we follow nature's pattern, the slave is nowhere to be found. Slavery is contrary to nature, and cannot be present in that most natural city, the only city that is true.

Those free laborers who might otherwise be condemned to involuntary servitude or slavery in imperfect cities are specifically identified as being citizens, who, unlike domestic slaves, are visible within the public space. For even if they may not possess the same intellectual capacities as a retailer or farmer, there are, by implication, other criteria for inclusion in the city, that is, the strength of their bodies and their physical prowess. Moreover, the wage-earners in a truly just city would not be vulnerable to any advantages enjoyed by those who contract for their services. In an ideal city, even those who are hired would be free from the uses and abuses of power, for in a natural city, no one would really hold power—at least not power as typically perceived—over other persons.[32] With the addition of the wage-earner, all the functions of the city are present, the city is complete. Consequently, when the city is simply designed and directed at meeting basic needs—true needs rooted in our nature and untouched by convention, no thought whatsoever is given to the addition of the slave.

To punctuate still further the differences contrasting the True City, which happens to include only free citizens against the many examples of those inhabited cities dependent upon slaves, Socrates/Plato consistently describe tyranny and the tyrannical soul as slavish. For example, in his condemnation of tyranny later in Book IX, Socrates described how the tyrannical types, even before acquiring power, ransack private houses, steal personal property, rob temples, and sell slaves. It follows that Socrates understands slavery to be a prominent vice festering within tyranny (575bc).[33] Slavery is included here among crimes of sacrilege—the robbing of temples—as well as among crimes against the property rights of free citizens. It is the potential tyrant who thinks nothing of treating other human beings as simply a means to expand their own ill-gotten possessions, to gratify their own unjust impulses. It is the tyrant and the tyrannical type of soul who eagerly enslaves others; in a city that is truly political and not tyrannical—for tyranny is not properly understood as a political regime—the crime of enslavement would be utterly

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expunged; that is to say, in the True City, slavery does not exist, for when politics is practiced according to its essence, human beings are not commanded or subjugated, but rather are willingly governed as they voluntarily contribute to the provision of the city's needs and the maintenance of the public order. All that is necessary is spontaneously supplied by free persons actualizing their true natural potential.

What are we then to make of the puzzling passage that does mention slavery at 433d? This passage, wherein Socrates, who is undeniably and directly referring to the ideal city, does include the term "slave" among those who do their own work without meddling with work assigned to others. Here an unambiguous distinction is drawn between free and enslaved within the context of the ideal city. Significantly, Professor Vlastos has insistently argued that this is unequivocal evidence of the presence of slavery within Plato's ideal polis. Against this, Professor Levinson dismisses this particular passage (at 433d) as simply a lapse in consistency, a slight moment of authorial forgetfulness; Socrates wasn't really keeping track of what he was saying and thus committed an inconsistency in his account. This suggestion from Levinson is rejected by Professor Calvert, who, while arguing that Plato does indeed exclude slavery from his ideal city, concedes that at least on this point, Vlastos is more convincing than Levinson; that is, it is unlikely that Plato simply forgot he was describing the ideal city and accidently slipped in features of "the conditions of man in an ordinary Greek city."[34] While Calvert's point is well taken, it is not altogether implausible that in writing the *Republic* Plato did in fact temporarily slip and employed the commonly used term "slave" denoting a specific type of person found within a typical ancient city. Should we concede that Levinson is correct—and in my view, there is no convincing reason to think otherwise—then it might just be the case that the reference at 433d is indeed anomalous, a casual insertion of a term that inadvertently contradicts other and more substantial elements within the dialogue. It would not be the first time that a great thinker, even a philosopher of the magnitude of Plato, would have committed what appears to be an internal contradiction. Seen in the greater context, it does not seem reasonable to conclude that the passing use of the word "slave," in one passage within the dialogue and lacking further elaboration negates all other passages—passages that occur both before and after 433d and that carry more conceptual weight—that either explicitly state or implicitly indicate that there is no slave function included in the Form of the Polis.

Further along in the text, Socrates again alludes to the absence of slaves in the ideal city. Here Socrates, now together with Glaucon, draws a comparison between those who govern and those who are governed in the city of speech on one hand and those who rule and are ruled in "other cities" on the other hand. In these other cities, those in positions of authority are called Co-rulers

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and those over whom they hold this authority—the ruled—are explicitly called slaves; while in the ideal city, by contrast, political officials are called Co-guardians while those who compose the remainder of the city—the governed—are referred to as providing for the maintenance of the guardians and managing the city's resources in general (463b-d).[35] Thus, even after Socrates makes his one slight reference to slaves at 433d, he pauses to observe that slaves are present in other cities (by implication, not in the ideal city), and those who are governed in the ideal city are not really subjects, but rather providers to and employers of (those who pay a wage—and therefore possess an authority of a kind that is their own) the guardians. By noting that those who are ruled pay wages to those who rule, the guardians themselves are not so different from those wage-earners who labor in service to the city. Both co-guardian and laborer earn a wage, and neither can be justly referred to as a slave.

Whether or not slavery is absent from Plato's True City will likely continue to remain an issue under debate.[36] Interestingly, when we turn back to the question of political leadership that we raised earlier in this section, the complete absence of the statesman from the first iteration of Socrates's True City helps clarify the matter of slavery in the True City, providing more insight into what Plato is trying to accomplish. As stated earlier, Socrates and Adeimantus specifically enumerate the key functions that must be filled in the True City, namely, farmers, builders, weavers, cobblers, healers, carpenters, metal workers, importers/merchants, retailers, herdsmen, mariners, and wage-earners, the latter completing the city. There is no mention of any role in the city that we would typically identify as political leadership, the type of a figure whose role is to direct or govern the city as an office-holder or appointed ruler is absent from the several functions explicitly identified. Perhaps Plato intends to convey the notion that the city of speech, being so natural a thing, manages to operate spontaneously and without formal direction; if so, it would thus stand to reason that characteristics of official organization, at least as we would normally recognize them, would not be evident. In fact, Socrates in the initial iteration of his True City does not bother to mention leaders of any kind, there appears to be a complete absence of identifiable political authority, the only authority recognized at this stage would be the authority over one's designated sphere of expertise: farmers holding authority over the cultivation of crops, carpenters over working with wood, merchants over the manner in which the marketplace were to operate, and so on. Notably, there is nothing to identify political leadership whatsoever in the True City. Whether we are speaking of statesmen or autocrats, monarchs or chieftains, magistrates or margraves, governors or rulers, Socrates supplies not a hint, at least at this stage of the dialogue, of any type or group that is by nature designed to supply the expertise of political rule. Nor does

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he identify any particular group or groups from among the list of occupations already defined that would, during designated periods, draw the duty of political leadership. He does not tell us if farmers or builders should also serve as community leaders, or merchants or shepherds; rather he simply does not mention any role within or segment of the city that is charged with governing the rest, either full time or part time, neither as civilian officials nor as military leaders.

Now, this could be further support for an interpretation that reads Socrates's first, True City of Speech to be more about the administration of things than the government of men, and if that is the case, then Plato truly is rejecting not only politics as we normally practice it, but politics as such, and thereby anticipating Comte or Marx and Engels in the radical abolition of political and governmental activity, rather than serving as one of the founders of Western political inquiry. While provocative, this seems unlikely for reasons already discussed earlier—Plato does not view the polis as simply an organization for the distribution of things, nor does he understand politics as the art of merely determining "who gets what, when and how."[37] Superficially, this is what the first iteration of the True City might appear to be for some readers (others, such as Prof. Bloom, would disagree[38]), and the formation of such an interpretation is frankly not unreasonable. Nonetheless we know that Socrates eventually indicates his belief that the distribution of wealth and the art of the political are separate, although not disconnected, responsibilities. We also know that the goal of shared communal self-sufficiency is more about partnership and less about gratifying needs and managing wants. There must be another reason why Socrates does not identify the politician or the statesman as a type among the specialized functions of the Beautiful City. Why would this be the case? Why does Socrates choose not to include a political function in his True City?

In the True City, there is no formal direction, that is plain, but only citizens attending to their duties and not troubling with the affairs of others, and, in so doing, achieving together what could not be achieved apart, that is, mutual self-sufficiency. No framework for government is erected, no political institutions established, no laws or juridical traditions promulgated, no body of citizens appointed, elected or designated to conduct the cooperative efforts of the citizenry as a whole. Given this, one could easily argue that this hardly resembles a political system at all, but more closely a private manor or commune. It all seems so naïve, so dream-like, so thoroughly unrealistic as a universal model conveying the essence of the political; and yet Socrates refers to it not only as a city imagined, but as *the* city coming to be in theory, the *only* city through which we can understand the nature of justice and the unpleasant realities of injustice. It is astonishing how Plato opens his analysis of the Form of the Polis without any explicit reference to any role or activity that we would ordinarily recognize as political.

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That Plato does not advance power as the first impulse of politics but rather identifies partnership spontaneously developing from the existential facts of need and interdependence as the origin of political society seems important. As stated earlier, the acquisition of material needs, while a prominent theme running through *Republic* II, is subordinate to the lesson about reciprocally achieved self-sufficiency (369–374).[39] For Plato, the first impulse toward interaction is interdependency, as natural as any of our most basic material needs. The original activity that generates politics is not, as others might argue, a desire for power for the sake of domination, or a desire for domination out of a natural fear, or even the need for the recognition of others and the appetite for acclaim, but rather from the realization that other persons are integral to the fulfillment of our own personal lives. If our focus is exclusively on the material aspects of this relationship, then we stretch and dilute the definition of the political. However, if we recognize the intimate connection between self-sufficiency and partnership, then we can discern the origins of the political in terms that exceed the material and direct us toward the immaterial relationship formed between interdependent persons. Significantly, this relationship is essentially an affiliation of self-governing voluntary members. Promulgated rules, as well as both alluring and coerced incentives (carrots and sticks), are unnecessary. Above all, the True City is acephalous—a partnership of equals meeting common needs without having to rely on designated leadership or identifiable, permanent political, administrative, and legal structures. It is a city that rests on the premise of the mutual benefit that is diffused throughout an association wherein partners freely share with each other, and in so doing recognize the consequent mutual benefit (369c-d).[40] Politics is not unbridled ambition nor the desire for dominance nor the raw discharge of one's power, nor pure self-seeking interest, nor the distinction between friends and enemies, nor a nagging anxiety over one's reputation before the public, nor even the fear of the unknown; it is rather the innate character of the human person as a being in relationship with others.

Furthermore, although in somewhat vague terms, the True City in its first expression implicitly resembles a democracy—or perhaps epitomizes what might be identified as a natural democracy—in that it is a self-governing arrangement of members meeting each other on equal ground for the purpose of working toward a common objective, an objective that is not determined for them by any external source or set upon them under the authority of a observable ruling hierarchy. Rather, the political community in its essence springs from the natural and evident desire for mutual self-sufficiency among the persons involved and committed to a common end. The True City is self-governing, a community intuitively identifying its needs and freely addressing them. As no one group or individual within the community is singled out for political rule, it can only be inferred from this that political rule, such as it

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is, is shared across the ideal city, at least as Socrates *first* describes it. Political authority springs naturally from an association of mutually self-governing persons spontaneously committing their particular talents for the benefit of all.

The only group that seems to be less qualified for participating in the direction of the city are, admittedly, the wage-earners, who, while not slaves, are intellectually unqualified for leadership. But is that really the case? Socrates does not explicitly say that they are altogether excluded from the political sphere; rather, as indicated earlier, it is only that their minds alone won't qualify them for membership. Other attributes may indeed qualify them for full membership in a city that is structured along lines established by natural abilities, in this case, the abilities that flow from strong bodies, and it is not clear whether or not the wage-earners are categorically denied at least some voice in whatever political processes might naturally emerge in this simplest of communities. Granted, there is ambiguity here, but it is nonetheless clear that earning a wage is not meant to disqualify a person from participation in the political arena. Again, it is important to remember that in completing the city, these wage-earners are citizens.

However, even though it would seem that Socrates includes the wage-earners in the city, thereby supporting the thesis that slavery is not present in the True City, one must be careful not to confuse wage-earning with political activity. Remember, as Socrates teaches (at 347b-e), those persons who should govern, the decent will not accept political responsibility in order to earn a wage or to win public esteem, but rather the decent govern only so as not to be subjugated by those who are indecent.[41] They are not identified with any particular group, nor are they specifically described as an intellectual, economic, landed, titled, military or cultural elite, but rather simply as those who are decent, namely, those with the virtue requisite to suspend their own self-interests for the ends of the good city. Those who govern rather than simply rule or command never seek their own advantage—they do not seek profit or acclaim for their public service—but only govern from necessity. Oddly enough, it would appear that in the True City introduced in Book II—which we argue here is but an extension of what Socrates, in Book I, provisionally identifies as the "city of good men,"—those assigned the offices of governing are less independent than those who would receive a wage as recompense for their services. If in the city of good men citizens compete not to rule, then those who do accede to the duty of governing are compelled to yolk themselves to obligations that they would otherwise eschew. The wage-earners can freely expect compensation for their services, and like any wage-earner, if compensation is not forthcoming, or not sufficient, they, unlike slaves, would be free to withdraw their services. By contrast, those who govern in the city of good men, the True City, do so owing to the constraints of

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necessity, they are not afforded the same choice that is implied in the act of earning a wage, in other words, they are under a degree of compulsion not experienced by those wage-earners who perform functions that require strength of body. Hence, even though Socrates has yet to explicitly include statesmen or political leaders in his simple, True City sketched in Book II, he has already established, in Book I, that those who govern ideally do so as a service from necessity, and not as something willingly desired or pursued. The decent person, namely, the person who should govern, is compelled to do so, accepting the burdens of political office to secure themselves from subjugation to someone of insufficient ability or weaker character. While a wage may be earned in fulfilling the duties of their assigned office, neither money nor honor motivates them, only necessity presses upon them to accept the responsibility of governing, of serving the city as its leaders. Those who earn wages for other tasks are able to "sell the use of their strength for a price called a wage," and thus enjoy more personal liberty than those who govern from the fear that they will be ruled by persons less capable, less trustworthy (371e).[42] The notion that one can "sell" their abilities for a wage implies a degree of freedom that is not enjoyed by those conscripted into a position of political responsibility.

One might raise the objection that the wage-earners are subordinate to their employers who pay them their wages, thus establishing a kind of hierarchy, which introduces power into the True City. Based on our direct experiences and observations, this is evident. Remember, however, that the True City is *absolutely* just. If it were otherwise, then Glaucon would not have invited injustice in his introduction of luxury. And, if justice and power are different things as Socrates teaches, then a city that is wholly just would not be marked by any relationships based on power. In the True City, the wage-earners and those who employ their services must be on an equal footing, even though one pays the wage and the other earns it. When we again examine the True City as a whole, every person performs the task that suits their specific nature, and thus are not burdened by any task that is incompatible with the kind of activities that realize their natural abilities and inclinations. This is the case with every function specified in the first iteration of the True City, a city that does not mention an identifiable political group.

Based on these passages in Book I (347a–348a) and Book II (369a–372c), there is little reason to assume that anyone in the city other than those who might govern—those mentioned in Book I but not in Book II—operate under compulsion of any kind other than what nature itself requires. From what Socrates says in Book I (not Book II), those who rule do so not from choice, but from sheer necessity, and in this sense, they are less free than the wage-earners mentioned in Book II, who are unlike their governors in that they are able to voluntarily require a wage, one that we can only assume is negotiated

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if it is a matter of "selling" one's services. For Socrates, there effectively is no choice for the most decent person, they must resign themselves to their duty or find themselves, and the city as a whole, under the government of persons less capable of ruling justly.

Perhaps it is inadequate to speak of them as somehow less free in the final analysis. They have fewer choices, but freedom is not simply a function of the quantity of choices. It can be said—and has been said (by St. Paul, for example)—that liberty to serve one another is substantively deeper and more meaningful than that liberty that is defined by an expansive variety of choices indulging individual wants. A good city, while it must command the most decent to rule, must, if it is to be good, avoid yoking any part of the city to inequitable burdens. Those who are the most qualified to govern, in Plato's understanding, do not desire to do so, but are naturally inclined to accept their duty without complaint.

SUMMARY: DEMOCRACY AND VIRTUE IN THE TRUE CITY

The rudimentary city sketched between 369b and 372e *is* the just city. Socrates describes it early in the dialogue, and he is clear that he believes it to be the healthy and therefore just and True City (372e).[43] It is a city that is absent a formal, authoritative structure but that, in fostering communal cooperation absent any evidence of compulsion or persuasion, resembles a natural democracy, particularly through features such as self-direction and widespread citizen participation, and by extrapolation, self-government. This is not the sophisticated democracy of Socrates's Athens or our varied, complex, and qualified modern democracies; rather it is a lean, self-motivated democracy promoting the common good. The description of the True City in Book II invites the impression that the spontaneity and a-cephalous shape of the city do not simply resemble democracy or contain democratic characteristics; it is a democracy, not in name but in action. If none are officially identified as leaders or rulers, then the city is administered by the citizenry as a whole. Every citizen does perform a specific function assigned to them by nature, such as farming or carpentry or sailing, and all citizens appear to share the function of governing, which would also be assigned to them by nature. Nature sets its conditions, and in the True City in theory, while undertaking the specific task to which we are suited by our nature, we are responsible for directing the city toward its ends. No other authority is identified, no other institutions are established other than those that grow out of our nature. It would seem that, implicitly at least, directing the community toward fulfillment of its purposes is a task undertaken by everyone.

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Concomitant with the specialization of the city, Socrates teaches that the True City is aimed at common ends and yet shaped by the presence of natural differences. As the citizens of any polity are different at birth, a fundamental feature of the ideal city is variation, which is the ground for the specialization that is so important to the development of the self-sufficient, moderate city. While this difference is fixed by nature and serves as the reasoned justification for the assignment of meaningful roles within the polis, it remains consistent with a notion, however vaguely drawn, of basic equality. Everyone in the True City recognizes the fact of difference, and from this recognition, freely embraces the necessity of specialization based on these differences set in our nature, and in so doing, commits to one's work above all other activities. Hence, every citizen equally devotes their private abilities to the public good (370c).[44] The presence of diversity and the free engagement with one's naturally determined occupation, in contrast with, say, the random, accidental, arbitrary, or irrational assignment of place or position in society (as one would find in a caste system, for example, or an autocratic regime that practiced "meddling in the affairs of others," or, more likely, the ubiquitous influence of life's vicissitudes in any social context), raises some incredulity among modern readers, particularly when comparing such an arrangement, however natural, to individual liberties enjoyed while taken for granted in democracies. Would we prefer to live out our days according to our nature, or would we rather choose to live under circumstances that would allow us to reject the kind of social role to which we are more naturally suited? Who among us would not want to decide for ourselves what we should and should not become within the social and political order? Even if we are naturally better suited to one occupation, we prefer the option to choose other pursuits in spite of ourselves. This is a reasonable expectation, the ability to steer one's own course in life, to determine for oneself one's principal occupation or vocation. Any social order that would constrain us within a specific, pre-determined path, even one to which we are naturally suited would rightly provoke resistance. Given this, it is important to remind ourselves that we are reflecting upon an ideal, Plato was fully aware of impracticalities. The point is that in an ideal community, each person would fill the part that allows the person to at once flourish as well as contribute to the greater good. Citizens of a modern democracy might refer to this as the pursuit of happiness, or at least a significant portion of that pursuit, and understood in this way—which is more likely than not the way Plato intended it to be understood—establishing one's role in the polis based upon one's nature is not inherently undemocratic, and in some ways, may complement democratic aspirations for the actualization of personal potential.

Drawing our attention for a moment back to the question that was initially raised in Book I with regard to the virtue of justice, Socrates asks Adeimantus

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if he can discern the justice and injustice within the city of speech (as it is developed to 372a).[45] Adeimantus is unable to comment about injustice in this city as originally imagined. It is established from what Socrates says later that this description of the city of speech reveals its justice, in effect the model for a just community, and at this point—in the first iteration—injustice remains unknown. We thus already know what is just, and what a just city is (432e-433b).[46] The True City, the healthy city as sketched by Socrates prior to Glaucon's objection, is intrinsically just. Otherwise, Socrates would have to admit either that there is no natural justice, or that human beings are not just by nature; and the question of our nature would then fail to answer any questions about justice. To the contrary, Socrates understands that if we are to really get to the heart of the question about justice, whether in the person's soul or within the political community as a whole, we must consider justice as springing from human nature, antecedent to any conventional account or presumed social construction. What Socrates calls the true and healthy city is a political community conditioned by nature itself, the first principles that govern what it means to be human, principles that are decidedly shaped by our inclination toward cooperation in addressing necessity's demands.

One of the principal virtues of the True City is its moderation; the lives of the citizens might be simple, but not spare. Pleasures are modest, desires are simple and few but by no means abolished. There is plenty of time to share feasts and sing hymns to the gods, and the enjoyment of wine and other pleasures are an expected feature of daily living, set within the proportions directed by the virtue of moderation (372a-d).[47] While it is implicitly understood that this city is guided by the virtue of justice as mentioned earlier, it is explicitly temperate; a dignified city marked by the quality of self-mastery and that consequently lives in peace, sustainable throughout the lives of its citizens (372c-d).[48]

Moderation, the virtue that is present as a pronounced quality of the True City, also shares an important relationship with democracies. More directly, the meaning of moderation for democratic cities as described in *Republic* is revealed to us by its absence. The democratic city, and thus the character of the democratic person, lacks self-mastery, and thus succumbing in the moment to the caprice of desire and novelty, the democratic soul and city are unable to develop the one thing requisite to flourishing—self-governance (561c).[49] It is the singular irony of democracy as described in Book VIII, that the one virtue that is indispensable to its success is the same virtue that is most noticeably absent. It is also in this city that unnecessary pleasures are confused with necessary ones (561a).[50] The consequences of this are seen in the perversion of values that accompanies the deterioration of the city as it succumbs to the rule of the appetites, a process of decay underway since philosophers abdicated their responsibilities, accelerated by the descent into

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oligarchy. A residue of moderation, identified as thrift, remains within the oligarchic temperament, but it is a hollow echo of the self-restraint that marks the virtuous person, a haunting reminder of the rot that has set in. Once this remnant of self-discipline vanishes, the democratic soul abandons itself to indiscriminate desires and reckless whims, wanting comfort, absent resolve, forsaking all reverence. Deprived of the virtue of moderation, the one virtue that protects a democratic city from its democrats, the polis drifts. Confused acephaly frustrates the demos, a marked contrast to the acephalous community of the True City guided by prudence and disposed toward moderation. The contrast could not be sharper for Socrates: the acephalous crowd of a democracy is prideful, imprudent, reckless, and immoderate. The True City, by contrast, is without institutionalized leaders and immune to the seductions of pride, lust, and greed. Democracies are vulnerable to dangerous manipulation, which fuels the demagogue's tyrannical ambitions. One is self-directed and without formal leaders; the other is self-absorbed, incapable of leadership. In the True City, moderation pervades and the pleasures that are enjoyed are those that are worthy of the dignity of persons, the governing that occurs reflecting their self-mastery.

This is the symmetry revealed when comparing the True City with the democracy described by Socrates as one of the variations of imperfect cities identified in Book VIII. The former is a self-governing and self-sufficient community sustainable through the diffusion of the virtue of moderation, which is, in turn, vital to the emergence of justice. In this way, Plato seems to be teaching us that a community that lives moderately and recognizes mutual interdependence is a city that helps us to illuminate the nature of justice. The structure of the city of speech is implicitly participatory as no particular group or individual is granted power or dominion. It is grounded and framed by nature, the True City is instinctively cooperative. Immoderate democracy, according to Socrates in Book VIII, is unstructured and, by contrast, lacks constancy, mutual reliability, direction, prudence, and cohesion—all owing to the absence of moderation, and thereby susceptible to injustice. While most attractive, it is the least disciplined (557c).[51] While the most diverse, it is the least integrative. It is not to be assumed that Plato is simply drawing a caricature of democracy in *Republic*, the description of imperfect regimes shared by Socrates serves to illuminate what befalls cities when the rule of reason is either diluted or abandoned altogether, to be replaced by the tyranny of the appetites. Moderation neutralizes tyranny through the constraint of the appetites, which is what would occur naturally, without prompting, in the True City. If we in fact can view the True City as at bottom democratic, we can only do so because it is premised on the notion that a moderate soul is a natural soul, and for Plato, it follows, a moderate city is a natural city. Absent moderation, democracy fails to realize the freedom and equality toward

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which it aspires as a consequence of the corrosive power of insatiability that it would have unleashed.

The real problem with democracy, Socrates explains, stems from the inability of the democratic character to reliably discriminate between necessary and unnecessary pleasures, to treat as equals the fine and the course. We are too readily taken in by the crass and vulgar, too quick to dismiss that which is fine on the premise that what is good is determined by what gratifies the appetites. In a word, the democratic man simply fails to recognize the true, the beautiful and the good as realities to be discovered rather than feelings or impressions to be shaped, constructed, and expressed. It is this lack of judgment and control that degrades the virtues of Socrates's self-absorbed democrat. In democracy, Socrates warns, good and pleasure are presumed commensurate, there is nothing true toward which we may aim, only drives which aimlessly prod us into motion.

Democracy can only hope for justice by fostering moderation. Once self-restraint is removed the city oversteers hard toward immorality. Moderation in cities self-directed by members of a community attending to their proper tasks without coercion, and associating freely with each other toward the common goal of self-sufficiency, are just. By any measure, Plato's True City resembles, by implication, what we today call democratic subsidiarity. We must remember that the city in theory cannot be, if we are to find the true definition of justice and the real reason why we should live just lives, a particular city (like Athens or Thebes) or a specific type of regime (e.g., autocracy or democracy). Plato seeks a city of speech that is not located (in any physical sense) or categorized by acts of speech that are, considered by themselves, at best reflections of the Form in various degrees of approximation. It cannot be described as a type, for it is singular and transcendent, existing independently of phenomena and unspecified by category. That said, in the description of such a city, the virtues discussed therein imply a democratic arrangement, but not of any kind that can be readily identified with any prior category or known political culture. At one point, Socrates describes it as that city which resembles a true aristocracy, for it does promise the rule of excellence by those who are the most virtuous (544e).[52] The Form of the Polis resembles in its structure an aristocracy—Socrates does refer to it as either a monarchy or aristocracy—but it is in no way what we typically recognize in aristocracy, for those who are to govern are as much servants as leaders. Neither inheriting their office, nor earning it through election or appointment, the Philosopher-Rulers are conscripted for their duties on the grounds of their virtues, fully developed through superior training. They share more in common with the wage-earners than any other group within the city. Toiling, neither guardians nor wage-earners produce nor manage. Rather, they serve in ways distinct from those who are designated as providers for the guardian's

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upkeep, that is, the economic network that supplies the community, which is managed by those citizens with title to all property and who direct all commerce.[53] (463b) No other aristocracy in the experience of Socrates and his friends would sever the relationship between merit and wealth; and yet that is precisely what Socrates does, allowing for the ideal city to be like an aristocracy, but also dramatically unlike any aristocracy experienced.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, as with any of Plato's Forms, the Form of the Polis is not disconnected from those phenomenal manifestations that reveal its essence. The Form of the Polis, while only discerned via the activity of the intellect, is also present in all expressions of the political, found, however partially, throughout the many textures and varieties experienced across the multifaceted constellation of political communities. When we act politically, regardless of the regime in which we are immersed and through which we exert our efforts, we are following the pattern, perhaps indirectly and imperceptibly, set in some instantiation of the Form of the Polis. It is during those times when we act against the Form that we abandon the political and replace it with unreflective domination. If Plato is correct, the very promise of the political is possible because there is something objectively real to be promised, something essential to be realized, a city and a soul toward which we can through disciplined reason and spirited effort become attuned.

NOTES

1. Cooper, p. 1,126.
2. Cooper, p. 1,007.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Cooper, p. 1,098.
6. Ibid.
7. Cooper, p. 1,009.
8. Cooper, p. 1,008.
9. Cooper, pp. 1,008–1,011.
10. Cooper, pp. 1,008–1,009.
11. Cooper, pp. 1,009.
12. Schofield, "Approaching the Republic," in Rowe and Malcom Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 212.
13. See Reeve (1988; 2006), pp. 170–171; Rosen, pp. 79–80.
14. Cooper, p. 1,064.
15. Cooper, p. 1,010.
16. Ibid.

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17. Cooper, pp. 1,010–1,011.
18. See Schofield (2000), pp. 210–212.
19. Cooper, p. 1,065.
20. The debate regarding slavery in Plato's *Republic* is well-worn. Vlastos, for example, argues with considerable skill for the presence of slavery in Plato's City of Speech. Conversely, one of the best cases arguing the exclusion of slavery in Plato's ideal city is available to us in Brian Calvert's "Slavery in Plato's *Republic*," *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1987), pp. 367–372. Calvert's lean, effective, and influential article joins the argument earlier developed by R. B. Levinson in his *In Defense of Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), wherein it is established that Plato does not include slavery in the ideal city. For Vlastos's argument, see Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*. See also Tim Hyde, "Plato's Kallipolis: Reasonably Free," *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter* (2008–2009), pp. 1–13; and Joseph Gonda, "An Argument against Slavery in the *Republic*," *Dialogue,* March 2016, pp. 1–26.
21. Cooper, pp. 1,010–1,011.
22. Cooper, p. 1,011.
23. Ibid.
24. Reeve (1988), p. 172.
25. Reeve (1988), pp. 216–217.
26. Calvert, p. 368.
27. Cooper, p. 1,159.
28. Ibid.
29. Reeve (1988), pp. 216–217.
30. Thrasymachus argues that a just person serves another's ends, like a slave—justice is "really the good of another." (at 343c)
31. Cooper, p. 1,011.
32. "[T]he Republic takes pains to point out that people who are psychically just will have no motive to behave unjustly. . . . the psychically just have no desire for the fruits of injustice, their desire being oriented solely toward the good." Lane (2006), p. 179. In the truly just city there you would find only truly just souls. Not only is slavery impossible in the ideal, just city, so are asymmetrical relationships. Souls in the good city have no interest in power, but share life for the sake of the Good.
33. Cooper, p. 1,183.
34. Calvert, p. 367.
35. Cooper, p. 1,090.
36. Professor Vlastos is less convinced that the debate, while ongoing, will remain so. See Vlastos, "Does Slavery Exist in Plato's *Republic*?" *Classical Philology*, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 1953), pp. 291–295.
37. Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: Meridian, 1936).
38. Professor Bloom views the relationship between the first and second iterations of the City in Theory quite differently. See Bloom, p. 348.
39. Cooper, pp. 1,008–1,013.
40. Cooper, p. 1,008.

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41. Cooper, p. 991.
42. Cooper, p. 1,011.
43. Ibid.
44. Cooper, p. 1,009.
45. Ibid.
46. Cooper, pp. 1,064–1,065.
47. Cooper, p. 1,011.
48. Ibid.
49. Cooper, p. 1,172.
50. Cooper, p. 1,171.
51. Cooper, p. 1,168.
52. Cooper, p. 1,157.
53. Cooper, p. 1,090.

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Chapter 5

The True City Embodied in the Guardians

Once the True City is altered by the introduction of unnecessary needs and their subsequent multiplication, the acephalous cooperation that politically and spontaneously organized the city expires. Insatiable want stimulates conflict, and conflict erodes the friendship which binds and stabilizes political communities. Compulsion, whether tapped internally from the will or imposed externally by institutions and those who administer them, is now a necessary adaptation to the luxurious variant of the True City. Natural democracy, the self-government that need not rely on a permanent political establishment, cannot respond to the challenges of a citizenry that confuses need for want and cannot be set in its own limits. In an erstwhile acephalous city that has lost this capacity for self-government, designated leaders become a necessary addition. Cephalus must return, at least in spirit; but not to create an artificial democracy replacing the natural democracy that has been destroyed by indiscriminate and insatiable desire—the tyranny of so many mad masters—but rather to assist our understanding of the essence of political leadership itself, the statesmanship of the wise. Power, which is absent in the True City, is introduced to address indisciplined, illimitable want. By itself, power is equally vulnerable to desire and therefore must be carefully harnessed, only applied with a view to restoring the initial, just arrangement present in the True City. Justice must manifest in a new but perhaps more vigorous shape, a virtue of the soul that is combined with temperance and courage, and above all, grounded in wisdom. As power becomes a necessity in the life of the polis owing to the blandishments and lures of immoderate desires, the life and success of the polis hinges on its intelligent application. The True City is in-itself the rational and just city, and because of this, power is not even an afterthought until Glaucon forces the issue. Once pleasure and preference seek to rule the soul, and want determines the pursuits of the city, only order

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secured by power can promise to rehabilitate justice, and that rehabilitation can only be accomplished should reason guide power in service to that justice.

Remember that it was Socrates, not Cephalus, who actually introduces the concept of justice during their amiable exchange near the opening of Book I; and, given the typical understanding of justice as most relevant to political activity and legal institutions, one would expect that at this point the conversation would steer toward the topic of politics more directly. Instead, Socrates, first implicitly in his response to Cephalus and then explicitly in his conversation with Polemarchus, establishes that justice is more than a political and legal/juridical concept, it is essentially a virtue of the soul. He doesn't appear to even be thinking along political or juridical lines until Thrasymachus pushes into the conversation with his ponderous attempt at moral relativism. Even then, the political is treated vaguely by Socrates, introduced through his brief yet fundamental comment about the good city (*Republic* 347d).[1] While these remarks are a useful prelude to what will unfold later in the dialogue, they are not fully fleshed out until Glaucon predictably presses Socrates to address what he perceives to be the inadequacies within his initial attempt at the ideal city. A city suitable for pigs is Glaucon's well-known reaction to the natural polis that an unwavering Socrates insists remains, in spite of his friend's strident protestations, the True City (372d).[2] Glaucon's Devil's Argument counterpoint is not feigned, he seems genuinely disappointed in what Socrates has just offered. That city in which the inhabitants are satisfied by modest, wholesome fare, is unworthy for a human life in Glaucon's estimation. Who would settle for the bland and bare minimum in life? Socrates quickly fills in the details for Glaucon, describing the contrasting luxurious city, with Glaucon's assent, and in the process, re-introduces the political question (372d-374b).[3]

If it is an inevitability that we must expand this ideal city as Glaucon insists in order to procure the more numerous and complex conveniences for which a healthy city is insufficient, then we will need a new specialty added to the polis, filled by a different kind of person—the lovers of wisdom—who bear little if any resemblance to the farmers, carpenters, and so on, and who in a noticeable manner are unexpectedly closer to the wage-earners, or laborers earlier described by Socrates.[4] Similar to the wage-earners, the newly introduced guardians are oriented toward service, not production, distribution or management of any of the city's needs and resources. As the wage-earners devote themselves in service to the rest of the city, so too the guardians. The guardians, however, do not receive the same kind of recompense. Remembering Socrates's description of the wages earned by the decent, we are struck by the true governors' sheer indifference with regard to monetary reward, signaling the attitude that will be held by the guardians (347b).[5] Guardians and the wage-earners share common ground in their devotion to their responsibilities

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in service to persons, not in the growing and husbandry of crops and livestock or in the making and moving of things—both serve, neither produces.

The guardians and the wage-earners also inhabit a space between naturally occurring necessity and artificially established necessity, for it can be said of the wage-earners that they become necessary when those whom they serve are unable to maintain communal self-sufficiency through the shared application of their natural talents, and the guardians become necessary when the needs of the city are detached from nature itself. Politics, for Plato, does arise naturally in that it is only through the polis that we can together achieve self-sufficiency; and yet once desire turns toward unnatural needs, a new political element must be conscripted to manage these freshly unleashed appetites. Hence unlike the wage-earners, the guardians have *less* command over their own services, for the former "sell the use" of their physical strength for a wage that, we can only assume, they deem appropriate; whereas, the guardians that Socrates now inserts into the city receive recompense under conditions that they neither negotiate nor determine for themselves. As with the wage-earners, they are servants to the city, but unlike the wage-earners, they are not in a position to sell their services, implying that they not enjoy any latitude in negotiating the terms. The guardians have but one interest, and that is to serve the needs of the entire city. Socrates has indeed reintroduced a city of good men, those who devote themselves selflessly to the common good.[6]

Through this addition Socrates redirects the conversation to the explicit political discussion previously neglected subsequent to the taming of Thrasymachus, and begins the involved process of restoring the True City of speech through the reforms necessary to abate the fever now suffered in the paradigmatic community as a symptom of the illimitable multiplication of needs and the desire for various delicacies exceeding all necessity (373a-d).[7] These limitless and unrestrained desires, Socrates explains, are nothing less than the original cause of war and its destructive consequences to city and soul (373e). Desire without proper self-restraint disintegrates cities and debases individuals. To solve these critical problems, the dialogue turns from the discussion of spontaneous self-government toward establishing a framework for the institutionalization of a formal political structure, the last principle discerned within the City of Speech. So begins Plato's account and analysis of the Form of the Polis within the reforms applied by Socrates. These reforms each represent something intrinsic to politics, both as idea and in every case. It is in delivering the lessons of these reforms that Plato describes the substance of politics, thereby connecting the eternal idea of the polis to the realities of political action in both its potential and its limitations.[8]

Even given the reforms that Socrates employs to eliminate the symptoms of injustice in the luxurious, febrile condition of the ideal city, Plato makes it clear that they have already discovered the just city—the True City. Socrates

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explains that each person shares their talents without having to meet any conditions other than membership within the polis, and while so engaged, the members do not trouble to involve themselves with the responsibilities of their fellow citizens (370a).[9] This might be interpreted as a state of indifference to the community if disconnected from its context, but here the association that Socrates mentions revolves around a specific task—one that only a particular type of person is able and trained to accomplish, the successful completion of which can be achieved without interference from the unqualified. However, it has already been established that the community is a kind of partnership, and that active association consequently emerges at other levels. It is only in the accomplishment of one's personal task that one expects to proceed toward a set goal without the imposition of others. It is thus evident that justice has been implicit throughout the discussion of the True City (432e-433b).[10] Specifically, Socrates defines (at 433b) justice as "doing one's own work," which reiterates what is said at 370b.[11] This necessary condition for the manifestation of justice in city and soul is first discerned in the formative stages of the city in theory.

PRELIMINARIES: THE QUALITIES, EDUCATION, AND CHARACTER OF THE GUARDIANS

To meet Glaucon's requirements, Socrates recognizes that with new needs, new roles must be filled in the city, roles required to meet and manage the unnecessary needs that deplete the city's energies and force its reorganization. A broad array of additional functions are added to fill the multiplying wants arising in Glaucon's intemperate city, ranging from wet nurses (a service that a derisive Thrasymachus wagged might be in order for Socrates) to poets (373c).[12] A city now working to satisfy a multitude of increasingly emergent appetites can no longer sustain itself on the modest resources of the True City, rather, unlimited desire can only be met by finding, or taking, indefinitely expanding resources. It is in the taking and protecting of these resources that war becomes a reality and warriors a necessity. Socrates resigns himself to this, and turns his attention to the serious matter of replacing the a-cephalous qualities of the first iteration of the True City with a new mode of direction, one that must guide the city in its virtue as before (373e).[13] The warriors, or guardians, more than any group within the city, must be carefully molded and led, for it is they alone who secure order, and it is they who provide a service that is not involved in either the production of things or their distribution, a service that is in direct response to the needs of the entire polis, and not, as in the case of wet nurses, sailors, beauticians, producers, and so on, in service to a particular part of or interest within the city (373b-c).[14] The guardians must

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be "free from other things" in order to attend to their assigned function, they must have no other obligations or commitments aside from caring for the defense and success of the city (374e).[15] Owing to their immediate responsibility to the entire polis rather than one part (whether mediate or immediate), the guardians appear to be, at least upon their initial introduction, the first directly political function within the ideal city in response to the onset of its febrile condition.

To ensure that the responsibilities of the guardians are assigned accordingly, Socrates and Glaucon describe the natural qualities requisite to this role, and the complex education essential to its nurturance and fulfillment. It is in the guardians that the rational and the spirited are at once present and properly aligned, and it is in the guardians that the intellect and the body are harmoniously pressed into the service of the polis. For the sake of the city, the guardians are lovers of wisdom, spirited, and physically adept—a fusion of intellect, heart, and prowess in balanced proportion (375c–376d).[16] Tempered by a disposition resembling a devoted watch dog, a disposition inculcated through a careful and self-less education, the guardian gently serves the city without commanding, docile to friends and citizens, and yet confronting foes with ferocity. In a word the true guardian is the embodiment of that which is fine and good. The ideal city would, naturally, be governed by leaders of this kind, and leaders of this kind embody the essence of statesmanship (376c).[17]

Forming prospective guardians into statesmen requires a lifetime of care, that is why Socrates designs an exacting education, one that does not introduce discord or imbalance into the souls of the young who, upon the evidence, possess the nature awaiting the correct nurture. The analogy of the properly treated wool and dye aptly convey this message for Plato—there are those who by nature are most suited to govern because they are the most inclined to love wisdom, comporting themselves with spirit, and physically healthy; but without an education that directs their attention to the fine and good, neither soul nor body will be tuned to that harmony requisite to the responsibilities of statesmanship (402d).[18] This is an education that encourages and tempers, respectively, the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul nurturing courage and moderation: moderation so as to abate the fever induced by exposure to unnecessary needs, and courage because it is the only virtue that eliminates savagery within the spirited element (410d).[19] Once nurtured, the spirited becomes the virtue of courage itself. Such an education, which prepares the souls of guardians to only receive and absorb beauty, truth and goodness, can (and often does) appear to modern readers as restrictive, uncritical, and excessively doctrinaire; but for Socrates, this education is one that liberates the soul through its fullest realization, within the considerable limits of the human intellect, of the most important aspect of reality—the nature of the divine itself, and our attunement with it.

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Having established with Glaucon those specific attributes a prospective guardian must possess from the beginning in order to become fine and good persons, Socrates now discusses with Adeimantus the details of the education requisite to qualified statesmanship, that is, the kind of training that will transform the right natures through the appropriate nurture into the kind of loyal watchdogs that will instinctively serve only to the benefit of the entire city (375e).[20] Shifting from Glaucon to Adeimantus at this point is significant. With Glaucon, Socrates discussed the qualities found and trained in true guardians, perhaps in response to Glaucon's assertion that it is only the appearance of virtue that matters, for in the end, one cannot be happy unless one is willing, at some point, to succumb to well-concealed vice. Glaucon's suggestion has not only reinvigorated the argument of Thrasymachus, but it has induced a febrile state within the emergent ideal city. Socrates must address Glaucon's justification of the vices through the identification and practice of virtue in fact and not simply in appearance. In the familiar ring of invisibility parable, Glaucon advances the proposition that human beings are incapable of virtue, for even when they commit what appear to be noble acts, they do so only from utility, or out of a pure desire for gain, or from some heterogeneous need, not because they possess any specific quality or character. All human beings are suspect under the narrative provided by both Thrasymachus and Glaucon as Devil's Advocate, thus it is with Glaucon, and indirectly in deeper response to Thrasymachus, that Socrates engages in order to restore full virtue to the febrile city, as well as answer the defamatory charge against human nature. Socrates is well aware that this endeavor, while arduous, is as feasible as it is necessary. Later, in Book III, Socrates reflects upon Asclepius and the institution of the art of medicine, an art that is made possible only because those who are served by it, that is, a physician's patients, are predisposed to live an ordered life, a life that is guided by virtue (407c–408b).[21] Medicine, Asclepius teaches, is for the preservation of health and good habits (407d).[22] Moreover, medicine is not a futile practice, for the gods do not give hopeless gifts. Treatment is in order for the febrile city because it can be cured owing to the fundamental goodness of human beings and the potential for virtue within the city. As Socrates elucidates through his teaching on Asclepius, just as an incurable body is treated only to prolong suffering, a community that is no longer a city is beyond repair. The injustice that Glaucon introduces to the True City can be mitigated, if not entirely removed, for the simple reason that the True City remains, and seeks a cure.

Once again Adeimantus risks impiety. As discussed earlier, it is Adeimantus—who otherwise appears quite moderate when compared to the observably headstrong Glaucon—who overreaches by sacrilegiously discussing the gods, suggesting that they are vulnerable to deception, implying their

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irrelevance to the point of thinly denying their existence. When Socrates here launches his conversation about the education of the guardians regarding divine things, he shifts his focus away from Glaucon and deliberately draws in Adeimantus. In the same way that Socrates wants to correct Glaucon's insincere defense of vice and injustice, he also seeks to purge both city and soul of the slander against the gods committed by Adeimantus, sincerely or insincerely, as an extension of Glaucon's unqualified consequentialist ethic. Unlike Adeimantus's exemplary schemer, Socrates's ideal guardians must be carefully educated in the nature of the divine, beginning with the essential premise that the divine is unqualifiedly and invariantly good, incapable of acting to the contrary (379b–383a).[23] Hence, the profanity in depicting Zeus and the other gods as deceptive, selfish, and cruel. Only good comes from the divine.

Because of the sacrilegious treatment of the gods, reading Homer in like manner profanes and distorts the young soul, leaving a potentially ineradicable and injurious impression on potential guardians. For Socrates, this is both a simple affirmation about the nature of the gods informed by common sense (how could the divine be anything other than divine?) and something vitally important. One must not be false in one's soul when one pursues the nature of being, the transcendent essence of reality. To be false about the true and divine is to compromise one's soul, to distort what is real by embracing ignorance (382b).[24]

This closes a circle, or seals a rupture that was opened by that other Devil's Advocate, Adeimantus, whose impious suggestions prompt Socrates to examine truth about the gods, truth necessary for the education of the guardians. The gods are not like us, they do not manipulate our world through sorcery or act against us from ill-will, rather, they are immutably just, eternally good (380d).[25] For Socrates, in the ideal city, those who are educated about divine things, and especially those who, emulating gods, govern human beings, must not be tainted by warped and impious claims regarding divine nature and divine principles. This is why the poets must be observant to the manner in which they depict the gods; it is not because Socrates seeks social or political control through censorship, but rather that Socrates believes—and we have to take Plato at his word here unless we are prepared to impugn the very heart of his claims about the Form of the Good—that goodness is the only possible result of the actions of that which is itself essentially good; and the gods are good. Homer, Socrates allows, is worthy of praise in many ways, nevertheless, in this regard, in his cynical misuse of the gods and their champions for the sake of spinning an exciting story, we must withhold our approval, we must seek other and truer voices (385c).[26]

As expected, Adeimantus abandons his contrived posture of impiety, and endorses the Socratic patterns that will foster piety among our guardians,

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encouraging them to love and emulate the divine as far as humanly possible (385c).[27] Without such devotion, the guardians will not only operate under an illusory vision of reality, but will also be incapable of honor, and as a result, treat friendship casually and neglect their allegiances, a telling observation, for Plato conceives of the guardians as friends to each other and to the city as a whole. Adeimantus, unlike his more spirited brother, appears to have been rendered docile in his submission to Socrates, hence it would seem that the modesty that others have observed in Adeimantus has, with the proper instruction, re-asserted itself against the impiety previously affected. Without this virtue of piety, the guardians will be incapable of authentic heroism, for their anxieties about death would exceed their fear of enslavement (387b).[28]

Gods and heroes do not behave in the fashion of Zeus or King Priam as sung in the *Iliad*; rather, the divine is only and always good, heroes virtuous—and so they must be depicted. Socrates insists on the correct patterns for the fine and good guardians to emulate in their efforts to become ideal statesmen. We are speaking here of the forms, thus the patterns now discerned by Socrates and his friends are of necessity simple, clear and objectively true. Genuine heroes, like the gods themselves, are not morally ambiguous in the manner of the Homeric heroes of the *Iliad*, at least according to Socrates's critique. For Socrates, heroes are like gods in that they truly are as they appear, and unlike the rest of us, they are not so easily tempted by our baser impulses, not prone to the same common selfishness. That's why they are heroes and not just interesting or amazing persons. Heroes understood in this way embody the virtues unadulterated; the flawed hero is not for Socrates, or at least not the kind of example that informs the ideal city. The operative word here is "ideal," for we must remember that the context here is a discussion of the essence of things. The essence of heroism is found in virtue alone, to succumb to vice is to forget our courage.

Socrates is not saying that heroes are pure in every sense, that the admirable people that we actually know in our lives are somehow deficient because they share our flaws; rather, he is simply explaining that the *model* for heroism is by definition pure, for why would we adopt something impure as our model? Are we to really believe, Socrates might expect us to ask, that Hector, however terrified by the fearsome sight of an avenging Achilles, would run from the battle, chased around the city the way panicked prey flees from the lion? Would Priam really grovel, rolling around in dung in a filthy act of self-abasement, or would Achilles sob lamentations while dropping ashes upon his own head? (388b).[29] Achilles, that greatest of the Achaeans in Homer's epic, is in truth a bad example for any young person to emulate, at least as the poet depicts his character, for in following the immoderate advise of Phoenix as the story is told, he treats Agamemnon, Briseis,

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Hector, Priam, and everyone else, whether divine or human, comrades or foes—even his beloved friend Patroclus, with egotistic contempt (390e).[30] Socrates knew well the story of the rage of Achilles and its consequences for his comrades in arms. Such selfishness and brutality evident in Homer's Achilles disqualifies him as an exemplar for our young guardians, for Socrates, this slander against Achilles is an egregious impiety (391a).[31] We must deny that a *hero* like Achilles is capable of blasphemy against Apollo or of savagely abusing Hector's corpse. Defaming the heroes, combined with the sacrilegious depiction of the gods, is found to be not only inappropriate in the education of the young, but alarming. If a figure such as Achilles is authentically heroic, then he must only be depicted as doing heroic things. Heroes don't sulk in their tents or desecrate the dead. To commit acts that are far removed from heroism, such as the shocking mistreatment of Hector's body, distorts the pattern, and thus warps the souls of the young warriors. They, too, will presume to address Apollo as if they were an equal to a god, or nurse the dual diseases found in the soul of Homer's pseudo-Achilles, slavish greed and arrogance toward both the human and the divine (391c).[32] All told, the Achilles of the *Iliad* typifies vice rather than virtue. Young guardians require more dignified, more unwavering examples to follow if they are to comprehend and engender virtue.

Additionally, Socrates observes that these young guardians, in facing death and misfortune with quiet dignity, demonstrate their decency, proving themselves truly self-sufficient, unperturbed by the necessities upon which the rest of us rely (387e).[33] Through this assertion, Socrates claims that ideal statesmen either achieve or approximate a quality of life that transcends our natural dependence upon one another, for he has already made it clear that human beings are generally not, as individuals, self-sufficient. The guardians that are being formed through the right kind of nurture are able to, at least in this one way, overcome something of our nature, they are able to achieve a level of autonomy unavailable to the rest of us, those of us who are the producers and distributors in addressing the natural needs of the polis. Affirming the decent life, there is a requisite self-sufficiency involving one's character and personal attributes, not one's material needs or practical dependencies. In truth, a hero like Achilles, for example, will not exhibit slavish, greedy, or arrogant behavior toward men or gods in the way that he is defamed by Homer, for these are flaws that stem from immoderate desire and the want of virtue. Such indecency is evidence of a dependent and diffident soul, not the kind of soul who is capable of forming friendship and governing free persons. Those who aspire to be good must seek guidance from our inner models and must therefore only absorb the kind of patterns that will cast those models accordingly (409d).[34] As Socrates concludes, the true statesman guards the city's freedom, wholly committed to this vocation,

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disinterested in other activities or enterprises (395c).[35] Pursuant to this, the guardians' actions must manifest properties of the correct virtues needed to lead a free city, for example, courage, temperance, and piety, and they must not succumb to the slavish or the shameful behaviors common among false politicians. A true guardian, like a reliable watchdog, would be incapable of the dissembling that is described in the ring story. Further, such a person—a lover of wisdom—would only regard the divine as good and heroes as virtuous, and hold this close to their own souls as patterns to be adopted. In accomplishing this, Socrates, the philosopher, has already undertaken the curative task of purifying the True City that had been polluted by the spirited Glaucon's meddling. Raising guardians with souls good and beautiful is the purpose of education. In other words, politics, and those who are devoted to public things, must be aligned to decency and friendship from the start. This can only happen within that soul who has achieved a level of moral self-sufficiency. Not that this person is without needs that must be met by the assistance of others—remember the guardians cannot engage in any activity other than serving and protecting the city—but rather that this kind of person meets any challenge with wisdom, courage, moderation and justice.

Moderation is, at this stage, the cardinal virtue that serves as the hinge upon which the purification of the True City relies. All of the virtues that Socrates mentions are essential and unified, and, as stated earlier, courage and moderation are stressed throughout Books II and III in the right nurturing of the young guardian. Through edifying poetry and the correct musical modes, the young, malleable soul is attuned to moderation and raised toward courage. What is immoderate in any city can be corrected through this re-attunement (399e).[36] Moderation and courage, the virtues that, respectively, enable a person to manage pleasure and overcome fear, are the virtues that foster the inward guardianship of one's soul, which is indispensable to the outward guardianship of the city (413a-d).[37] Such a person is the best guardian, complete in their capacity to equally rule their own souls and also govern the city, protecting against enemies and encouraging friendships among the citizens (413e–414b).[38] Socrates further delineates the roles of guardianship by now identifying this type of person—the one who successfully meets external threats while also managing internal discord—as auxiliaries to those true guardians who accept the responsibility of statesmanship, of governing the polis. Having made this distinction, Socrates sets about implementing those reforms that will accomplish the purification and full restoration of the True City for which the nurturing of the character of the potential guardians and their auxiliaries was deemed both preliminary and obligatory. These reforms serve as Plato's description of the essential properties of the Form of the Polis, the principles that express the very meaning of the unqualifiedly political.

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THE FIRST ESSENTIAL PROPERTY: SHARED RESOURCES

What we have been discussing to this point with regard to the qualities and education of the genuine statesmen is but a preliminary to the institutional reforms of the True City. While it would be fair to say that this discussion about the nature and nurture of the model guardians is itself the first reform, or the first step toward curing the febrile city, it might be more useful to understand this as preparatory, correspondent to Plato's dye and wool analogy previously mentioned. Hence the description of the qualities of those who will govern the city of good men and the manner in which those qualities are nourished through education is a preliminary to the reforms required of the city itself. It is through these reforms that Socrates cures the True City. With these reforms, his real purpose is met: explaining the principal expressions of the Form of the Polis.

For the guardians to strengthen their commitment to the polis as friends and allies resisting together those temptations which entice anyone who holds public authority, their daily lives must be structured as a means to the fortification of all virtue (416b).[39] The first reform at once institutes this possibility while also teaching the reader a principal lesson, which applies to all political communities for them to meet their potential. This point cannot be overstressed—for Plato, every political community contains within it a potential that is natural to politics in and of itself, and therefore essential to political activity. Plato teaches us that we can only understand the meaning and purpose of anything by considering the things as they really are, what they ought to objectively mean for us. In Plato's understanding of the nature of things, politics as it is and political things as they are can only be meaningfully discerned as in-themselves prior to the contingent, and while variable and shaped by numerous factors in practice, at bottom unconstructed in essence and thereby applicable within any given context. The very purpose behind discerning the form of political activity is to apply the lessons contained therein to the ordinary course of political affairs as we directly experience it. It is through these reforms intelligibly applied by Socrates that Plato begins to explain what *is essential* to the polis, what is necessary to all political communities, intrinsic within political activity. Socrates begins with the manner in which the ideal governors of a city, those who are responsible for protecting and serving the state, would live within the good city. In this way, Socrates selects what appears to be the most ordinary of things—the guardian's routine—uncovering the features that are unqualifiedly natural to politics. The first property of the Form of the Polis is conveyed in the requirements for the sharing of property, and it is here that Socrates moves the conversation from its emphasis on the

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virtues of the rulers themselves (which remain important) and toward the institutions of the True City itself.

Socrates begins simply enough: the lessons taught in the hypothetical provision of room and board suitable only for warriors serve as the first property instantiating the essential form of the political (415e).[40] Glaucon's immediate reaction is to inquire into the meaning of the distinction between "housing for soldiers" in contrast to what might be enjoyed by those who are described as "money makers," which allows Plato the opportunity to elucidate this principle intrinsic within the Form of the Polis. It would be a disgrace for a shepherd to raise sheep dogs as if they were meant to be wolves, for it would result in great evil, exposing a vulnerable flock to wickedness and abuse from those who should protect rather than prey upon them (416a).[41] As described earlier, the ideal guardian, or more precisely, the pattern to be followed for all guardians and their auxiliaries, is that of the expertly trained and steadfast watchdog rather than the fearsome wolf; for as watchdogs, the auxiliary warriors are gentle to each other and to their fellow citizens for whom they are responsible (416b-c).[42] Education in the cultivation of virtue is the preliminary preparation for this, the actual details governing the manner in which the guardians and auxiliaries are to live enable them to more effectively act upon these virtues, for as Socrates explains later, the first step is to become virtuous, and having done so, then act upon this virtue (443d-e).[43] Even the right living quarters must be judiciously established in support of those who practice the best kind of government or true political activity. So that the guardians who have been educated in a way that gentles their souls with regard to each other and to the city as a whole will be properly sustained in their duties, it is imperative that the very manner in which they live and the things that they possess are carefully aligned to the service of the public good, and immune from the enticements that arise from considerations of private attachment and the aspirations for personal gratification (416b-c).[44]

Equally significant, Socrates opens the discussion of this principle by contrasting the life of the guardians and auxiliaries to the way in which wealth managers live, stressing the pitfalls that await us when the balance of our endeavors is chiefly pecuniary. Licentiousness and hunger, while an unlikely combination and more typically regarded as either opposites or at best decidedly dissimilar, are here together paired by Socrates rather than contrasted, for the contrast that is now being brought into relief are these two appetitive states set against the virtues of the statesman (416a).[45] It is safe to say that under the typical definitions of the words, the hungry are in no way licentious, but the licentious can be said to hunger in a perverse way, craving excessive or indiscriminate pleasure. Therefore, these two conditions, while distinct, are not necessarily unrelated, under certain circumstances, they may derive from similar impulses. They both are appetitive states; and while hunger is

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induced by need or deprivation and not a vice as in the case of licentiousness, they are both conditions in response to the impulses of the appetites, one a somatic, involuntary, and natural response (hunger), the latter a reaction indicative of the state of one's character, an involuntary impulse stemming from a prior voluntary choice, or record of choices, with regard to the manner in which one manages desire. Hunger or want, licentiousness or dissolution, or similar weaknesses, prompt rulers to commit evil, to abuse the city in a way analogous to sheepdogs becoming wolves. If the ideal city is to be more than Glaucon's city of pigs, it must not be driven by those same appetites that lead us to desire luxury, or that are the root of both licentiousness and hunger. Those who serve the city alone must be immune from the impulses of the dissolute and the pangs of the hungry, their motivations and inclinations must be unspoiled by the temptations of extravagance and the pressures of want. A separation from ruling and acquisition is executed by Socrates, at first in the souls of the guardians and auxiliaries, and then in the conditions, expectations, and direction of their daily lives and their public commitments.

Plato, through the voice of Socrates, fleshes out his recommendations for the way the guardians are to live, and in so doing, on a deeper level he begins to describe the properties of the Form of the Polis (416d–417b).[46] This reform is hard to accept, for it is an unrealistic suggestion on the face of it. However, what matters is not so much the issue of practicalities as the serious lesson underlying this and all of his proposals. According to the details of Socrates's design, only that which is "wholly necessary" may be possessed as private property by the guardians, and from what Socrates has revealed earlier in his discussion of what is naturally needed to build a True City in speech, those necessities are limited and modest (416d).[47] The spare possessions that might be held by individual guardians must somehow address an inward need, which, given the nature of the guardians' character, their wants, proclivities, and abilities, would be minimal and in every aspect reasonably serve both themselves and the city. Ideal statesmen, because of their austerity, would not be distracted by the ever-multiplying wants that provide pleasure for the majority of citizens served by their governance. When we recall the first iteration of the City of Speech—the True City—it may be remembered that this city is characterized by modesty, simplicity, and self-sufficiency throughout the whole city, a city in which these qualities make it possible for genuine self-government, self-government within the autonomous souls of each citizen as well as self-government through the spontaneous interaction among the citizens themselves (369c-372e).[48]

Socrates describes a community of friends sharing talents and surmounting the limits of nature by at once aligning themselves to its conditions. In its febrile state, a polis now in need of direction and security, the pursuit of minimal needs, or rather, natural needs, remains the ideal. Unfortunately, to

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explain the origins of both justice and injustice in all cities, the injustice subsequently attached to the True City must be purged through the same means that would have been provided by that which was abandoned: that is, through moderation, simplicity, and self-sufficiency.[49] Having lost its initial simplicity, the True City is partitioned between governors and governed, protectors and protected, the virtues of moderation, self-sufficiency and courage must be reawakened in the city with particular care among those who are now responsible for its direction and security. Previously the True City governed itself, a spontaneous self-government absent formal institutions and attendant leadership, wholly attuned to the natural rhythms measured in the Form. Those rhythms remain true, in spite of the discordant desires that have interrupted nature's cycle. It is now the guardians who must recover those rhythms, who must forsake artifice and become existentially attuned to nature's harmonies. In this way, the entire city can be realigned to those harmonies, and thereby to justice. Therefore, the conditions enjoyed by all in the first iteration of the True City, the healthy city, are recapitulated and restored among the guardians and their auxiliaries. A new group of citizens is selected according to the requisites of virtue, liberated from the desire for material possessions and the fixations of private wealth, and established as those who govern the city in service to all. To restore and preserve Socrates's true and healthy city, those who now visibly, formally and directly govern a city that was previously governed informally, indirectly and, by all appearances, invisibly, embody that feature of moderation and detachment present in the Form of the Polis (372e).[50]

Socrates also states that the quarters in which the guardians live would be open to everyone with no allowance for the kind of privacy enjoyed by the citizens they govern. With this detail, Socrates extends the ideal guardian/statesman as a thoroughly public person, unconcerned about privacy in the same manner as those citizens assigned other responsibilities (416d-e).[51] If we are to restore the virtues of the acephalous True City by inculcating those virtues formerly established as universally shared but that are now manifest within a particular group of citizens, then those citizens—the guardians—who are selected and trained for that purpose would be indifferent to the need for privacy that comes naturally to the rest of us. Statesmen and warriors in the *ideal* city share all they have openly and in common in the same way a closely knit family shares a household, or a small group of intimate friends give of themselves while undertaking a common venture. The idea of all houses and storerooms opened to all, the elimination of the need for locked rooms and secured private spaces, is integral to the lifestyle of the guardians in service to the rest of the polis. The guardians are busy protecting the city, not worrying over private matters. For Plato, this is to be expected among those who rule according to nature and who are properly nurtured and trained into virtue. The

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guardians have no interests to guard anything other than the city itself—they serve the interests of all citizens with the same care and equity, their own dwellings open to everyone. A ruler marked by this level of pure commitment and selflessness would not be distracted by the anxieties of personal possessions or distinct and secured private domiciles. In this sense, the guardians again restore a part of the True City that was compromised by immoderate appetite. If all needs are at once natural and spontaneously provided, then there is nothing to be guarded, no one would seek to take what one does not need, and what one needs, one would either have or have available to them owing to the natural rhythms that guide the distribution of the city's resources. With those rhythms interrupted by luxuries and trifles, the guardians now re-set the tempo of the city's distributive cycle by themselves not needing, not wanting, and not guarding anything that does not serve the whole city. Their interests and their desires are thoroughly fused with the city as a whole. Moreover, if each guardian lives modestly and virtuously, then shared living quarters and open store rooms follow naturally, for no individual guardian will seek more than what is required to meet a specific need, thus the desire to enter a space inhabited by another is inconsequential for all parties involved. No one would be motivated to enter a space normally occupied by another, thus those who reside in a specific space are disinclined to secure it, and those who may pass near are disinterested in what it may contain. In the ideal city, governed by the ideal rulers, the rulers are the least guarded with regard to their own persons and their own domiciles. Indeed, they have but one domicile—one dominion—the good of the city as a whole and never as a mere part.

Speaking realistically, rare is the person who can observe this kind of rule. Even in an imaginary ideal it is difficult to fully grasp, the thought of surrendering one's privacy to this degree is reflexively contrary to our inclinations. Other than those who enter a cloistered life motivated by religious devotion, most of us would find Plato's prescription for the disciplines of the guardians beyond the common sense expectations of even the most dedicated public servant. As a practical matter, it could never be fully instituted, let alone sustained beyond the shortest term. This is one of the many reasons why Plato's city in theory not only seems like an unreachable, even absurd, abstraction but also an undesirable prospect.

While only an uncommon kind of person is capable of detachment from all personal possessions and can renounce all expectations of a private life, Socrates nonetheless describes his ideal statesman as doing just that. Unequivocal devotion to the common good is the natural disposition in the ideal statesman; for as Socrates understands it, in the True City any common direction would arise spontaneously without needing designated leaders, suiting everyone equally. Once spontaneous, mutually directed cooperation is instantiated within identifiable governors, those same qualities would there

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be embodied rather than diffused throughout the entire city. The True City has but one interest, that of the whole. Or rather, more accurately, in the True City, the interest of the whole and the interests of its parts are not simply united, they are indistinguishable. Once guardians are required to restore the qualities of the True City, it is they who solely exist for the interest of the whole, preserving the private lives enjoyed by others throughout the rest of the city. Plato's instruction here is that such a quality is not as strange (or beyond human capacity) as it appears; rather, it is intrinsic to the art of statesmanship.

Human experience unaccompanied by reflection might lead us to draw very different conclusions about political life. Plato understands that it is not in familiarity or experience alone that we discern the Form, for our experiences unassayed by reflection can at best only disclose a small hint of the essential. Socrates teaches that political leadership entails pure commitment to the city, and as a service to the city, such leadership directs without deception, leads without insincerity, is dispassionate toward private achievement, and governs without distraction. It strikes us today, as surely it struck Plato's own contemporaries, as impossibly abstract; but that is of no concern to Plato, for his is an ideal model that is meant to convey a lesson, not a directive to be implemented. Socrates begins from the assumption that we are naturally cooperative, and thus the ideal community is one wherein there is no formal authority, only informal arrangements based around addressing each person's necessary needs—needs that are by definition moderate—in a way that is natural to them, and one must also surmise, fulfilling for them.

Having explained the rule of discipline proposed for the guardians, Socrates further elucidates his prescription for treating the ideal city's fever by remarking upon two additional facets of this first reform: the dependence of the guardian upon the rest of the city for support and sustenance, and the martial spirit fostered in their quarters. In the case of the latter, the practice of "common messes" and the establishment of barracks for housing the guardians reinforces the notion that ideal governors are thoroughly public persons devoted exclusively to each other and, more importantly, to the larger political community (416e).[52] This elucidates the embodiment of both courage and moderation in the guardians. This further supports Socrates's attempt to restore the virtues of the True City as first presented, particularly the virtue of moderation. What the spirited Glaucon deems to be a city fit for pigs is, for Socrates, modest and temperate in every sense as a matter of course, without self-consciousness or self-justification. In the first iteration (the true ideal), every citizen would live contentedly on modest means, wearing functional clothing practically suited to the climate, adopting a rustic, moderate diet, sharing their meals with their few children whose numbers would be managed in consideration of available support so as to avoid declining into

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poverty and war (372b-d).[53] This moderate lifestyle marking the True City, having been weakened by Glaucon's introduction of luxury, reemerges in the equilibrium between shortfall and surplus enjoyed by the guardians, who depend upon the rest of the city to sustain this rule and, in so doing, practice the virtues that they have acquired through both their rigorous education and from institutional support.

Guardians as described by Socrates, who remain the ideal type of leader for the True City, and thus the model for any city, the one that is intelligible and the many that are visible, are perfected through the virtues; therefore, such a rule of life would not feel burdensome to them, the absence of the kind of comforts available to the rest of the city are to them scarcely worth noticing. Divine gold and silver are present in their souls owing to a combination of natural qualities and nurturing education—and thus through nature and nurture their potential realized (416e).[54] These divine qualities prepare guardians for their duties, which include unwavering commitment to a simple, public lifestyle. Moreover, living as they do, the guardians practice the virtue of piety, avoiding the corruption of the divine gold and silver in their souls by exposure to the physical gold held in one's hand or banked in one's storehouse (416e).[55] If we are to seriously consider an ideal ruler, one devoted above all else to public affairs, then we know that such an exemplar would not be distracted by the things that occupy producers and distributors, for to do so would undermine the guardians' devotion to the community by way of concern over private affairs (417a).[56] The needs of such guardians are freely supplied by the rest of the city, for ensuring their unadulterated commitment to public good is in the interests of all those in the city, those who hold political authority and those who generate and manage the city's wealth. It is in the admixture of the two that Socrates senses the corruption of both. In an ideal city those who govern would be incorruptible when exposed to temptation, for only impiety will result from private meddling with public good.

Naturally, it is Adeimantus who doubts that this manner of living would deliver happiness to the guardians, remarking that even though the city may belong to them, they are prevented from enjoying its many benefits, bearing all responsibilities in exchange for minimal support. Echoing Thrasymachus, who ridiculed the notion that a self-sacrificing just person can live the happiest life, Adeimantus again speaks immoderately as well as inaccurately and presumptuously. The guardians, Adeimantus complains, are little more than low-rent mercenaries hired to stand watch while the rest of the city enjoys comfortable lives within their privately owned homes, possessing gold and silver, and offering their own, domestic sacrifices to the gods (419a-b).[57] This complaint stems from inattention—Socrates has already meticulously described the guardians as not receiving wages (as mercenaries do) but rather sharing in common what is supplied by the

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larger community. Nor are the guardians simply hired watchmen, for they dutifully govern the city in friendship (463b).[58] His presumption is that the guardians are motivated like the rest of us, adopting a simplistic view of happiness in spite of Socrates's explanation of their a-typical aspirations and purposes. Additionally, it is evident that the guardians possess the finest character in the city. Immoderately, Adeimantus attempts to recapitulate Glaucon's reinsertion of luxury into the city, this time directly into the guardians themselves, which would consequently neutralize the curative alterations that Socrates has been applying since the introduction of the guardians as a distinct group. Glaucon stimulated the True City with an appetite for unnecessary needs, an influence that subsequently required the addition of guardians in order to manage the consequences of indiscriminate desire. By claiming the guardians could not be happy without fine houses, personal wealth, and the license to privately customize their worship of the gods, Adeimantus attempts to nullify the treatment and restore the fever, only now the fever would spike in those who have the weapons and the specialized training to effectively use them.

This reveals a still further presumption behind Adeimantus's complaint, the presupposition that the guardians will act possessively and vulgarly, claiming to own the city as tyrants would when in no sense has Socrates said anything to prompt this misconception. The polis cannot be possessed by any group—if it were then it would no longer be a public community but a private association—and while it needs to be directed in a way that was not required in the case of the first iteration of the True City, then it must rely upon direction from a group within the city that embodies the virtues of that first iteration. Those virtues, Socrates helps us to recall, are dependent on those who are most capable by nature and most qualified through education to practice their natural crafts, a condition that is shared by all groups in the city as they contribute in their respective ways, and in the assurance that once a city is truly well-governed, happiness will occur in various ways and in accordance with what is natural to each person, what is suited to the diverse natures that are present in the polis (421c).[59] With this in view, Socrates reminds Adeimantus that the point behind discussing their intelligible polis is not to secure happiness, however understood, for any single segment within the city, but rather to aim at the natural, virtuous happiness of the entire community (420e and 421c).[60] Socrates also notes that, far from feeling deprived, the guardians would be happy with such a lifestyle, for it suits their character and their purposes. Adeimantus's attempt to change the criteria for happiness among the guardians transforms the guardians into something else. Guardians such as these find natural happiness in philosophy and the attendant virtues of

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the philosophic life, and in providing service and protection for the rest of the community. To impose unnatural criteria for happiness upon them would expose an ignorance about the kind of happiness enjoyed in pursuit of the fine and good life (420d-e–421a).[61]

Were Adeimantus right, the fever that Glaucon has induced in the city, which Socrates is abating through his reforms, would be raised again in the guardians, to the detriment of the city. Such fever would prove more dangerous. For the fever of luxury, as much as it corrodes the unity of the polis, is easier to address through the virtues of its citizens, and especially the virtues and training of the guardians. But now there is the threat of irreconcilable division in the city resulting from an undue concern for the material comforts and worldly ambitions of the guardians. If we are training true guardians, then we must recognize that their inward virtues free them from the material values important to the rest of us, values that become misguided absent the cultivation of the proper virtues (421b).[62] Should the guardians adopt the views that Adeimantus immoderately objects that they should have, then in the same way that Glaucon's febrile city is no longer a True City, the guardians are no longer guardians, they would indeed be mercenaries contracted by the city and motivated by their own pecuniary interests, commanding bonus wages that would place gold and silver in their hands, which would, assuming that they could be described as possessing the inward divine qualities, expose them to corruption and eventually an ungoverned life pulled down into vice.

In sum, Socrates is clear: those who are to serve as guardians must neither possess their own property nor even manage the wealth of the city, and conversely, those who own, manage and increase the city's material wealth are disqualified from holding political responsibility. Again, it is reasonable to have misgivings about the ideal city imagined by Socrates on the grounds of impracticality; or, with a dismissive shrug doubt that Plato means any of it. However, as noted previously, it is not the feasibility of the reform that matters, but rather the lesson that Plato means to convey: namely, it is always the case that political power and wealth should be separated, it is an abiding truth that the influence of money should be prevented from corrupting public servants, and that those same public servants should not be distracted by the allure of personal gain and the anxieties of private responsibilities. As the embodiment of the first iteration of the True City, the guardians are themselves guarded from the enticements of wealth and impervious to the challenges of poverty; in the case of the former because they know that real wealth is of the human soul, and in the latter because their own modest needs are simple, few, and natural.

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Much of what Plato teaches here is framed within Socrates's attempt to build an imaginary city that locates the healthy mean between poverty and wealth, a purpose consistent with his insistence on moderation both in city and soul. Wealth and poverty, Socrates remarks, both compromise the quality of any kind of craftsmanship, the guardians are no exception (421e).[63] Excessive wealth produces sloth, servile poverty corrodes workmanship, and revolution is likely to be prompted by both (422a).[64] Any community beleaguered by these extremes will predictably split into two cities, divided against each other in enmity rather than united in friendship, enervated by the dilution of character, unable to foster amity among themselves. Not only are these two cities of wealth and poverty enemies, their reflexive antagonism opens still more fractures until what was once one genuine city is now a multitude of false cities (421e-423a).[65] This follows logically owing to the prevalence of self-serving motivation in such a fragmented society, for all that is required to gather the support needed to achieve one's goals is to appeal to our selfishness (423a).[66] Such a contrast could not be drawn more sharply: where political power and wealth are separated and kept apart from each other, the city remains unified and harmonious, once wealth and power are blended, the city stumbles into division. Further, those who once held only the authority of the state now seek the possessions of others, and those who are better suited to manage wealth but not political power now desire dominion over all facets of the community. Once the city's unity is broken, all friendship is forsaken; one's allies are merely mustered and motivated by the appetite for gain and the desire for dominion.

Significantly, after reaffirming his principle concerning the virtue of moderation, a principle that was present in the initial discussion of the True City, Socrates once again assures Adeimantus that the True City as discerned prior to the infection of unnecessary needs is *the* Form of the Polis, there is no other model for political life, no other polity deserving of the name (422e).[67] Cities that are governed moderately are truly superior, whether or not this is immediately apparent to us; the moderate city is greater than those cities bereft of similar virtues, for it is virtue and not power that is both at the essence of politics and serves as its purpose (423a-b).[68] In a word, the harmony of the city hinges upon the virtue of moderation, which must be diffused throughout the entire city, and in particular, moderation must be shared in the virtues of the guardians themselves. This is the first lesson about the Form of the Polis: *politics and wealth must be separated as far as humanly possible*. In so doing, the virtue of moderation, which is vital to the art of governing, is tightly woven throughout the political community. Should this virtue, which governs the appetites and thereby encourages the correct attitudes toward wealth, be neglected, the city will disintegrate and reconfigure around extremes that are not only disconnected, but disdainful toward each other. For Plato, contempt

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and envy are the cause of this mutual disdain, the former held by the rich against the poor, the latter by the poor when encountering the rich; these vices split the city and seed the germ of civil war.

LEGISLATION AND EDUCATION, LAW AND VIRTUE

The strict separation of power and wealth is thus the first lesson that directly instantiates the Form of the Polis. Technically, it is not the first reform, as Socrates begins his treatment of the febrile city with his discussion of the guardians, their purpose, selection, and education; but it is the first step toward the intelligible building of the city itself. Beginning with the separation of political activity on the one hand and the production and distribution of goods and services on the other hand is a revealing choice, for the whole question of justice depends upon this. Once Socrates and Adeimantus conclude their examination of the relationship between power and wealth and the necessity of this relationship to be marked by their division, the acceleration of the city's growth, which was stimulated by the love of luxury once introduced into the city, is slowed. A moderately governed community wherein political direction is protected from the influence of material gain tends toward intermediaries, seeking the mean (423a).[69] Specifically, a city governed within these ideal lines will of necessity limit its physical size, claiming just enough land to sustain its internal balance, then with forbearance leaving the remainder alone. A unified city unfamiliar with the extremes of wealth and poverty and undistorted by the mixing of political power and the business of producing and managing wealth, will sit within natural limits. The luxurious city that Glaucon suggests incessantly expands, its appetite for unnecessary needs and the interminable multiplication of those needs as a consequence of indiscriminate desire dissolves all limits to growth, and thereby guarantees conflict, both external and internal. However, a city wherein the political and the economic are separated, and wherein neither the wealthy nor the poor are present, would neither be great nor small, but of sufficient size and unity (423c).[70] Through the proper relationship between political power and the management of material resources, the febrile city is restored to its original and healthy self-sufficiency. Moreover, through the restoration of this self-sufficiency, the guardians fulfill their true purpose, serving the city as protectors and watchdogs rather than as soldiers on the offensive driven by the necessity to conquer new territory to meet the perpetually expanding needs of a city soaked in luxuries. Socrates certainly understands the need for martial training and preparedness, given the realities of our world, but his understanding is that this necessity for warriors must be governed by self-restraint. As a

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fighting force, Socrates describes the virtuous and disciplined guardians as more than a match for even a far larger cohort of enemy soldiers lacking the same kind of training and character. As with a well-trained watch dog, the guardians are more than capable of repelling even the most formidable enemies lurking beyond the horizon. With the limit to growth trained by the virtue of moderation, the guardians will protect the city motivated by justice rather than acquisition.

Cities are communities of persons situated in friendship and committed to cooperative self-sufficiency. None of this is possible without virtue in both city and soul. Wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice are discussed both explicitly and implicitly from the beginning of *Republic* to its end, a principal theme that is particularly prominent in Book Four following the separation of political power and wealth. These virtues are the properties of a city that is thoroughly good, first mentioned by Socrates in Book I, later detailed and deepened, beginning with the discussion of the city in theory opened by Socrates in Book II (427e).[71] Other closely related virtues such as piety, frankness, decency, and high-mindedness enter into the conversation, especially with regard to the guardians; but it is these cardinal virtues, their proper cultivation and careful alignment in city and soul that animate and sustain the True City. Political communities are of necessity framed within and governed through the intelligent enactment and reasoned enforcement of laws; however, it is owing to the presence of virtue that both persons and cities are able to meaningfully live and meet their higher purposes. Law is important in any city, nevertheless, education, not legislation, is the first nutrient that feeds and promotes the virtues. Socrates returns to education, reminding his friends that poetry and music are soul-nourishing activities, fortifying the guardians' character, and determining the success or failure of the community (424d).[72] Children absorb moral rectitude from ordered poetry and harmonious music. Our modern sensibilities might bristle at the suggestion, but for Socrates, such careful training through just the *right kind* of poetry and music is vital to the health of soul and city. Having absorbed lawfulness, the young person will know without explicit instruction how to decently conduct oneself toward others, intuitively knowing the manners, conventions, and unwritten rules of the marketplace, the assembly, and other public spaces that, while seeming insignificant, nonetheless allow for healthy interactions between citizens and among friends. Concomitantly, Socrates observes that the social regulation of manners and conventions cannot really be imposed by law, for it is evident that the virtues making these manners possible are not the sort of thing that legislation alone can instill. He is quite plain about this, for he asserts that it is folly to regulate conduct through statutes or decrees (425b).[73] Furthermore, Socrates observes that to enjoin virtue of the virtuous would be at once unwanted and inappropriate

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(425e).[74] Finally, the conclusive move in the definition of justice supplied by Socrates stresses the internal nature of justice, reaffirming what he said in Book I, that justice is a virtue of the human soul (335c, 443d–444a).[75] Character is not formed by regulation, nor motivated by external influences. It is virtue that constitutes good character, any rule or array of incentives is not a sufficient influence. Good laws, written or unwritten, come from persons of character, freely assented to by the same.

Misconduct, in Socrates's view, is the consequence of poorly governed cities, those cities that are enthralled by the self-indulgent, the cynical, the opportunist, and the clever, those who flatter and reflexively cater to the lowest cravings of their citizens, displaying a posture of servility to the crowd while angling for new occasions to exploit popular approval. Under such poorly "governed" regimes, the populous will reactively spurn those among them who would suggest the renunciation of base appetites and vice, thereby prompting the kind of leadership that curries the favor of the city by indiscriminately supporting what the majority find gratifying. This is evidently contrary to the True City, which is characterized by moderation in every regard, an ideal city that is so self-governed and self-restrained that the political is an inseparable and indistinguishable layer woven throughout. The characteristics of a poorly behaved city are those that are burdened by their absence of restraint, with a visible leadership incapable of leading, a citizenry indulging even their worst impulses in the effort to cheat the system and each other, and at best passing and amending laws that only encourage the increased amplification of vice in the way that cutting away the heads of the Hydra simply doubles the trouble (426e).[76] This contrast is stark: the True City is so successful in its self-regulation that there is no evident need for a distinct and formal political-juridical segment, the citizens governing themselves spontaneously, cooperatively, without politicians and leaders; compared to the badly governed cities incessantly enabling weak character. Without the diffusion of moderation throughout the whole city—all the parts, not just one specific part—this luxurious, indisciplined city sets a low norm. Self-indulgence fuels division and separation. Self-restraint, Socrates tells Glaucon, strengthens the weak and unifies the city not simply through the imposition of a law or regulation, but through the recognition of what is by nature good (432a).[77] We have observed courage and wisdom in the guardians, and moderation diffused throughout the entire city—rulers and ruled, and it is owing to these virtues rather than the result of the promulgation of laws and conventions, that the disintegrative divisions of the city as described are prevented, and the unity created by the harmonious alignment of nature with function, city with soul, is promoted. In these virtues alone, and not the enactments of even the more intelligent and skilled legislators, the virtue of justice is now found and fixed.

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NOTES

1. Cooper, p. 991.
2. Cooper, p. 1,011.
3. Cooper, pp. 1,011–1,013.
4. Reeve (1988/2006), pp. 191–192.
5. Cooper, p. 991.
6. For Reeve the introduction of the Philosopher-Ruler "leads to the construction of the Third Polis." See Reeve (1988/2006), p. 191.
7. Cooper, p. 1,012.
8. Professor Roochnick identifies "three conditions for the possibility of a just city," those conditions that, when expressed, must ride through the "three waves" of criticism in the sea of argument as discussed in Book V (Roochnick, pp. 5–6).
9. Cooper, p. 1,009.
10. Cooper, pp. 1,064–1,065.
11. Cooper, p. 1,009.
12. Cooper, p. 1,012.
13. Ibid.
14. Cooper, p. 1,012.
15. Cooper, p. 1,013.
16. Cooper, pp. 1,013–1,015.
17. Cooper, p. 1,015.
18. Cooper, p. 1,061, and 1,039.
19. Cooper, p. 1,046.
20. Cooper, p. 1,014.
21. Cooper, pp. 1,043–1,044.
22. Cooper, p. 1,044.
23. Cooper, pp. 1,017–1,022.
24. Cooper, pp. 1,020–1,021.
25. Cooper, p. 1,019.
26. Cooper, p. 1,022.
27. Ibid.
28. Cooper, p. 1,024.
29. Cooper, p. 1,025.
30. Cooper, p. 1,028.
31. Cooper, pp. 1,028–1,029.
32. Cooper, p. 1,029.
33. Cooper, p. 1,024.
34. Cooper, p. 1,045.
35. Cooper, p. 1,033.
36. Cooper, p. 1,037.
37. Cooper, p. 1,049.
38. Cooper, pp. 1,049–1,050.
39. Cooper, p. 1,051.
40. Ibid.

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41. Ibid.
42. Cooper, pp. 1,051–1,052.
43. Cooper, p. 1,075.
44. Cooper, pp. 1,051–1,052.
45. Cooper, p. 1,051.
46. Cooper, pp. 1,051–1,052.
47. Cooper, p. 1,052.
48. Cooper, pp. 1,008–1,011.
49. See Rosen, pp. 109–138.
50. Cooper, p. 1,011.
51. Cooper, p. 1,052.
52. Ibid.
53. Cooper, p. 1,011.
54. Cooper, p. 1,052.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Cooper, p. 1,090.
59. Cooper, p. 1,054.
60. Cooper, p. 1,053 and p. 1,054.
61. Cooper, p. 1,053.
62. Ibid.
63. Cooper, p. 1,054.
64. Ibid.
65. Cooper, pp. 1,054–1,055.
66. Cooper, p. 1,055.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Cooper, p. 1,059.
72. Cooper, p. 1,057.
73. Ibid.
74. Cooper, p. 1,058.
75. Cooper, p. 1,075, and p. 980.
76. Cooper, p. 1,058.
77. Cooper, p. 1,063.

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Chapter 6

Rough Seas

Curing the True City of its luxury-induced fever, Socrates applies an aggressive treatment involving the introduction of a new occupation into the polis: the protective political leadership and service of guardians. It is the guardians who recover those virtues found originally throughout the whole of the city that Socrates first imagines, uncompromised by intemperance. In addition to adding the guardians to the restoration of virtue, Socrates separates political power from private wealth, and assures his companions that the guardians, who possess the right nature judiciously nurtured through the best kind of education, will not strive for happiness in the same way as the rest of the city. Neither needing nor wanting the same material comforts desired by other citizens, the guardians are free to meet their potential as servants of the city, the only real servants wholly devoted to the common good absent any identifiable private interest.

In our better moments, we are all capable of acting as Plato's guardians would, renouncing our own interests to the benefit of others. What Socrates proposes, therefore, is not unnatural. Self-sacrifice and dedication to the good of others is as human as the reverse, perhaps more so, for it is through such conduct that we are human in accordance with our true nature. In an ideal city, those charged with public service would embody the virtues of the public servant. Surely Socrates is more than aware of the impracticalities of this standard, but he is not arguing that these and other proposals are practical. He is seeking to understand the meaning of the political in response to questions about justice and its benefits, and to do so, he attempts to get to the essence of these things. If, as Socrates has argued in contrast to Thrasymachus, politics is not merely about power but more essentially about good, then the ideal city and those who govern it will naturally be good. Thus, it is no matter to the guardian as conceived here; to them, it is natural to serve

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the city without the desire for possessions or the distractions of private affairs. There are moments in the lives of any given human being when we put the good of another before our own interests, thus the promise of the guardians is natural to us all. In a True City, that promise would be kept in the activity of politics as it is manifest in its essence.

That the guardians live detached from private possessions defines the first manifestation of the Form of the Polis, teaching the lesson that political responsibility and political power must, ideally, be separated from private interests and the management of wealth. In any city, politics and money should be kept apart, political activity should be free from the influence of wealth, and the production and distribution of wealth should support the city while simultaneously preserving the private interests of those who manage it. The private sphere does not dissolve as it does under modern totalitarianism, it is only prevented from influencing the direction of the community. Plato's communism only applies to those who are responsible for governing the polis, trusting the helm of the ship of state to those who are by nature and nurture qualified in its operation.

This first reform separates political power from private wealth, which is essential to political community. Socrates then proceeds to undertake three additional reforms that also help in discerning the essentially political. Apprehensively, Socrates senses that he is like an adventurer in a sea of argument, buffeted by surging waves of criticism, even ridicule.[1] With Glaucon's encouragement, he steadies himself.

FIRST AND SECOND WAVES: SECOND AND THIRD LESSONS

Having developed his discussion of the Form of the Polis at length, Socrates prefaces additional considerations by signaling his readiness to discuss different types of incorrect, observable cities. Again he is interrupted, not from Glaucon, this time, but from Adeimantus and Polemarchus. We have once again come to an important transition.[2] At this point, the question of wives, or spouses, and children is raised, one that Socrates would rather pass over, knowing it would roil arguments stirring still more incredulity (*Republic* 450ba-d).[3] Readers will recall interruptions throughout the *Republic* typically represent pivot-points in the dialogue. Thrasymachus's interruption in Book I both moves the discussion in a political direction and raises the second, and more important, question: Is it more beneficial to be just or unjust, or more simply, why be just? Glaucon's objection in Book II interrupts Socrates's explanation of the essential features of his True (healthy) City, and forces him to not only address the specific criticism shared by Glaucon, but also to

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deepen his discussion about injustice in city and soul, and what is requisite to their treatment through the restoration of justice. As Book V opens, Adeimantus and Polemarchus, joined by the others, move the conversation away from the external relationship between wealth and power, the topic framing the first reform, and back toward a more inwardly framed discussion focused on a community of souls. This is not to say that the proposal separating power and wealth is itself separate from the analysis of the soul, but rather to say that the soul is now, in response to Adeimantus and Polemarchus, brought into sharper focus. It begins with an observation about our common nature that both explains the reasoning behind the second reform and its role in restoring the City in Theory to its original state as well as the lesson conveyed through this proposal. After hesitation, encouragement from Glaucon, and in prudent deference to Adrastea—the goddess of dread consequences[4]—aware of the precarious course that he is now charting, Socrates braces for the first wave of objection that he anticipates will be agitated by his next proposal: that women and men should rule as guardians together.

Surely, for the twenty-first-century student such a proposal is unnecessary, a crumbled relic of a less democratic age, and should our own conceits percolate above the surface, such a suggestion could only stir controversy among less egalitarian sensibilities. Of course it goes without saying that men and women are equally qualified to share political power. Socrates, however, in the context of his own times and culture, felt obliged to petition to the goddess before proceeding with an unconventional argument likely to provoke ridicule (451b, 452a).[5] Socrates and Glaucon, even while observing that women are in some ways physically weaker, easily recognize that in the most important qualities requisite to guardianship, their fundamental attributes are the same, their inward nature identical, superficial differences notwithstanding. Phenomenally the differences are obvious. Essentially, there is no difference. The human soul is of one substance, and gender is not one of its attributes. Consequently, there is only one set of virtues for human beings, not one kind of virtue for one type of person, nor another kind of virtue for another type of person. Virtue and the soul are without gender.[6] Bodily strength and agility, while desirable to anyone, are in the final analysis superficial qualities, of no more consequence than having long-hair or being bald (454c-d).[7] Were physical properties important, men and women would be educated differently, but Socrates and Glaucon together conclude that men and women will be employed and deployed by the city for the same things, and thus will require the same education in music, poetry, and even physical training, for the bodily differences just mentioned are, as stated earlier, superficial, of no substantive nor enduring consequence. Women and men of virtue will together guard the city, sharing without qualification all the duties and responsibilities attached to their roles, including those needed in combat.[8]

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Socrates, and Plato, would expect such a proposition to be dismissed with little argument. As Prof. Bloom notes, what Socrates proposes in Book V is "preposterous," and "he expects it to be ridiculed"[9] for its absurdity. Together with the sharing of spouses and children among the guardians, the third, following reform that must ride through a second, and even larger, wave of objection, these proposals would have seemed ludicrous to Plato's audience. Bloom finds Socrates entertaining a comedy so farcical that it exceeds the art of the playwrights.[10] This proposal joins the effort, according to Bloom, to dissolve the private sphere and abolish the family, and given the nature of the first reform, that is, the renunciation of privacy by the guardians, it is a logical extension of what has already been advanced. Even more to the point, because Socrates is now purportedly writing comedy more skillfully than poets like Aristophanes, Bloom argues, we are not to take the content of what Socrates here teaches seriously. Under this interpretation, the philosopher is beating the poets at their own game. Bloom's reading successfully illustrates Socrates's apprehension that his proposed reforms—that women should be guardians as well as that spouses and children should be shared—will be met with indignation, and this discussion of the conflict between appearance and meaning remains vital to a fuller understanding of Plato's intent. One might add that, while it is evident that Socrates does not seriously expect anyone to receive such proposals absent incredulity, and moreover, that he himself would have admitted the impossibility of this or similar kinds of reforms, it is also possible that Socrates is not simply engaging in outlandish satire merely to expose the absurdity of the melding of the public and the private, the politicization of every facet of life, but that he might be conveying a still deeper lesson. If the reforms that Socrates imagines are exaggerated fancy deployed as a means to alert his audience to the conflict between philosophy and politics, then Blooms account prevails; however, if, as is argued here, they are directed at understanding the Form of the Polis, then the claim that *Republic* is satire is unpersuasive. We are again reminded that it is important to regard the substantive lessons behind the unconventional—and in some instances bizarre—appearances of Socrates's various suggestions.

Plato's conclusions about the nature of the soul are central to his teaching on women as guardians. Socrates explains that, even though the male and the female, like the bald and the long-haired, are noticeably different on the surface, they in reality share the same essence. One's superficial properties, for example, size, strength, and speed, while not unimportant, are ultimately inconsequential in discerning a person's qualities and, as a result, determining a person's proper role within the community. For the purposes of guarding the city, women and men are by nature equally qualified to serve when they exhibit the right kind of virtues. Even if one is physically stronger or weaker, Socrates still holds that provided with the same education, and sharing the

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same way of life, female and male guardians are equally capable of also sharing any and all responsibilities in any endeavor (454d).[11] Male and female physicians, while different phenomenally, are identical in their souls, in their nature. This applies equally to female and male guardians (454d, 456a-b).[12] That one is less muscular than another has no bearing on governing any more than it would in medicine. Socrates speaks of the essence of the human person, and those virtues when, properly developed, realize personal potential. Earlier, in Book II, Socrates does speak of the physical qualities of the guardian, for example, speed and strength, but he also speaks of intellect, and as the intellect rules both soul and body, it would appear primary in consideration. Women and men alike share the identical capacity for wisdom, courage, and temperance, and when the proper balance of these is achieved in both the city and the soul, justice. Additionally, Socrates reaffirms this principle in *Timaeus* (*Timaeus* 18c).[13] There, while reflecting upon the discussion that occurred the previous day—conveyed through the dialog *Republic*—he proclaims that the natures of women and men are identical, and thus they should be educated accordingly, and more significantly, that all occupations, including those associated with war, are to be undertaken by women and men alike, or at least those who share the right virtues in the same proportion.[14]

We must consider those virtues of the person hidden to us when we are otherwise distracted by appearances, for we know that beauty resides in and is primarily of the soul. Ultimately, it is the virtues that engender goodness in the human person, not those physical qualities mentioned earlier but rather the immaterial qualities that cannot be measured, only experienced in the person's conduct and actions. And while a proposal requiring the practice of men and women training together in the same way is folly to Socrates's friends, Plato draws the reader to look beyond the accidental into what is essential, and to understand that the goodness of the soul is the criterion for guardianship. Over laughter Socrates explains his daring suggestion by reminding his friends that the sole standard to be applied by serious persons for any reason is firmly grounded on and shaped by the realization that what is fine and beautiful is good, and that which is good is fine and beautiful.[15] Only in the soul can we find the essence of these things (452e). Thus, the second lesson: *superficial differences are irrelevant in deciding who should share political responsibility, who should govern the city; the virtue in one's soul is the sole criterion for the appointment and distribution of political office*.

Outlandish as these proposals may have appeared to his contemporaries, Socrates assures his friends that, if we consult the first principles of nature rather than relying solely on convention, that which is truly outlandish is revealed in the opposite of nature, that is, the preposterous and the unnatural is exposed in the prevailing conventions and customs, or what many of us would call, employing a popular expression, our social constructs. The law

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establishing women as guardians is the only one that follows nature, Socrates avers, instructing us that the shared rule of men and women is part of the invariant, objective order of natural things, even if contrary to the varied traditions and laws of men. Pointedly, Socrates avers, the exclusion of women from politics is utterly unnatural (456c).[16] A community that excludes any person of virtue from political life defies nature, it is in its very essence unnatural. Since there is only one kind of virtue, there can be only one kind of guardian, the ideal model teaches us, and a guardian who possesses wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, and additional virtues such as piety. It is perversely unnatural to exclude women from politics, both unwise and unjust to deny women their natural place as political leaders and co-guardians serving public good. Plato holds that there is only one set of virtues, and one kind of soul, one kind of courage, one kind of wisdom—biological variations are meaningless in determining which person possesses these virtues.

While the argument might seem reasonable were we to assume that great thinkers are only creatures of their times, unable to break free of the context in which they are embedded, it is unlikely that Plato is writing this with a satirical intent or with an ironic wink; rather, he is teaching us that there is a higher law that can be discerned through its adherence to the first principles of nature, transcending contexts, and culture. Furthermore, it is accordingly natural law that qualifies women to share in the full responsibilities of guarding the city equally with their male peers, of justly governing their fellow citizens as free friends. In all seriousness, Socrates observes that not only is it possible for men and women to share power, it is the optimal arrangement. Remember, the True City, the city that is now being restored through the alleviation of the fever caused by the introduction of illimitable luxuries, is the natural city. Men and women are not assigned roles in that city based upon the biological criteria of their sex. The only criterion that must be met is discerned in a person's natural potential. To employ the best men and women in service to the city is to follow nature's lead, to cultivate the natural, and therefore the best city (456e). It is both possible *and* optimal, for Socrates, *because* it is natural. Plato signals to us that he considers politics as typically practiced to be disordered, for the exclusion of women guardians, who are natural to the city and whose unnatural dismissal can be confirmed in the inappropriate reaction of those who find the notion laughable, represents a deviation from the essential order of things. If we are to affirm the essence of politics, we must seek leaders who are appointed only for their virtues, and the virtues and qualities of a person can only be apprehended in the encounter with the soul, wherein resides one's true nature.

Thankfully, our own contemporaries expect and need women to participate in the life of the polis. However, the third reform, or that proposal that must endure a still more forceful second wave of objection in the sea of argument,

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is universally received, now as then, as a preposterous scheme—the sharing of spouses and children, and the risibly elaborate way in which spouses are to be selected in the ideal polis, and how this affects the relationship of adult guardians to the city's children. Not only are the proposals outlandish to modern readers, and as stated earlier, even to Plato's own contemporaries, but the tone reveals attitudes toward women incongruent with the previous proposal in which women are regarded as naturally equal to men. Women are, in a sense, to "belong" to men, and following the previous discussion of the essential equality of women and men, this different language is unexpectedly androcentric—it is not more generally the common sharing of spouses that we are now discussing, but more specifically the common sharing of wives (457d).[17] Additionally, the scheme that Socrates sketches in order to increase the odds of adding children possessing the natural qualities of a guardian would be rebuked today as a dangerous exercise in eugenics. Finally, Socrates rounds out his plan with a manifestly cold-hearted edict to prevent any natural bonding between mother and child. These suggestions can hardly count as features of an ideal city—for the methods Socrates adopts appeal to neither reason nor sympathy.

What is Plato trying to accomplish by means of such a peculiar turn in the discussion? How is this discussion anything other than weird fantasy? We can only assume that Plato himself recognized the outlandishness of what he has Socrates propose, and given this, it would seem to follow from this kind of assurance that Plato is engaged in satire, or that he is not really talking about politics at all, but only something analogous to it. We will never be able to rule out these interpretations without the discovery of additional written evidence from the primary source. However, in following the basic theme that we hope to support, that is, the proposition that Plato's explicit proposals—impractical, confusing, outlandish, inordinately unrealistic, or risible as some of them may be—are in truth intended to actually convey serious lessons that are meant to instruct us in the subject of the essence of politics, namely, the Form of the Polis; and, in so doing, continue to be meaningful to political science and political action today. Should we allow ourselves to become fixated on Plato's apparent overreach, or stall in perplexity at his decision to clarify the nature of his ideal city by becoming absorbed in rococo minutia, we might be deflected from the actual lesson about political action that Socrates is seeking to deliver. The key is to remember that the four reforms are parts of a whole—they are facets of a larger image that, like the soul to which the city is compared, must be brought into alignment if they are to come into clarity.

Revealed through this curious discussion mandating, for the guardians, the sharing of spouses and children, Plato offers the *third* principal manifestation of the Form of the Polis in the lesson contained therein: *the public good must remain separate from the influence of private interest.* Plato surely knew

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that no one would accept such a farfetched plan, which was never the point to begin with. We suggest here that Plato, without irony, through Socrates's conjecture, illustrates to his friends that the separation of the public good from private concern is a defining element of the political. As with its closely related concept, the separation of political power from private wealth, the removal of private concerns from public affairs is vital to political activity, foundational to the very meaning of politics. The *polis*, and the political community as we have come to understand it in all it variants, is largely designed to be independent of personal desire, protected from the subjective claims of private interests, and shielded from the pressures of individual will. In the ideal political community, those who hold political power would be released from the connective bonds of private obligations and attachments, fully devoted to the direction and protection of the city. Remember, Socrates observes that the guardians, ideally, would devote themselves exclusively to serving the city, holding no other interests, engaging in no other activities (395c).[18] He is here recommending that those who hold political responsibility would ideally do so independently of all other obligations, a recommendation congruent with the functionalist dynamic within the True City, reaffirming the importance of aligning the abilities of the person with their proper nature, and further aligning the city itself with its inner nature. Politics is intrinsically an association of persons committed to the advancement of public accord, and ultimately, the public good. For a governing official, such as Plato's guardian, to confuse political responsibility with personal desire is to abdicate one's role in the city, and to place individual need and ambition as a priority.

Aristotle's criticism of Socrates's city in theory rests on the premise that Socrates's perfect city is not a city at all, but more like a family or even a single individual.[19] Plato is indeed grounding the polis on the premise of unity, and at times Socrates speaks of a kind of unity that is well-described as an indivisible whole rather than, as Aristotle envisions the polis, a multiplicity or aggregation, a plurality of various associations joined in unity, but not to the extreme point that he perceives in the ideal advanced by Plato. Aristotle perceives in Socrates's ostensibly radical proposals a city so thoroughly unified that its citizens think and feel in utter uniformity, without any variation, on what belongs to the self and what belongs to another (462c).[20] This city, one that not only aims at a common purpose, but even attempts to cultivate an intense common sentiment about affairs public and private, appears to be more than the unity Aristotle recognized as necessary for political partnership, and in some ways, it does indeed sound like the parts are absorbed completely into the whole. A close reading may, however, indicate otherwise.

The common sharing among citizens of the same pains and pleasures is not necessarily meant to recommend the imposition of an artificial,

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depersonalized, and monotonous uniformity. Socrates and Glaucon, in considering both what is the highest good for cities as well as those evils that could befall any city, do share a concern for political unity; however, they are not endorsing an artificial introjection of personal homogeneity pervading all members of a community (462a-b).[21] Designers of the city and legislators are responsible for enacting laws that aim at this greatest good while taking care to avoid the greatest evil, hence it is the unity of the city to which they must commit. Recalling Book II, Aristotle's objections notwithstanding, the ideal city is from the beginning a natural plurality, one that is based on the full realization of various talents, a diversity that serves to shape the composition and purpose of the True City. It is a plurality that achieves natural equilibrium, ensuring that both genuine differences and essential, common purposes are preserved and advanced.

This is certainly not to say that Plato values pluralism above unity, for that would tender a false claim; nor are we to similarly conclude the converse, that Aristotle valued pluralism for its own sake, for his observation that the city is a multiplicity is not meant to deny the essential cohesion of any city—a given city's true unity—it is only meant to question what Aristotle deems to be an excessive unity in Socrates's city in theory.[22] Aristotle's remarks on the importance of variation among the city's groups are not intended to diminish the unity that marks the end of the polis itself.[23] Both Plato and Aristotle recognize the primacy of unity in the polis, and as Socrates avers, the worst evil suffered in a city is its disintegration, and conversely, the greatest good that can be secured for a city is perfect unity (462b).[24] We are speaking of public matters here, and Plato is focusing on the need for a political community to feel the same pleasures and pains only about what is held in common, that is, only what belongs in the public sphere.[25] A True City will be one in which citizens together rejoice or lament when experiencing or suffering their shared successes or failures (462b).[26] The True City is not divided into segments, some responding to the city's successes and failures one way, and some responding in a quite different way. Socrates is speaking only of the public realm, not the joys and sorrows of private persons and families.

A city divided by wealth and poverty in particular is so severely splintered that it is reduced to a state of irreconcilable conflict, effectively a perpetual war between two cities (422e-423a).[27] To prevent the deterioration of the city from one into many, harmony is considered a paramount requirement for Socrates, a harmony that can only be established by mitigating the influence of private inclinations and personal distractions. A city is best governed wherein political power and private wealth are separated, and wherein individual desire is removed from public decision, a harmonious city unmoved by egocentric anxieties and selfish impulses. Once those things and activities that are shared publicly are vulnerable to desire, that is, once the commonwealth

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is determined by private motivations rather than guided by wisdom through law, the polis disintegrates. The reform requiring the guardians to adopt a way of life without the typical privacy enjoyed within the remainder of the city, among the majority of citizens, conveys the lesson that public good is essentially distinct from the myriad private interests and personal wants. This reform is closely allied with the separation of political power from private wealth in its attempt to dissipate the power of private motivation in the souls of those who hold political power; and it also shares in common with the second reform, the equal assignment of power among men and women, a commitment to prioritizing the unity of the city over trivial differences.

While discussing the separation of the public good from private interests, Socrates and Glaucon detect a new variation, a kind of city that does indeed so thoroughly blend these two otherwise distinct spheres—the public and the private—that the unity achieved in the city matches that of a single individual. With some hesitation, we may again consider what Plato writes at 462c-e, where Socrates, having already stated that the ideal city is that city wherein citizens share the same thoughts and feelings about mine and thine, then appears to turn his attention to what he now calls that city which resembles a single person, a city that appears distinct from the City in Theory.[28] Just a few lines above this observation, Socrates does speak as if he is considering an alternative city, one wherein words such as mine and thine are not uttered with unanimity, hence his comment about that city resembling a single person is offered in contrast to that city that speaks about another's pleasures and pains (462c). However, immediately after that Socrates returns to the city, which is governed best, and in which citizens speak of mine and thine in unison, just prior to raising the question about a city that would be like an individual. In short, we read the following sequence:

(i) At 462b, Socrates and Glaucon are discussing the ideal city, a city wherein "all the citizens rejoice and are pained by the same successes and failures"
(ii) At 462c Glaucon agrees that a city is best governed when citizens feel and think the same way about mine and thine.
(iii) Still at 462c to ~462d, Socrates inquires into that city which resembles more closely a single person, and compares it to a human body and its many components guided by a ruling element, one in which the entire city experiences pain and miseries with anyone who suffers.
(iv) Between 462d and 462e Glaucon observes that "the city with the best government *is* most like such a person."
(v) At 462e, Socrates announces that we must now "return to our own city," meaning the City in Theory (what I call the Form of the Polis) that has been under examination since at least Book II (even Book I).

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(vi) After an interval within which this City in Theory/Form of the Polis is further explained, Socrates and Glaucon agree at 464a-b that sharing pain and pleasure throughout the city, which is the best governed, is the greatest good for a community. This city resembles a human body with regard to its reaction to stimuli. Because of this step, it would appear that Socrates is confirming that the Form of the Polis is that city which is like a single individual; but this remains incongruent with what appears to be a comparison between the City in Theory and a city that is a close variation of it.

One could conceivably draw from this that Socrates and Glaucon may actually be discussing three cities here: (i) a city in which the citizens do not share any common sense of pain and pleasure, followed by (ii) the best-governed city, the one that they have been examining (the True City), the one that is rehabilitated through the reforms proposed by Socrates and that we have been analyzing over the course of the past two chapters, and (iii) what might be a newly, vaguely introduced third city, which closely resembles a person; and, if it is a separate city, one closely related to the True City, an approximate variation (462d).[29]

If there is something to this observation, then it appears that Socrates describes this third, ghost city not in terms of a unity achieved through a harmony of parts, but rather as a seamless, bland whole, a city wherein even one's individual pain is experienced throughout in a way similar to the entire body's awareness of an injured finger. Glaucon concedes that the best-governed city is like a person, but it is not Socrates who draws this conclusion.[30] He reflects on it for a moment, somewhat neutrally, adding to Glaucon's observation that this city as a whole empathizes with the pleasures and pains of each of its citizens; but then, following Glaucon's additional remark emphasizing the requisite of good laws for the promotion of such an outcome, appears to terminate this line in the conversation. Socrates abruptly steers away from this city that resembles a person by directing our attention back to their own city, the one that they have been discussing in detail, namely, the Form of the Polis, and to then seek in that city the features they have together deemed fundamental.[31] (462d-e) In other words, Socrates and Glaucon actually do entertain for a moment the kind of city that alarms Aristotle upon his review of Socrates's proposals, that is, a city so unified that it resembles an individual more than a political community; but they forebear from shaping their ideal in emulation of such a model. By returning to what they call their own city, Socrates might be signaling to us that the city that appears to be like a person is not in truth their City in Theory in spite of a superficial resemblance. If we are to read the remark about returning to their city—the City in Speech—as a re-direction back

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to the Form of the Polis, then the question raised at 462c, about the city that resembles a person, is indeed about an alternative to the City in Theory.[32]

As indicated earlier, Plato muddies the waters through the recapitulation at 464b, a passage that cannot be overlooked, wherein Socrates recalls with Glaucon that feeling the same pains and pleasures in common with the whole city is the greatest good in the polis, combined with comparing the well-governed city to a body and its many reactions to stimuli (464b).[33] However, the comparison of the city to the reactions of a body recalls that city resembling a person, and that is, in spite of appearances, nevertheless distinct from the substance of Plato's ideal; it is at best only an echo of the True City. Following this, Socrates claims that sharing wives and children among the auxiliaries is the cause of this unity, this greatest good in the city—the class of warrior-auxiliaries who share spiritedness with the individual soul, and who are the allies of the Philosopher-Rulers. It is a curious choice to single out the auxiliaries here. Prof. Ferrari explains that the way in which the auxiliaries are to live, the manner in which they are regulated, are in fact distinct from the Philosopher-Rulers, as well as the rest of the city. "T]he level of military discipline imposed on the auxiliaries . . . turns out in Book 5 to exceed anything even Sparta could exhibit. Domestic life in separate families is to be abolished; women will fight in the army and be freed from the duties of childrearing; the military class will be one huge family."[34] To this point, the reader could draw the inference that the common sharing of spouses and children is to be practiced by both the Philosopher-Rulers and their auxiliaries, but Plato reveals otherwise as he develops the ideal in more detail.

Plato is sending us two messages here: (i) at 462–463, he seems to be speaking of the entire city sharing the same pains and pleasures about public things (and further, *appearing* to distinguish the city that resembles a single person from the True City between 462c-e), and then, (ii) the sharing of common wives and children among the auxiliaries in particular (not yet mentioning the Philosopher-Rulers whom they serve) as the cause of the greatest good in the city, that is, the unity that Socrates has stressed throughout, particularly in Book V.[35] By tightening his focus on the auxiliaries (Ferrari's "military class") at 464, Socrates amplifies the civic nature of this unity, thereby passing over in silence other dimensions of human living. The unity Plato seeks is not that of a collectivist hive, but one only shared in the political sphere, and politics only operates within the dynamics of free agency. For indeed, how could a carpenter and a warrior really feel the same way about everything? However, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a carpenter and a warrior could freely share nearly identical sentiments about public issues as autonomous persons. Prof. Reeve interprets this sharing of pleasures and pains as occurring between "rationally self-interested agents"; and being

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rational, self-interested, and free, the citizens of the polis retain their own identity, and likely their own individuality and personal independence, the kind of independence requisite to perform their natural roles.[36] Political unity binds and harmonizes the city, absent all discord: influencing, defending, and guiding but not coercing that which remains outside of the political (465b).[37]

Perhaps the Form of the Polis, and the city that is like a person are distinct after all, but still similar enough to be easily confused, even by Socrates himself during the course of the conversation. In emulation of the harmonious soul, our Kallipolis achieves a unity so complete that the citizens in some way do share the same pleasures and pains about public affairs, and thus appear to be not unlike a single individual, at least in this regard. Or, we may be witnessing how easily the proposal for complete unity in one part of the city (among the guardians and their auxiliaries—perhaps especially among the auxiliaries) can be mistaken as a recommendation for the same kind of unity throughout the entire polis, the guardians and non-guardians alike.

Not unexpectedly, Professor Benardete's observations regarding communism and the True City are of interest here. Recall that the True City, as discussed in its initial iteration prior to the introduction of luxury, is notable for the absence of any explicit, formal leadership or governing structure. The True City in the account given by Socrates does not include a specific political function, and yet it appears to be self-governing in a way that exceeds a more conventional city. We argued earlier that the True City is not conventional, that is, established by the acts of human beings, but rather natural—a city wherein nature sets the conditions, thus allowing for the possibility for government without a typical political/juridical structure. In his study, Professor Benardete remarks that "the True City" functions "perfectly without any rulers"; it would do so in a way that is not only a-cephalous, but at once a-political and unnatural, for it would "culminate in the manufacture of citizen robots," a city of pure artifice inhabited by automata.[38] Certainly, a city wherein everyone feels the same way about everything, wherein each individual would equally share in the pleasures and pains of every other individual in the same way, would consist of bland, uniform and mechanistic individuals rather than distinct persons. For this reason Benardete's interpretation serves as a valuable caution. Plato, in discussing through Socrates and Glaucon that expression of the Form of the Polis denoting the fundamental separation of public good from private interests and impulse, establishes a public unity amplified to its most extreme point in the requirement of common ownership, shared feeling, and universal affection. This unity is so thoroughgoing that it results in the obliteration of the person; surely this is not what Plato intended. Hence, the reasonable conclusion by some commentators that irony or satire is underway, that Socrates does not really mean what he is saying, and thus the message of the entire dialogue is

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either in some way concealed if serious or otherwise a "modest proposal" if not. If the city that Socrates has described is simply a work of his imagination, then it can be argued that this model is a pure fabrication, contrary to nature. However, if the city is rooted in nature as it seems to be from what is said from 369a-372d, then any description of it must somehow align with common sense in spite of the appearance of the outlandish, infeasible, and undesirable.[39] The unity that Socrates and Glaucon propose, when examined in isolation, does appear outlandish, incongruent with the ideal political community. If what is being studied here is the Form of the Polis instantiated in separating public good from private desire, then the excessive unity reached by Socrates and Glaucon must somehow be tempered, otherwise the treatment applied to address the ideal city's febrile symptom will have failed.

Plato tempers the unity of the city in two ways. First, in returning to their own city, the City in Theory, Socrates summarizes the nature of the relationship between Philosopher-Ruler and citizen with a few succinct observations. Remember that Socrates and Glaucon compare the Form of the Polis to all cities, noting that those who rule in the True City are properly called protectors and auxiliaries, and those who are governed are to provide for the guardians and support the political community as a whole. Rulers in other cities are referred to as despots, or in the case of democracies, simply as rulers, and those over whom they rule are unequivocally and strikingly identified as slaves—regardless of the form of the regime observed. In sum, Glaucon, responding to Socrates's questions, marks the distinction between co-rulers who exercise authority in typical cities, and co-guardians, those who govern in the ideal city, the Form of the Polis (463a-d).[40] As Socrates will later remind his companions, the governing cohort, in their role as co-guardians, are by nature abundant in soul and committed to drawing all citizens, who are by definition free, toward virtue (463b, 547b-c).[41] In a word, the unity of the city that Socrates discerns within the Form of the Polis is understood as the harmony between free friends, who should share the same sentiments regarding things political; and yet, as they are associated in friendship, they exist as autonomous persons freely acting in the fulfillment of their natural roles within the polis, with a view toward communal self-sufficiency in the spirit of mutual benefit—the very cornerstone of the True City in its simplest manifestation.[42]

This third reform in-itself appears preposterous, and yet in context, its instructional purpose is more clearly discerned. In spite of the extreme to which Socrates and Glaucon extend themselves in the discussion of the sharing of sentiments within the city, the lesson remains: *politics is intrinsically distinct from things private*, for the latter is impelled by desire while the former can only succeed through the rational fostering of the virtues—the same virtues that set the unified soul in its harmony. We must consider these

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observations, and in appreciating that Plato speaks of a city of free persons who, even though there is variety among the citizenry (some are carpenters, some are guardians, and so on) they share a common sense of unity about things political, a marked contrast to both divided cities disturbed by internal conflict and the kind of city that has completely obliterated difference through the abolition of personality. Upon this foundation rests the fourth principal manifestation of the Form of the Polis: *reason must always guide power.*

THE THIRD WAVE AND THE FOURTH LESSON: REASON SHOULD GUIDE POWER

During the course of the conversation shared within Plato's *Statesman*, the principal figure, a Visitor from Elea, authoritatively explains that the finest thing in undertaking the direction of the polis is not so much the art of legislating, for all its merits, but more fundamentally, that the art of governing and all its ultimate responsibilities should only be assumed by a person who is at once regal and wise (*Statesman*, 294a).[43] For the Eleatic Visitor, only the regime administered by the wise, that is, those who possess the virtue of prudence, or good judgment (*phronesis*) and are capable of understanding the importance of measurement and due proportion (thereby marking the mean for the correct direction of political affairs as well as encouraging the development of virtue), is grounded in knowledge. It is a constitution shaped by the expertise that can only emerge from knowledge, a science of governing free from mere opinion and the impulses of self-interest, and is so far removed from other constitutions that the distance between the heavenly pattern of which he now speaks and the regimes we typically inhabit is comparable to the difference between the divine and the human.[44] Statesmanship in the Visitor's estimation entails directing those who are able to manage the details of governing such as legislating and judging. A statesman in essence acts from a distance; the art of statesmanship involves rational authority, direction through wise—and consequently just—consultation, in contrast to the illusory maneuverings practiced among political sophists.[45] Power as ordinarily exerted by the inexpert officeholders ruling imperfect regimes is neither found in the language nor present in the disposition of statesmanship.

True rulers are concerned with knowing the essence of things, to plumb the nature of being within the limitations of human wisdom, and consequently remain primarily interested in that which is indispensable in the order of things as established by nature. Rulers of this kind are those who discern when it is time to act, to initiate that which is important to the city, and equally important, when it is best to forbear from acting (305d).[46] The statesman, practicing the art of measurement, is able to gauge various qualities and

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things with regard to what is related and what is opposed, which is to say that a true statesman is able to take the measure of properties and subjects relative to each other, and, still more importantly, to know what is proper and when it is so in action, and to follow the imperative of aiming toward the middle between the extremes (284e).[47] As with the art of weaving, the art of governing obliges those who practice it to learn objective principles established in the nature of things, in contrast to conventional practices that emerge in the context of shared needs that appear within relationships. Understanding relationships is recommended, surely anyone engaged in governing must be sensitive to the kind of knowledge this entails. Knowing governing as a science, a kind of expertise, requires that kind of knowledge, which transcends particularity, knowledge that is only acquired through the pursuit of wisdom, and a practice that considers what is true above all, unobscured by the attitudes of citizens, the interests of the wealthy or the poor, or even the conditions promulgated within statutory law (293a-c).[48] Rare among citizens of any given political community, true statesmen, comparable to pilots, weavers, and physicians—recall the comment at *Republic* 407e describing Asclepius as a statesman—act from objective first principles discerned by the intellect, principles grounded in the essence of both city and soul, principles that are followed not in response to the desires of the citizens or dependent upon the letter of the law, or refracted through the background of those who practice the art, whether they are rich or poor, but rather principles that are manifested through the practice of governing as an art, informed by principles but not influenced by the contingencies through which the statesman operates (293a-d).[49]

A true ruler displays an affinity for the essence of politics, and thus intuitively knows that the political community is natural to human persons. Any effort at learning the first principles of an idea, virtue, property, thing, or activity is an effort to comprehend what is natural to those things, activities, and so on, that is, what is intrinsic and real. If we are to speak of a *true* political community—*the* true polis, not what we perceive as "true" but rather what is true independent of our particular experiences and preferences—then we must seek a point where we can understand the political as also reflecting the Forms, in this case, the Form of the Polis. If there is a Form of the Polis, then there is a principle of governing that is essential to all properties of that Form, that is, all political regimes that we can observe within our own experience and through all other accounts. When we consider the Forms, it is difficult to speak of this concept in terms of anything other than universality, essentiality, and indivisibility, for Forms are perfect, unqualified and incomposite unities of that which is in-itself. We can, however, speak of ways in which Forms are manifest, expressed, or instantiated. For example, Socrates speaks of the Form of Justice in terms of both one's natural function in service to the city

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as well as a person's internal harmony, the soul resembling a properly tuned instrument. It is not altogether incorrect, particularly in light of what Prof. Sayer writes about the Forms as understood by Plato at the writing of *Philebus*, to examine the Forms through their properties. It is apparent that the Forms must be thought of as incomposite on some level; and yet in reference to other Forms, we may be able to speak, on another level, of ways in which Forms partake of other Forms, and are thus components of other Forms.[50] The Form of Justice is made possible by the Form of the Good—may we therefore ask if the Form of Justice is a property of the Form of the Good? We can, with confidence, say that justice instantiates the Good.

We can speak of a Form of the Polis as explicit in *Republic* and implicit in *Statesman* and, later, *Laws*, owing to the necessity of the concept itself. If the Forms are real, and if there is a Form of the Polis among them as argued here, then Plato, who believed in the Forms, will continue examining political activity throughout all of his writings from this premise. Moreover, while Plato may be read as having modified or changed his views about the Forms in light of *Parmenides*, it could also be said, and more persuasively, that even though Plato may shift his emphasis, he never replaces or abandons the theory of the Forms, and hence the True City as the Form of the Polis. Thus, if we say that the Form of the Polis is present in *Statesman*, we mean that the Eleatic Visitor's understanding of the ideal city is informed by the True City itself, even if implicitly or indirectly.[51] In *Statesman*, the ideal discerned in Socrates's Philosopher-Ruler is present, embodying the rule of reason within a more observably political variant, reminding us of the fusion of philosophy and politics in *Republic*.[52]

Thus, the idea of a statesman, or statesmanship, is only meaningful within the polis as it is in-itself, universal, eternal, and natural. The Visitor, while certainly alluding to the impossibility of living within the ideal city—for the ideal must be separated from all other constitutions in the same way that the gods are transcendentally distant from human beings—nevertheless speaks of statesmanship as a type in terms that ground the act of governing on the rule of reason, and in particular, practical reason (303b-c).[53] Owing to the practiced virtue of prudence, the statesman is capable of steering the state and its citizens away from excess and deficiency, and in so doing following due measure in undertaking what is necessary for achieving the fine and the good. Statesmanship is made possible only through virtue and aims in turn at tending to the virtues of citizenship, knowing that the laws and institutions of a regime, while certainly of great importance, are only sustainable, only useful, given the participation of citizens of character, particularly citizens who possess the virtues of courage and temperance.

In the account advanced by the Visitor, statesmanship is likened to the art of weaving, a craft that involves intertwining the warp of one kind of citizen

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characterized by one dominant virtue with the woof of another kind with a different predominant virtue, and from these differences successfully blending them into one fabric.[54] Neither warp nor woof lose their particular consistency on close examination, and yet they are together transformed through intermixing into a single whole (305e).[55] While it is to be admitted that the Visitor's statesman seeks both efficiency and virtue, ultimately the art of statesmanship, the aim of its craft, involves the weaving together of virtues for the goodness and nobility of the polis and its citizens.[56] As with Socrates, the Visitor's statesman is concerned with the state of the soul and how it is supported by the city.[57] Courage and moderation, the virtues that are entwined and balanced as the Visitor elucidates from *Statesman* 305e forward, are woven under the dexterous hand of the statesman, the art of which can only be established and applied by those who love wisdom and thereby are led to an appreciation of the human soul and its various capacities.[58] Government under the lovers of wisdom is for Plato the only sure means to achieve harmony and promote justice in the polis. And thus encouraged by Glaucon, Socrates advances his eminent dictum that philosophy and political power must become one (473c-e).[59]

Even though Socrates concludes that this last reform, that philosophers should rule, is the indispensable institution requisite to bringing the City in Theory into practice, he hesitates to share it, paradoxically anticipating a wave of objection capable of inundating him under the indignities of ridicule and disdain. An astonished Glaucon adds that this last reform is so provocative that Socrates should expect more than vociferous objections, but also physical assault against his person (473e–474a).[60]

Looking back, we have already been introduced to this reform at various points in the conversation, the first of which can be identified at 347b-d wherein Socrates offers the good city consisting of decent persons, a city wherein people work to avoid ruling, an implicit first presentation of the True City as well as an early acknowledgment that such people will not seek power, but rather conduct themselves to the contrary.[61] One can also discern other moments during the conversation in which Socrates is already describing this culminating, indispensable reform, for example, the explicit inclusion of philosophy among the qualities of the nature of a guardian, or implicitly in the injunction that the education of the young guardians must aim at the Good and the Beautiful, an education that bespeaks the philosopher's quest, or even the comment that describes Asclepius as a statesman, who serves as a model for the application of an objectively grounded art to the treatment of disease and disorder (375a–376d, 407d–408c).[62] Doubtless we could flag similar allusions and clues pointing to the Philosopher-Ruler, but it is here that Socrates brings this teaching to fruition. In defense of this teaching, he elevates the conversation to its highest level. Through this attempt to elucidate exactly

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why philosophers should rule knowing they are the least likely to seek authority and the least likely to receive it, he guides his companions upward toward the transcendent heart of Plato's understanding of the nature of knowing and being. As both Socrates's trepidation and Glaucon's initial reaction confirm, this is indeed on the face of it, the most absurd proposal of all, one that wraps its absurdity within a double-folded paradox.[63]

Socrates knows that the love of wisdom dissolves all ambition. Additionally, wisdom is that virtue which is marked by the quality of curiosity, a desire to know the way of things as they are, not simply as they appear, achieved over the long course of a studious and decent life, illuminating the vanity of the powerful and thus further militating against any predilection toward ambition. Neither love nor wisdom can be possessed, they can only be sought, and as such the fullness of these virtue are ever elusive; and even should those who love wisdom accept the duties requisite to holding power, they do so fully aware that the only course proper to the assumption of power is a resolve to limit it. The lovers of wisdom know—and this is one quality that separates them from the clever and the brilliant—that the rational exercise of the art of government is *not* about the exertion of power as it is commonly assumed, but rather about the search for and application of the virtue of justice in soul and city. Political action does at times require the application of power, Plato is surely aware of this fact; however in his analysis, political power is considered as but one aspect and in no sense the most important, and when it is to be applied it must be done so prudently, moderately, inconspicuously, and infrequently. As in the simile of the True Captain or True Navigator, those who know governing in-itself are disinterested in the ambition for power, disinclined to vulgar, insincere petitioning for the serious responsibility of guiding those who should be guided, those who need governing. Philosopher-Rulers are unfamiliar with the ignoble practices of self-promotion and coercion, the tools of those who seek power but know little to nothing about its true nature. Rather, the Philosopher-Ruler, like the True Captain, recognizes that politics is about something other than power. The true statesman has learned what Socrates taught in the very first book of *Republic*, that the model for political knowledge supplied by Thrasymachus's proclamation that politics and all related virtues are a function of power and that everything is reduced to the desire for power in pursuit of one's own gain, is unreservedly false.

Politics is essentially about something other than power, and the True Captain is the analog for the one who grasps this fundamental fact about the nature of things political. As the true captain knows the art of piloting and navigation by studying the stars, wind patterns, currents, and movements of the sun through the changing seasons, the true statesman seeks virtue not power, and pays attention to justice, wisdom, prudence, courage, temperance,

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piety, decency, honor, fairness in the law, leadership through service, steadfastness in direction, due measurement in seeking the mean—the true and the beautiful and above all, the Good, the latter being the lodestar of the virtues established in the nature of being-itself (488d).[64] Following the model imposed by Thrasymachus, that politics is fundamentally and exclusively about power, will deflect the ship of the state from its course, and eventually cause it to flounder. Those who entreat, seduce, or force the citizens of the polis, those who crave to own the city as the ship owner owns the vessel, are the least qualified to steer it, for only those who know navigation and seamanship belong at the rudder. Only those who know that justice is a virtue and that prudence, not power, is the essence of political judgment, are properly statesmen and public servants. True statesmanship is practiced by those who love wisdom in the correct way, and those who either know the Forms or who know that there is an objective principle of justice as much as beauty, for it is only possible to speak of beautiful things and just actions if there is a Form of Beauty, a Form of Justice. We must seek those who in their nature exhibit the probity and grace enabling them to discern the Forms, to know what is and how this essential reality is reflected in what appears (486d).[65] For Plato, power is not a principal quality of the Form of the Polis, but is at best ancillary to it, a necessary subordinate to the virtues and purposes mentioned earlier, and a practical means to the direction of the polis in the awareness that a facility for the appropriate use of power rests in the recognition of the need for its constraint. More than wielding power, a statesman must preserve its limitation, and this can only be accomplished by a person who studies the essence of things, the Forms themselves, and consorts with the divine without regard to the impositions of their detractors. Socrates finds Thrasymachus's model for the study and practice of politics benighted, and commits himself to the real nature of the polis, one that is discerned through the study of the divine pattern, the essence of the political that may seem to the majority to be beyond belief but that to the philosopher is known through the activity of the intellect. When we set aside the desire for power, we may realize, vaguely at first but then more clearly, what is needed in the city and undertake political activity accordingly.

Should all of the right conditions converge, all of the requisites met and the Form of the Polis were made manifest in the visible realm, the lynchpin that holds the structure together would be the institution of the Philosopher-Ruler. This is the primary reform, one that we are assured is vital to the phenomenal actualization of essence, and the one that is the most difficult to accept from both directions, from the separate perspectives of the lovers of wisdom, and the inhabitants of the cave. It is the reform that is at once the most decisive and the most elusive. Philosophers do not see the ruler in-themselves, and conversely, no one will recognize the ruler in the philosopher. Stargazers,

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good-for-nothing babblers, so the crowd maligns the lover of wisdom; and on board the ship of state any philosopher who would attempt to guide souls let alone pilot the helm, is more likely to become acquainted with accommodations in the brig, or be dispatched overboard, or condemned to drink hemlock. Even the very suggestion that a student of philosophy should govern a city will incite waves of laughter likely to drown those who submit such a proposition (473c, and also *Statesman* 299b-c).[66] Philosophy and politics as ordinarily pursued and routinely practiced appear to us as at best indifferent toward each other and at worst alienated from each other, even at times adversarial. More pointedly, in Socrates's assessment, they often find themselves opposed as antagonists chiefly because neither is suitably practiced in our common experience—those who are blessed with a philosophic nature are poorly educated and those who normally hold political power are those who inappropriately desire it for their own advantage, who fight against each other to ascend to positions of honor and authority from selfish motivations, induced by their own appetite for domination—for example, at 347d and 495a-e.[67] Even so, only when philosophy and political power are seamlessly combined will we find relief from trouble and distress (474d-e).[68]

Owing to this ongoing division between the demands of politics and the aspirations of philosophy, Plato expects this proposal to be received by the majority as more preposterous than any preceding it, even more outlandish than the sharing of spouses, children, and property among the guardians; and he knows at least as well as we do that, as a practical matter, neither will the philosopher accept the yoke of government, nor will the governed passively submit to philosophy's authority. For that rare philosopher who remains genuine and firmly devoted to the love of wisdom is as a great soul within a city of small people, disdaining politics, and finding happiness only in that which is transcendent (496b-c, 517c-d).[69] Were a philosopher to turn back toward the concerns of the city, namely, to descend back into the cave, he would be received by the majority of its citizens as awkward and foolish, stumbling about to and fro in a lurching attempt to make sense of the habits and conduct of those who dispute about shadows and poor images of justice and things political (517d-e).[70] Socrates assures his companions that a philosopher, once having re-adjusted to the cave, would understand it better than anyone else; for such a person would not only eventually acclimate with requisite acuity to perceive more sharply than others the shadowed, chaotic realm of the world in which we live, but this same person, the philosopher, would unlike all others, realize the truth, comprehend justice as it is, and know the Good (520b-c).[71] Philosophers, those least eager to govern, completely disinclined to seek power, are paradoxically the most qualified to govern in any city. They are fully awake, guided by a love of wisdom that has been strengthened by

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their familiarity with essence of things. True Captains know that there is an art to steering the ship of state, and that to take the helm, one must have learned and successfully practiced the exacting skills necessary to guide the city in a way that actualizes its true nature and pilots it toward its noble purposes. Implicitly, Socrates is here answering Thrasymachus's complaint that everyone acts to their own advantage at the expense of others, that, for example, shepherds protect and nourish their sheep so that they can in the end fleece (and in some cases eat) them for their own gain. A true governor, like an accomplished pilot, serves the city for its sake, not for the sake of any identifiable party nor even for the sake of the pilot alone.

Socrates assures us that all souls seek the Good, the highest of the Forms and the essence of being itself; further, he recognizes every soul possesses the ability to learn, which is itself a consequence of the objective reality of the Good, that most brilliant of all things, and that which exceeds in importance even the cardinal virtues, for without it the virtues themselves would not exist (504e-505e, 518c-d).[72] Every human being is in various ways capable of knowing, however vaguely, the Good, and therefore committing good works in at least a limited but not insubstantial way. Good, which is affirmed through the virtues, is indispensable to human life as such. All souls are moved to goodness in general, and in particular the Good is the royal principle in the selection of the guardians.[73] For example, when Cephalus at the opening of *Republic* appears to assent to Socrates's description of his definition of justice as paying one's debts and speaking truthfully, he exhibits a truncated awareness of aspects of justice at least partially aligned with knowledge of justice itself. Recall the earlier observation that Cephalus is not entirely incorrect, for honesty and meeting one's obligations are evident qualities of just conduct. Nonetheless, as Socrates teaches in examining this definition, it is easy to appreciate that these rules of behavior do not encompass the whole of justice, the Form of Justice. Cephalus speaks of just things, and while his explanation of the just life is obviously incomplete, he knows something about justice in-itself. Compared to Thrasymachus, Cephalus's contribution to the inquiry into the nature of justice reveals that he is far closer to the truth of the matter. Thrasymachus seems unable or unwilling to grasp the concept of justice in-itself; his recommendation of a life of injustice is proof enough that he lacks understanding of things in-themselves, and particularly any knowledge of justice and the just life. Even his conflation of power with justice exposes his inability to understand either concept.

Cephalus, while not knowing the Form of Justice, nevertheless knows something about at least two examples of just conduct, and embraces the possibility that justice is something that is not merely contingent, but objectively real. He sees just things but the just itself eludes his vision, unlike Thrasymachus, he senses that it is more beneficial to live a life in search of justice

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rather than a life wickedly embracing injustice (479e).[74] At least this is what we are led to believe initially, for if all souls pursue the good as Socrates teaches, even Thrasymachus must be aware, deep down, that justice exists in-itself and that the just life is more beneficial than an unjust one. Recall Thrasymachus blushing, a response exposing some inner realization, in spite of his protestations, that we can speak of just things because there is in reality justice itself. He denies outwardly what he must inwardly feel.

Feelings aside, Socrates knows justice as it is (in spite of his predictable disclaimer that he knows it not), a knowing that has been acquired through his love of wisdom, his awareness that reality is behind the appearance, or better still, that what appears to us is a reflection of what is real. While it is the case that Socrates teaches us that the essence of things are only fully known intelligibly beyond the limitations of our perceptions, it does not follow that what we experience before us is mere illusion, that the phenomenal world is somehow unreal. To the contrary, just as one's shadow is seen, so also principles of the Forms are understood, even if imperfectly. Were it otherwise then there would be no foundation for knowledge, nor even any cause behind belief. The phenomenal world of becoming is not an illusion for Plato as we might be tempted to suppose; however, mistaking the real for the apparent, the substance for the shadow, is illusory. When we see a shadow, we experience an optic phenomenon—a shadow is there to be seen, and while it is insubstantial it is clearly not an illusion. If I were to mistake a shadow before me for the thing that casts it, then I would operate under an illusion; but the shadow itself is not an illusion, only my misconception. Were we to walk outside together on a sunlit afternoon and I were to see your shadow, there is no disputing that it is there. If I were to begin speaking to your shadow as if it were you, then I would succumb to an illusory state of mind.

Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus are engaged in a discussion of justice while still in the cave, mistaking the phenomenal for the essential. And yet, in spite of their disparate errors about the thing examined, they are perceiving, or in the case of Thrasymachus, feeling, something that indicates there is a transcendent reality beyond the perception, not contingent upon their fixed perspectives. The Forms are not detached, they are manifest in the things and actions that we experience around us, sometimes vaguely, other times more substantially, but the Forms are what constitutes the phenomena with which we are familiar. It is indeed just to be truthful and to pay what is owed, but those actions are not the whole of justice, only discrete species that are just only insofar as they express the essence of the Form of Justice. If we confuse examples of justice for justice in-itself, we are like those lovers of sights and lovers of sounds who appreciate beautiful things and just actions but cannot admit that there is beauty, that there is justice. They may resemble philosophers, but they are not true philosophers (475d-e).[75] Lovers of wisdom

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know that beauty, because it is objectively real, is that which makes it possible to appreciate anything beautiful in this world, and they know that beauty cannot be mistaken for its opposite. As Socrates affirms, this is true of justice as well as beauty, and for that matter all of the Forms that our limited minds may discern. Every Form is an essence, transcendent and yet manifested everywhere through activities, through bodies, through relations, through virtues; and while appearing to us as many, the Forms are ultimately one, immaterial, and eternal (475e-476a).[76]

Philosophers always seek the eternal, loving those studies that guide them away from the field of appearances, the flux of the material, the currents and cycles of time (485a-b).[77] We are wanderers in the realm of becoming, the phenomenal realm embedded in matter and ruled by incessant, unrelenting time, marked by generation, degeneration, and dissolution. Those who fix their gaze only on the visible, the material and temporal, limit themselves to the images of the real and shadows of the images, and at best can only become experts at how the images wax and wane, how the shadows and echoes appear and fade. Shadow justice is the province of those who draw their conclusions on the many facets of appearances alone, and while one might, as with Cephalus, develop an appreciation for one, or even a few, of those facets of justice, should one mistake the part for the whole, one's conclusions about justice in-itself, the things in-themselves, will remain insufficient. At times such conclusions will be wrong, for the shadows and echoes of the cave are easily blurred, and even when observing the images from which they arise, in the dim light, it is difficult to form anything beyond a reasonable opinion about what is observed, what is experienced and perceived. Over time, philosophers learn to not only better discern the discrete elements of the phenomenal world, but also to fully understand these elements in the context of the larger whole. Justice is not something external to us, nor a set of rules and guidelines to direct our outward behavior; justice is a virtue of the soul, and sensible recommendations, such as paying debts and speaking truth, only make complete sense, and can only be fairly won, with a knowledge of justice in-itself, independent of our opinions, practices, biases, and conceits, a knowledge that prevents us from confusing the part with the whole, the sense with the essence. It is justice discerned by reason beyond the requirements of convention, the aspirations of the will, or the drives of the appetites.

In all cases, the polis must be directed by reason, formed through the pursuit of wisdom; and in spite of his hesitation to say it, Socrates is resolutely convinced that reason and truth are not only independent of the undercurrents of power or the exertions of the will, but that additionally reason is the appropriate sovereign, and that the reverse—power determining or governing the rational—is never legitimate regardless of the type of regime or the shape of

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its institutions. In every imaginable instance, political power should be ruled by reason in the same way that our individual appetites should be governed by the intellect. The very notion that knowledge and truth are somehow creatures of power is alien to Plato's way of thinking. To say that power determines any given truth, or somehow defines what it means to know, is to confuse what is real for what is apparent, what is correct for what is preferred or compelled. There is never to be made a legitimate case for the reverse, that power should guide reason, or that power determines truth. Plato rightly detaches truth from power, he correctly understands that in every case, and under any given political regime (whether it is governed by one, or few, or many), reason should rule over power, and power, if it is of any use at all, must be applied rationally and justly. Ideally, the philosopher is the one who should govern, for it is the philosopher, those who love wisdom, who commit to the life of the mind in service to the Good. Plato's Form of the Polis, the True City, is first and foremost that city wherein the rule of wisdom—ennobled reason—governs free citizens in the pursuit of justice for the sake of the Good. This is the essence of politics. According to Plato, this is what Socrates conveys through his extended teaching about the ideal city, regardless of how impractical it is in comparison to the way in which we actually live, and in spite of the many vigorous objections that are frequently raised against it. Through the conversation that Plato has imagined in *Republic*, the Form of the Polis is examined, the "heavenly pattern" to which all political regimes must be compared, and toward which all proper political activity rightly aspires.

All four of the principal reforms Plato recognizes are meant to provoke controversy and resistance, for it is clear that politics as commonly practiced is incompatible with the ideal discerned by Socrates. Resistance aside, the point is not to be lost in the prima facie absurdity of these suggestions. Rather, the point, the meaning, is to be found in the lessons Plato conveys from within the reforms that Socrates proposes, the fourfold treatment of the febrile city that while symbolically curing the City in Theory of its fever conceptually identifies what could be called the four primary properties of the Form of the Polis:

(i) that the guardians are not to own private property, → teaching us that in every instance it is the ideal that, *political power and wealth must always be separated*;
(ii) that the guardians would ideally be both women and men, → teaching us that as every human soul possesses the same nature, *superficial differences are irrelevant in determining who should govern*;
(iii) that, ideally, the guardians would share spouses and children in common, → teaching us that *the public good must be separate from private*

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interests, that common concerns should be immune from personal desire;

and finally,

(iv) that in the ideal city philosophers would rule, or in other words, those who hold political power would be raised as philosophers, → teaching us that in every case, in all political communities regardless of their institutional structure, *reason must always guide power.*

Critical to our understanding of these reforms is not so much the practicality of their implementation, which scholars commonly recognize as problematic by Plato's own admission, but rather the lessons conveyed by Plato through Socrates from within these reforms. Appearances notwithstanding, all *political* regimes are somehow grounded on these central principles, for it is in these principles that we are able to grasp, however imperfectly, the nature of political life, the purpose of political action. While these principles may not appear manifest in the routine practices of our public institutions and in the attitudes that are the offspring of our political sensibilities, they are nevertheless the essence of politics, the dynamic core of public activity. As a shadow may be cast by a statue that passes before a source of light, and as that statue may, in turn, be an inanimate image representing an animate and complex reality, or the essence of the thing-itself, so it is with the polity and the activity that occurs within it. While it is likely that we live and work primarily in the shadows and among the images, these shadows and images still reflect the transcendent reality that makes them possible, there still remains a connection between the surface and the substance, the representation and the real. There would be no shadow of a horse cast upon the cave wall without the solid statue of the horse that throws the shadow, and such an image would be impossible to conceive and fabricate without the living horse that it represents. Our many and varied political regimes follow suit, and while we witness at every turn, the way in which wealth corrupts power, private interest unduly influences public good, superficial differences are made to matter in politics, and power subjugates reason, we intuitively understand that such circumstances thwart the realization of the essence of political action. We know that political power and wealth should always be separated, that the public good cannot be realized when overtaken by private interests, that only the best and most qualified natures should govern, and that reason must guide, and contain, power—regardless of the regime, or the political culture within which political institutions operate. These are self-evident realities.

What we understand to be the essence of politics serves as the ideal toward which we are obligated to reach if we are to fully nourish our inward potential as political creatures. Conceding that the ideal will never be realized owing to human frailty and the general and inexorable degradation of temporal things,

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we nevertheless know that the "heavenly pattern" of the polis, as with the heavenly pattern of justice, is eternally consonant with the true, the beautiful, and the good. Plato knew that philosophers will not rule, and wealth's influence will never be eliminated from the government of cities and states; and yet these properties of Plato's Form of the Polis remain true and real, made known to us through those lessons conveyed within the conversation that is the *Republic*. Inserted in time and located in space—the phenomenal realm of becoming—through the practical application of these theoretical principles, the ideal regime will change, as Socrates reflects, and not for the better (546a).[78]

Decaying from the governance of reason, our perfect city will descend into its least imperfect variant, what Plato identifies as timocracy, a type of regime resembling the examples of Sparta and Crete, governed by the spirited aspect of the soul who naturally love honor and victory, falling midway between reason and virtue on one hand and the appetites on the other, pulled in both directions. Given enough time, the appetites prevail, and a further descent into oligarchy results. Passing from the Form of the Polis into timocracy is the consequence of the relinquishment of the rule of reason, that guiding principle of the True City that is represented by the rule of philosophers (the fourth major reform), which is accompanied by the fusion of private desire and public interest, for the spirited guardians that replace the rational guardians begin to place their own reputations as a priority over the good of the city. In a word, two principles of the True City are evidently lost in the descent from the Form of the Polis to the timocratic type. Likewise, the separation of wealth and power is initially compromised within a timocracy when wealth is secretly coveted, prompting still further deterioration into oligarchy, the completion of the fusion of wealth and power, which extinguishes justice and friendship in the city.

It is in reaction against the indignities, and the vulnerabilities, of oligarchy that democracy arises (557a-c).[79] For Socrates in *Republic*, democracy, the most attractive constitution and yet the one furthest removed from the ideal, is but a step away from tyranny, which is the negation of the Form of the Polis and thus the abolition of the political community. Unlike the anti-political tyranny, democracy remains constitutional and thereby political; however, its excesses ripen and precipitate its own abolition. Those who are the most qualified are not required to rule, indeed, there is no recognition that anyone needs to demonstrate any real qualifications, a feature of democracy that is tantamount to the extinction of citizenship and the emergence of the a-political individual who blithely squanders his days indulging his egotistic preoccupations. Not only is character excised from statesmanship to be replaced by the superficiality that haunts the selection of leaders in all democracies down to our time, but the rule of the appetites, first inchoate in timocracy

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and fully emergent in oligarchy, is further intensified with the removal of any residue of genuine discipline. Still worse, the democratic soul and the regime that it produces deems all pleasures as fundamentally the same, and thereby all values as equally valid. While persons within the city may still choose a life shaped by the virtues of temperance or justice, such a choice is assigned the same value, the same legitimacy, as a life of intemperance or injustice. No truth or virtue inspires the community as a whole, and each individual is given license to exert their will as far as it goes according to their own preferences. Absent temperance and justice, the kind of unrestrained liberty embraced by the democrat, according to Socrates, gravitates to the extreme—endless choice without self-mastery, distortion of all virtue, the reduction of wisdom and courage to self-satisfied navel gazing and arrogance, and the confusion of the Good and the pleasant. Uncounseled freedom sows the seeds of its own obliteration; for once freedom is allowed to reach its extremity unchecked, it will react toward its opposite, extreme slavery (564a).[80] It is here, from unrestrained democracy, the tyrant is raised.

These reflections on democracy and the democratic soul raise the opportunity to return once again to a brief review of the importance of Cephalus. If Cephalus really is superficial and overly fond of himself, then we need speak no further of him as he would then represent a type who, behind only the tyrant, stands in proximity to the furthest remove from Socrates and the Philosopher-Ruler. This interpretation of Cephalus seems to miss the mark when employed as a device for comparing the democratic person to the democratic constitution. Democracy, while an inferior type in the taxonomy suggested by Socrates in Book VIII, is the most complex regime examined, as mentioned earlier, compared to an embroidered coat, a heterogeneous multiplicity that allows one to find and justify whatever they are looking for—exactly what they are looking for. In a democracy, one will find profligacy, selfishness, impiety, intemperance, gluttony, arrogance, and all manner of vices, but there remains the potential to cultivate other and more commendable qualities, the possibility for moral conduct, however uncertain, also resides in the democratic city. The problem with democracy is that virtue is too easily abandoned when it interferes with the indulgence in something new and more alluring. Democracy confuses types because it regards all pleasures as equal, a characteristic of the popular regime that is magnified by the incontinence and instability of the democratic person. One day he practices a species of temperance resembling one of Socrates's guardians, the following day he changes his mind and succumbs to base self-indulgence. Is Cephalus this kind of man? As we asked at the beginning, is Cephalus democracy personified because he is a creature of appetite and a shallow poser? Or is he, like the democratic constitution that he seems to represent, more complex?

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Again, the question is raised as to how we should interpret Cephalus's character in the matter of the appetitive portion of his soul. Has Cephalus adopted a more modest approach to living because he has lost the desires of his youth? Or, has Cephalus always led a life of moderation? If the former, then Cephalus does personify democratic incontinence and confusion of types, a superficial man prone to self-indulgence signaling his shallow principles, unable to sit still long enough to engage in conversation with the philosopher. If the latter, then Cephalus represents democratic character tempered by the virtue of moderation, informed by self-mastery. In comparison to the wisdom-loving Socrates and his spirited companion, Glaucon, Cephalus appears to us to be a man unable to match their evident virtues; and yet Socrates appears to respect him, and what he does offer during his brief moment in the discussion is not without some merit. Because Cephalus has lived a life of moderation he is now able to relax, not because his desires have been extinguished, but because he had once learned while younger how to master his appetites, to find contentment in youth and in old age through moderation, bearing whatever circumstance offers.[81] Through what he has learned from his experiences over the course of a long and self-disciplined life, Cephalus has gained a degree of wisdom with regard to proper conduct in confronting temptation. This wisdom at maturity is, according to Prof. Reeve, comparable to Odysseus. Because of his fortitude, Reeve explains, the warrior Odysseus renounces his "love of honor"; and because of his moderation, the businessman Cephalus tempers his appetites.[82] On reading what he shares with Socrates, Cephalus fostered his virtues much earlier in his life than did Odysseus.

Cephalus reminds us that how we live is the key to managing any situation. Correspondingly, absent moderation, the democratic constitution that is incapable of restraining its impulses from the beginning will never achieve contentment at any level, or in any moment. Democracy shaped by the virtue of moderation, following Cephalus's example based on this reading of his character, while still inferior to the True City, is nevertheless able to entertain the possibility that there is an objective principle of justice that is not driven by self-interest (unlike Thrasymachus), that it involves a sense of duty to ones fellow citizens without respect to persons (unlike Polemarchus), and is more than a compromise upon a mean that is partially framed by our purportedly natural and presumptuously correct impulse to a life of injustice (Devil's Advocate). Socrates warns against democracy's indiscipline, instabilities, and excesses, for these baser tendencies both undercut the freedom that it desires and, in the end, divert democracy from the pursuit of the Good in favor of thralldom to appetites, the kind of life that is particularly susceptible to the perverse designs of tyrants. If Cephalus is genuinely a man of moderation, or at least one who aspires to be so, and if he also does in fact represent the

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democratic soul, then Plato seems to be offering another possibility for the democratic constitution, the democratic citizen. To explore this interpretation further, one might be well served to place it within a still larger framework.

It does us well to remember that Plato, through Socrates, discusses what he has discerned to be the True City, the perfect regime that is the Form of the Polis, and as a form thereby more real than any type of regime that we can identify within our own incomplete and frustratingly limited taxonomies. Timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy, however they are ranked, fall short of realizing the potential of public commitment that can be found in the essence of politics itself. The Forms are purely immaterial and yet far from insubstantial, for it is in knowing the Forms that we can come to know the substance, and the substance of politics is neither autocratic nor democratic, neither defined as the imposition of authority nor justified by the pursuit of unrestrained liberty. The Form of the Polis is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, for such a regime exceeds the narrowed expectations set by human limitations, but also, because of its essential reality, irresistible to the goals of human life realized through virtue and revealed in nobility. Beyond our reach and yet more real than our experience, we are well-served to examine ways in which the lessons of the True City can be applied. The Form must be placed in time. Plato does not tell us how this could be accomplished in *Republic*. Socrates only describes how it would fade and vanish once established in this world. To insert the eternal into the temporal, Plato composes another dialogue in which a different set of friends aspire anew toward the promotion of reason's governance.

NOTES

1. See Roochnik, pp. 5–6.
2. See Bloom, p. 379.
3. Cooper, p. 1,078.
4. Borrowing from the definition employed by Ferrari and Griffith in the glossary supplementing their volume of Plato's *Republic*, to wit—Adrasteia as "the personification of necessity or fate, she imposed on mortals the inevitable consequences of their actions, and was therefore the divinity to appease in advance . . . when undertaking something rash." See *The Republic*, p. 347. Grube and Reeve note that Adrastea was "a punisher of pride," hence the need to appease her prior to undertaking any action that might be perceived as exhibiting the kind of pridefulness that often, but certainly not always, accompanies breaking from convention.
5. Cooper, p. 1,079 and p. 1,080.
6. "The *Republic's* idea of genderless virtue is not new in the Platonic corpus. It is foreshadowed by the Socratic concept of virtue in the early dialogues and argued for by Socrates in *Meno* 72d-73c. Samaris, "Family and the Question of Women," in

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Bobonich (ed.), *Plato's Laws: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 184. Prof. Reeve considers Plato's views on women to have been, and in some ways still are, revolutionary, for they are "remarkable against any background." See Reeve (1988/2000), pp. 217–219.

7. Cooper, p. 1,082.

8. Prof. Buchan argues to the contrary, that, in the end, Plato's views on men and women is gendered, and he thereby understands women to be substantively, not superficially, inferior. I disagree with this interpretation. See M. Buchan, *Women in Plato's Political Theory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), pp. 135–135 and *passim.*

9. See Bloom's, p. 380.

10. Bloom, p. 381.

11. Cooper, p. 1,082.

12. Cooper, p. 1,082 and pp. 1,083–1,084.

13. Cooper, p. 1,226.

14. Ibid.

15. Cooper, p. 1,080.

16. Cooper, p. 1,084.

17. Cooper, p. 1,085.

18. Cooper, p. 1,033.

19. Aristotle, *Politics*. Sir Ernest Baker, editor and translator (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 39–42. See also Robert Mayhew, *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's Republic* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997). Professor Mayhew's analysis of Aristotle's critique provides a valuable service to anyone seeking to gain a better understanding of both thinkers, especially with regard to the question of political unity.

20. Cooper, p. 1,089.

21. Ibid.

22. See Annas, pp. 104–105.

23. Aristotle, *Politics*. Edited and Translated by Sir Ernest Baker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 39–42ff.

24. Cooper, p. 1,089.

25. See also Bobonich (2002), pp. 74–75; and Annas (1981), p. 173.

26. Ibid.

27. Cooper, p. 1,055.

28. Cooper, pp. 1,089–1,090. Prof. Sachs renders this passage a little differently, to wit, "And this is precisely whichever city is in a condition closest to that of a single human being." Presented in this way, Sachs's text does not appear to indicate that a variation of, or perhaps even an alternative to, the ideal city is now brought into view, however temporarily, there being no evident redirection in the flow of the conversation. Nevertheless, at 462e we are, still in the Sach's translation, reminded that "this would be a good time . . . for us to go back to our own city," hence even here it may be possible to discern at least some kind of comparison to the True City has been introduced, however vague this might be. See Plato, *Republic*. Translated by Joe Sachs (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2007), p. 157.

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29. Cooper, p. 1,089.
30. See also Mayhew, p. 135.
31. Cooper, p. 1,090.
32. Cooper, pp. 1,089–1,090.
33. Cooper, p. 1,091.
34. Ferrari, *City and Soul in Plato's Republic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 111. For an alternative perspective, see Schofield, *Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 305–306.
35. Ferrari, p. 111.
36. Reeve (1988; 2006), p. 204.
37. Cooper, p. 1,092.
38. Benardete (1989), p. 118.
39. Cooper, pp. 1,008–1,011.
40. Cooper, p. 1,090.
41. Cooper, p. 1,159 and p. 1,090.
42. Professor Reeve rejects the interpretation that the producing class would be as slaves to the Guardians. And by extension, that the unity of the city is artificially coerced and contrary to the natural order of things. See Reeve (1988; 2006), p. 207.
43. Cooper, p. 338.
44. Here comparing Rowe's translation ("one based on knowledge) with Brann, Kakavage and Salem ("scientific regime"). See Cooper, p. 348 and Plato, *Statesman*. Translated by Eva Brann, Peter Kakavage, and Eric Salem (Newbury, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 2012), p. 90. See also Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Statesman: The Web of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. viii–xi, and *passim*, for a discussion of *phronesis* in *Statesman*.
45. Rowe, "The Myth of the Politicus," in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 244 and 247–248.
46. Cooper, p. 351.
47. Cooper, p. 328.
48. Cooper, pp. 336–337.
49. Ibid. See also Taylor, pp. 401–402.
50. Sayers, pp. 183–184.
51. See Dorter, pp. 3–4, 9–13.
52. See Weiss, "Statesman as ΈΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver," in Christopher J. Rowe (ed.), *Reading the Statesman* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), p. 213, Pappas, "A Little Move toward Greek Philosophy," in Sallis (ed.), *Plato's Statesman: Dialectic, Myth, and Politics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), p. 96, Schofield, *Saving the City: Philosopher-Kings and Other Classical Paradigms* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 28–38.
53. Cooper, p. 348.
54. Gislene Vale dos Santos, "On the Art of Weaving and the Act of Thinking," in Beatriz Bossi and Thomas M. Robinson (ed.), *Plato's Statesman Revisited* (Berlin/Boston: DeGruyter, 2018), pp. 178–181.
55. Cooper, p. 351.

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56. For the contrary position, see Rosen, pp. 125–128ff.

57. "The weaver-paradigm is in its essence Socratic, as it assigns to the weaver *direct* concern with the just, the beautiful, and holy—though the weaver is concerned with these as they pertain not only to individual souls but to the polis as a whole." Weis, p. 212.

58. Prof. Rowe observes that "the wise statesman or king of the *Politicus* is the equivalent of the imaginary philosopher kings and philosopher queens of the *Republic*. They too combine theoretical knowledge with practical understanding: they have not only scaled the heights of philosophical knowledge, and come to know the Good Itself, but have also acquired the practical expertise needed for the application of that knowledge. But in place of an indefinite plurality of ideal rulers," as envisioned by Socrates in *Republic*, "the *Politicus* envisages a monarch." See Rowe (2000), p. 237.

59. Cooper, p. 1,100.

60. Ibid.

61. Cooper, p. 991.

62. Cooper, pp. 1,014–1,015, and 1,044.

63. "This excellence of philosophy points toward the good simply." See Mark Blitz, *Plato's Political Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 178.

64. Cooper, p. 1,111.

65. Cooper, p. 1,110.

66. Cooper, p. 1,100 and p. 343.

67. Cooper, p. 991 and p. 1,117–1,118.

68. Cooper, p. 1,100.

69. Cooper, p. 1,118 and p. 1,135.

70. Cooper, p. 1,135.

71. Cooper, p. 1,137.

72. Cooper, pp. 1,125–1,126 and 1,135.

73. See Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 67.

74. Cooper, 1,106–1,107.

75. Cooper, p. 1,102.

76. Ibid.

77. Cooper, p. 1,108.

78. Cooper, p. 1,158.

79. Cooper, p. 1,168.

80. Cooper, p. 1,174.

81. Cooper, p. 974.

82. Reeve (2013), p. 46.

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Chapter 7

Building a Theory from an Account

TIME AND TIME MEASURED

Time will corrode the Form of the Polis were it to become manifest in the flux of becoming; for as we learned in *Republic*, the city in theory would dissolve should it appear before our experience as a tangible phenomenon, should it become exposed to the forces of change that are inevitable in the flow of the temporal and the fluctuations within the mutable (*Republic* 546a).[1] As Socrates explains, whatever is manifest in the realm of becoming will change; set the eternal into the temporal, into the stream of time, and it will inevitably be worn away (546a).[2] Impermanence is itself permanent in our world, at least the world as it appears to us; while eternal being is marked by the permanence absent in temporal becoming, and thereby knowable to our limited minds in at least some of its aspects. We are immersed in the stream of change and variation, drawn away from essence by the inescapable patterns of generation and degeneration that conduct our experience.

We are creatures in time, the essence of time is change. Time is not an illusion any more than the phenomenal world is illusory—the only illusion is the belief that the experienced world, the world that we know and feel through our senses and comprehend from our diverse, and divergent, perspectives, is all that there is. We can and often do describe, or understand, time as a "construct" (justice is also described by some as a mere construct)—but it is important to bear in mind that how we appreciate time, how we comprehend it, may be a construct, but one that is still built upon an independent world, grounded in an ontologically objective reality. The world changes, thus there *is* time. How we construe, describe, organize, track, and measure those changes that constitute time are our invention, but the reality behind the measuring precedes perception and comprehension. We do measure and organize

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time, and the measures and organizational markers are constructs, but we do not really construct time itself. If time did not have an objective existence, then we would live within Parmenides's eternal and changeless One. The world would be a place where nothing happens.

Plato's Forms are eternal and therefore changeless; but their reflections in the realm of becoming are in constant motion, it is they that inexorably change. Socrates knew and taught this in *Republic*, and the Athenian Stranger assumes this in *Laws*. Were we to see through the phenomenal to the trans-phenomenal, and then actually establish that which we see, that is, the ideal city presented in time, inhabit its manifest spaces and successfully adopt its prescriptions, it would change, and in only one direction. The Form of the Polis, the perfect model of the political community, cannot be lived, or at the very least it could not be lived for long were it actually instituted, for it would inexorably decline. It is as real as it is eternal, a reality far exceeding any regime or constitution that we could indicate in experience, and it is as immutable as a mathematical principle, immune to the fluctuations and permutations that characterize political activity as it is practiced by us in our communities and nations. Only divine beings are capable of inhabiting a perfect state (*Laws* 739d-e).[3] Fully aware of this reality, the Athenian sustains the notion that, even though this ideal remains inaccessible, there cannot be found any design surpassing this heavenly pattern as a guiding principle in the founding and exercise of political institutions and activity (739b-d).[4]

TEMPORALITY AND THE ORIGINS OF THE POLIS

In *Laws*, politics is examined within the context of time. In contrast to *Republic*, where Socrates and his friends seek the timeless Form of the Polis in the hope that its lessons will inform politics in the field and flow of time, the companions in the *Laws* seek to trace the history of politics to better understand its origins and temporal development. Socrates begins his study of the True City by observing that a city of good men will be populated by those who recognize that politics is *essentially not about power*. He later adds that the city springs from our true needs and is naturally organized by aligning our responsibilities with our talents. The origin and nature of things political are examined and described in *Republic* through a purely conceptual exercise. Socrates seeks the intelligible reality behind and above the perceptual field of our experiences. His theoretical city is natural, not in the sense that it is experienced in nature, rather in the sense that it is a part of our nature. In *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger undertakes the examination of politics through an historical account, one that traces the development of political communities to their pre-historic origin. This account begins with a discussion of natural

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events and directs itself toward an analysis of the historical growth of politics in time. It is not the Form that we are directly seeking; nonetheless, as the Form is not detached from the phenomenal, we can indirectly seek it in the course of events that roll out before us in the historical record. The Stranger wants to know the nature of politics within history, as it has emerged from the obscured past and grown through the stories of our predecessors. The True City in *Republic* is without location, it is known to us only through its qualities—and thus it is discerned through the intellect as the Beautiful City, fine and good. In *Laws*, the quest for the ideal is oriented in the long reach of time and sensitive to location, even to the point of finely grained detail (*Magnesia's* population, for example). As we follow the companions along the way toward their appointed destination, a cave sacred to Zeus, we are immersed in an investigation of political things that is phenomenally dense, set in motion by the vicissitudes of nature at its most capricious.

As the conversation shifts into Book III, the Athenian Stranger offers an account of the innumerable states that have conceivably come into existence and passed from our view, a story of both moral growth and decay that cannot be traced to a single recorded event, for in this account humankind itself has suffered innumerable catastrophes even to the brink of obliteration within an interminable cycle of creation and destruction, a cycle wherein thousands of civilizations, now forgotten, have emerged, declined, fallen, and vanished into the relentless, consuming vortex of unfathomable time (676a–685a).[5] Politics is properly studied in terms of change, and a gathering of data to mark the causes and their effects as components of forces of change is required, the Athenian implicitly explains, if we are to correctly comprehend the origins of politics and predict those factors that will eventually affect its development. Any discussion of change is necessarily an account of causality. Causality is integral to the proper study of politics, for if we can fully grasp the nature of cause and effect, we are better positioned to understand how political communities emerge and develop (676e).[6] The empirical observation of political agents and their history and institutions establishes the study of politics in time, the understanding of causality as the dynamics of political activity.

Plato's Athenian Stranger agrees with Socrates in the sense that we can discern the origin of things political. For Socrates, we are able to recognize the generative roots feeding the growth of the political through a consideration of nature: we are naturally political because we need each other to become mutually self-sufficient persons, and we are thereby akin to each other as friends. For the Stranger, not unlike Socrates, we are equipped to discern the vectors that naturally set human beings on a trajectory toward community through a consideration of time: we are inclined toward the political because the inevitably cataclysmic forces of nature will always reduce us to necessity, thin our numbers, isolate us, and prompt us to mutual love

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(679a).[7] Who can say how many civilizations have arisen in the unrecorded past, only to be obliterated without a trace by unremitting time? How has the human race, the Stranger further asks, survived after having been nearly annihilated innumerable times, to the point where only thin remnants of humanity manage to barely survive? What we can say, the Stranger asserts, is that should there remain a small number of human beings in the aftermath of the cataclysm, like embers smoldering on high mountains beyond the reach of the great deluge, common inherent human impulses, framed within identical contingencies, will gradually recapitulate our political phylogeny, restore communities, reform cities, while remaining nonetheless as vulnerable as before (676–677).[8]

The Athenian Stranger's lecture on the patterns of catastrophic destruction and gradual recovery resemble later speculation about the state of nature common to early modern thinkers. After one such cataclysm, the Stranger imagines, humanity's reduced and scattered numbers exclusively populate alpine elevations, shepherding their flocks in general seclusion and relying primarily on themselves, there no longer being cities or towns to occasion interaction. Isolated from long-forgotten cities, these few survivors would preserve their innocence, unaccustomed to the unnatural pace of urban life, and even more unfamiliar with the manner in which cities corrupt virtue. There is no motivation to commit injustice against others, and no reason to cultivate the kind of habits that lead to a life of deception and trickery (679a-b).[9] In describing these immediate survivors and their environment, the qualities of the Stranger's primitives anticipate, at least partially, Rousseau's "happy savage" as depicted in his *Second Discourse.* Like Rousseau's natural person, the Athenian's primitive men were simple, strong, upright, guileless, and self-reliant. However, the Athenian's primitives were not Rousseau's carefree and self-contained savage, indifferent to others and inoffensively self-satisfied. Rather, the inclinations of the Stranger's post-diluvial person are social in spite of their deprivation, their predisposition toward mutual love a consequence of their enforced isolation. By contrast, Rousseau's savage prefers solitude. In *Laws*, the approach of the Athenian more closely anticipates the "natural inclination toward fellowship" and mutual love adopted by John Locke from his reading of Richard Hooker.[10] What the Athenian illustrates in his analysis of the origin of political communities foresees modern speculation about the natural person, a hybrid of Rousseau's happy savage (innocent, artless, self-sufficient, robust) and the proper state of nature imagined by Locke and Hooker (i.e., fellowship, communion, and mutual love are natural to human beings). What could be called the Stranger's state of nature is inhabited by the sort of person who would fit easily into the True City described by Socrates in *Republic*, Bk. II, a person of modest needs, attuned to nature's requirements, committed to the public endeavor

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according to innate ability, unacquainted with the temptations, ambitions, anxieties and complexities of sophisticated, urban living and the drama of its political contests, the violence of its excesses. As with the citizen of the True City sketched by Socrates, the post-diluvial person would neither enjoy affluence nor suffer deprivation, and thereby conflict would not arise, and those simple, even primitive, communities that would coalesce upon surviving the cataclysm would exhibit the same spontaneous unity recognized by Socrates and his friends as stimulating political activity and sustaining common institutions (*Laws*, 679b-c, *Republic*, 369a-371e).[11]

Prefiguring Rousseau's peculiarly inhuman "natural" person, innocent and unassuming, lacking both sophistication and cynicism, the Athenian's primitive felt no need to establish laws or undertake basic political activities. This is consistent with Socrates's first iteration of the city in theory, in that the function of lawmaker, the function of political leadership, is not mentioned among the small number of positions required for the True City to realize and sustain communal self-sufficiency. Socrates and the Athenian Stranger share the conclusion that human beings are naturally political, and yet in its essence the ideal polis is spontaneous in its direction, absent formal institutions and permanent hierarchy. Similarly, these post-diluvial communities, according to the Stranger, are populated by persons of fine character, resembling Socrates's city of good persons (*Laws*, 679c, *Republic*, 347b-e), inhabited by those who are averse to power, and who live serving each other. In both cases, the timeless True City in *Republic* and the inchoate cities in *Laws*, politics arises from necessity, and in its purest activity, is directed without permanent offices and protocols.

What the Athenian describes in his account only resembles what Socrates and his friends discern in their investigation. As the conversation proceeds in the *Laws*, the Athenian, with the approval of his companions, notes the introduction of what he calls autocracy early in the reconfiguration of society during the disordered aftermath of the cataclysm (680e).[12] While the origin of politics, human necessity, is the same in both works, the Athenian considers the movement from naturally emergent communities in which legislators are not necessary toward a community that vaguely lives under the authority of established usage and ancestral laws, and followed by the beginnings of organized leadership of a kind, initially identified within the household (680a-e).[13] It is a governing by elders, inherited power that flows from either parent but is ultimately defined as a kind of patriarchy, the most legitimate kingship (680e). Since Socrates is reflecting upon the intelligible and timeless, his attention is focused on the manner in which function and harmony are born from natural need. The Athenian, on the other hand, while beginning in a similar place, the natural city, proceeds not to a discussion of proper function, but rather through time to an explanation of progression from one

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phase to another. It would be inevitable, the Athenian holds, for the earliest communities to coalesce around familial structures. From where else would justifiable leadership of any kind arise? These scattered families isolated in alpine heights were likely the inspiration for Homer in his description of the a-political Cyclopes, a race of beings in which each man rules over his wife and children while remaining indifferent to their neighbors. And yet, remember that for the Athenian, human beings in that post-cataclysmic environment would, unlike the Cyclopes, be interested in each other's fellowship and affection, and would cherish the company of a community of friends—for their can be no community without friendship; and thus in time the most primitive political arrangements would change as human beings were more closely drawn to each other, a tightening of the communal bond that Socrates would also recognize as foundational.

The family is not mentioned in the first iteration of the True City in *Republic*, only persons and their capacities. Familial concerns arise later as part of the treatment to cure the ideal city of its intemperance and injustice. In *Laws*, while the Athenian Stranger does not mention families as he begins his account, he operates from the presupposition that families naturally stimulate the recovery of the political community after the flood. Hereditary autocracy naturally grows from remnants of humanity generating a proto-political medium that feeds the regrowth of the public realm. Socrates deliberately omits the family in his introduction to the True City, for if we are to understand the Form of the Polis, we must from the beginning separate private relationships from political ends; for example, the public good must be made distinct from private interests. This is the timeless, ideal city, the city discovered through the activity of the intellect, the real city reflected, to various degrees, in the cities we inhabit and the principles that direct them. Examining the emergence of cities in time, after an unspecified number of generations have come and passed, Plato in *Laws* offers a chronicle. There is no need for chronological accounts in *Republic*, at least not until Book VIII when Socrates speculates on the effects of inserting the Form of the Polis into the temporal cycle, the ideas spoken of there transcend time as they transcend all phenomena. In *Laws*, we are recounting the cycle of generation, degeneration, and regeneration, and thus we are well served to understand the chronological order of events, whereas Socrates seeks the ontological order of things—the being of politics, the essence of politics as a Form, and those first principles intelligibly discerned. Here an historical explanation is articulated as background and context in preparation for imagining another ideal city; but this is not an alternative meant to replace the ideal city discerned and explored by Socrates, rather, it is the second-best city. As such it is another, ancillary ideal city that is meant to approximate as closely as possible, and yet not precisely attain, the True City. When adding the factor of temporality we

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are compelled to sort out the development of political communities as an historical sequence, one that is influenced by the cycle of nature in a way similar to Socrates's True City, which is that city in which nature-set conditions are not natural phenomena, but the essence of political purpose comprehended in light of the Good. This is not to say that the Athenian and his friends are oblivious to the Good, indeed, their opening conversation about the divinity of the laws reveals otherwise. Rather, this is meant to say that when we direct our focus to cities that human beings *can* inhabit, a recalibration of a sort is required. Human beings, in building their cities and establishing their institutions, need not look beyond the Form of the Polis for the ideal, and they should follow this divine pattern or seek an additional pattern that is the closest possible approximation (739e).[14] The Athenian Stranger is aware of the transphenomenal, heavenly pattern as described by Socrates and his friends; nevertheless, he well knows that we live in the phenomenal, and he knows that time is the very thing that distinguishes the phenomenal from the eternal. Not against Socrates, the Athenian works toward the ideal from a different, contrasting and yet complementary perspective. We are not realizing the eternal Form, for ultimately any realization will fail. Rather we seek to follow the eternal pattern from within our own context, and that context is shaped by history, molded in time.

DISSOLUTION FROM GROWTH

In a concise overview, the Athenian explains how kingship originates from this familial autocracy, and as these small communities grow, they each develop their own laws and the ways and means of legislation, which is itself a function not just of autocrats and kings, but also chosen representatives. From this interaction between autocratic and democratic elements, another kind of regime emerges, one that contains features of all other political communities and their variations (681d).[15] Eventually the several, originally independent communities enter into leagues. Once done, a more sophisticated and involved civilization re-emerges—polities no longer confined in the high country, but now spreading out along the plains and lowlands, the effects of the deluge and the hardships no longer felt (681a–684e).[16] None other than Troy itself serves as the Athenian's observable example of a city settled on a lower plane by former highlanders, long after old stories of the ancient cataclysm had faded from memory (682a-d).[17]

Two things are of interest in this brief chronicle: the continued, abstract historical pattern sketched to serve as a guide toward understanding the genesis and development of advanced political regimes, and the observation by the Athenian that both autocratic and representative political structures and

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practices emerge early in the restoration of the public sphere. They seem to appear almost simultaneously—for representation entails legislation, and the selection of leaders institutes new forms of authority, for example, aristocracies and kingships (681d).[18] These developments are sketched in vague outlines, nevertheless the Athenian is serious in this effort to convey the nature of politics through a discussion of its historical origins (in contrast to Socrates who concentrates on its ontological essence) and the features that spontaneously arise as the process moves forward. Among these features we find both the autocratic and the democratic, the presence of kings and aristocrats on one hand, and the necessity of representative lawmakers who work with appointed leadership, on the other. It is important to the Athenian that we discern the mutual attraction between authority and liberty and their equal contribution to shaping the political sphere.

Our Spartan participant, while entertaining an unlikely scenario in which divine intervention would aid another attempt in our quest to examine the foundations of our cities and laws, fittingly alludes to the change of season now underway, reminding the reader once again that we are moving in and through a temporal account of the patterned evolution of political communities (683c).[19] He recommends extending their shared journey in order to achieve understanding while alluding to the fact that the physical trace of their journey—the walk toward the sacred cave, is occurring on the day of the summer solstice. As the Athenian explains the temporal origins of cities and laws, the Spartan notices the passage of time around them. Pressing forward from here, the Athenian, responsive to the Spartan's eagerness to extend the physical journey, lengthens in kind his chronological account by imagining the formation of a three-state alliance between Sparta, Argos, and Messene. In the course of his analysis, a dynamic relationship between monarchial rule on one hand and the general citizenry is revealed, a relationship that is described as interactive, balanced, and reciprocal, resting upon mutually obligatory laws under which the kings of the three cities aid and defend each other. Even more interesting, these cities and their leaders equally support their respective subjects, providing mutual assistance to fellow king and subjects alike (684a-b).[20] The Athenian insists that this arrangement is bound under the rule of law, for it is only when laws are broken are the kings obligated to commit their aid, and making no mention of the practice of reacting to personal loyalties or private interests. It is only under the law that kings and peoples must act. Over time corruption sets in—the Athenian assuring his Spartan companion that this was no fault of Sparta itself—thwarting their own design and resulting in the dissolution of the original mutual agreement.

One of the most important discussions within *Laws* occurs early in Book I, wherein an inquiry is raised into the principal concern of the state, opening the way to a deeper discussion of virtue. Readers of *Laws* will recall Clinias

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foreshadowing claims found later in both Machiavelli and Hobbes. Clinias asserts that all states are entangled in perpetual war against each other, and the true lawmakers legislate from this cold, sobering premise. We find the same condition emerging even between individuals. On both levels—state and individual—Clinias sounds a chord later struck by Thomas Hobbes, that is, we are all by nature enemies to each other. In his commending the founding legislator of Crete for grounding his laws and institutions on the severe realities of inevitable and pervasive war, the kinship between Clinias and Machiavelli is also evident (625e–626a).[21]

The Athenian is unconvinced, and goes deeper, steering the inquiry toward the war within oneself, concluding, with the assent of Clinias, that it is really this internal war that is the defining struggle, the one in which victory is critical, even more so than any victory against an external enemy. Based on these statements, the Athenian directs his friends to two important conclusions: first, that it is not war that is the utmost aim in the political sphere (foreign or domestic), but rather peace and goodwill, and secondly, that while courage, which is the indispensable virtue in war and is numbered among the principal virtues overall, is nevertheless visibly subordinate to good judgment (prudence), self-mastery (temperance), and justice. If war exclusively commands the activities of rulers, courage emerges as the governing virtue. However, the Athenian naturally offers the correction that those legislators who found cities must not do so by single-mindedly focusing on a ruling virtue (i.e., courage), but rather should aim at all virtues as a unified whole (630d-e).[22] In Book III, we return to this principle in the context of the Athenian's chronicle of the origins and development of political communities wherein he reasserts that a legislator must seek to encourage virtue in general, and in particular, good judgment and wisdom, and the intellectual resolve to restrain all desire (688b).[23] When these virtues are diminished or absent, kings fall—for it is neither cowardice nor military failures that undercuts a prince, as one might surmise from the claims of Clinias, but rather political dissolution that is the result of vice and ignorance (688c-d).[24] States and communities face at least two threats: the inevitable natural catastrophes, the worst of which obliterate the home that humans have built, and those disasters that are precipitated by our own ignorance, our own abandonment of virtue. Natural disasters may leave in their wake a battered, weakened human race confronting the most materially straitened circumstance, but crass ignorance, the kind that despises or mocks in shameful resentment all that is fine and good, decent and true, throws down even the greatest empire (689a-c).[25] Virtue abandoned is destruction purchased.

Numerous claims, or as the Athenian describes it, titles, to authority will be made, each with their own justification and their own appeal, and in the mix of conflicting arguments civil strife predictably ensues. Once the lineage of

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political authority that began in the primitive, post-cataclysmic communities ramifies, differentiates, and multiplies, the ongoing development of political institutions and regimes moves further from nature, and further from virtue. This is what happened, the Athenian concludes, to the tripartite alliance between Sparta, Argos and Messene, with the latter two going astray, breaking their accords at the expense of their own mutually beneficial positions and, ultimately, to the detriment of Greece itself (690d-e).[26] Any deviation toward extremism distorts the proper growth of the community, and encourages an unwillingness to accept what is feasible, what is within reach—to realize, the Athenian cites, Hesiod's insight that half can be at times greater than a whole, and a reliably sufficient amount under many circumstances is more valuable than abundance (690d-e).[27] All of these developments, this complex descent from the ur-polities that coalesce from within an unorganized, inchoate state and over time evolve into complex and vulnerable societies, are self-propelled toward dissolution in direct correlation to the complexities of their features, aspirations, and drives. At this point, the Athenian shares his conclusion about the structure of constitutions, pivoting the *Laws* toward the conceptual construction of a second theoretical city. In so doing, Plato suggests a renewed examination with the nature of democracy and its significance with regard to the political ideal.

POLITICS, FRIENDSHIP, AND THE RULE OF PROPORTION

Political unrest, Clinias and the Athenian agree, is more commonly the plague of licentious and arrogant kings rather than a consequence of a disordered or rebellious citizenry, an interesting observation from a thinker whose reputation for mistrusting popular government is reasonably earned. During the dissolution of the tripartite alliance mentioned earlier, the Athenian explains that the greed to which those kings succumbed led them to abandon any virtue they may have once known to all lawlessness (691a).[28] To mitigate the temptations that come with the vice of greed and that prevent the vulgar ignorance, which stimulates discord within a community, we must orient our conduct and decisions to a principle of due proportion, the neglect of which will result in injustice and contempt (691a-c).[29] Politics, it would seem, requires moderate temperaments and measured decisions, all made possible through the careful education of citizens along with the establishment of sober and stable institutions. At its core statesmanship must be about balanced, sober measurement.

Finding balance in the correct proportion is one of Plato's ongoing interests. The proposals in *Republic*, and even in *Laws*, strike us as extreme; nonetheless, there is much in Plato that recommends moderation and balance,

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and not simply in the *Laws*. In his *Statesman*, another anonymous character, the Eleatic Visitor, devotes a considerable amount of time toward explaining the importance of measuring, and at arriving at a "due measure, what is fitting, the right moment, what is as it ought to be," for in seeking the fitting, the well-timed, the right way (or ideal way), we turn away from the extremes and gravitate to the middle (*Statesman,* 284e).[30] The Visitor goes so far as to assert that measurement, which is requisite to meeting the due proportion spoken of by the Stranger in *Laws*, in fact pervades everything, and thus the art of statesmanship, the art of politics as a whole relies on the ability to find the due measure, to achieve the correct proportion, to find stability somewhere between the extremes of excess and deficiency (285b-c).[31]

In *Statesman*, the Visitor's discussion of the art of weaving is intended as an analog for the activity of statesmanship, the balanced weaving of the warp and woof, directed by the due measure. This analogy with weaving rests on the same principle found in Socrates's discussions about the interconnections of the virtues in *Republic*, interconnections upon which politics depends.[32] Political activity weaves disparate kinds into a unified whole—the firmer warp stretched under high tension to receive the filling threads of the woof. Each community will include at least two fundamental types that must be woven together by the hand of the statesman if it is to become a polity, and such weaving cannot be haphazard, shoddy, or imbalanced. One kind of citizen must not simply physically exist alongside another, but must be connected to the other kind of citizen in a fundamental, immaterial way. The nature of the threads does not change itself, but rather something new emerges from both, something that at once includes the two different types, and binds them together in a transcending unity. While the warp and woof, or the two types of citizens, remain, viewed from a distance only the whole can be observed, and when put into use only the woven cloth is experienced, the distinction between the two no longer perceived. Statesmanship does not destroy one type, nor subdues one kind in favor of the other. Rather, the statesman under the guidance of law and within the limitations of sound institutions weaves the otherwise disparate types into a unity that fulfills the capacities of both in the same way, for the same purposes, and with the same benefit. Moreover—and perhaps this is the essence of it—statesmanship does not simply weave together different elements within the polis, it involves forming a sure unity between dissimilar virtues in a way analogous to the different materials of the warp and woof (310a).[33] Unlike, and tending in the opposite direction, the virtues of moderation and courage (bravery) are woven into a single fabric by the artful statesman.[34] Consistent with the Socratic awareness of the unity of the virtues, courage and moderation are to be intertwined in the same character, according to the Eleatic Visitor, for unrestrained courage is capable of sudden madness, and moderation unqualified becomes diffident, lethargic,

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and lacking the initiative that comes by courage (310d).[35] Weaving the courageous and the temperate parts of the community into one city is the balanced and unifying craft of true statesmanship, that which gathers the citizens of the polis together in freedom and in the sharing of a common will, all dependent upon the good judgment that implements proper measurement, following the tenet of due proportion.[36]

As the Athenian and his friends reflect on the advantages of following the rule of proportion in states, they again seek a richer understanding by drawing upon the experience of history, of cities that have grown in time. Upon considering the delegation of authority to an unqualified soul, or to an inexperienced and irresponsible person, the Athenian proposes that it is the duty of legislators to draw from that sense of proportion, which enables them to guard against the follies consequent to power being held by the incompetent and immature (691c-d).[37] And yet it goes deeper than this; with a well-placed reference to the history of Megillus's native Sparta, the Athenian accentuates the divine wisdom behind the institution of the Spartan dual monarchy, a splitting of the line of kings into two for the sake of restraining power and providing authority with needed balance (691d-e).[38] Power is to be dispersed in accord with the rule of proportion, thus it is clear from this reading that Plato is advancing a recommendation for institutionalized separation of powers. Divided power stabilizes a political community and ensures ongoing balance, and we are well instructed by the historical precedent set by Megillus's Sparta, with authority distributed among kings and ephors, and the city itself a blending of Spartan vigor and resolve along with the prudence that comes with age through the leadership of selected elders (691e-692a).[39] Admiringly, the Athenian notes how Sparta thus reconstituted their kingship through the skillful blending of these elements (692a-b).[40] Through the conversation between the three mature friends, speaking candidly to each other as equals without the presence of less mature, less patient men, the doctrine of the separation of powers is numbered among the constituent features of the rule of due proportion.

The lessons of the benefits of divided power do not require deep wisdom to absorb—the Athenian reminds us that we can understand through the record of history, and the example before us is Sparta itself. Socrates, in *Republic*, while hinting at admiration for certain Spartan practices, is nevertheless seeking an ideal that is utterly intelligible, transphenomenal, and a-historic. In *Laws*, we are, as stated before, embedded in time, the realm of cause and effect, both natural and historical, and in this passage, we are clearly excavating the political principles essential to the art of statesmanship in the accounting of a political history. Lessons drawn from history reveal the necessity of divided and limited power. Only true philosophers are worthy of holding indivisible power, but the philosopher is not present in this dialogue, leaving

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us to address our anxieties about those who are in a position of authority, who hold by chance or effort the power of the polis. We must attend to the possibility that the crass, the stupid, the acquisitive and defiant, will sooner or later hammer their way into power. Socrates did understand this; he knew it to be a reality of the political world, especially within Athenian democracy. There will always be those who will throw the polis into discord (691a).[41] Dispersing power, which would be unnecessary if we were to be ruled by philosopher-kings—a type of governing which remains the ideal in spite of the differences that separate *Republic* from *Laws*—is essential to the project currently shared by the Athenian with his two friends. Conforming to the rule of proportion, which is tested by a study of the historical example of Sparta and similar cities, the separation of power and its consequent limitation is revealed as vital to the establishment of true political rule. As the Athenian explains, it is easy to grasp the necessity of divided and restrained power, the kind of restraint against ambition (viz., the ambitions of young men of ability) that is necessary to prevent the development of tyranny. As the Athenian reminds us, we need not undertake a complex theoretical analysis to become aware of all of this, for there are many lessons available to us from history through which we may learn the facts of these matters (692b-c).[42]

As with the Visitor in *Statesman*, it is not the exertion of power that marks the art of statesmanship, but rather the contraction of power under the guidance of the rule of proportion, which not only involves blending moderation and courage in the proper mixture but also is implicitly reliant on the virtue of good judgment, or prudence (*phronesis*—common sense, practical wisdom), as moderation, or *sophrosyne* (self-mastery), involves qualities that either overlap with prudence, or are closely related to it. One might suggest an intimate relationship between wisdom (*sophia*), prudence or good judgment (*phronesis*), and moderation/temperance. Socrates describes the virtue of moderation in *Republic* as a virtue that not only perfects the appetitive part of the soul, but also a quality that must be diffused over the entire soul. Appetites do not need courage, but it would seem that the spirited part of the soul still needs temperance, and more to the point, that even the rational part of the soul, drawn to its perfection through the cultivation of the virtue of wisdom, is itself also understood as completed through temperance. This is consistent with Plato's background premise that the virtues are unified. While they remain distinct, they will share common properties and mutually reinforce their different strengths, an interrelationship directly derived from the Good. Practical wisdom is not only supported by temperance, it would seem to at least partially arise from it; thus prudence relies upon this root virtue of self-mastery so as to better guide human activity in the pursuit of the Good.

Because so much of the *Laws* is grounded in a thorough understanding of the virtues, it becomes evident that for the author, *nomos* is inextricably

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connected with, ancillary to, and dependent upon, *arête*—excellence that stems from virtue. Moreover, if one considers the progress of *Laws* with regard to the conversation over the importance of the virtues in the context of political action, the teaching that courage is but one of the principal virtues—rather than the sole or most important of the political virtues—mirrors the lineage and meaning of the concept itself. *Arête*, it would seem, initially consisted more narrowly of the virtue of courage and the noble qualities attendant to the life of the warrior. Over time *arête* would come to mean virtue more broadly, especially the virtues of political life.[43] Virtue, while understood as requisite to the commission of moral acts, is also for Plato a matter of those properties that allow a person or thing to function in the fullness of their capacity. The Athenian Stranger is never far from considerations of virtue with relation to both city and soul, and is thereby echoing Socrates himself.

Furthermore, following the pattern established in *Statesman* by the Visitor from Elea, the Stranger advances still further the vital role of the virtue of moderation with regard to the other principal virtues. While examining the descent of the kings of Persia, the Athenian soberly details the manner in which an education enfeebled by luxury and indiscipline spoils the character of the political elite as a whole and their youthful heirs in particular. The immeasurably wealthy and cossetted scions of power suffered from lack of discipline and training, ever deprived of the noble example of their toughened, Persian fathers who were perpetually absent, forced to fight far away winning glory for the empire. They became unfamiliar with correction from parent or teacher, and would thereby suffer a debasement of their character, an enervating diminution of their quality (694d-e).[44] And thus, when they came into their inheritance, they were already ruined by debauched living, having lost the war within their souls while their fathers were winning wars against enemies far afield (695b).[45] Under the deleterious influence of the unlimited wealth absent the discipline acquired through the qualities associated with traditional character, the virtues that in their essence are unified become fragmented, isolated, and susceptible to excess. It is impossible, the Athenian asserts, to achieve virtue from such a dissolute upbringing, a lesson also suggested by Cephalus during his conversation with Socrates in *Republic* (*Laws*, 696a-b; *Republic*, 330a).[46] As with Cephalus in *Republic*, such wealth does not qualify anyone for anything, especially in the affairs of the city; for, as the Athenian explains, even a person who possesses some of the virtues, without the virtue of self-control, is unqualified to rule and unacquainted with a noble life. Courage, justice, and wisdom must be blended, the Athenian avers (aligned with Socrates), for a person to achieve the character requisite to personal fulfillment and public responsibility. The Athenian and Megillus decide that a person will never be just without the virtue of self-control, and that one would not seek for a neighbor a person who displays

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courage but is in reality licentious and indisciplined, for the exclusion of one virtue initiates the exile of all the virtues. Or, as we learned from *Republic*, while wisdom is the virtue that elevates and guides reason, and courage the virtue that fulfills the ends of the spirited part of the soul, moderation, while focused on the appetites, nonetheless joins justice as a virtue diffused across the entire soul.

The Athenian and the Spartan together conclude that, while we can conceive of isolating some of the virtues such as courage, we cannot really determine whether or not we can isolate moderation and still be able to admire it—we just cannot say either way (696d-e).[47] We only know for certain that spiritual goods should always rank higher among those qualities worthy of honor within cities and among persons. More to the point, good judgment, which is ranked highest among the spiritual goods (although still ranked below reason itself), is followed in rank not by courage as one might expect in light of *Republic* (wherein the spirited is the ally of the rational, and thus courage the ally of wisdom), but rather by self-control, with courage itself re-positioned as fourth in importance among those virtues that bring divine benefits, what we might call heavenly virtues. This ranking of self-control as second only to good judgment (practical wisdom, prudence, common sense) logically follows from the manner in which good judgment and moderation resemble each other to such an extent that they are difficult to isolate, as virtues they seem to naturally fold into each other.[48] Additionally, one cannot help but notice that justice is also difficult to isolate from both the virtues of prudence and moderation, and like moderation, justice is an attribute that is evenly dispersed across the entire soul, not simply one part of it as in the case of wisdom and courage. One would be hard pressed to conceive of a wise person who was not just, or a just person who was unacquainted with courage. A state that follows the rule of proportion in balancing the virtues will have temperate persons for citizens. *Arête* precedes *nomos*.

The Cyclopes that the Athenian mentioned earlier, as any casual reader of Homer might recall, lacked these virtues, and therefore while the nature of their loose association as described in *The Odyssey* may have resembled the Athenian's primitive, familial communities of the post-cataclysmic villages, the comparison is superficial; for the measured growth of the polis and the institution of the art of statesmanship are requisite to balance in the polis. Courage is a principal virtue for the exercise of political action; in *Laws*, it is clear that both the Spartan and the Cretan regard a brave character to be central to political leadership. Their Athenian friend, on the other hand, while certainly recognizing the importance of courage, ranks it below good judgment, moderation, and justice. In *Statesman*, there is no question that the civic cloth woven by the true statesman rests on the ability to balance courage and temperance so that these two conflicting virtues are evenly blended

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and mutually supportive throughout the political community. Through this successful blending, expertly accomplished by the statesman-king, these two types not only coexist, but they are bound to each other as friends, no longer discernably separate virtues but rather joined compounds that both frame and hold the state together (311c).[49] Moderation and courage are not solely a matter for the individual, they are familiar virtues shared among friends; the former directs the like-minded toward common and agreeable habits, and the latter fosters the readiness toward mutual sacrifice regardless of personal cost.

Courage and moderation, as with any of the virtues Plato discusses, are by nature elements of the political life—the life of freedom, friendship, and sound judgment. Rejecting the notion that a city's laws and leadership must focus primarily on war (the position that was advanced by Clinias and Megillus at the outset of their conversation), the Stranger affirms something quite apart, understanding the essence of politics in a way that diametrically opposes his vision of political life with that shared by his two companions, an opposition that, while not as vividly consequential as that which separates Socrates and Thrasymachus, is one that still echoes Plato's contrast between politics as it is popularly practiced and politics as it truly is. Rather than constantly fixated upon war as described by Clinias, the Stranger rests his analysis of the aims of politics on the foundation of friendship, practical wisdom, and moderate liberty (626b, 693c-d).[50] This notion actually is given voice through Clinias, who is asking the Athenian to further explain the aim of legislation with regard to friendship and freedom. Directly preceding Clinias's question, the Athenian Stranger had noted any legislation that establishes extreme authority is wrongheaded, for a state must remain free, guided by wisdom, and set into harmony. Only this is the purpose of proper legislation (693b-c).[51] Moderation, practical wisdom (good judgment, common sense), and friendship are all of a piece, shared together within a community that must both encourage and expect the actions of persons who possess, and know how to exercise, free will. Based upon this premise, we are taught that all political regimes (if they are truly political) are ultimately variations of two principal types: monarchy and democracy, the personal rule of one or the popular rule of the many—the "mother constitutions" serving as the primary colors from which all regimes are blended.[52] Notably, the Athenian strenuously asserts that the extremes of both of these types, absolute subjugation of the people that reduces them to an oppressed, friendless state absent any bonds of community, and the unrestrained freedom of the rule of the mob, are to be prevented. Going further, he concedes that however different, in truth, the Athenians and Persians have unfortunately suffered similar experiences, for a state of unlimited liberty wherein we slavishly gratify our appetites without any real discrimination between the pleasant and the sordid, is in effect no different from a condition of slavery under a tyrant (699e).[53]

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Under tyranny, we are subjugated under the worst and largest slave of all, the tyrant who is himself enslaved by his own raging lust; while in a state of unrestrained liberty combined with the indiscriminate indulgence of pleasure, we are slaves to the little tyrants within us.

To prevent either our enslavement as victims of the tyrant's dissipations or our mindless enthrallment to our own petty cravings, buttressed by our ignoble conceits, we must strike the kind of balance in the polis which fosters an identical harmony within the soul. Consequently, the blending of the authority of a monarchy with the freedom and friendship of a democracy is unqualifiedly necessary. Only this way will a city enjoy liberty and good judgment (693d-e).[54] This is the balanced and judicious blend of liberty and authority that the Athenian considered paramount in cities—following the rule of due proportion to mix the better attributes of monarchy, which is representative of authority, and democracy, which is the medium within which our liberties are enjoyed, and thereby laying the foundations for the building of prudent institutions and virtuous citizens (693d-e–702e).[55] According to Prof. Lee McDonald, this proposal for the balanced blending of regimes, forwarded in Plato's *Laws*, "inaugurated a line of political theorizing that was to run through some of the most famous theorists of the Western tradition—from Aristotle to Montesquieu, to the Federalist papers, though it was later to take on a more technical meaning than it had in the Laws."[56]

Plato's anticipation of Aristotle—or perhaps more likely, Aristotle's debt to Plato—does not escape our notice, for here in the Stranger's teachings, we detect more than a kernel of what Aristotle will advance in his *Politics*. Further, as Prof. Laks observes, the relationship between democracy and monarchy "is identical to that obtaining between two opposed Aristotelian vices. Both extremes are due to excess of a certain element (power in one case, freedom in the other), whose right measure is found in the 'mean.' License must be rationally controlled if genuine freedom is to be possible, just as power must be limited if real authority is to be exercised."[57] Avoiding the extremes is paramount for Plato, as well as for Aristotle after him.[58] Neither liberty nor authority, according to the Stranger, can gain pre-eminence, for if the combination is tipped toward an imbalance favoring the former, indiscipline and disunity overwhelm the city fueled by an anarchic freedom that is worse than the obedience practiced under moderate government.[59] (698b) Remember what Socrates taught in *Republic*: excessive freedom always recoils toward its opposite.

Should extreme imbalance favor authority, not only would the people be deprived of all liberty as the price for political order, but they would also lose their freedom and their community (697d).[60] Friendship galvanizes public spiritedness, and the Athenian is convinced that only democratic practices and institutions will nurture the social and political climate receptive to

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communal friendship. While democracy nourishes freedom and friendship, authority supplies good judgment, enabling justice and the governance of temperate and brave citizens. Authority rooted in good judgment and liberty shared among friends are essential features of politics, and if a state is to be successful, if it is to realize its potential, these must be compounded in an even amount, neither one predominant.[61] It is only through their persistent equilibrium that political activity can cultivate the community of friends that the Athenian, in the *Laws*, and Socrates, in *Republic*, understand to be the prevailing relationship binding and directing political activity and grounding political institutions. Without the presence of both freedom and authority, friendship between citizens cannot be shared. The Athenians admiration for the judicious combination of liberty and authority is reiterated in Book IV in his response to Megillus's admission that he can't identify exactly what kind of political regime governs his Spartan home, for he describes it as a multifaceted mixture of types. Clinias also admits that he experiences the same problem in trying to describe the constitution of his home. For the Athenian, their confusion signals only good things about Sparta and Crete, for they are mixed governments rather than pure regimes; they are true polities, worthy of being described as constitutions (712d-713a).[62] This is no small matter—for if we are endeavoring to emulate the Form of the Polis (*Republic*) through the recommendations of the second-best city (*Laws*), then it would seem that the closest approximation of the former can only be achieved through the combination of regimes as prescribed in the latter.

Plato's belief in the unity of the virtues and his commitment to their balance is consistent throughout his works. In addition to *Republic*, *Laws*, and *Statesman*, for example, a passage from *Menexenus*—which we assume here is not offered in the context of satire—reaffirms this commitment to this balanced cohesion. Plato, through Socrates's recitation of a speech that had originated from Aspasia (hence the satire for some readers), stresses the necessity of integrative virtues; and that even wisdom, which is the virtue of the royal part of the soul (*Republic*), must be accompanied by "valor, for without it all possessions and all ways of life are shameful and base" (*Menexenus*, 246c).[63] Further, as Socrates/Aspasia asserts, "all knowledge cut off from rectitude and the rest of virtue has the look of low cunning, not wisdom." In other words, the rational virtue of wisdom requires the assistance of the other virtues to achieve its fulfillment, elevating itself above the vulgarities of a mind uncultivated. In *Menexenus*, the celebration of the Athenian polity, and by extension, the acknowledgment of the merits of popular sovereignty with the attendant virtues of equality and freedom, is accompanied by a lesson about the necessary cohesion and mutual support of all the virtues (238d-e).[64] The temperate, the brave, and the wise—these are ways to describe the person who lives a life that is balanced, one who is neither aggravated during times

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of calm nor anxious in the face of death (remember Cephalus). Socrates and the Athenian Stranger expose the flaws and disadvantages of democracy; and yet to ignore those passages wherein Plato favorably speaks of specific qualities in democracy and the democratic character would be to draw an incomplete profile of his conclusions. This recognition is drawn more sharply as we examine what the Stranger and his friends are trying to accomplish as we move deeper into *Laws*.

It is at the end of the third book when Clinias reveals to the others that he is a member of a committee charged with the responsibility of designing a new Cnossian colony. Enthusiastic over the Athenians analysis, Clinias entreats his counsel. Consequently, all three figures proceed together to imagine an ideal city, establish its features and anticipate its practices. Thus, Plato's "second best city" is conceived. Following the precedent set by Socrates and the sons of Ariston, the three travelers in the *Laws* contemplate a city, which, while not the Form of the Polis, nevertheless closely approximates it. By allusion, the Athenian confirms the True City to be the ideal, the divine Form (739d-e).[65] We mortals may not be capable of instituting and sustaining such a city in practice, and yet we still need a *pattern*, illustrating in accessible terms politics in its essence. We therefore are well served by studying its principles and attempting to find that city which is its closest approximation (739e).[66] In *Laws*, approaching political questions within the context of history, and circumscribed by the limiting conditions of the phenomenal world, the Athenian and his companions consult the properties of that eternal ideal.

Remarkably, in spite of Plato's strident criticisms of democracy, one half of the second-best city, the city nearest the divine ideal, consists of conspicuously democratic institutions and practices. The one city that singularly ranks second only to the Form of the Polis includes a substantial measure of democracy constituting half of what the city should be, sharing equally with monarchy the key institutions that shape and animate it. This second-best city, called Magnesia, is understood not to simply contain only traces of democracy here or there, rather, it is described as equally balancing both democracy and monarchy—liberty and authority—so as to avoid their respective excesses.[67] It thereby follows that the second-best city is in effect an ideal compromise between the rule of the many and the rule of one (756e–757a).[68] Plato's commitment to the combination of liberty and authority, democracy and monarchy, pervades the *Laws*. The ideal city remains the True City described by Socrates in *Republic*, and Plato understands that most noble and purely rational ideal exists beyond our reach, fully intelligible, but ultimately inaccessible. Remaining the reliably rational, objective standard, it directly informs all regimes that we do practically inhabit as ordinary human beings who in the course of our days will inevitably yield to irrational desire. Those regimes that approach this standard successfully blend authority and liberty

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in the correct proportion. The second-best city accomplishes far more in the effort to emulate the True City than any other regime that Plato describes, and remarkably—given Socrates's reproaches in *Republic*—it does so by weaving democratic textures into its constitution. Plato's inclusion of democratic ingredients in the second-best city is well known, what I am stressing here is the close relationship between these prominent democratic features and the True City sketched in *Republic* which is to be closely emulated within the second-best city. Any casual reader of *Laws* will notice the democratic ingredients in this newly imagined city. What is important about those ingredients is the manner in which they realize Plato's Form of the Polis, the way in which democracy is within the True City. Not only is democracy one of the two essential components of the second-best city, itself an imagined ideal developed from a study of regimes in time, it is *only* through democracy that vital elements of freedom and friendship are intertwined into the city's constitutional foundations. We know that freedom is essential to political life, without it we would be left to live as children under parents, wards under the state, or more darkly, slaves under masters—this is why the guardians in *Republic* are depicted as governing friends rather than commanding subjects. Friendship among citizens is crucial to any political community, and in *Laws*, the Athenian teaches us that democracy is its source.[69] Monarchy/authority and democracy/freedom/friendship are equal features of the only city surpassed by the True City, the Form of the Polis itself. Having affirmed this principle, the Athenian and his companions prepare to describe and more thoroughly analyze the only city that merits the allegiance of virtuous citizens: a city guided by good judgment, and that promotes the kind of freedom that can only be shared among friends. Aptly, the Athenian teaches us that if the second-best city is in part substantively democratic, then we must give democracy as such a serious hearing; and if friendship in the city is attributed to its democratic portion, the outcome of such a hearing must inevitably direct us toward an encouraging possibility.

NOTES

1. Cooper, p. 1,158.
2. Ibid.
3. Cooper, p. 1,420.
4. Ibid. Bobonich disagrees, arguing that the Second Best City is not second best to what I am calling the Form of the Polis in *Republic*, but rather the Athenian Stranger is identifying a city that only resembles the ideal discerned by Socrates. Bobonich, p. 11.
5. Cooper, pp. 1,365–1,374.

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6. Cooper, p. 1,365.
7. Cooper, p. 1,367.
8. Cooper, pp. 1,365–1,366.
9. Cooper, pp. 1,367–1,368.
10. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*. Edited by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 277–278.
11. Cooper, p. 1,368 and p. 991.
12. Cooper, p. 1,369.
13. Cooper, pp. 1,368–1,369.
14. Cooper, p. 1,420.
15. Cooper, p. 1,370.
16. Cooper, pp. 1,369–1,374.
17. Cooper, pp. 1,370–1,371.
18. Cooper, p. 1,370.
19. Cooper, p. 1,372.
20. Cooper, p. 1,373.
21. Cooper, pp. 1,319–1,320.
22. Cooper, p. 1,325.
23. Cooper, p. 1,377.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Cooper, p. 1,379.
27. Cooper, p. 1,379.
28. Cooper, p. 1,380.
29. Ibid.
30. Cooper, pp. 327–328.
31. Cooper, p. 328.
32. Professor Miller observes that the Visitor "recovers Socrates' foundational claim: for him too, the virtues are, and are united in being, founded in insight!" Miller, p. 108. See also Dorter, pp. 203–204.
33. Cooper, p. 356.
34. See Cole, "Weaving and Practical Politics in Plato's *Statesman*," *Southern Philosophical Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2 (1991), pp. 203–205; Klosko (2006), pp. 208–210.
35. Cooper, p. 357.
36. See Lane, "A New Angle on Utopia: The Political Theory of the *Statesman*," in Rowe (1995), pp. 280–281.
37. Cooper, p. 1,380.
38. Cooper, pp. 1,380–1,381.
39. Ibid.
40. Cooper, p. 1,381.
41. Cooper, p. 1,380.
42. Cooper, p. 1,381.
43. In the glossary to his translation of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*, Prof. Martin Oswald shares an instructive definition and lineage of the Greek word *arête*.

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See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. Translated and edited by Martin Oswald, pp. 303–304.

44. Cooper, pp. 1,382–1,383.
45. Cooper, p. 1,384.
46. Cooper, p. 974.
47. Cooper, p. 1,185.
48. See also Julia Annas, *Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 112–114.
49. Cooper, pp. 357–358.
50. Cooper, p. 1,320 and p. 1,382.
51. Cooper, p. 1,382.
52. See Taylor, p. 471.
53. Cooper, p. 1,388.
54. Cooper, p. 1,382.
55. Cooper, pp. 1,382–1,391.
56. McDonald, *Western Political Theory: Part One—Ancient and Medieval* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1968), p. 29. See also, Klosko (2006), pp. 238–241.
57. Laks, p. 278.
58. "Though opposed in form, despotism and democracy are to a great extent similar in their effects." Laks, p. 278.
59. Cooper, p. 1,387.
60. Ibid.
61. Annas (2017), pp. 58–60.
62. Cooper, pp. 1,398–1,399.
63. Cooper, p. 961.
64. Cooper, pp. 954–955.
65. Cooper, p. 1,420.
66. Ibid.
67. Annas (2017), pp. 36–37, Laks, pp. 278–281.
68. Cooper, pp. 1,432–1,433.
69. The very name "Magnesia" serves to remind us once again that Plato's second best city—his ideal in the *Laws*—is to be understood in phenomenal terms. Not only is it a city in time, but the Athenian also conceives of the city as existing in space. Magnesia was a location, in contrast to Kallipolis, which derives its name from virtues and qualities beyond geography. When Clinias begins to speak of the task assigned to him of designing a new colony, he speaks of the importance of physical space. As Professor Morrow writes, "The description that Clinias gives of the site of the new colony he is charged with establishing (704b-705c) suggests that Plato has in mind a definite place in southern Crete. This site is described as about eighty stadia (nine or ten miles) from the sea; it has a good harbor; its terrain contains a mixture of forest, plain, and mountains; on it there are plane trees and pines, with some cypress and fir, though not enough for extensive shipbuilding. It was formerly occupied, but the inhabitants moved away long ago, and it has been deserted for a great many years. Later the citizens of Plato's new colony are called Magnesians, and

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they are specifically enjoined to give honor to any local divinities of the earlier Magnesians whose memory is still preserved. All this indicates that Plato remembers—or images—an ancient Cretan city named Magnesia." Morrow, pp. 29–31. In *Republic* the Form of the Polis cannot be comprehended by referring to a specific geography or historical place, it is utterly intelligible, and thus more real than any city that can be inhabited and described. Magnesia is understood physically as well as intelligibly, for it is a drafted blueprint for a colony that is intended to be established and inhabited, or at least as a guide to further assist the Cretans work in constitutional design.

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Chapter 8

The Second-Best City

REGIMES, LAW, AND VIRTUE

Law is essentially an enactment of the divine. Plato's *Laws* and the concepts and prescriptions that it contains rest on this principle, stated from the beginning and reaffirmed, explicitly and implicitly, throughout the entire dialog. Plato understood the nature of God as something unfathomably transcendent and inestimably good, incomprehensible to the poets who seek divinity in the jealousies and petty designs of Homer's flawed deities. If laws are established by divine fiat, then they are inherently just, perfectly wrought. Should we enact, in our human capacity, statutes that fail in justice or that are so imperfect as to become instruments in service to the partisan and the self-serving, we in fact enact not law, but misshapen edicts. As we ourselves are not God, our efforts will inevitably fall short, and the unjust, the intemperate, the ignoramus and the voluptuary will ever seek ways that will enable them to twist legislation for purposes known only to those who act from the worst of motives. Nevertheless, if Plato's faith in human potential—a potential that is revealed in the assurance that, as Socrates affirms, "every soul pursues the good"—is justified, then we need not despair over evil; rather, we need only to persist in our commitment to knowing that Good, and to looking for it in the Forms, which are always available to our assiduous reasoning even as they remain beyond the reach of our practical aspirations, our common and immediate concerns (*Republic* 505e).[1]

To speak of that which is ideal is to admit of an eternal standard. A standard that is contingent may be practical, but it is only ideal insofar as it is aligned with a permanent and objective principle, a fact of being. This ideal is conveyed through Socrates's explanation of the True City, both in its initial iteration and as it is reformed through the proposals he tenders to Glaucon,

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Adeimantus, and their friends and fellow seekers. Little is said of law in conveying this idea; as stated previously, in the original iteration nothing whatsoever is said of law or politics. When Socrates considers his ideal, he does so by consulting nature itself rather than the multiple cases of political life, historical or contemporary, available in the record of the past or to our direct experience. The Athenian Stranger begins from the same position. For while he asks of his friends where the laws of their cities come from, and thus is offering a nod to the case, he expects their answer to steer us toward the nature of the thing itself—understood to be divine (*Laws*, 624a).[2] True laws are those laws that human beings know by nature and follow, under ideal circumstances, as any creature would spontaneously follow its instincts. In Socrates's True City, the need for formal or institutional political and juridical direction is not evident. Ideally, we would need neither coercion nor inducement. In their essence, politics and law are as far removed from power and persuasion as the sacred is removed from the profane. Why the Athenian concludes that such an arrangement is fit for gods or children of gods becomes plain to us, for how can mortal creatures disposed to so many weaknesses in reality govern without government and adhere to laws without statutes? The second-best city is not just an alternative; it is a manifestation of a far deeper reality which is the essence of the thing.

That reality is knowable through the commitment to virtue and an inquiry into the Form of the Polis and how this is related to our immediate and mediate needs and situations. Any ideal is invulnerable to our influence. We will not hold to an ideal at T1 and then change it at T2 and still know it to be ideal. Rather, the "ideal" at T1 and the "ideal" at T2 are either preferences of the moment, or pragmatic solutions in reasoned response to the shape of things. And yet the ideal remains and is available to us—we can work to model our conventions and institutions to approximate its principles, or we can allow ourselves a more convenient and less rational alternative. Our Athenian friend is aware of this, an awareness from which he speaks on nearly every page of the *Laws*. He knows, as Socrates knew in *Republic* at the moment he first began to discuss the City in Theory, that it is not imposition so much as education that will lead us toward the Form of the Polis, as we are led up and out of the Cave. In the Athenian Stranger's explanation of things, he teaches us that the closer we are to the divine Form of Law, the less we actually legislate and the more we truly educate, teaching citizens rather than imposing rules (857e).[3] We may not be able to inhabit that city fit only for gods or children of gods, but in examining every political regime, we catch shadowy glimpses of the Form peeking through layers of culture and context, however distorted by the forces of self-interest and passion. The Athenian's study aims at establishing in practice the genuinely ideal polity, as well as discerning the barest minimum of what could still be considered acceptable. Failing the

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ideal, we must consider the acceptable minimum as the alternative (858a).[4] That minimum remains informed by the ideal, in spite of its inadequacies.

If the Form of the Polis is somehow vaguely known to us, even practiced by us, however distorted by self-interest, ignorance and vice, we cannot help but inevitably touch upon it, even if accidentally. It will not descend upon us from white clouds, delivered by Hermes by command of Zeus, it will become evident to us in examining politics as we know it immediately, imperfect as it might seem, insufficient as it might be for us, and we for it.

In 690a-d of Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger and Clinias develop a taxonomy of "titles," or entitlements that underwrite legitimate rule, and attendant specific claims to authority upon which these titles are grounded: that is, parental rule, the title of the high born, the rule of elders, masters, the rule of the strong, the rule of reason, and divine sanction. Of these seven claims, the sixth, which requires the ignorant to assent to the rule of the wise, is the more efficacious in this account. In this section, Plato is reporting on the many different shapes of authority and their various justifications, and in so doing he reminds us, as taught in *Republic*, that the only truly compelling, political justification for authority is the rule of reason.[5] Without explicitly referring to *Republic*, the Stranger alludes to the Form of the Polis in holding that the ideal polis and finest laws is that community wherein the property of friends is held together, and where wives and children are also shared in common (739c).[6] Even more purposely, the Athenian refers to the Form of the Polis in *Laws*, affirming that when supreme political power and wisdom are completely intertwined, the finest political system and its attendant laws naturally emerge (712a).[7] Thus, the heavenly pattern that is the Form of the Polis continues to serve as our blueprint in the course of the conversation between the Athenian and his companions as they proceed to sketch their own proposed city, which, as it turns out, is also the city through which the Socratic ideal is most effectively emulated. For the Athenian, we can begin to understand it as that city in which good judgment is combined with shared friendship: the combination of monarchy and democracy.

Consistent in his commitment to the Form of the Polis, Plato also reaffirms the essential qualities of his True City through the voice of the Eleatic Visitor in *Statesman*, antecedent to the conclusions drawn by the characters in the *Laws* and consonant with the central lessons taught by Socrates in *Republic*. As the Visitor explores the nature of various regimes, it becomes evident that Plato is offering still another taxonomy of constitutions, different from the ones conceived in *Republic* and *Laws,* a typology that compares those cities that are governed by experts under the rule of law to those that are lawless and lacking the benefits of any sort of expertise. This taxonomy also contains, probably coincidentally, seven variations, one that is the ideal and standard, and six that are ranked from best to worst. What is not coincidental is the

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contrast between the perfect and the imperfect, that which is ideal and intelligible only, and that which is or can be instituted, the pattern established in *Republic*.

Prior to this turn in the conversation, the Visitor reminds us, in a way wholly congruent with both Socrates and the Athenian Stranger, that the finest government is still the government of wisdom (Philosopher-Rulers), or in this instance, *phronesis*, the virtue of prudence requisite to the stabilization of democratic impulses, which further enables the participants in the *Laws* to build the second-best city (*Statesman*, 294a).[8] Going further, Plato alludes yet again to the Form of the Polis, the Visitor careful to note that, while we may speak of different types of regimes and their qualities, the one regime that transcends all other constitutions is that regime in which life would be the best and the most tranquil—a regime that stands in relation to all other constitutions as would a god to human beings (303b).[9] This is the seventh regime, the rule of wisdom, separated from the six constitutions that the Visitor and Young Socrates have been discussing, regimes classified based on the criteria of whether or not they abide by laws or prefer lawlessness, and are thereby ranked as follows: lawful monarchy (which is the best constitution in this taxonomy, excepting of course the ideal seventh regime which is the divine rule of wisdom), lawful aristocracy, lawful democracy, lawless democracy, lawless oligarchy, and the worst, lawless monarchy (tyranny).[10] While Plato consistently ranks law and lawfulness below wisdom and the love of wisdom, the distinction between the lawful (law abiding, law-bound) and the lawless is significant (302c–303b).[11] Wise rulers remain the ideal for Plato in *Statesman*, supplemented by the Visitor's recognition that, failing the rule of philosophy, the law itself supplies an auxiliary kind of reason.[12]

This distinction drawn between lawfulness and lawlessness—a distinction that in effect adumbrates the taxonomy offered by Aristotle in his *Politics*, for he also includes the rule of law as among the fundamental criteria, along with the virtue of prudence and the cultivation of civic friendship, and so on, separating constitutional regimes from their deviations.[13] Lawless constitutions, Plato observes through the voice of the Eleatic Visitor, their configuration notwithstanding, are decidedly inferior, and in all cases ranked below any regime wherein law governs the city. While democracy ranks lower than monarchy and aristocracy among the lawful regimes in this taxonomy, it is the least objectionable of the lawless types, preferable to the oligarchic and despotic variants. Democracy is so ranked by Plato's Visitor owing to its weakness; it is an intrinsically inept regime, incapable of accomplishing anything worthwhile, enervated by the multiplication of petty offices among the many, too numerous to enable good judgment and concentrated effort in the city. It is this weakness that makes it the best of the lawless regimes, for with offices so broadly distributed, officials each enjoying only a modest

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portion of authority, the potential for injustice is diminished in comparison to oligarchy and tyrannical rule. Lawful democracy and lawless democracy occupy the middle within the Visitor's ranked taxonomy, too weak to elevate the city when law abiding, too divided to undermine the city when law is abandoned. Even though the Visitor ranks democracy as third among the lawful regimes, inferior to lawful monarchy and aristocracy, his ranking of lawless democracy above oligarchy and tyranny is significant when compared to Socrates's ranking of imperfect regimes in Republic. For Socrates, democracy exists near the edge of tyranny; in *Statesman*, the Visitor views democracy as farther removed from the impulses that lead into tyranny because power is broadly dispersed, and unlikely to concentrate. For Prof. Annas, this means that, "while Plato can never bring himself to be really enthusiastic about democracy, even in the *Laws*," neither the rule of "the virtuous," nor the rule "of the vicious and selfish" are likely to emerge from democracy's weaknesses and flaws, whether lawful or lawless.[14] Prof. Monoson's reading of this passage in *Statesman* leads her to the conclusion that Plato identifies "democracy as preferable to any other regime likely to exist," and "that of all the likely-to-exist, flesh-and-blood regimes, democracy is the best because it is the least capable of perpetrating evil."[15] This is a point well taken, for while technically Plato ranks lawful and lawless democracy below lawful monarchy and aristocracy (as well as the ideal regime, the rule of reason itself) in *Statesman*, if all truly and enduring lawful regimes are difficult to establish and continued against all odds, then democracy, lawless or otherwise, remains preferred of all regimes in our experience, the "imperfect, actually existing regimes."[16]

Lawful regimes at their best only imitate the ideal, ever guided by the philosopher, law being subsidiary to the rule of reason (296e–297c).[17] Statesmen, who are by definition virtuous, will always be preferable to any regime governed by laws, which at best offers a substitute for virtue. Hence, the government of the genuinely wise and virtuous remains Plato's ideal across his dialogues. The teaching about statesmanship shared by the Visitor bears a resemblance to the conclusions drawn by Socrates in *Republic*, for what the Visitor recommends is the True City in its essence—all regimes are imperfect save for the Form of the Polis, the only regime that is truly just, and the only regime that always aims at the Good. In *Statesman*, the three regimes that abide by law, including democracy, are susceptible to the sham teachings of the sophists and their followers and disposed to preferring petty allegiances at the expense of the interest within the larger compass of the political community in-itself. For this reason, the analogy comparing the art of the weaver to the art of statesmanship is useful, for it elucidates both the talent requisite to governing with expertise, and the tightly woven nature of a political community properly constituted and directed, and, as discussed earlier, the correctly

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balanced admixture of virtue in city and soul. Connections in democratic cities depend on friendship, however these connections are weakened and likely to unravel unsupported by law. Abiding by law is the qualifier that separates the two types of regimes, it is on this point that we split those regimes—whether governed by one, few or many—on the criterion of the art of statesmanship on the one hand, and depraved attitudes of those who unabashedly exhibit the worst kind of ignorance in matters regarding the finest and most important principles (302b).[18] Monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, while still ranked in the Visitor's taxonomy, nevertheless are in one quality equally correct in that they are lawfully governed and not burdened by lawlessness and ignorance among rulers and ruled alike. Democracy, in spite of its limitations, shares this quality with monarchy and aristocracy, while continuing to chase the true constitution (viz., the rule of wisdom), enduring their troubles and sustaining themselves even when suffering, somehow managing to remain steady (301d-302a).[19] For law supplies what is deprived of cities in the absence of wise rulers (i.e., Philosopher-Rulers), a principle that is still more fully elucidated by the Athenian Stranger in *Laws*, but also present in *Statesman*.[20]

The Eleatic Visitor concludes that law alone is insufficient to attain the universality at which it is aimed, unlike the rule of the wise—the ones who govern by the virtue of good judgment—no law regardless of how well it is designed anticipates every case or foresees every possible exception. This is so in light of human variability and the vicissitudes of political activity and social change (294b).[21] Prudence will always stand as superior to the rule of law, the shape of the regime notwithstanding. It is beyond the capacity of the legislators to anticipate the needs of every person, there will always be sufficient exceptions among citizens to prevent laws from serving the city with the kind of good judgment found only in a wise ruler (294b-295a).[22] Even though the Visitor clearly separates all six regimes included in his taxonomy from that regime governed by the statesman, holding that those who rule in all but the ideal city (i.e., the seventh regime which is ruled by wisdom) to be insubstantial and tending toward faction, he still draws an unambiguous distinction between the lawful and the lawless, signaling the superiority of the former over the latter. Moreover, while he unequivocally regards democracy under the rule of law as inferior to monarchy and aristocracy, his recognition that a lawless democracy is preferable to oligarchy and tyranny must rest on important assumptions about political life. Laws strive to instantiate the True Polis in a way that not only separates them from the lawless regimes, but that also emulates the divine ideal. Under the rule of law, for example, monarchy is preferable to the others (302e).[23] Additionally, it is lawlessness that perverts monarchy into the worst possible regime. This is no small difference: what separates the best among the six imperfect cities from the worst possible

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regime is the presence or absence of law. Therefore, a government of laws, while not the Visitor's ideal, is sufficient enough, ensuring that the rule of one person follows the principles of good judgment rather than the incessant abuses of tyranny. If we remove the ideal regime from consideration, then the difference separating lawful regimes from their lawless counterparts is meaningful because the three law-abiding variations emulate the one correct city insofar as they obey good judgment. It defies logic to conclude that the lawful regimes, while admittedly inferior to the rule of philosophers, are not preferred to the lawless, and it stands to reason that they are solely preferred because of the law. No law, written or unwritten, can in all cases anticipate what is best for every single person; this reality, for the Visitor, lends support to the superiority of the rule of wise statesman over reliance on laws. Lawfulness approximates the rule of the philosopher while lawlessness fails. If we cannot inhabit the regime that is divine, we can nonetheless establish through law regimes that we can inhabit in an orderly way, regimes congenial to reasonable human expectations.

Virtue matters, above all, to the Eleatic Visitor, specifically, the sensible blending of moderation and courage. The blending of these two virtues through the statesman's weaving is the focus of this complex dialogue near its conclusion (310e-311a).[24] Both those cities and souls predominately governed by moderation are, in the Visitor's estimation, susceptible to becoming slavish should that principal virtue paradoxically exceed its own rule of due proportion. Immoderately practiced moderation distorts its own properties. How often do we encounter individuals who, in pridefully trumpeting their moderation, conduct themselves both immoderately in the way they impose temperance upon themselves, and immodestly through the conspicuous advertisement of their practice? Conversely, should the virtue of courage dominate, misshapen by anger, aggression, bravado, and recklessness, the city will ever be drawn indiscriminately and needlessly into war. Statesmanship exercised in its genuine form weaves these virtues together, and exactly how that can be done is something that only the lovers of wisdom know; it is only the philosopher, the Visitor persistently asserts, who can weave virtue into the fabric of the city.[25]

War is uppermost in the minds of Clinias and Megillus, prompting a reflection on the virtue that engenders the appropriate martial spirit. Recall that Clinias observed that there is "a never-ending, lifelong war against all other states," which is the reason why all laws enacted and institutions established by legislators must first address the consequences of this hard reality (Laws, 625e–626b).[26] When the Athenian raises the question regarding a person's inner character, he is alternatively introducing conditions for the examination of another virtue, the virtue of moderation or temperance. Nothing is worse than succumbing to one's lower appetites, and it is the virtue of self-mastery

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that fortifies one's soul against this misfortune, preserving one's dignity (626e). Legislators, the Athenian affirms, know that the "greatest good" for any state cannot be so narrowly drawn or singularly fixed, and that the greatest virtue for lawgivers and citizens alike cannot be courage alone, for by itself, it is insufficient to protect the city. Courage against one's foes and self-mastery over one's vices provide roots for good character and enable meaningful life, but neither one stands as pre-eminent (although later in the dialogue, as indicated above, the virtue of self-control is, contrary to the shared sensibilities of the Spartan and Cretan, ranked higher than the virtue of courage). As discussed earlier, the Athenian asserts that those who are exclusively committed to the art of war cannot be considered true statesmen. Clearly the Athenian is not a pacifist any more than Socrates was when he argued against Polemarchus in Book I of *Republic*: war is an unfortunate reality for human beings, and even though it is not choice worthy, defense of the polis is an inescapable burden. Naturally, this admission is well understood by his Spartan and Cretan friends. Just so, a genuine lawgiver always acts under the hope that war is only qualifiedly useful if it serves to work toward enduring peace, it is never to be regarded either as an end in-itself nor the principal concern of political leadership or the ultimate end of the legal and political activity of the state. In *Statesman*, the Visitor is not arguing for or against the importance of war, he is mainly interested in unity in the city under the rule of reason. Like the Athenian, he recognizes courage as a principal virtue, but in no uncertain terms must we concede to it the primacy of place among the dominant virtues of political and moral life, for courage without temperance can lead to a kind of madness, which is itself the loss of genuine courage (310d–311a).[27] More than any other duty, the statesman must weave together those disparate dispositions, creating a unified city and encouraging habits among citizens that will realize the virtuous soul. This is a goal that is also held by the lawgiver-statesman in *Laws*, and meeting this goal requires both the proper institutions and laws that are themselves reason made manifest through the enactments of prudent legislators. Our aim should always be simply virtue, the Athenian avers, and as with the Philosopher-Ruler in *Republic* and the true statesman in *Statesman* (who are in effect one and the same), legislators unify the city and elevate the soul through the proper exercise of their truly learned craft (630e).[28]

Returning to the Athenian's historical account of the origins of political communities in *Laws*, we notice that this learned craft of legislation emerges parallel with constituent and combined associations. Smaller communities, when over time are naturally joined to larger ones, do so with their own laws and practices well established. How these laws were enacted, either by the rule of one person, or few or many, is not indicated nor important, but we can draw the inference that these smaller communities were not democratic in any

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sense that we would recognize. Still, any inference drawn about these things may prove immaterial, for what really matters is the manner in which the Athenian describes the origins of representation. Under his account, representation is, quite naturally, a logical consequence of the institution and practice of lawmaking itself, indeed, he explicitly states that the lawgivers are representatives, thereby excluding autocratic rule from this particular account. Remember that in *Statesman* the Visitor analyzes how statesmen weave together the disparate elements of the community to create one political fabric. This is an activity that, in the Visitor's analysis, requires only one wise ruler who, resembling an expert weaver of cloth, is no less than a shepherd of human souls. By contrast to the Visitor's teaching on the perfection of philosophic rule in *Statesman*, the Athenian Stranger, Clinias, and Megillus seek to understand law; from the beginning, their joint examination starts with the assumption that laws are properly understood to be divine and proceed further into a consideration of the principal ends of the political, thereby raising the question about external and internal war and the primacy of virtue in political activity. Moreover, the Athenian adds that officials of the government, whether we are speaking of a body of aristocrats or a king, would themselves be appointed by a body of representatives in this early, post-cataclysmic reintroduction of legislation and political representation, a signal to the reader that as political practices and institutions develop from a simpler to more complex level, the autocratic leadership typical of the family and primitive communities becomes subordinate, however slightly, to a body of representatives. The Stranger understands that political life is participatory, a departure from the Eleatic Visitor's preferences evident within the *Statesman*. For the Visitor, political participation is more than a choice between various political institutions and conventions; participatory politics is contingent upon deeper cosmic dynamics, and while unseen to mortals, these dynamics are the basis from which our political life formed.

COSMOLOGY AND COMMUNITY

Myth, as all readers familiar with Plato's dialogues, serves as one of his more effective means in teaching important lessons.[29] Some of these stories are adopted from traditional folklore and legends, perhaps altered to fit Plato's purposes; but even with revisions, they would still be familiar and instructive to his contemporaries. Others are metaphors or parables of Plato's own invention, or stories that Plato has synthesized from different sources. While still subordinate to philosophy, Plato effectively employed shared myths as secondary means to convey moral teachings.[30] In particular, a fascinating set of myths, all in some way prominently involving Zeus, speak directly to

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things political, and one of the aspects that makes them curious is that they are told by someone other than Socrates. Two unidentified speakers in separate dialogues—the Eleatic Visitor in *Statesman* and the Athenian Stranger of the *Laws*—narrate the same myth describing the belief in a grand cosmic cycle oscillating between distinct eons separated by opposite ontologies: the Age of Cronus and the age of Zeus.[31] Notably, in a third dialogue, the *Protagoras*, we meet in this case an identified speaker, a personage no less than Protagoras himself, who conveys political insight through a story about Zeus and his divine intervention in the creation of political wisdom.[32] It is a familiar legend: following Epimetheus's clumsy and short-sighted distribution of physical attributes in designing all creatures at the origin of the world, an irresponsibly uneven distribution deprived an overlooked human race abilities necessary for survival. The human species was left pathetically vulnerable. A sympathetic and more mindful Prometheus comes to the rescue, delivering fire accompanied by the divine practical, technical arts to this poorly appointed race of creatures—this fire having been stolen from Hephaestus and these practical arts (technology) from Athena, earning the wrath of Zeus for his trouble. However, it so happens that even with these stolen gifts, human beings remained vulnerable to all manner of wild animals who would instinctively sense their weakness (*Protagoras* 322b).[33] When matched against our fellow creatures on their terms rather than ours, all weakness is exposed, and thus in any contest in which we must depend on our physical attributes alone, our chances are bleak, our situation desperate.

Our vaunted technology is in-itself insufficient in addressing the problem of self-preservation. In spite of now enjoying the unique fortune of sharing with the gods the capacity for speech, invention, cultivation, and development—common attributes akin with the divine, distinct from all other creatures and inspiring reverence for and ritual celebration of the gods—the human race in its primitive state, a condition worsened by Epimetheus's appalling absence of forethought, still could not survive the predations of other, stronger species. Protagoras further notes that it is only through a merciful Zeus's humane gift of the political arts that human beings finally managed to overcome their precarious circumstance. Aided by Hermes serving in his customary role of mediator, All-Seeing Zeus implanted the virtue of justice accompanied by shame so that human beings would develop the conscience necessary to steer them toward right action.[34] Doing so separated humans from the rest of nature, transforming them into persons, not mere individual creatures scrambling, and in the case of unaided humans, failing to survive. This, according to Protagoras's narrative of the myth as relayed by Plato, and which aligns with ideas that we would otherwise expect from Socrates himself, is the critical element needed for human beings to survive, that is, to institute order in their communities strengthened by friendship,

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virtues thus dispersed evenly throughout the community so as to more effectively foster broad and meaningful political participation. While Plato is not siding with Protagoras, there may yet be found some value in the sophist's exposition.[35] Socrates may not agree that all will be equally just, or equally capable of justice since all virtue is a kind of wisdom, and not all will be wise. Moreover, the Eleatic Visitor also clearly states that no number of people could independently acquire the expertise necessary to govern with intelligence (297c).[36] Nonetheless, as justice is a Form, we may conclude that it is instantiated in all who seek justice, and all who participate in a just community, but in different degrees. Shame, on the other hand, is neither virtue nor Form, but it is a state all rational humans share, and again in various degrees.[37] Most importantly, Plato seems to place in Protagoras's speech a valuable lesson that does not necessarily conflict with Socrates's principles: that justice and shame, equally distributed by the command of Zeus, are both requisite to political life.

In essence, Protagoras appears to believe that we cannot single out any particular group to bear shame for the rest, nor can we dispense justice unevenly from one segment of the polis to another—for to do so is counterintuitive to the very meaning of a just community. Observations such as these entreat among readers a commitment toward a deeper understanding of the moral center that binds political life, a moral center that includes among its components a fundamental equality, at least equality shared among citizens—more broadly equality characteristic of any manifest political community. Among the many symptoms of tyranny are the distortion of shame and the obliteration of justice, further illustrating the manner in which tyranny, by its nature, does not simply capture politics, but abolishes it.

All other talents and qualities necessary for the survival of the human community need not be distributed universally nor shared in equal portions. Justice and shame, however, must be uniformly diffused if the gift of politics is to be fixed in our nature and properly advanced. The unjust and shameless are self-centered persons lacking conscience, or disinterested in what is right and fair and, consequently, incapable of political life and thereby a disease to the rest of the city. Under Zeus's own severe law, they are considered persons deserving the condemnation of death (*Protagoras* 322c-d). Commenting further, Protagoras explains that political excellence depends on temperance and justice, an admissible argument unexpectedly affirmed by a sophist in this instance rather than Socrates (323a). Protagoras's particular lesson with regard to temperance surprisingly reflects Plato's own way of thinking. Protagoras describes temperance as a quality closely associated with the more evidently political virtue of justice; and in this sense, the claim that he offers to Socrates and those present resembles positions advanced by the Athenian Stranger in *Laws*, the Eleatic Visitor in *Statesman* and Socrates himself in

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Republic, the latter noting how the virtues of justice and temperance together develop across the whole soul, while wisdom and courage are more properly qualities of specific parts, the rational and the spirited, respectively. Because Protagoras is arguing, at least through a portion of the dialogue, that virtue—at least the kind of virtues that shape good citizens—can and must be taught, he further concludes that anyone can participate in the political sphere provided they have indeed absorbed these particular virtues, and thus are able to act justly and to appropriately know shame. Granted, Socrates, the Stranger, and the Eleatic Visitor do not adopt this latter point—that is, that anyone can participate in governing—but they do rest political action on these virtues, properly blended with the other virtues, woven together and unified as part of the craft of political practice. Absent a just and temperate character, a character that understands shame, a person cannot fully and constructively participate in the political sphere. And participate we must, for it is this capacity for political participation that rescues us from the consequences of our vulnerabilities, our frailties, and our fears.

Finally, the importance of temperance is clearly made evident to us through the Stranger in the *Laws*, for it is here that Plato forecloses any reading of his works detecting utilitarian sensibilities, as in some of Socrates's comments in *Protagoras*—comments not meant to convey Socrates's real position—or elsewhere in *Laws* (e.g., at 636d-e).[38] The Stranger later explains that right living is found as a mean between the extreme, incessant indulgence in pleasure and constantly evading all pain. Such a mean is in reality a divine state to which we should all aspire (792d).[39] Through temperance, we are able to imitate divinity itself, divinity as rationally understood, unencumbered by impious stories that portray the gods as driven by lewd appetites and vulgar emotions. In sum, virtue is, as the Stranger elaborates, a state of concord shared between the rational and the emotive, a concord that is achieved through reasonable feelings in response to life's pleasures and pains, and the knowledge of what is worthy of our love, and what is properly despised (653b-c).[40] Loving what is worthy, what we ought to love, requires the exertion of all the virtues: wisdom to know that which is worthy of love, justice that enables us to advance its purposes, courage that provides the resolve to both strive to achieve it as well as stand in its defense against that which ought to be hated, and temperance that elevates our desire toward it.

Additional accounts explaining Zeus's intervening role in the origin of the art of politics are supplied through *Laws* and, most notably, *Statesman*. Both the Eleatic Visitor and the Athenian Stranger teach about the cosmic oscillation that governs nature and history, fluctuating across countless epochs, each epoch moving in a direction contrary to the previous one. In *Laws*, this story serves as a fantastic and instructive interlude bridging the introduction of the Athenian's teaching on the blending of monarchy and democracy to

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the following passages comparing politics as typically perceived and practiced with a more edifying model regime. Reminiscent of the Athenian's previous historical account of the last, ancient cataclysm and its regenerative aftermath, the cosmology behind the reversal of universal motion and its subsequent effects for earth-bound mortals reflects the Athenian's inclination not to explicitly seek truth in the eternal Forms, but rather to understand the meaning of the change and movement that drives the realm of becoming. This story, in tandem with what directly follows it, serves as a necessary preliminary toward building Plato's second-best city. In this way, the Athenian anchors still more firmly the genesis of the second-best city in *Laws* to the Form of the Polis in *Republic.*

In *Statesman*, the Eleatic Visitor—straining to illustrate what distinguishes kingship from herdsmen, that is to say, discerning the essence of statesmanship and political action in contrast to other kinds of leadership, other kinds of directive activities—treats us to an involved account comparing life under the reign of Cronus and life under the reign of Zeus (267e).[41] The Visitor turns to a great myth, in the interest of clarity, to separate the statesman from the many kinds of inferior leadership (267c-e).[42] He signals his dissatisfaction with the manner in which the statesman has been examined to this point, having only described what resembles a kind of king, one that remains difficult to discern from an ordinary herdsman.[43] Another approach seems in order, one that is a little more playful while at the same time still conveying an important point about the difference between kinds of leadership, different ways to direct the social order, and different expectations held by members of the political community. Here the Visitor explains the oscillation of our world by contrasting its two phases. Life within one phase of the cycle is determined by the direction in which the universe is moving at that point, whether with Cronus as active guide or Zeus as distant onlooker. If the former, everything that human beings need is readily supplied, there is no scarcity, no toil, no conflict or dissent, no painful extremes, a world absent despair—all savagery fully abated with needs met and comforts supplied. Life springs spontaneously from the earth; there is no labor, no strife, no anxiety. Our divine guide shepherds the mortal flock in a way analogous to the human shepherds that tend their sheep, and for this reason, there is no need for politics, constitutions, and laws. In this age, political activity is not required to either live or live well, for courtesy of divine care, living comfortably is all there is (271c-272a).[44] Human beings are wards of Cronus, whose unfathomable largesse provides humankind with a well-tended life of uninterrupted leisure, wherein the realm of freedom is thoroughly removed from the realm of necessity, each person unconstrained by any obligation. Even the god does not expect a sacrifice, a life of piety is as superfluous as a life of justice is unnecessary when every person can gratify every want simply by stretching out their hand. The very

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concept of leisure time is unfamiliar to the nurslings of Cronus, for there is no time in which they are required to work, thus nothing against which their easy condition is contrasted.

As they are still permitted free will—so as to remain human in the eyes of the gods—they are free to choose a life of conversation in which they are able to share the love of wisdom, or alternatively, a life of gratifying physical pleasures without consequences. Under this languid condition, there is no difference between the two. Either choice is pure self-indulgence: for those who embrace philosophy because it is pleasant are consequently not motivated by a genuine aspiration for truth, and those who choose only to satiate their appetites without the need to work are as a matter of course indifferent to well-being.[45] Day in and day out, indulged by their divine keeper and provider, each person, pastured, fed, and content, lives indiscriminately, unattached to the past for lack of memory and unconcerned about the future for the want of purpose, uncommitted to any obligation and unacquainted with resolve (272b-272d).[46] Politics is no part of their nature, association is unknown in the herd. Courage and justice are absent, for the former is not needed, the latter is the province of the divine alone. Moderation is the only virtue that improves their circumstance, should they choose to seek its improvement. Humans, under Cronus, are more likely apathetic than self-disciplined, more prone to become sluggish rather than temperate. As they are well-tended, the virtue of moderation, if they inculcate it, is attenuated.

Once the cosmic steersman releases control and "retires to his observation-post," the rule of Cronus lurches convulsively toward the rule of Zeus, who, resembling actions attributed to him in Protagoras's story, introduces political activity, or at least the need for it, to a reshaped humanity now left to their own devices, forced to direct their own lives and provide for their needs without the benefits of divine generosity (272e).[47] All that is fine from the Age of Cronus is diminished, and the global destruction that scoured the world as a result of the cosmic reversal is worsened by the indifference of the gods, travail and hardship now burdening the human condition. Formerly accustomed to abundance, human beings now for the first time confront scarcity, the prospect of which produces deepening anxiety, discord, and injustice. Moderation is imposed upon them; any pleasures now enjoyed are mixed with the pain of labor and the pangs of dissatisfaction. Courage and justice are once again necessary virtues. It is here that the Visitor indicates that we have arrived at the moral of the myth (274b).[48]

Plato again mines the Promethean tale, the Visitor reminding us of our enfeebled faculties and vulnerabilities to the predations of stronger creatures. Under the reign of Cronus, these attributes would be inconsequential, for they would not place humans at a disadvantage within a world in which the whole of nature enjoyed the kind of harmony that can only be tuned by the divine ear, a state in which humankind shared friendship, even conversation, with

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other animals, there being no need under such preconditions to fear the fang, claw and horn of our companion creatures. Under the reign of Zeus (viz., how we live), wherein we are estranged from the god who had once tended us like carefree sheep, our weaknesses expose us to new dangers previously unknown (272b, 274b).[49] Fortunately, the gifts of Prometheus and Hephaestus partially compensate for the disinterest of the gods, and humanity can now survive independently of the close direction of their divine shepherd. Compelled to strive and struggle and live by their own wits, humans now learn the meaning of freedom and confront for the first time both its promise and its apprehensions (274d). The point of all this, for the Visitor, is to explain the difference between tending dependent flocks and governing independent persons. In the Age of Cronus, we were herded by the divine will for inscrutable purposes, certainly purposes not our own, and we thus lived without effort or meaning. Once the cosmos heaves into the opposite direction, and the catastrophic effects of such an abrupt reversal have mitigated, we must strive to meet own needs and govern ourselves without the tender interventions of divine beings. We face the requirements of life, a condition in which leadership must be found from within. The art of ruling is now given over to us, no longer to be moved by the hand of a divine caretaker. Unlike divine herdsmen, statesmen arise from among us, and share some of our qualities even if they are better educated and are fortunate to have the talents that enable them to lead. They are more like us than like any god, and thus they are capable of governing not over us but rather for us as friends and fellow citizens. The rule of reason remains the ideal for the Visitor, but the wise rulers of the ideal city only vaguely resemble divine intellect; more deeply, their humanity enables them to understand the needs and aspirations of the political animal, who only emerges when the god withdraws without disappearing.

In *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger explains that the Age of Cronus is exemplary, serving as a blueprint for us today (713b).[50] Summarizing the Age of Cronus in terms that identify it with the Golden Age, the Stranger describes an ancient era, similar to that which was described by the Visitor in *Statesman*, in which gentle nature was our provision, making it possible to live happily in peace and mutual respect, justly and harmoniously throughout (713c-e).[51] It would ever serve to our benefit to align our daily lives, both public and private, to the divine order of things. While this in some ways conflicts with the Visitor's conclusions in *Statesman*, both figures teach that the rule of reason is the only pattern to follow in designing political communities and governing citizens. The Athenian recognizes that the Golden Age of Cronus is but an ancient legend far beyond the scope of our own experiences and the promise of our reach. All the same, there is another lesson conveyed through the story: namely, we should attempt to imitate life under Cronus, that is, a life wherein the qualities mentioned earlier are present, the conditions so

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established experienced (713e).[52] Failing the rule of divine or otherwise simply superior beings, we are nonetheless able to approximate it, perhaps even match it, by the alternative in the rule of law, which from the outset of Plato's *Laws*, we know to be divine. We will return to the importance of this proposition later, suffice it to say at present that lawful government, to borrow from the Eleatic Visitor, is the substitute for divine rule. Law is an inseparable and principal constituent of political communities.

All three myths herein discussed reflect an understanding of political activity as consisting of both communal self-reliance and formal direction. Additionally, these stories illustrate how politics is fundamental to the human condition. Politics in the Age of Cronus is unnecessary, for human beings live under the immediate care of the divine. As we know it, politics is essential, not the product of blind circumstance. To explain this, the Visitor and the Stranger speak of political man as a product of the Reign of Zeus. While the gifts of fire and technology are needed for our survival in the story of Prometheus and Epimetheus, politics is ultimately the decisive addition necessary to the improvement of human life. The stories contrasting the Age of Cronus with the Age of Zeus share in the conviction that human beings must assume responsibility for their own direction, and that even though the gods are present they are not necessarily available, or, at least in the view of the Visitor, they are no longer interested in our affairs. Both the Eleatic Visitor and the Athenian Stranger draw a distinction between a condition under which human beings are tended by divine wisdom, enjoying an untroubled life, undisturbed by conflict and anxiety on the one hand; and on the other the very opposite, a life in which we are governed by our fellow mortals rather than herded by the immortals, one that still recognizes the superiority of divine rule but can only emulate it, knowing the limitations fixed by our mortality.

Politics is so essential to us, to our nature, that if we were to live without it, we would in fact have to become different creatures. Plato describes through these stories a non-political existence, populated by non-human creatures, weird beings that age backward, spring spontaneously from the earth, and that consequently must experience thoughts and emotions foreign to the way human persons really think and feel. While it is true that life under Cronus as described in *Statesman* and *Laws* resemble life in the ideal city, in the final analysis, there cannot be a reasonable comparison. The ideal city is in no sense anything like a flock shepherded by divine beings; rather, it is a community governed by mortals seeking the fulfillment of their potential—the city that flows from our nature rather than an aggregation of individuals controlled and comforted. While simple mortals, the Philosopher-Rulers love and seek the divine. They come from among us—they are of our number, moving upward and outward toward

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the world beyond the cave, only to by necessity return to whence they came to our benefit. Upon their return, they know through their gifted insight their appropriate role as true rulers, and understand its paradoxical impossibility. Were all human beings philosophers, we would naturally inhabit the fine and good city; and yet we are not all philosophers, thus the True City will seem to us far beyond even our noblest capacities. Only divine beings are equal to the task of living ideally, living only as we should and not as we do. Nevertheless, the faculty of reason enables us to discern divine things, and because of this we together share the virtues of prudence and courage, temperance and justice, and wisdom. Politics in its perfection stands just outside our experience, and yet because of our experience in sharing these gifts, we have knowledge, however incomplete or partially obscured, of the True City—and it is because of this that we can regard its principles as the elements of our goals. For the Stranger from Athens, this means that we can approximate the city fit for the gods in a way that is within our reach, a city in which we live on our own terms, managing our own needs, confronting our limitations.

HALF A DEMOCRACY

Let us briefly review what has been discussed. Plato's second-best city, the specific city that most nearly approximates the Form of the Polis which has been discerned and described for us by Socrates in *Republic*, a city that is from the outset identified, along with the True City that sets the standard, as in effect half democratic. This is not meant as an original proposition, for, as stated earlier, the democratic institutions and practices in Magnesia are evident and familiar to Plato's readers. Still, it is important to again consider what this means for Plato, particularly in light of the connection between Magnesia and Kallipolis. The second-best city discussed in *Laws* is one half a democracy—democratic institutions and practices consist of half of the second-best city's general design. Or, in other words, the constitution upon which Magnesia is established is one part democracy, one part monarchy, so combined in order to promote liberty under the authoritative guidance of good judgment. When civic friendship and the moderate freedom of democracy are joined with the good judgment of monarchial authority, both the indissoluble unity of the True City of Socrates and its purely rational governance are emulated, and democracy contributes in a vital way to this achievement. In this way, the Athenian plants the twin foundations upon which those institutions which have "established . . . virtue as their aim" are built; and not simply a part of virtue as initially proposed by his friends from Crete and Sparta, but the whole of virtue, which is always regarded as the

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only consistently worthwhile goal of legislation, the principal purpose that the laws are designed to fulfill (705e–706a).[53] Virtue, the Stranger reaffirms at 707d, is our highest good—especially those virtues that bring divine benefits; it therefore must draw the full commitment of the political community and those who represent it. The virtues of good judgment, contributed by the monarchial/autocratic element, in combination with the participation of free friends that can only be fully developed by the democratic element grounded in liberty, are those twin foundations. They are the way toward a kind of governance echoing the Golden Age of Cronus in that the conditions for communal harmony are set, while at the same time introducing personal independence and responsibility with which the inhabitants of Cronus's flock were unacquainted. In sum, the second-best city is the epitome of the mixed, or composite regime, blending the better attributes of monarchy and democracy, woven into one political fabric that binds the city together in a way that is only surpassed by the True City itself.

What institutions, practices, and procedures does the Athenian propose in composing the democratic half of the second-best city? Representative legislation itself signals a subdued, qualified democratic sensibility in *Laws*; for unlike *Republic*, in which the True City hinges on the judgment of philosophers, it is a legislative assembly that shapes and guides this second ideal. Legislation is to be crafted and administered by many officials who are selected by the larger body of law-abiding citizens from a set of candidates, and thus deliberately drawn out by and from the city itself (751c-d).[54] What this means in our terms is that this city that is substantively nearest to the Form of the Polis itself will, in part, employ elections through which important offices are to be filled. The Athenian is determined to ensure that democracy and its many liberties is properly mixed and guided by the good judgment that is provided by the tempered autocratic part; this determination is illustrated in the structure of the government and the procedures employed to fill its various offices. In the Athenian's proposals, we are again reminded that Plato refuses to promote only undisciplined, self-indulgent liberty, and instead committed to that kind of freedom which is drawn toward the Good.[55]

First and foremost, the Athenian recommends instituting an electoral process reflecting both the city's democratic and monarchial portions—fusing them together, which is an effort toward which any constitution should assiduously aim (756e–757a).[56] Once again, the Athenian, without qualification, insists that a constitution—any constitution—ought to comprise both democratic and autocratic features, thus, democracy and the liberty that it promises is as necessary to a political community as monarchy and the good judgment that it delivers. A part of this democratic liberty is, as one would expect, the ability of citizens to participate in the selection of their leaders, and if scrupulously undertaken to ensure the safe and most effective appointment of

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qualified officials, this process will reflect this deeper compromise between freedom and authority. Specifically, the Athenian recommends the method in which the Guardians of the Laws will be selected, a task that is particularly important when the first leaders are chosen at the city's founding, a selection meant to establish a constructive and enduring precedent for the city's political future. Significantly, the process of election is to be performed in the state's most revered temple, and while the Athenian does not offer an explanation for this, the reason is apparent: the laws come from the gods themselves, and thus those who guard the laws, the just and the pious, must be appointed to that task in their sacred company.[57]

Magnesia, the Athenian recommends, should be divided into twelve tribes, equal in population and influence. From each of these tribes, three citizens are to be selected to serve as a Guardian of the Law, and thus the council of guardians is to be composed of thirty-six members, with an additional member added at large bringing the total to thirty-seven. Initially, as the city is established, nineteen of these guardians, a simple majority, will be drawn from those settlers new to the area, those sent out by Clinias's city to establish the colony. Given the passage of time, the Athenian explains, and the precedent for the procedure has been set, different qualifications will be expected, namely, primarily service in the city's military. In other words, those assigned the responsibility of guarding the city's laws must first earn experience in guarding it against its enemies. The selection of these guardians—three from each tribe, thus ensuring parity across the city's different segments—is to be undertaken in stages to safeguard fairness in appointments and quality in elections. These stages include nomination, scrutiny, and finally election to office. Nomination is to be solemn and credentialed, and more to the point, any candidate nominated is subject to elimination by the preemption of any citizen (753c).[58] That any citizen can, for reasons of their own and independently of any support other than the law itself, thwart the nomination of any candidate within the thirty-day period discloses the importance of citizen participation for the Athenian Stranger, and suggests a particularly democratic bent. Every member that is to be nominated and subsequently elected to serve as a Guardian of the Law must be acceptable to all citizens, should one citizen object, that candidate is withdrawn from consideration. Such a procedure ensures both democratic participation and consensus, and forecloses the possibility of the formation of interest groups who, should they muster a majority, could dominate and thus undermine the fairness of the process.

Those who choose to block a nomination would do so by removing the objectionable candidate's name from the temple and setting it to be displayed in the agora. This separates the erstwhile candidate from the public sphere, which is under the auspices of the temple god, consigning them to the private

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sphere, the marketplace—separated from political activity. Removing names from the public temple and placing them in the agora signals both a rejection of a person's nomination for public office while simultaneously preserving that same person's inclusion within the larger community.

A second and third round of nominations follows, the third incorporating a sacred ritual sacrifice that results in narrowing the candidates to a pool of three hundred, and from there, the election of thirty-seven concludes the process. The Athenian's proposed procedures deftly fold in the democratic through its focus on the fair and equal influence of each and every citizen, while simultaneously entwining it with the authority of the temple, which the citizens would naturally regard as rational, solemn, and divine. The choices of individual citizens are combined with the objective structure of the city as a whole. Finally, the last step involves a close scrutiny of the winning candidates to allow a final rejection of anyone considered unqualified or undesirable. Once a winning candidate passes scrutiny, they are officially elected (753e).[59] Again, the fusion of pure democratic participation with the solemn authority manifest in the city itself is evident, and an intelligent community of free friends sharing a process guided by good judgment exercised through the procedures and the institutions within which it operates. Person and polis meet in the selection and commissioning of the guardians of the law.

Other offices in service to and defense of the city are also subject to election at least in some stage of the process, either through direct voting or by sortition. Military commanders are elected by their company, expert magistrates responsible for managing culture in the city (a decidedly important office, as any reader of both *Republic* as well as *Laws* must be aware) are elected by "all those who are keen," or interested in, cultural performance, for example, music, dance, and poetry. The whole city does not participate in the process to fill these important roles, rather, regular participants self-select, or belong to a property group within the city designated by law to participate in the appointment of these offices. In each case, officials are chosen by combining democratic practices (voting and selection by lot) with non-democratic variants (voting or sortition among specific groups), all scrutinized to ensure qualification and promote good judgment in public administration. What is deemed the most critical responsibility in the state, the Minister of Education, is selected from among the Guardians of the Laws (themselves elected by their respective tribes) and chosen by all other officials in the city with the exception of the larger council (766b-c).[60] Again, the person who wins the most votes must undergo scrutiny, for the aim is to identify those citizens most qualified to govern the education of the community's children. While the selection of the myriad offices established throughout the city is complex, the goal remains, in every case, to follow the basic pattern established at the founding of the second-best city: to

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blend as seamlessly as possible liberty and authority, democratic friendship and monarchial judgment.[61]

An important institution within this structure is the Great Council, a body of 360 members elected from four divisions within the greater polis, 90 members from each division. The entire city participates in the nominating phase, the actual election permitting those who choose not to vote the option of instead paying a fine. Scrutiny follows, and those who pass sit as Councilors for one year. Additionally, a rotating executive committee composed of 1/12 of the greater assembly, each appointed committee serving for one month each year before passing their responsibilities to a new committee, conducts ongoing public business and manages exigent circumstances as they arise—to run the ship of state, as it were—a responsibility involving routine matters such as convening legislative sessions but also responding to emergencies.[62]

This Great Council follows the essential purpose of the government that the Athenian proposes, namely, blend the monarchical with the democratic, as mentioned earlier, and to promote virtue and friendship among the polis, which is designed to be as small as possible—5,040 hearths—so as to achieve a high degree of communal self-sufficiency, civic familiarity, and solidarity in confronting danger. Such a large assembly again reinforces the notion that Plato is not averse to democratic institutions. In fact, through the Athenian Stranger's proposals, he relies on them to construct the city that is closest to his ideal; it is the habitable alternative to the uninhabitable paradigm. This fact in-itself illustrates democratic commitments to the second-best city in the proposal for a large legislative body and the management responsibilities of its standing committee. Additionally, the manner in which the Great Council is composed and convened is even more important for us today, for it serves as a recommended institution through which the Form of the Polis as discerned in *Republic* is manifest in the second-best city of *Laws*. Finally, Plato's inclusion of a predominant and integral electoral process in that city that most closely approximates the Form of the Polis is in-itself noteworthy. As Professor Morrow reminds us, the "selection of officers" in Magnesia "rests mainly in the hands of the citizens." We are speaking here of democratic elections, the full participation of the citizenry in general, determining for themselves who should be nominated for those offices decided by sortition as well as those offices that will be filled through popular election. "This consideration," Morrow continues, "also seems to be presupposed in certain details of Plato's electoral procedures, and in the various institutions, he sets up for promoting the friendliness and fellow feeling that are fundamental criteria of a good society."[63]

Democracies, the Stranger asserts, as noted earlier, are vital to the promotion of both freedom and friendship—a position affirmed from the beginning, not just explicitly in Book III, it is already presented in the friendship of the dialogue's three elderly figures enjoying the shared liberty of serious

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conversation.[64] When they are guided by the divine rule of law and moderated by the inculcation of virtue among the citizens, they can be successful in advancing the common good in spite of democracy's disposition to elevating the individual above broader concerns. Every polity in the proper sense of the word will respect the rights of individuals. Good polities understand the need to balance the dignity of persons with the ends of the state. Weaving authority and liberty, good judgment and freedom, and friendship and justice provides the pathway toward a politics so dedicated.

If rightly directed by the virtues of good citizens, stable institutions, and divine law, democracy, mixed with tempered autocracy, contributes to the rational direction of the second-best city. Kallipolis remains the model for all polities then and now, Magnesia, the City of Speech in *Laws*, being the one city closest to that model, and conspicuously, half democratic. These two models are unified pieces of the same whole, and while the Form of the Polis, in its perfection, is without peer, the second-best city fulfills a role that is equally important. While Kallipolis is the model that directs the Athenian's design, Magnesia itself, in turn, teaches us something about Kallipolis, and through Magnesia's institutions and practices, Plato allows us to more fully understand the city imagined by Socrates. Compared to the Athenian, Socrates paints his intelligible city in broad strokes, and working from another angle, the Athenian seeks to provide the kind of detail in the ideal that draws it closer to practice. Those democratic details, in their complexity, recapitulate the democratic simplicity of the first iteration of the True City as envisioned by Plato. By studying and reflecting upon the Athenian's Magnesia, we are offered an opportunity to flesh out the True City imagined by Socrates. In a sense, Magnesia may be the promise of the True City as it was established prior to the introduction of injustice by the hand of Glaucon in his lifting the limits of our self-restraint, his banishment of moderation from the original True City. Socrates only separates political power from private wealth once injustice seeps into the ideal city, had Glaucon not been so moved to press his case, Socrates may have not discerned the need to establish that separation. In any event, Magnesia's importance to Plato may extend beyond its role as "second-best," for it offers another lens through which the transcendent ideal may be more effectively understood.

NOTES

1. Cooper, p. 1,126.
2. Cooper, p. 1,319.
3. Cooper, p. 1,515.
4. Cooper, pp. 1,515–1,516.

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5. Cooper, p. 1,379.
6. Cooper, p. 1,420.
7. Cooper, p. 1,398.
8. Cooper, p. 338. See Rowe (2000), p. 237, and fn. 139 above.
9. Cooper, p. 348.
10. Earlier in *Statesman* at 291d-292b, the Visitor offers a different typology of regimes that Prof. Jacqueline Merrill deems inadequate when compared to the one offered later in the dialogue at 302c-303c. See Merrill, "The Organization of Plato's *Statesman* and the Statesman's Rule as Herdsman," *Phoenix*, Vol. 57 (2003), pp. 48–49.
11. Cooper, pp. 347–348. See Rowe (2000) p. 247; Annas and Waterfield, *Plato: Statesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 71–72.
12. Or, as Prof. Lane notes, law "is relied upon as a form of surrogate reason" in Plato's *Statesman*. Lane (2006), p. 182.
13. Aristotle, *Politics*, Bk. III, Ch. 16 at 1287a10–187a30. See also Schofield (2006), pp. 120–124.
14. In her introduction to the Waterfield translation of *Statesman*, Prof. Annas observes that in this dialogue, "Plato, for the first time, realizes that the feature of democracy that makes it most resistant to the rule of 'true kings' in ideal circumstances is actually an advantage in the real world, since it also makes it most resistant to dictatorship, and in the real world there are more potential dictators than potential true kings." See Annas and Waterfield (1995), p. xix.
15. Monoson, p. 4 and p. 120.
16. See also Monoson, pp. 121–122.
17. Cooper, pp. 340–341.
18. See also, *Republic*, 488b-489d in Cooper, pp. 1,111–1,112.
19. Cooper, pp. 345–346.
20. See Laks, p. 271.
21. Cooper, p. 338.
22. Cooper, pp. 338–339. See also Rosen, pp. 156–161.
23. Cooper, p. 347.
24. Cooper, pp. 356–357.
25. See Saxonhouse, "The Philosopher and the Female in Plato's Political Thought," *Political Theory*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (May 1976), p. 208; Miller, pp. 87–91.
26. Cooper, pp. 1,320–1,321.
27. Cooper, pp. 356–357.
28. Miller, p. 108.
29. See Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 137.
30. See Brisson, p. 127.
31. See also Rowe in Bobonich (2010), pp. 40–41; Cropsey, *Plato's World: Man's Place in the Cosmos* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 117–121; Pappas, pp. 90–91; Kahn, "The Myth of the *Statesman*," in Partenie (ed.), *Plato's Myths* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 148–166; and Castoriadis, *On Plato's Statesman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 37–40.

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32. See Yona, "What About Hermes?: A Reconsideration of the Myth of Prometheus in Plato's Protagoras," *Classical World*, Vol. 108, No. 3 (Spring 2015), pp. 362–364.

33. Cooper, pp. 757–758.

34. Prof. Yona makes a persuasive case for the comparison of Hermes to Protagoras himself, which sheds further light on Plato's message. Yona, p. 383.

35. While it is certainly true that we cannot say that Protagoras is speaking for Plato, it is not necessarily the case that Protagoras is merely an antagonist. To be sure, Socrates is the prevailing figure and Plato's philosopher; but Protagoras plays a role quite different from, say Thrasymachus, or Gorgias, or Callicles. On this there remains disagreement: e.g., See Olof Pettersson and Vigdis Songe-Møller (eds.), *Plato's Protagoras: Essays on the Confrontation of Philosophy and Sophistry* (Springer, 2017).

36. Cooper, p. 341.

37. Alternatively, see Rowe, "The Myth of the *Politicus*," in C. Rowe and M. Schofield (2000), p. 242. See also Rowe (2000), p. 253, including fn. 34. More pointedly, see Penner in Rowe and Schofield (2000), pp. 180–182.

38. Cooper, pp. 1,330–1,331.

39. Cooper, p. 1,462.

40. Cooper, p. 1,344.

41. Cooper, p. 309. See also Dorter, pp. 191–195.

42. Cooper, pp. 308–309.

43. Cooper, p. 309. "A certain kingly shape," from *Statesman*, Translated by Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Sale (Newburyport, MA: R. Pullins Co, 2012), p. 35. In the Cooper edition, Prof. Rowe translates the phrase as "kingly figure."

44. Cooper, pp. 312–314.

45. Professor Catherine Zuckert concludes that it is "unlikely that" humans living under the care of the gods during the Age of Cronus would be interested in or occupied by "rigorous intellectual investigations, for they would both lack the sufficient motivation to pursue philosophy as well as the memory—owing to a life lived backward from senescence to birth—to support the life of the mind." See C. Zuckert, "Practical Plato," in Stephen Salkever (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 188–189.

46. Cooper, pp. 313–314.

47. Cooper, pp. 313–314.

48. Cooper, p. 316.

49. Cooper, p. 314 and p. 316.

50. Cooper, p. 1,398.

51. Cooper, p. 1,400.

52. Ibid.

53. Cooper, pp. 1,392–1,393.

54. Cooper, p. 1,428.

55. "The liberty of the *Laws* democratic assembly is not the negative liberty of license, but the positive liberty to strive for the good." Laks, p. 279.

56. Cooper, pp. 1,432–1,433.

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57. See Laks, pp. 278–290.
58. Cooper, p. 1,430.
59. Cooper, p. 1,431.
60. Cooper, pp. 1,440–1,441. See also Laks, p. 282.
61. Laks, pp. 278–290.
62. See Strauss (1975), pp. 85–87.
63. Morrow, p. 129.
64. Laks, p. 261.

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Chapter 9

The Form of the Polis in the Second-Best City

The Visible

Everything in Plato's *Laws* is an approximation of some ideal. The Athenian Stranger is a different kind of person and thinker than Socrates, nevertheless they are similar in that they share fundamental ideas about morality and politics, as well as commonly held beliefs about things divine. Many of the concepts and themes explored in other dialogues are re-examined in *Laws*, not only political questions but also questions about virtue, education, economics, art, and theology are examined, only without Socrates's persistent interrogation. Additionally, the Stranger's second-best city not only imitates earlier ideas developed by Plato through Socrates and other characters (e.g., the Eleatic Visitor), it effectively expresses these same ideas in a different way. Magnesia is Kallipolis restructured so as to increase its accessibility. Because it too is a kind of ideal, the standards set by Magnesia may still be difficult to realize; nonetheless it strikes the reader as an honest attempt to draw this ideal more closely to the practical realities that we face as we engage in political life. "The real difficulty," the Athenian cautions us, "is to make political systems reflect in practice the trouble-free perfection of theory"; and this candid assessment counsels the reader throughout the *Laws* (*Laws* 636a).[1] The second-best city is the Form of the Polis once removed, it is not the immutable and True City discovered by Socrates, and yet it is infused with its spirit. It sets its sights on a particular task, the founding of a colony, and because the chief architect, the Stranger, knows something of the Form, the pattern to be used is grounded in the heavenly design. It is, in effect, heaven enacted, the Form embodied, the transcendent folded into the immanent, the principle woven into the world.

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POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND PERSONAL WEALTH

Twelve tribes divide the second-best city into groups, as mentioned earlier, and from these tribes, the Guardians of the Laws are selected, each tribe contributing three members. A more meaningful division is proposed in the composition of the Great Council, one that is correlated with the ownership of property. Here, Plato demonstrates how one of the prescriptions learned from reflecting on the Form of the Polis can be applied. Remember that it is not the practicality of Socrates's reforms in *Republic* that matters, but rather the lessons that he teaches us through these recommendations, each lesson teaching us more about the Form of the Polis, the City in Theory. After his allusion in Book V of the *Laws* to the True City described throughout *Republic*, the Athenian sets his sights again on the second-best city and he does so by first introducing the proper distribution of property, asserting that land must not be farmed in common, but should rather be managed by private households (739e-740a).[2] In proposing, as sketched by Socrates, that the guardians in the True City would not possess private property, happily sharing their ration as donated by the rest of the city, Socrates means to teach us that, ideally, those who hold public authority should not possess personal wealth: political power and private wealth should be separated. For Plato, this is one of the primary lessons from the Form of the Polis, and as such, is an eternal and irrevocable rule that governs all political communities. It is always the case that wealth and political power should remain apart from each other, those who hold power should not be interested in any kind of wealth, and those who hold wealth should never seek to employ their wealth for their own advantage at the expense of the public good or without first ensuring that the city benefits from their actions. In an *ideal* city, there would be no connection whatsoever between one's economic assets and one's political responsibilities. Wealth that can be held in one's hands or staked out as separate from the commons is inherently corrosive to the virtues of statesmanship. Were we to implement this ideal, that is, were we to accomplish the improbable and establish a propertyless aristocracy to govern us in accord with virtue alone (the Philosopher Rulers), without the distortions that bend the soul through the temptations of wealth, we would thereby align our political institutions with that which nature prescribes, the strict separation of political activity and accumulated wealth.

Remember how Socrates explains that, should we actually accomplish the improbable and establish the Form of the Polis in the world so that we can inhabit it, eventually this true aristocracy would gradually, secretly at first, begin to covet gold and land eventually valuing wealth even above wisdom—even more than honor or victory, which is the desire of the spirited part of the soul that would inherit political authority upon the abdication of philosophy. In coveting material things, the attention of the guardians is

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turned away from the Forms, away from the Form of Justice in particular, and toward things, toward property both personal and real. This draws the rational down into the phenomenal, down into that which is located in space and subject to the effects of time. As soon as reason yields to the spirited, the ideal is distorted; and once the spirited succumbs to the desire for wealth, all virtue in city and soul is compromised. Plato reflects upon this in both *Republic* and *Laws*, for Socrates insists that the physical gold that can be handled externally corrupts the immaterial divine gold found only within—the soul's rational faculty elevated by the virtue of wisdom (*Republic* 416e).[3] The Athenian Stranger is forthright in his position that exceptional virtue cannot be reconciled to extreme wealth, a position that can't be overlooked when defending the virtues of Cephalus (*Laws* 742e–743a).[4] Moreover, those who are so seduced by wealth that their appetite for gold and silver has become "insatiable," have abandoned all moral value and perverted their will through the belief that incessant material gain is an end in-itself that justifies any and all means. Enthralled by the allure of money, they are shamelessly prepared to commit any action without discrimination when wealth is the promised outcome (831d-e).[5] Personal virtue and public responsibility are vulnerable to the deleterious effects of unbridled and indiscriminate acquisition and use of wealth. Remove moderation from the person, and the power of wealth breaks all virtue. Of this Socrates and the Athenian are of the same mind.

What Cephalus represents in *Republic* may have in effect re-emerged here in *Laws*, for recall that it was Cephalus who described himself as both having achieved a level of wealth somewhere between his more successful grandfather and his less successful father, having lived a moderate life marked by honesty and a sense of commitment to one's obligations. Conceding that it is typically easier to live decently when not burdened by poverty, he nevertheless does not accept the insinuation that wealth alone, simply because it reduces or removes inconvenience, can improve or sustain a virtuous soul. Poverty, which confronts one with numerous obstacles, does not in any way condemn a person to bad behavior, at least in Cephalus's understanding of the relationship between wealth and moral conduct. Plato, on more than one occasion, whether through the voice of Socrates or through the Athenian Stranger, does indicate the contrary position, namely, that wealth is incompatible with virtue and in fact leads to vice. And yet Plato does not propose the abolition of wealth nor does he suggest prohibiting the kinds of activities that lead to its production. He only insists on a strict and clearly knowable, reasonable division between private wealth and the public interest.

Earlier we explored the possibility that Cephalus is not without his personal merits, in spite of enjoying the kind of affluence that may appear to some readers as raising Plato's suspicion. The statement in *Laws* in which the Stranger claims that "to be extremely virtuous and exceptionally rich at

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the same time is absolutely out of the question," suggests a hardened position. On the other hand, the Stranger also says in the same sentence that he refuses to allow that a wealthy man can achieve real happiness without virtue, a statement that does not foreclose the possibility of a wealthy man, perhaps like Cephalus, from becoming virtuous (743a).[6] Moreover, there is no reason to believe that Cephalus's wealth is extreme. He is, of course, a man of some affluence, and has through his own efforts added to the wealth inherited from his father, an achievement that might just as easily be the result of a life guided by moderation and prudence rather than outright greed. The Athenian draws distinctions between just and unjust means employed in the acquisition of wealth, prompting the inference that some wealth, though by no means all, can be acquired without compromising virtue. After all, if wealth can be acquired justly, and one would imagine such a possibility in a rightly ordered city, and by those who have rightly ordered souls, then there is no reason why some who hold more wealth than others, people such as Cephalus who exhibits a commitment to acting moderately, cannot be esteemed as among the virtuous.

By limiting the magnitude of a person's wealth while also reducing anxieties rooted in poverty, the Stranger guides his city's attitudes regarding wealth toward the sensibilities personified by Cephalus. If this reading is reasonable, then we may recognize in the person of Cephalus the democratic virtues present in the second-best city. While not prepared to claim that the democrat Cephalus is the "second-best" man to the philosopher Socrates, it may be fair to say that certain qualities in the character of Cephalus, when combined with the good judgment of a person like Socrates, would effectively reflect some of the qualities of the second-best city. It is when the good-natured Cephalus—who has received Socrates with the kind of spontaneous friendship one would expect from a democratic sensibility—exits the scene that we observe the conversation deteriorate, first through Polemarchus's vulgar corruption of his father's understanding of justice through the introduction of the concept of enemies (contrary to the friendship embodied in the democratic Cephalus), followed by the petulant, smug absurdities of Thrasymachus. Had Cephalus been less devout instead of punctually meeting his religious obligations even at the cost of enjoying the pleasure of Socrates's company, the aim of their inquiry may have been realized before Glaucon's immoderate suggestions.

Human frailty is not itself frail but persistent and obdurate, fixed hard in the soul. We want things and places that we call our own, barred from the intrusions of others, fortifying our own security and serving our own comfort. It is an eternal rule that our private wealth should not boost our public influence; and yet our foibles predictably encourage its violation. Thus the conflict between the truth of the principle and the realities of the practice, we are left with the practical measure that seeks to adhere to the principle

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while accommodating the limitations of human character. Plato attempts to solve this conflict with regard to the relationship between wealth and political authority through the formation of property divisions as recommended by the Athenian Stranger. While the unbridgeable separation of power and wealth that is discerned in the Form of the Polis is an unqualified ideal, the second-best alternative obliges a reasonable limitation of wealth's influence. In the Athenian's proposal, governors own private property, unlike the guardians in *Republic*, but a buffer is established shielding political activity against the potent influence of wealth. If we cannot realistically ensure the complete, permanent separation of power and wealth, we can still aim at the ideal by controlling and reducing its effect. The Athenian cautions that we always endeavor to avoid civil war, that worst possible misfortune for a city, by ensuring that the extremes of wealth and poverty are not allowed to emerge among the citizenry. No segment of the city should enjoy unlimited indulgence or suffer hopeless want (744d).[7] Even more emphatically, the Stranger remarks—later in Book IV during his observation that God is ultimately the true legislator, the guiding hand in human affairs—that severe poverty along with disease is a more formidable force for change than even war, for extreme poverty can overturn constitutions and force the enactment of novel laws (709a).[8]

Few problems receive Plato's attention more than political disunity, a fragmented polity precipitating injustice at all levels; much of the more controversial measures proposed by Socrates are better explained within this context. Furthermore, the Athenian, in his account of the origin and evolution of cities in the post-diluvial world maintains that fine character among citizens is effectively instilled within those communities wherein distinctions drawn between wealth and poverty are absent (679c).[9] Those cities that allay the greed, jealousies, and bitterness, which accompanies excessive division of wealth, encourage virtue across the entire population, preventing the diseases of cynicism and impiety. To this end, the Athenian Stranger unapologetically recommends firm restrictions on the accumulation of wealth, instituting a segmented property structure. Divided into four permanent ownership-ranks, the second-best city is designed to harness and stabilize the ownership of wealth while permitting a small degree of equal opportunity within the firm limitations of modest affluence set under the law (744b).[10] The lowest property band is by no means impoverished, nor is the highest awash in the excesses of opulence.[11] Each citizen is protected from the indignities and injustices suffered under poverty, and likewise, is equally protected from those vices habituated by the obsession with wealth, an obsession that defeats public spiritedness and causes feelings of indifference to their fellow citizens (831c).[12] While it is true that political power and private wealth must be separated, it is equally true that, when they are not or

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cannot be separated, the amount of wealth one does or does not own directly affects a person's inclination to serve the city. A political community that fails to grasp this fundamental principle will soon raise up a population in which everyone attends only to their own interests, each person fixated upon material profit and contemptuous of those activities, such as philosophy or public service, that do not lend to the expansion of their own private wealth (831d).[13] The second-best city accepts the realities of private ownership, but does not abandon the principle that power and wealth must not be permitted to interpose against the other. For the Athenian, the best way to do this is to employ the rule of due proportion, capping wealth on one end and securing it on the other. In a sense, a modest amount of ownership inoculates the city against the abuses of excessive wealth.

Citizens in each property band are permitted to own only one more unit of property than their fellow citizens in the proximal lower band, and it follows, that those same citizens in that same unit own just one less unit compared to those who are grouped in the band directly above them, with one band serving as the lower limit, one band capping the upper limit. Say the lowest property band owns one unit, the property class just above it would own two units, and above it, three, reaching the highest level wherein four units are permitted—four times more than the lowest band. The properties of all citizens would be halved, with one subdivision held in the city itself, and one subdivision held in the countryside surrounding the urban neighborhoods.[14] Additionally, the Stranger, in order to preserve the structure of the city, suggests that all land is inalienable, no family is to divide their lots in a way that would disrupt the configuration of the four property groups, and thereby requiring that only one heir per generation would be allowed.[15] Moreover, such firm continuity reduces the occasion for disputes over land or tension between property ranks, assuaging any discord in the city. Once the variance in ownership between the four groups is set, the city's economic groupings contribute to equilibrium rather than threaten the kind of imbalance inevitable in any community in which private wealth is accumulated and concentrated in excess. More than a sustainable economic structure or organizational framework, Plato's proposal to limit ownership is considered a moral necessity—the state will neither be stable nor virtuous should unconstrained accumulation, accompanied by its entangled correlate, poverty, are introduced. We know what this means for Plato: fragmentation of the city into two hostile segments, and the corruption of virtue by the vices of envy and contempt.[16] This sturdy unity depends on the virtue of citizens, the strict inalienability of land—no hearth should surrender its holdings—and setting a limit on accumulation. Given the solidity and permanence of holdings and their indispensable service as integral components in the several hearths of the city, any real shift in distribution is discouraged. Personal assets separate from land holdings

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must also be capped, confiscation of any surplus restoring balance should one's acquisitions violate the legal upper limit. It is the city's responsibility to enforce this; any accumulation of riches surpassing the lawful maximum is to be returned to the community.[17]

Modest wellbeing is the benchmark guiding the distribution of wealth in the city, a standard designed to eliminate both indigence and extravagance. Through this design, the Athenian affirms the ownership of private property while also moderating it, ensuring that all citizens enjoy some wealth, and no one enjoying an amount of wealth that could undermine the unity of the city. Additionally, each rank would consist of the same number of households, preventing the few from controlling the balance of the city's wealth. Owning private property is both allowed and encouraged in a way that protects the public sphere from the direction of wealthy interests while simultaneously preventing both deprivation and opulence. Both Socrates and the Athenian Stranger perceive an existential war between wealth and poverty, warning that a city in which luxury and impecunity are both present is in fact two cities at war against one another.

Equally important is the connection between the graduated distribution of property and the configuration of the Great Council, effectively folding in an important democratic feature into the second-best city. Three hundred and sixty members are to be elected to sit on the Council, ninety from each graduated property band. The election is conducted in steps, the first step involves the nomination of candidates to represent the highest property class, a stage that is compulsory for all citizens, failure to participate resulting in the imposition of a fine in proportion to one's wealth—fines being higher, but not heavier, owing to the practice of proportionality, for the upper property bands. This step is repeated again when candidates are nominated for election to seats representing the second-highest propertied class. In sum, all citizens from all four property ranks, the lowest band owning one unit of land through the highest who own four, are mandated to participate in the nomination of the representatives from the two wealthier classes. In nominating the Councilors to represent those ranks owning two units and one unit of land, all citizens may participate, but in the case of the nomination of representatives from the former, citizens in the latter may choose not to participate without fear of penalty—however, it is important to note that they may still choose to participate if they are so inclined. Nomination for Councilors to represent the lowest property grade would again be conducted in a way that encourages participation from the entire city; however, citizens in the lower property grades may again choose to participate or not participate without incurring a penalty. The imposition of fines and taxes envisioned by the Stranger should be levied proportionally with any money owed to the city, whether by tax or a fine, determined on the basis of a citizen's wealth. Thus, as stated before,

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levies, fees, and penalties imposed on the higher property bands are also higher than those paid by members of the lower bands, higher but not heavier as a result of a practice of accounting on ability to pay.

Prof. Morrow concludes that such a practice would encourage less participation from members of the lower property bands, in part owing to different responsibilities and burdens comparing one class to another, with members of the higher property bands enjoying more leisure time, thus accorded the luxury of participating in the nominating process. Whether or not this was Plato's understanding is not clear. As is evident on examining Plato's proposals, the higher property band, while indeed holding certain advantages because of their economic status, may not be as leisured as one may initially suppose. Nor is it clear that devoting the same amount of time to political and legal affairs would unduly burden members of the lower bands. The disparity of wealth across the four groups is not so great as to de facto reduce or increase the likelihood of political participation in any group.[18]

Significantly, all citizens from each of the property grades are allowed, and in some cases required, to participate in the nomination of representatives across the four classes. Hence citizens in the lowest property band are able to equally participate in choosing the nominees for the upper grade, thus the interests of the lower and upper grades are blended. Once the nomination process is completed, each citizen from all property bands cast their votes for all the nominees, regardless of which level of graded wealth they are to represent, narrowing the field to one hundred eighty for each property band. The third stage reduces that number in half for each property band through sortition, the final number being 90 from each grade, 360 total. By investing each in the interests of all, every citizen, regardless of their economic position, would share the same influence. Disparity between the wealthiest and the least wealthy groups is already obviated by the capped, four banded structure, resulting in the establishment of a modest affluence which sets in equilibrium personal opportunity and communal responsibility. Moderation is fostered across the four property bands through the process of nomination, election, and sortition. As Professor McDonald notes,

> More votes of the poor than of the rich would be needed to elect the representatives of the rich and more votes of the rich than of the poor would be needed to elect the representatives of the poor, so that the moderate factions in each group would prevail.[19]

Private wealth is not to be withheld from the city's governors as prescribed by Socrates to separate political authority from management of the city's wealth; rather, everyone in the city, it is established in Magnesia, is to own property, and everyone in the city participates in an equal way in both the

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election of and serving within the Great Council. Even so, the purpose of the lesson, which is to detach power from wealth and wealth from power, remains: first through the establishment of an economic structure that ensures comfortable affluence while preventing even the mildest poverty, and secondly, while entangling the interest of the four property grades with each other in a balanced, even-handed manner, and thirdly, by fostering electoral equality among all citizens, economic position notwithstanding.[20] Socrates's qualified, limited communism mandated for his guardians is not recommended by the Athenian Stranger, even though he again affirms that such an arrangement remains the ideal; nevertheless, the lesson supplied by Socrates in making this proposal is still applied by the Stranger, instituted through structures, mandates and procedures guaranteeing the existence of private property throughout the city while simultaneously nullifying the influence of wealth on the direction of public affairs. Plato, through the Stranger, rather than the absolute separation of private wealth from public power discerned by Socrates as a principle of the True City, conceives of a way in which, without abolishing private property within any group, safeguards property ownership against the dominance of one group over the remainder of the city merely based on wealth. Perhaps of equal significance is the absence of property qualifications for those who are appointed to serve as Guardians of the Law, their selection being based on the equal participation of the city's tribes with no reference to wealth or requirement expected with regard to property.

Landed property and those requirements and restrictions pertinent to its establishment and preservation in the city appear uppermost in the Athenian's discussion. Throughout this discussion, the essence of Socrates's lessons regarding the necessity of separating wealth from political power is manifest. It is plain to see that Plato knew politics to be a different order of activity than the acquisition of wealth, recognizing that the ownership of land and fixed properties does not qualify a person for the direction of public life. Later in the dialogue, the Stranger expands his discussion of the accumulation and distribution of private property through his remarks upon other types of wealth and the importance of regulating their development and checking, or at the very least dampening, their influence on government. From approximately 918a through 920d in *Laws*, the Athenian focuses his attention at length on retail trade and the movement of wealth through markets, with particular interest in the potential for this species of commerce to serve the public good at large.[21] Plato's sustained attitudes toward the acquisition of wealth and its true purposes is well represented here, and particularly consistent with what we encounter in *Republic*. As Socrates teaches in Book II of *Republic*, every rational human activity addresses a true need and executes a natural function. In his description of the True City, Socrates mentions importers, merchants, and retailers, all of which are to be included, by necessity, in any given polity.

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What is of concern is not the activity of the acquisition of wealth in-itself, for the real needs of the body and the comforts of the spirit must be met; rather, what is of genuine concern is how this activity is to be executed and the limits to which it can be extended while still ensuring that our actions conform unimpeded to natural principles. In its essence, retail trade, the Athenian explains, is not inimical to the public realm, in fact, the opposite is the case (918b).[22] Natural retail trade, or trade undertaken that is true to its essence, serves the city and promotes the public good. Just as Socrates assumed in his account, the Athenian recognizes that commerce, when it is in accord with the essence of what it is, participates in justice. For it is possible, the Athenian and his friends note, to allow a decent profit among those who pursue the life of a merchant, so long as they do so as naturally as possible, and recognize the interest of the city in freely conducting their private business.

Consistent with his position staked out elsewhere, Plato reaffirms the importance of a distribution of material resources in accord with the pursuit of a just community populated by virtuous citizens. Mitigation of the disproportionate influence of wealth in the political sphere is not only accomplished through the four-tiered structure framing land ownership, but it is further supported by implementing a more rational equity in the distribution of goods. The very aim of trade, the Athenian maintains, is to facilitate this fair redistribution of goods. It is in the nature of retail trade to redistribute money from a situation in which goods are held disproportionately and distributed unequally to a new arrangement in which this distribution has been corrected toward equality (918b-c).[23] It is a troubling state of affairs, reflects the Athenian, which has spoiled the reputation of the retailer. Trade, he explains, is now universally held in contempt—traders are distrusted, received in society as profiteers and swindlers. Such a state of corruption is inevitable in any function within a city that is absent proper virtue, for it is in the virtues that the nature of persons and activities are found. Rare is the person who is capable of reigning in all desire, thus any role that would be filled in a city, whether we speak of those who hold political office, those who manage commerce, or those who are committed to any function in service to the community, will suffer temptations stirring up vice. Neither Socrates nor the Athenian Stranger are naïve when considering this circumstance. Nevertheless, the reality is in the form, and the forms are uncorrupted, if they were otherwise they would not be the eternal forms. If we cannot ensure the presence of the rarest and most talented persons, those who are moderate in their habits and choose competence over wealth, the city itself can then supply the defect through specific measures (918d–919c).[24] The retail segment of the city, when like the rest of us succumbing to the power of temptation and blunting virtue's capacities, would be constrained and rehabilitated

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through the implementation of policy. Three specific measures would be adopted in pursuit of this end: the city must limit the size of its retail segment, keeping it at a minimum; second, trade should be undertaken only by those who, even if they are corrupted, will not injure the city; and thirdly, measures must be employed that will discourage shameless activities and small-minded ways of living among those who are responsible for retail trade, or for that matter, any activity found necessary to the city (919c-d).[25]

Moreover, the Athenian knowing that God is the true founder of Magnesia and not the men who share their aspirations and designs with regard to it, recognizes that the most suitable situation is to assign responsibility for retail trade to those in the city who are not to own property, who are not to represent one of Magnesia's 5,040 hearths. It would be an indictable offense for a landed citizen to profit as a retailer, only non-citizens would be permitted to manage this facet of the distribution of wealth. All citizens are to be virtuous, hence they must not be exposed to those activities and attitudes that lower one's character, and that might potentially enervate one's spirit and distract one's soul. This is not to say that all those who engage in retail trade will be categorically corrupt; if a trader grasps the nature of things, then the act of trading would be guided by virtue, and would promote the common good. Rather, the Athenian's teaching stems from an awareness that the virtue of citizens remains our priority, and thus it is less risky to assign responsibility for these matters to non-citizens—metics, as it were, who reside in the second-best city, and while not enjoying the full rights of citizens, nevertheless benefit from the laws. Fortifying virtue still further, the Stranger proposes a law enjoining those metics who manage retail trade to conduct themselves properly while sharing their talents within their currently adopted city, a requirement that can only be possible given a natural potential for virtue common to all persons, regardless of occupation. Retail trade, in the Stranger's estimation, is accompanied by the kinds of activities and lifestyles that elicit vice, thus leading those who earn their living in this manner vulnerable to dissolution. To address this, the Guardians of the Laws themselves must supervise the conduct of the market, and establish regulations and practices that militate against these temptations, and in so doing, promoting virtue. Additionally, if we are to sustain the dignity of citizenship that can only be shared among the free, appointing citizens to trade and then imposing restrictions especially designed to check their practices would be inequitable and patently ill-advised. If the ideal cannot be guaranteed (i.e., retail trade according to its essential nature), then a second-best solution is prudent, and it is found in both regulative policies and the careful assignment of the necessary task.

Finally, that principle of the Form of the Polis separating private wealth from political power pertains not solely to those who govern it—the guardians

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who are proscribed from property ownership—but also to the city as a whole. In the separation of the hearth from the market, the Athenian follows the Form itself. Citizens, both officeholders and those qualified for office, while still owning land, must nevertheless reduce their exposure to money, their participation in the commercial environment. Separating and regulating property classes is straightforward and comparatively easy, the complexities of the market are more difficult. Those who are members of the polis must guard themselves against overexposure to the culture of acquisition, and while regulating the distribution of land was sufficient for checking the influence of landed wealth, such clearly established policies are unsuited to the dynamics of the market. To conform to the essence of the True City, citizens themselves, regardless of their specific titles and responsibilities within the polis, are to be isolated from the commercial. It is in harmony with the divine foundations of the city that commerce, while a present and necessary component of public life, demanding service to the public good in accord with its nature, remains an activity apart from the dignity of its citizens. Should a citizen become entangled in commercial activities, questions would be raised in the matter of appropriate participation in the public realm, one's ability to hold political office would be compromised, perhaps incapacitated. Property of any kind is at best a qualified good, subordinate to the unqualified good of the virtues of the soul, which are themselves only made possible by the Form of the Good itself.[26] Ideally (as taught in *Republic*), the political and the economic are to be disconnected from each other; the second-best policy (as affirmed in *Laws*) would not consist of some half-measure or incomplete realization of the paradigm, instead the Athenian suggests that to approximate the purposes of the ideal a close relationship between the political activity of the city and the procurement of its necessities should be developed. In other words, if we cannot realize the ideal by detaching the political from the acquisition of wealth, we can still approximate the essence of the separation of private wealth and the public sphere by effectively drawing them closer, setting the fair distribution of wealth by aiming at the right mean, reflecting the practical realities of the inevitable stratification of economic wealth while also remaining committed to a social and economic arrangement informed by a sensibility for equality in the most important things.[27] The most important things are immaterial. While such a proposal may seem counterintuitive to many of us, it is not contrary to the Form of the Polis if the essence of the lesson separating political power from wealth is followed, that is, if the divine pattern is consulted in the course of the city's affairs, public, private, and mixed.

In sum, the first lesson taught through Socrates is closely followed by the Athenian in the design of the second-best city. Every family enjoys the protection of its lawfully held property, no family gains politically from any

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material advantages, virtue is preserved in each person, and civic duty is stirred within the soul of each citizen.

PUBLIC GOOD AND PRIVATE INTEREST

Were we to follow the sequence of exposition that unfolds in *Republic*, we would next turn to the lesson treating the irrelevance of superficial differences in determining who should govern. Instead, we turn first to the manner in which public interest is protected from the influence of private desire for the reason herein stated, that is, its proximity to concerns over the intermixing of wealth and political power. It would not be an error to view one as an extension of the other, that is, to understand both of these principles of Socrates's True City to be a part of a larger set: the relationship between the universal and the particular. When reflecting upon the proper relationship between economic wealth and public service (ideally, no relationship at all), one cannot do so without also examining the relationship between the pursuit of private interests and commitment to the public good. These two essential qualities of political life, that is, the separation of private wealth and political authority on the one hand and the protection of the public good from the narrow squint of private influence on the other, are closely related. For matters that stem from the possession of private wealth are in fact matters of private interest in nearly every imaginable case, and while such matters are to some degree implicated in issues involving the public realm, they are ultimately affairs that are distinct from political activity. Drawing Council membership evenly from each property rank in the second-best city, as discussed earlier, not only addresses the problem of the uninvited influence of private wealth, it also encourages civic spiritedness by expanding each citizen's awareness beyond self-interests constricted by purely private passions and fixations.[28] Any discussion addressing the relationship between public good and private concern will include an examination of the manner in which wealth can and typically does distort political activity. Plainly, the practical separation of public concerns from private activities is unlikely in any active political community, it is equally clear to any student of politics, and any serious-minded citizen, that the various private interests held by individuals residing together in many tangible ways undercut the pursuit of a common purpose, and dilute shared attitudes regarding political responsibility.

Plato understood the importance of free persons capable of advancing their own interests while simultaneously knowing that by doing so we must without qualification pledge ourselves to the community through which we derive our sense of kinship and commitment. In *Laws*, the Athenian holds to the position that those who participate in politics must understand that the

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common good is the preeminent concern, and that lawgivers, statesmen, and citizens seek to develop the practices that will advance the principles of a rational community. Reminiscent of the arguments and teachings presented in *Statesman*, the Athenian echoes the weaving analogy shared by the Eleatic Visitor (875a-b).[29] In weaving the virtues together, politics realizes the unity of the soul by combining the diverse elements of the state the way a carder and weaver bind the ingredients that will constitute the finished fabric. This weaving of virtues runs parallel to the weaving of public and private interests. The guardians embody this in *Republic*; in *Laws*, it resurfaces through the equilibrium that is consequent to the balancing of modest authority with modest liberty, resting on the law itself.

Once political power is in fact shielded from the corruptive effects of private wealth, and the reverse, once private wealth is disconnected from the potential abuses of unbridled political ambition, the requisite and essential first step toward the division between private interests and public good has been committed. Other considerations also arise in this pursuit, for the relationship between public purpose and private need, so familiar to students of political inquiry, involves still more than the connection, fundamental though it may be, between material wealth and civic responsibility. Why does Socrates, in *Republic*, devote so much time discussing the importance of personal relationships among the guardians, only to draw the conclusion that those who share the responsibility of public authority are not to form any personal relationships with others in any real understanding of what that may entail? In Book Two of his *Politics*, Aristotle's most persuasive criticism of Socrates's ideal city is directed at the notion that we can feel the same affection for everyone that we normally feel for a few companions, and Socrates himself knows in advance that his proposal to abolish private families so as to substitute them for the larger family of fellow guardians will disturb the sea of argument (453d).[30] Why then is it drawn into the foreground as one of Socrates's fundamental reforms, a step in his treatment reducing the fevers of injustice in cities? And, more importantly for our question at present, is there a connection between this reform—the abolition of private families among the Guardians in the Form of the Polis—and any institutions, practices or customs in the second-best city?

Magnesia is grounded on the idea that law in its essence is divine. Therefore, law can only be just. This is not to invite the harmful conceit that justice is convention, or that legality and justice are equated; but rather to stress the principle that law is essentially just, and if legislation is insufficiently just or unjust, it is not in reality law—a position that would be familiar to later thinkers such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Furthermore, the family is indispensable in founding Magnesia, it is the core, organic component constituting the complex of political institutions. Here Plato re-introduces

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the importance of private families who own and manage their land. Private families were detached from the political sphere in the True City of the *Republic* for the reasons described earlier: private interests and public good should, ideally, be disconnected and shielded from each other. If these two spheres—the private and the public—cannot be completely disengaged and made impenetrable to each other, they should at the very least be purposefully separated and connections between these spheres effectively restricted. Alternatively, they could be intertwined so tightly that at every turn one sets a check against the other, and thus reduces or in some cases extinguishes undue influence of the one against the interest of the other. In *Laws*, family, land, and household serve as the underpinning substructure of the political community, the original foundation upon which political institutions are built and upon which community life depends. "For Plato, then, the state is a union of households or families, not a collection of detached citizens."[31]

By underscoring the necessity of the family in the development of things political, *Laws* contributes a salient contrast and counterpoint to the ascetic, propertyless guardians of *Republic*: landholding is not simply permitted, it is mandatory, and by extension, obligatory for those who assume any political office or governmental responsibility. Citizenship is not granted to those without title to property within the city. Such a suggestion is much closer to the realities of Plato's times. There is much to be found within the many features of Magnesia already present in the living institutions of Athens and Sparta. In fact, the Athenian, in contrast to Socrates in *Republic*, considers private families to be so necessary that he proposes fining any unmarried adult males over the age of thirty-five. Maturity and bachelorhood, it would seem, is a combination in violation of the public good. Woven throughout the latter books of Plato's *Laws*, a tight fabric binds the public and the private together in a fashion that appears contrary to Socrates's community of guardians, the leaders of the True City. Even so, when one reflects upon the description of the True City antecedent to Glaucon's amendments, a picture of a community based on familial tradition and practices is encouraged. Those occupations that Socrates identifies as the pieces of the True City are those that typically represent the private sphere, the public sphere seeming like a trace element throughout the initial iteration of Socrates's ideal. Furthermore, pastoral occupations, such as farming and shepherding, so indispensable to the True City, require distance from the city, their activities more congruent with nature than convention, undertaken within the expansive country surrounding the urban centers where other types of private activity, such as trade and the various crafts, are the common activities. In an ancient culture such as the one that serves as the context for Plato's vision, many of the occupations that are necessary within the True City would seem to be family enterprises, or at the very least, enterprises confined within small,

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tight circles of those who share common natural gifts. Family and close affiliations are just as important building blocks for Kallipolis as they are for Magnesia. Only with the introduction of unnatural needs (groundless want) does Socrates augment his True City with formal political occupations and institutions; and simultaneously, it is only at this point that the political community is required to address the problem of injustice, seeking the restoration of a just order. In the first iteration of the True City, citizens are naturally just, thoroughly unacquainted with unjust and immoral conduct. If it were otherwise, Socrates would have realized that there was a need for specific members of the community to protect their fellow citizens from the wicked designs of those who choose malfeasance over service. Socrates is sketching the ideal, and thus, ideally, citizens who would constitute the True City would be as Socrates would expect them to be, incapable of committing injustice, even against those that they might perceive as potential enemies. In voicing his protest, Glaucon effectively contributes a new need for formal politics as an amendment to the informal and simple ideal, a contribution that, on close examination, illustrates that formal, institutional politics is born not as the consequence of the desire for power, as Thrasymachus would have us believe, but out of the need to protect justice, and to ultimately purge the city of injustice for the sake of Good itself. Prior to the corruption of our needs and the subsequent descent into injustice, the True City, the ideal Form of the Polis, is constituted out of the pursuit of crafts and arts that are more typically practiced within the private sphere.

Is this a significant departure from *Republic*? In at least one way it is: those who hold political authority in Plato's True City are prohibited from holding private property and living within private families. In another way, the contrast is less marked, and perhaps on a deeper level not real, for, as stated earlier, the True City as initially envisioned by Socrates does not include anything explicitly political as we understand it. Further, the balance of those citizens encompassed within the ideal polis would indeed own their own homes and live among their own natural families (419e).[32] Moreover, these private families in *Republic*, the bronze citizens in Plato's hierarchy, provision the guardians who must depend on them for material support. In a sense, while we certainly are correct to notice the contrast between the way in which the guardians live in *Republic* and the familial roots of the second-best city, it must now be evident to us if what we have been saying from the beginning is correct, that Plato, in his restoration of the importance of the family to the political community in *Laws*, is doing so not contrary to the True City, but rather as an effort to remain consonant with it.

Nature itself provides a clue to more clearly understanding the relationship between the public and the private. We are, each one of us, unique persons from the very beginning, apart from and chronologically prior to the political

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community, the world itself. Concomitantly, we are, each one of us, persons who are radically interconnected to others, our very persona is and can only be existentially shared with others, and whose virtue can only be exercised in friendship (or tried in conflict, as the case may be). We are ontologically part of the political even though we are chronologically antecedent to it. Bereft of society and politics we are diminished. Both person and polis are naturally separate and naturally inseparable. In his analysis of the relationship between individual interest on the one hand and public good on the other, Plato, whether writing through the figure of Socrates as he knew him or the more inscrutable Athenian Stranger, exhibited an awareness of their mutual relationship. Private interests that seek to dominate the public sphere effect the corruption of both, and the public authority that shrinks the compass of private activity to the smallest possible field conjures the specter of pervasive, insatiate tyranny. The Form of the Polis separates the public from the private; not by eliminating one or the other, but by ensuring their coexistence and interdependency while dissolving primacy of self-interest and the conflation of politics and power. When Thrasymachus claims that justice is the advantage of the stronger, he destroys both private and public, for upon such a premise no person can act on principle, and no state can justify its interests. In *Republic*, the True City shields both spheres from each other, in *Laws*, their mutual influence is checked and channeled not by isolating their features, but through tight interweaving.

Recall that the Stranger recommends fixing the number of hearths in Magnesia at 5,040—these lots owned by distinct families (737e).[33] This suggestion follows practical, mathematically explained reasoning, and is admittedly a useful number that bears a factoring relationship to the number twelve, corresponding to the number of tribes constituting the city. While this is in-itself important, particularly given Plato's proclivities, it may, even more significantly, be a consequence of the Athenian's commitment to ensuring a modest affluence across all four property grades. Just prior to committing to such precision, the Athenian reflects on the unremitting problem of indigence burdening all cities, and forthrightly declaims that the cause of poverty is not from any lack of quality or fortune on the part of the poor, but rather from greed among the rich. "Poverty is a matter of increased greed rather than diminished wealth," Plato writes, once again identifying the excessive accumulation of riches in the hands of the few as a critical, pernicious agent in the corruption of community and the introduction and spreading of intemperance and injustice (736e–737a).[34] While wealth must be capped to reduce disparities across different property groups, poverty also must be abolished. Setting the floor of property ownership at a comfortable albeit lesser degree of affluence is critical, the very foundations of a successful state. More precisely, the Athenian insist that any pattern setting the distribution of property must

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assure reasonable comfort, a modest affluence for all citizens—there being no real poverty—thus the total amount of land, and the manner in which it is divided among families, is to be acquired and managed with this in mind (736e–737e).[35] For this to take root and hold fast, it is not redistributive policies that will fix this in place, although having the opportunity to begin from scratch—for example, founding a new colony—amplifies the influence and potential success of a distributive policy; rather, it is the virtue of moderation, which must govern our conduct and the conduct of citizens across the *polis.* As one would expect from Plato, without the virtue upon which our actions are to be grounded, the policies, practices, and regulations that guide the design of our cities will be set and enacted to no avail. Fanning the flames of desire must be avoided if a city is to achieve the unity and equilibrium sufficient to sustain personal character and public good. Everything depends on the reign of Lady Modesty—who, long ago reigned as queen over the hearts of Athenians (698b).[36] Under the guiding hand of modesty, we can know the meaning of goodness, and modesty is also that virtue which precludes the excesses of wealth and the deprivations of poverty.

As poverty must be eliminated, unbridled acquisition must also be prohibited, if the Athenian's second-best city is to successfully emulate the ideal established by Socrates in the Form of the Polis.[37] To prevent greed and the poverty it causes, we should follow those reformers who understand that justice and "indifference to wealth" are a natural combination. This combination is vital to the establishment of a city that is to be animated by the spirit of public good rather than private gain or weakened by privation rather than fortified through comity. Unlike *Republic* wherein the guardians (those who hold political power) are forbidden to own their own property and privately live among their own kin, in *Laws* all citizens in Magnesia belong, by law, to a private household tied to entitled land, managing their own familial affairs in accord with the needs of the larger community. And yet like the True City in *Republic*, it is manifestly political in that its affairs and policies are independent of private caprice. Family and *polis* are equally natural, the former arising from phenomenal nature and developed in time, the latter from objective nature which is antecedent to any particularity, any specified circumstance.

While law is the essence of Magnesia, families are the social groundwork upon which the city is built, and the virtue of its citizens in service to the Good its existential purpose. Private families are necessary for the city, provided they serve the common good and foster the city's prosperity while securing its posterity. Hence, the private sphere is not only a social fact, it is a moral and political necessity, a necessity that, rather than divide the private from the public as we see in the Socratic True City, effectively strengthens their relationship. It is an exercise in the unexpected, for the very thing that Plato

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concludes must be separated in *Republic* is intricately interwoven in *Laws*. The absolute separation of public good and private interest, while remaining the ideal and higher reality, is impossible in practice. Hence the Stranger, fixing his method to the ideal, applies its lessons by committing to the opposite. Hearth and polis are meshed at the city's base, remaining distinct while also rendered interdependent to the point that one cannot exist without the other. Influence flowing from one upon the other is absorbed and deflected by this fundamental and mutual interdependency. As long as the institutions of the city encourage moderation in both persons and groups, this interweaving of what, in essence, must be unqualifiedly distinct, can approximate the purpose of the True City in this matter through unexpected configurations and their attendant relationships.

As we also find in *Republic*, marriage draws considerable attention from Plato in the *Laws*. In the former dialog, Socrates envisions an elaborate, and somewhat ludicrous, "marriage protocol" to govern the procreative activities of the guardians and auxiliaries—the majority of the city mercifully left to manage marriage as a private matter. In *Laws*, the elaborate matrimonial scheme in *Republic* is abandoned, and replaced with marriage protocols and requirements that are shared by all citizens together, one that, unlike the Form of the Polis, mandates private families for rulers and ruled alike. Citizens privately manage nuptial arrangements, the Stranger is clear that the polis cannot compel its requirements on private individuals, but it is obligated to use persuasion and other techniques to charm the citizens into preserving marital norms. The polis has a vested interest in who marries whom, asserting the necessity of balance between prospective couples, both emotional balance of diverse personalities (opposites should marry) and the blending of different financial stations. Reasoned wealth and good character must be blended, like must not marry like; rather, personality opposites should be joined, weaving the different fabrics of the polis together at the smallest level—and the property ranks must be interwoven to further assist in the regulation of economic differentiation.[38]

Even the manner in which marriage is sanctified and celebrated is governed by established norms. At the celebration, adherence to the principle of moderation is expected, weddings must not be lavish, nor must participants overindulge. Throughout a marriage, the spouses must avoid the abuse of alcohol, knowing full well the consequence of this abuse on their progeny. As noted earlier, everyone must marry, no male citizen should remain a bachelor beyond the age of thirty-five without penalty. The Athenian considers a mature bachelor to be unsociable, one who "keeps to himself" at the expense of the public good. While the public and the private remain separate, and the Stranger assures his friends that the state cannot impose its will regarding marriage on private citizens, there is nevertheless a careful equilibrium sought in balancing

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the needs of the community with the dignity of persons (772b–775e).[39] In the comparison, while the Athenian Stranger's remarks on marriage would be met with incredulity, perhaps even umbrage, by modern readers, when measured against Socrates's proposals in *Republic*, not only are the Athenian's suggestions less outlandish, they seem more humane. Remember that it is not the actual description of the proposals in both *Republic* and *Laws* that is important, rather, it is the meaning behind the proposal, the lesson conveyed through the proposals, suggestions, and reforms offered by Socrates, the Stranger, and also the Eleatic Visitor in *Statesman*. In every aspect, from wealth to personal character, public good and private interest must remain apart. Ideally, this separation would be unqualified and unbridgeable. If we cannot sustain the ideal, the best alternative would require ensuring their separation through means available to us, within reach of our abilities while accounting for our frailties. Citizens must be protected in their private interests and personal affairs, and the polis must be sanctified in a way that prevents any encroachment of private design on public life.

Socrates, who knows the Form of the Polis, envisions distance between the public and private as the only way to assure purity. The Stranger, in a way resembling the Visitor, embraces the necessity of preserving the one from the other while imagining their dissimilar substances woven into unity. Prominent throughout this conversation are two threads: virtue/character on one hand and wealth/property on the other. We must remember that while much is written about the importance of property and the protocols under which it is publicly regulated, virtue alone ennobles the polis. The management of wealth, when properly subservient to the divine virtues, sustains it. In all acquisition and in the management of all holdings, fixed or fluid, a person who cultivates justice in the soul to the exclusion of the unconstrained accumulation of wealth will both contribute to the city's actions motivated by friendship as well as receive in return the benefits that can only spring from the ground of goodness (913a-b).[40] In essence, political activity is premised on the separation of public good from the desires and importunities that spring from private interests, hence the strict division between common good and self-interests remains the ideal to emulate. Imperfection thwarts the full realization of the ideal; even though the clear separation between public good and private interests may never be fully accomplished and sustained, the ideal ever remains as it is. Failing the separation of the two, the ascendance of public good within politics—good achieved only through virtue and the practices that it initiates—over private design and self-promotion will approximate the ideal.[41] Intertwining the public and the private, weaving them together according to the rule of due proportion, while not transporting the heavenly city to our rescue from our many and varied earthly travails, will forward the elevation of the earthly city nearer to the perfection of the Forms.

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NOTES

1. Cooper, p. 1,330.
2. Cooper, pp. 1,420–1,421.
3. Cooper, p. 1,052.
4. Cooper, p. 1,423. *Republic* at 330b, Cooper, p. 974.
5. Cooper, p. 1,494.
6. Cooper, p. 1,423.
7. Cooper, p. 1,424.
8. Cooper, pp. 1,395–1,396.
9. Cooper, p. 1,368.
10. Cooper, p. 1,424.
11. See Strauss (1975), pp. 78–79.
12. Cooper, p. 1,494.
13. Ibid.
14. Professor Samaras has noted that this configuration also promotes the spirit of equality, for each of the properties held by the various citizens outside the city itself would be located at the same distance from the center of town, and thus representing a level of equality among citizens that affirms the democratic element of the blended regime. Samaris, p. 174.
15. Samaris, p. 181.
16. Samaris, p. 182.
17. Ibid.
18. See Morrow, pp. 134–135.
19. McDonald, p. 31. Morrow stresses that "The members of the council, though chosen *from* property classes, are chosen *by* the whole body of citizens, or by all those whose attendance can properly be required." And further, that "The penalty for failure to vote is a fine, a fine that is particularly heavy for members of the first or second class who absent themselves from the proceedings of the fourth day, when members from the poorer classes are being nominated." Morrow, pp. 171–172.
20. "The introduction of an egalitarian principle at the constitutional level may be seen as the counterpart of the allowance for private property at the economic level." Laks, p. 285.
21. Cooper, pp. 1,571–1,574.
22. Cooper, p. 1,571.
23. Cooper, pp. 1,571–1,572.
24. Ibid.
25. Cooper, pp. 1,572–1,573.
26. Morrow, p. 137.
27. Shorey, p. 328.
28. Morrow, p. 172.
29. Cooper, pp. 1,533–1,534.
30. Cooper, p. 1,081.
31. Morrow, pp. 118–119.
32. Cooper, p. 1,053.

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33. Cooper, p. 1,419. See also Morrow, p. 112, and 128–129.
34. Cooper, pp. 1,417–1,418.
35. Cooper, pp. 1,418–1,419.
36. Cooper, p. 1,387.
37. "What [Plato] is more concerned with is to prevent the desire for unlimited acquisition from taking root." Morrow, p. 138.
38. See Benardete, *Plato's "Laws"*, pp. 182–184.
39. Cooper, pp. 1,445–1,449.
40. Cooper, p. 1,567.
41. See also dos Santos (2018), pp. 175–178.

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Chapter 10

The Form of the Polis in the Second-Best City

The Invisible

SOUL AND BODY

Diotima, in the account of her wise instruction in Plato's *Symposium*, taught Socrates that "what everyone loves is really nothing other than the Good" (*Symposium* 205e–206a).[1] She knew that the essence of things—the Forms themselves, always are as they are, those things, ideas, principles, qualities, and virtues that neither come "to be nor pass away, neither waxes nor wanes" (210e–211a).[2] In Aspasia's oration, also recited from memory by Socrates in *Menexenus*, we are taught that "a polity molds people," imparting the truth that a "goodly one,"—a fine and good polity—"molds good men, the opposite bad" (*Menexenus* 238c).[3] Essentially, political activity rationally directs us to the Good, molding our character accordingly. The Visitor from Elea compares this shaping of cities to weaving, for the ancient Greeks, a craft typically practiced by women. Professor Catherine Zuckert discerns an important shift in Plato's analogy between statesmanship and what would be for Plato and his contemporaries a skill evocatively feminine.[4] With the divine rule of Cronus and the myriad subordinate gods no longer nurturing the well-tended human flock, another model must be implemented, a practical analogy suitable to the pragmatic art of governing responsible persons, one that underscores the essence of politics as superior to politics as routinely practiced.[5] Weaving, an old and modestly human, tactile, and feminine activity is anything but acquisitive and aggressive, having nothing to do with power.[6] It is the art of protecting, not the armed protection in defense of the polis, but rather an art enveloping the person within fabrics, supplying warmth, comfort and security, while also occasioning a glimpse of one's persona in the projection of image. Weaving, which must protect the body as well as project a desired image, is at once substantive and superficial, not

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unlike political action itself, which must be guided by virtue and framed by principle while directed through rhetoric. For the Eleatic Stranger, the weaver adds depth to the person, and to the city, in the intertwining of virtue, while simultaneously understanding the importance of appearances. The comparison to the interface between the essential qualities of political activity (the cultivation of virtue and the alignment of the city to first principles) and the practical realities of political life (the crafting of the right message and the attention to imagery) is aptly drawn within the discourse on weaving and the pragmatic bent of political leadership.

Statesmanship is akin to the activity of weaving. Within the polis, the statesman weaves together into a seamless fabric the virtues requisite to life in politics: moderation which ensures our decency, and the courage needed to realize the intentions of wisdom. While moderation and courage in-themselves are dissimilar, like the warp and woof woven and indiscernibly blended into one cloth, a skilled political and moral weaver can interlace these virtues so tightly that they become mutually indispensable. Statesmen recognize that neither the flock shepherded by gods under Cronus nor the resourceful but embattled communities in the Age of Zeus can sustain themselves, for, as stated before, they require mutual assistance to prevent either one from slipping toward its extreme (*Statesman* 310d-e).[7] This is an essential purpose of the art of statesmanship: the unity of inward virtue and outward institution that can only be accomplished in a city of free friends who are determined to govern and be governed justly, and grounded to the foundations of the polis by one root concern: to seek the Good and act accordingly.[8]

While we can speak of many good things in the same way that we can speak of many beautiful things, the Form of the Good is unique. Every human soul seeks objective, transcendent, and universal Good, and every human soul can come to know the Good and act upon it. Knowledge of what is good and the activity of goodness are indispensable. There are not two or three kinds of soul any more than there are two or three forms of good, there being one Form of the Good sought and embraced by every soul. Those souls who hope to guide the whole city toward the Good, who are co-guardians of free friends, do so without any consideration to their own immediate interests, or more accurately, they do so in the understanding that their interest is in serving the Good, manifest in service to the good of the community as it is aligned with the Form itself. In the substance of the matter, there is the person and the Good joined in political life, co-guardian and citizen unqualified by personal interests that may be refracted through the medium of diverse and secondary qualities—those qualifications that are made to matter to us, but are only material to the case, immaterial to the whole.

Politics in its essence is indifferent to the superficial, although as practiced it appears exceedingly superfluous, the exasperating sway of the trivial and

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the meaningless. Socrates recognized such a state of affairs as one of the effects of convention, and a distortion of the very nature of political activity. Differences between women and men are superficial with regard to virtue and political purpose, and while these apparent differences are not unimportant, they are irrelevant in the realm of public service, meaningless to moral activity. There is no dimorphism in the soul. Were we to follow nature, Socrates tells us, men and women would govern together as equals and co-guardians; for there is only one essence within the human soul ennobled by the same virtues. To exclude those who are only physically different is to reject nature. The Form of the Polis includes among its expressed principles the abiding proposition that it is the virtue of one's soul that determines a person's role in the city, including the function of statesmanship. The second-best city, if it is to approximate as closely as possible the Form of the Polis while still increasing the possibilities of its manifestation, must be guided by this essential fact: in selecting those who are to govern our cities, superficial differences are irrelevant.

And so in *Laws*, Plato's Athenian Stranger operates under the premise that statesmanship is an art, and therefore requiring the right kind of nature encouraged through optimal circumstances. Since men and women are in essence the same, namely, there is not male or female soul, only a human soul, it follows that men and women in the second-best city would together share the responsibilities of political office and the obligations and benefits of citizenship in general. If the Stranger is still aiming at the Form of the Polis, and seeking to propose a new ideal city that closely approximates it, then we must expect that the status of women is also proximal to the position of women in the City in Theory. Socrates and the Stranger do not claim that men and women are identical, and both figures—even Socrates—at times echo the attitudes of their contemporaries regarding the differences between the sexes. Astonishingly, the Stranger, at least in one passage, appears to recant Plato's proposition that men and women share an essential equality by claiming that women somehow are less capable of achieving their potential for virtue than their male counterparts, are thereby inferior, and even in one case impugning their motives (*Laws* 781b-c).[9] This statement is contrary to the notion that men and women are essentially the same, that there is but one kind of soul for all human beings, which might strike readers as more troubling than Socrates's description of women as the apparently weaker of the two sexes (*Republic*, 456a).[10] How committed is the Stranger to this position? Does he mean to say that women are in and of themselves essentially inferior to men owing to a diminished potential for virtue? Or, alternatively, is he observing that a woman's potential has been compromised by the expectations of culture and the influence of exogenous pressures? As translated by Saunders, the Athenian Stranger states that *because* women have been neglected, and

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because they have been allowed too much license, owing to the misguided indulgence of legislators, the potential for virtue in women has become enervated. Such an interpretation might be dismissed as a strained attempt to let Plato off the hook, but then what are we to make of his assertion that a state will be happier if we ensure that every element in the city, namely—political, cultural, educative, are shared by all, men and women alike.

Worse still, in *Timaeus*, the eponymous character proposes that in the course of a soul's transmigration, those who had lived an unjust life would be reborn as women, while those who lived justly would return to the stars, living happily in accord with one's character (*Timaeus* 42b-c).[11] To be fair, this is not necessarily Plato's personal position on the issue, as it is Timaeus, not Socrates or the Stranger, drawing this conclusion, and to the frustration of the intelligent reader, purporting the inferiority of the feminine. After all, earlier in *Timaeus* (as previously noted), Socrates reiterates his conclusion that men and women are naturally equal, and should share the same responsibilities in the city appropriate to their personal abilities. Returning to *Laws*, we encounter a more complex and at times confusing account, but one that generally appears closer to Socrates than Timaeus.[12]

If women really were deemed essentially inferior in virtue when compared to men, then different measures would be applied based upon sex. However, the benefits offered by the city should be available to both men and women, and identical measures can only succeed when applied to people of identical potential. One could argue that the Athenian is claiming that disparate education and cultural expectations have weakened women's potential; this does not mean to say that in-themselves women are less virtuous than men, or that they are less capable of cultivating virtues within themselves, only that because of the manner in which the basic situation is arranged, the capacities of women are unhappily reduced. With the correct education, the Athenian, similar to the position held by Socrates, is confident that each person can be led toward virtue; he never abandons the notion that the virtues of men and women are the same. Plato only allows the Athenian the qualified statement that, given typical conditions, the development of a woman's potential is inhibited relative to their advantaged male counterparts. He is not arguing that men and women are innately different, for to do so would demolish his views on human nature. We must, as the Athenian recommends, set everything aright, meaning that it is incumbent upon us to reconfigure our political culture by setting aside convention and following the pattern of nature, a pattern that is identical for women and men (781b).[13] If there is truly one type of human soul, then it follows that courage in a woman is the same as courage in a man; and if a spirited woman is better educated, her courage will be superior to men and women deprived of the correct upbringing.

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Men and women are different only at the surface. Cultural and political variants have exaggerated and distorted these superficial differences, but we can still learn something about human variation and its relationship to political institutions. Magnesia, after all, is a temporal city even if an ideal one, whereas the Form of the Polis is the eternal essence of the political life and action. As such, the temporality and phenomenality of Magnesia cannot be ignored, and those secondary differences between men and women are regarded as significant, even though, in essence the virtues of men and women are identical. Nevertheless, once the Form is inserted into the phenomenal, essence is refracted through the medium of society and culture. We choose to amplify the consequence of this interaction between the essentially real and its practical application. Once the immutable ideal is exposed to the vicissitudes of history and culture, it is vulnerable to the caprice of will and the prejudices of interest. Every human soul seeks the Good, and in its purest form defined by this purpose; and yet cultural conditions and expectations militate against the realization of human purpose, and in a secondary manner, re-shape the soul's desire. As a result, while the soul cannot be described in phenomenal terms, we defy our own reality by attempting that very effort.

For instance, the Stranger claims that there are particular songs appropriate to men, and alternative songs appropriate for women. Men sing songs composed in modes and driven by rhythms reflecting the virtue of courage, women, on the other hand, sing songs that inculcate modesty and restraint. Plato is not saying that men are necessarily courageous and, conversely, women are necessarily moderate, should he claim this then he is committing to a dimorphism inconsistent with his teachings on the soul. Rather, influenced under the typical norms of any given political culture, the souls of men are deemed elevated, reflexively courageous, while the souls of women are considered moderate and restrained, what the Stranger calls a peculiarly feminine attribute (802e).[14] Ultimately, this claim cannot be sustained, as it recommends that boys and girls receive dissimilar educations to draw more effectively on their purportedly distinct dispositions, which is not supported by Plato's premises.[15] More likely, the Stranger, when remarking upon the different inclinations of men and women and their associated virtues, recognizes the manner in which men and women have become different phenomenally, not essentially—a variation in secondary, not primary, nature. Every expression of principle in practice, or the Forms in convention, is exposed to change toward imperfection. More importantly, confusion about the soul notwithstanding, the Stranger reiterates the significance of the relationship between courage and moderation in both person and polis. As we have learned from the Eleatic Visitor in *Statesman*, these are the two virtues perfectly woven together within the polis by true statesman. Absorbing the teachings shared by the Visitor, these two virtues are interdependent and inextricable, woven

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into a unity diffused throughout the city and present in every soul. Thus, the Athenian, having first suggested that courage and moderation are gendered, now suggests that everyone, female and male, in submitting to the designs of God, and in so doing exercising their own good will, should successfully orient their lives to the divine through proper education, that crucial activity in the promotion of virtue and the achievement of happiness (803c-e).[16] We must not, therefore, repudiate the proposal that, as far as possible, in education and all other endeavors, women should be placed as equals among men (805d).[17] Education serves the Good, it must be dedicated to the unified development of all the virtues in all souls—courage and moderation along with wisdom and justice, men and women placed together under identical instruction for the same purposes. Remember, Socrates teaches that men and women have the same nature, the same souls, and thus the same virtues—sharing alike wisdom, courage, moderation and justice, and all other virtues (*Republic* 454d–456c).[18] This teaching is central to Plato's understanding of the soul, and requisite to appreciating the unity of the virtues within human beings unqualifiedly.[19] Why would we, the Athenian wonders, subject men and boys to an education that imposes strident discipline and fosters—even demands—martial valor, as in Sparta, while simultaneously exposing women and girls to the temptations of a dissolute life for lack of opportunity (*Laws*, 805e–806c)?[20] Sparta's error in this regard is a grievous one, and while Sparta is in some ways admirable, in this critical aspect, their practices are to be rejected. We must neither compromise nor renounce the commitment to the cultivation of all souls, physical variations and culturally wrought adaptations or distortions notwithstanding (806c).[21]

When examining the contribution of women in both the True City and the second-best city, both Socrates and the Stranger without qualification recognize an essential equality between men and women, an equality that exists between human beings *qua* human being—for there is only one human nature, one human essence. This is evident across Plato's works, even though the practical circumstances of women, or the institutional disadvantages forced upon them, do not in every case precisely reflect that understanding.[22] Scholars such as Professor Susan Okin have described "a marked ambivalence" in Plato's analysis of the relationship between men and women and the manner in which women would participate in the ideal city as it is conceived in *Laws* in approximation to the heavenly pattern discerned in *Republic*.[23] For Okin, this ambivalence is the consequence of the reinstituted convention, as proposed in *Laws*, of requiring all citizens to own property, including those who hold political power—a stipulation that is prima facie contrary to the reforms of the *Republic* and, congruent with the expectations of Plato's own culture. Additionally, traditional marriage required of all citizens is integral within the second-best city, made compulsory, and in the final analysis

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detrimental to the position of women relative to men. By this account, domestic institutions built on the twin pillars of private property and monogamous marriage reinforces the subordination of wives to husbands, and the ideals that Socrates expressed in *Republic* are effectively abandoned.

Other scholars view more favorably Plato's statements regarding women in *Laws*. Prof. Morrow notes that there are specific reforms that were remarkable in promoting a more equitable arrangement between men and women, perhaps not according to the leisured judgments of twenty-first-century readers, but certainly "far in advance" of Plato's contemporaries.[24] Morrow notes that, according to the Athenian's criteria, all citizens—men and women alike—with a record of military service constitute the greater assembly of citizens. The assembly of the people, consisting of men and women as stated earlier, is commissioned with the serious—and most democratic—responsibility of voting nominees into office, provided that the winners of the elections pass scrutiny.[25] While unremarkable to us today, to Plato's first readers, the inclusion of women as equals among the body of citizens, each woman holding a vote, would have been viewed as extraordinary, perhaps dangerous. Moreover, as Morrow further reminds us, women would be eligible to hold political office in Magnesia upon reaching the age of forty, and while the minimum age requirement is lower for men, the notion that women would hold office at any age would have in-itself been received as a ground-breaking proposal.[26] Additionally, Morrow's comments on education again reinforce the notion that the Athenian Stranger committed himself to an educational structure grounded in the equality of the sexes.[27] Even the common meals shared among women in *Laws*, mirroring their male counterparts, Morrow explains, is better understood as an advance, in the ancient city, of the status of women.[28] Morrow's observations that "women are to share with men, to the greatest extent possible, in all the activities and duties of the state," and that "honors and dignities are open to them equally with men" (802a), need to be weighed against Okin's position that Plato's views toward equality between men and women in both *Republic* and *Laws* fail to fully realize the implications of his conclusions about the innate equality of each human soul.[29]

In the Form of the Polis as described in *Republic* private households, while certainly owned by the majority of citizens, are withheld from the guardians—public good being separated from private interests; in Magnesia, all citizens expect the same domestic arrangements. This raises the question as to whether or not women are, as a result, consigned to an inferior position in the second-best city. This question inevitably follows, for if the second-best city is an attempt to reflect the ideal, it must also be in at least some aspects inferior to the ideal (otherwise it would be the ideal), therefore the equality that men and women guardians share in the True City will not be precisely matched. Furthermore, the Athenian appears to embrace ideas

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about the essential equality of men and women that would have been a radical challenge to ancient conventions. In some instances, according to Okin, "the radical statements about women from *Republic V* are carried in *Laws* to new extremes," and further, "Plato's arguments and conclusions in the *Laws* about the natural potential of women are far more radical than those put forward in *Republic*."[30] Okin adds, while women do hold political office in Magnesia, it seems clear that the weightier responsibilities are appointed to men.[31] There is no doubt that there is some variation between the True City as envisioned by Socrates and the second-best city, prompting us to consider what this means for our general observation that Kallipolis is substantively present in Magnesia.

How does the Athenian follow the teaching, delivered by Socrates, holding that superficial differences are of no consequence in the life of the polis? In addition to what has been discussed earlier, what other attitudes evident in the *Laws* evince the direction of the eternal Forms? It is clear that both men and women receive the same education, not an inconsequential recommendation under the circumstances in which Plato and his contemporaries lived. This education includes martial training, and while at times, the Athenian appears to stress the importance of such training for boys, he is also clear that it is incumbent upon all citizens—male and female—to learn those skills that would be necessary to succeed in battle. In Book VII, the Athenian compares right and left handedness to being male and female, holding that each arm possesses the same potential in spite of our customary preferences, and more significantly, that the way that they are wrongly perceived as different is in reality our own mistake stemming from our tendencies to abuse what is opposite to the approved norm (794e).[32] In other words, the differences between men and women with which we are acquainted are the result of our own misconceptions and ill-conceived practices. In the second-best city, this error must be corrected (781b, 794-d-e).[33] All pupils are to receive the same instruction, physical and cultural, and each child, male and female, is to grow into versatility, using both hands and feet with the same dexterity and coordination, while the city, similarly, equally relies upon both sexes. Children of both sexes hope to emulate the Virgin Lady Athena, the warrior goddess of wisdom, she who dances only while dressed in full battle armor, and while the Athenian at one point does emphasize this practice for boys, all children, girls and boys without exception, must follow her example (795d–796c).[34]

We continue to encounter examples wherein Plato teaches of only one kind of human soul, one set of virtues; and other examples in which he frustratingly appears to shift back to the more conventional beliefs about the attributes of the sexes held by his contemporaries. Just prior to making this observation, the Athenian states that honors given, at the end of their lives, to men and women should be granted equally without distinguishing

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sex (802a-e).[35] Furthermore, he later adds that martial exercises, however physical, including skills such as archery, armed fighting, training for duty in the cavalry and its attendant and various skills, must be taught to everyone, girls and women included (813e–814a).[36] The Athenian describes in more detail here that women and girls must master all martial techniques, to do otherwise would risk disaster. Women must not retreat behind city walls while fighting to repel their enemies. Rather, women, as mother birds, must be ready to join battle, protecting their young as mother hens even against the most formidable foe (813d–814c).[37] War games are to include adults and children of both sexes, should be as realistic as possible, and should be celebrated in songs composed equally by women and men provided that they are sufficiently reverent (829b-e).[38] Ordering both women and men to battle evinces a deeply rooted recognition of their natural equality, even though conventional, artificial inequalities may have been imposed over time. These conversations are influenced by attitudes and norms shaped by convention, still, it is plainly evident that Plato maintains his position that men and women are essentially the same and must be educated accordingly. As an individual benefits from balance in the right and left hands, a city benefits from relying equally on both women and men. Punctuating his point, we must again remember, how the Athenian, implicitly referring to the lessons of Socrates in *Republic*, assures his friends that in the matter of education provided to all citizens, "we are not going to withdraw our recommendation that" the female sex "should be on the same footing as the male" (805d).[39] This is the voice of Plato, speaking directly from the spirit of the *Republic*, still committed to the notion that men and women are identical in their souls, and that both the ideal polis and its second-best approximation are not swayed by superficial differences in appointing its rulers.

Notably, the Athenian identifies all other activities as well, further stressing that those responsibilities undertaken equally by women and men in the Form of the Polis as described in *Republic* should also be evenly shared in the working model developed in *Laws*. Women are full partners in the *polis*, and if we are to tap the essential potential within any political community, women must hold office and exercise authority. In *Laws*, Plato conceives of a political community in which men and women are to be full partners, thereby making an effort at following the heavenly pattern established in the Form of the Polis itself; but he does so imperfectly, for contemporary attitudes, norms and customs regarding the relationship between women and men seep into his exposition and thus refract the ideal through the medium of cultural expectations and practices. Our confusion, or frustration, stems from the apparent reinsertion in *Laws* of an imbalanced relationship between men and women—both publically and privately. The Athenian will now and again speak more narrowly regarding certain private affairs, such as the inheritance of property,

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wherein the vested interests of daughters are considered second to the privileges of sons; and in specifying some public offices that are designed to be held by men, directly contravening the lessons of the Form of the Polis, for example, the Minister of Education, which is of highest importance, is a responsibility reserved to men (765e).[40]

Throughout the dialogue it would appear that the Athenian is thinking exclusively of men as holding the highest authority in the city while nonetheless still recommending women's share in citizenship and participation in the leadership of the city. In some instances, the Athenian may be speaking of men generically—that is, men and women—while in other instances (e.g., the aforementioned Minister of Education), he does appear to imagine a *paterfamilias* occupying that position. Magnesia's diversity is compartmentalized, some offices are at least on appearances designed to be occupied only by men, offices that we can rightly call "higher" in terms of political status, while other offices are explicitly meant to be conducted exclusively by women.[41] This may not be so in the case of every proposed administrative office, selecting the Market Wardens, for example, requires more attention to equity among the four property bands than concern for equal participation among women and men (763d–765d).[42] Additionally, men and women are treated distinctly in that they are allowed to hold office under different age restrictions, the offices themselves are not stipulated, and the ages for military service are also slightly different for men and women, largely owing to expectations for maternity (785b).[43] On one hand, the Athenian is clear that men and women are equals in everything; on the other hand, he appears to speak of specific responsibilities under the assumption, one that would be shared by his contemporaries, that men are expected to exercise a greater authority in matters of a political nature; thus the ambiguity clouding Plato's views with regard to equality among the sexes.[44] We detect in Magnesia the tension between the True City, in which physical differences are meaningless in determining who shares political authority, and the culture and times in which Plato lived. Indeed, as stated before, Magnesia, unlike Kallipolis, is a temporal city, an ideal developed in time, not in speech, and therefore subject to the effects of material forces, phenomenal, and conventional.

Slavery, as we have argued, is absent in the True City, which is particularly evident in its first iteration by Socrates in Book II of *Republic*; and yet, in Magnesia, it is taken for granted as an established practice. In this sense, the second-best city undercuts political life, for slaves and masters have nothing to do with the polis or the art of statesmanship. Similarly, the equality of female and male guardians in Socrates's Kallipolis is distorted in the second-best city. This does not mean that in essence, the Form itself is degraded, rather, it elucidates the gap between the principle and practice, what we

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might also call the ought and is, but more aptly what is in-itself and what becomes of it due to exogenous forces. Plato's Athenian Stranger consults the Form as he designs the second-best alternative, but simultaneously, as Magnesia is conceived in time, its components are predictably hampered by the prejudices of his time. The truth that superficial differences are irrelevant to political authority and activity is not abrogated by the frailties of men; to the contrary, even when thwarted by those frailties, the Form remains any city's true measure.

REASON GUIDES POWER: WISE LEADERS AND THE RULE OF LAW

Were we to try to paint a picture of a perfect sphere, our effort would fail, for even our most skilled hand could never duplicate its perfection. We would shift into an interminable routine of forever adding new touches to the image, adding here and subtracting there, falling short, if even imperceptibly, of the perfection to which we aspire. Were we to be thunderstruck by a bolt from the heavens and imbued with perfect knowledge of the essence of politics, and subsequently labor to put this revelation into words or depict its content through images, we would never be able to fully encapsulate its substance. Vainly, we would incessantly add to our descriptions, explanations, and applications of what we know to be pure but sense to be ever elusive. If, frustrated by the constraints of our language, we turned to other methods of communication and undertook to paint a picture of this polis, seeking to replicate its essential qualities, we would engage in an interminable effort, resigning ourselves to incessantly adding new touches and modifications, eventually realizing that identically matching the image to the reality exceeds our limitations. This most beautiful city cannot be painted or built in the realm of impermanence, for even perfect things descending into the temporal will become vulnerable to decay. We can only settle on that which is second-best, which is the most faithful approximation of the perfection sought (769b-e).[45] Were we to establish the ideal political community and hold confidence in its perfection, we would nevertheless, over time and of necessity legislate to repair and guard it against the further erosion of its institutions, exposed and vulnerable to the temporality and mutability that mark the stream of becoming.[46]

As argued earlier, the Athenian Stranger echoes Socrates: power must be joined to wise judgment along with temperance, once done, the best polity is manifest before us (712a).[47] Reason must guide power, the reform that institutes the Philosopher-Ruler in *Republic* and which teaches this essential principle, is at the heart of *Laws* and *Statesman*.[48] Expertise serves as the

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quality distinguishing correct from incorrect constitutions as envisioned by the Eleatic Visitor in the *Statesman*. It is neither wealth nor poverty, neither force nor consent—nor whether the constitution institutes the rule of the one, the few, or the many—nor even whether it is supported by written laws that reveals or animates the ideal. Rather, it is always through the rule of wisdom that the correct constitution is identified (*Statesman* 292a, 291e–294b).[49] Expertise in governing human beings is an essential element of correct constitutions, according to the Visitor, the other features mentioned earlier would seem to be instrumental, serving the intrinsic qualities and rational purposes of the wise statesman. Congruent with the Philosopher-Rulers, first established by Socrates as indispensable to the True City, the Visitor clearly avers that the kingly man is a philosopher (294a).[50] Rule by the wise is reaffirmed as the truly best thing, the guiding principle of the political ideal.[51]

Even more to the point, the Visitor insists that whether or not he holds office, that is, whether the philosopher holds and wields formal political power, he remains the most adept in the royal art, the one who either should rule or council those that do, reminiscent of the True Captain in Socrates's vivid parable (*Statesman* 293a–299e; *Republic* 488b–489e).[52] While elsewhere the Visitor proposes that the rule of law is a vital quality that distinguishes better regimes from their inferior counterparts, ultimately he adheres to the position that it is the rule of reason ennobled by the virtue of wisdom that more than anything else constitutes the essence of political activity (302c–303c).[53] Law, in its limitations, can never fully achieve what is best and just for all while simultaneously prescribing moral principle, the Visitor claims, and therefore, the best possible regime, the one that remains our eternal model, is the one that is guided by the rule of wisdom (294b, 303b).[54] Royal weaving, the art of wise rulers, seamlessly integrating the virtues of courage and moderation within the city's fabric, surpasses in value even the important art of legislation.[55] Still, while the Visitor recommends the rule of wise expertise even above the rule of law, he unqualifiedly promotes the rule of law in those regimes that aspire to emulate the rule of philosophy. Lawless regimes are inferior in every way to both cities governed by experts and those who govern under the rule of law. Lawfulness is what distinguishes the good from the incorrect regime, and the best of the lawful regimes, monarchy in the view of the Visitor, is nearest to perfection. In this way, Plato accomplishes two things: first, he reminds us of the ideal in the rule of wisdom, the seventh type of regime identified by the Visitor as discussed previously—the one polity that is divine, a regime that can only be the rule of reason, the essence of the True City revealed by Socrates; and second, the prominence of the rule of law in those regimes ranked higher, those regimes that, with each step, come closer to that ideal than any regime wherein power is exerted without law (302d–303c).[56]

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Plato's Form of the Polis is grounded in and preserved by the rule of wisdom. The Form of the Polis is the essence of politics, and the rule of the rational formed in wisdom is its sine qua non. Whether that wisdom is manifest as *sophia* or *phronesis*, it is the standard of political thought and activity running throughout *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*, and, if Plato is right, the essential quality of all true political activity now and always. It remains so simply because there can be no credible rebuttal to the self-evident assertion that reason should always and in every possible case guide power, ideally through the government of true philosophers, and failing the manifestation of that happy event in which "political power and philosophy entirely coincide," institutions that emulate it in substance if not in appearance (473d).[57] If the philosophers won't rule (and they surely won't, they seek not power and power seeks not them), then we must ensure the rule of reason by another way. What is intrinsic to politics hinges on this, it is more imperative than even the separation of power from wealth—for should reason rule, it might be argued, any mixing of wealth and power, however regrettable, could be constrained and prudently managed. A rational polity is equal to the task of managing a society that has permitted such a mixture. While the utter separation of wealth and power is an immutable principle of the essence of politics, our practical realities incessantly remind us that such a thoroughgoing separation is a theoretical imperative even though it is a practice at best uncommon. So long as this mixing is controlled by practical reason in close alliance with moderate habits, the approximation of the ideal is within our grasp. Every ideal can be realized, even though every realization risks eventually losing sight of its ideal. Such tendencies of themselves do not abolish the ideal nor make hollow its meaning and value.

The rule of reason is at once the core of the first principles and the proposition that must survive the strongest wave of objection. Remove the rule of reason cultivated by wisdom, and the principal quality constituting the essence of governing is lost. Consequently, political action becomes vulnerable to the errors and impulses of the non-rational and the irrational, doomed to its own decline toward ruin. We are well acquainted with the Philosopher-Rulers in *Republic*, and a variation on this theme, the wise, expert statesman in *Statesman* (what I argue is effectively a version of the Philosopher-Ruler rather than a notable alternative) as well as the example of Socrates himself across Plato's dialogues. We are reacquainted with this ideal in *Laws*, wherein the Athenian Stranger sustains the notion that the rule of reason is the essence of government. Plato pointedly contrasts the Philosopher-Ruler against those who rule without accountability, even though they may indeed have been well instructed in the principles necessary to advance the public good against the temptations of private want. Those who follow their own desires and private interests, according to the Stranger, would lack that

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courage necessary to stand by their convictions for the sake of the public good even at risk of their private interests, and would thus be incapable of devoting themselves to the welfare of the community. Holding power, such an individual would care exclusively for private wealth over common weal (875a-d).[58] Driven by appetite and aversion, a forerunner of the Hobbesian individual, he will be obsessed with the incessant indulgence of pleasure and anxious to avoid all pain and discomfort, wrecking his character and stunting any possibility for righteousness (875b-c).[59] Plato's description brings Thrasymachus's perverse ideal to mind, the "noble" tyranny that he lauds as the exemplar of a life lived selfishly, and also recalls the contrast between the irascible Sophist and Cephalus, who though imperfect like us, was nevertheless not anxious about pleasure and pain, appearing to have sincerely sought after righteous living. Cephalus was more akin to Socrates than Thrasymachus or Glaucon's ancestor of Gyges, for he was a man who appreciated a life of principle, assured that he was leading something like it. However, only Socrates represents Plato's highest ideal and his influence, if not his presence, is infused in *Laws.* The Athenian concludes his depiction of the self-absorbed, petty ruler by describing him as darkened by a stubborn and self-inflicted blindness (not unlike Thrasymachus who refused to see Socrates's position) who, if allowed to hold political power, would invite evil in his soul and spread malice throughout the city (875b-c).[60] In the Athenian's account, the philosopher-ruler appears to win the day, the abiding and incontrovertible lesson that reason should always guide power is again reasserted (875c-d).[61]

Herein is woven the continuity that binds Plato's discovery about politics throughout his writing, planted in the very notion that Socrates, the True Philosopher, seeks to shepherd our souls to the Good in the understanding that just as philosophy is a conversation, governance is best accomplished as a partnership, co-guardians governing free friends, unperturbed by common faction, petty division, and small-mindedness (463b-c, 520d).[62] Failing this exceedingly improbable arrangement, the rule of law framed within correct institutions must step forward on behalf of reason, for the Athenian is convinced that law is a manifestation of the rule of reason.[63] As the Philosopher-Ruler cannot be found, instructs the Athenian, we must therefore turn to the best alternative, the law (875d).[64]

Law is essential to government. Sound government, consisting of rational, moderating institutions, is the only secure framework wherein the rule of law may be housed. Such institutions, as previously established, must be well balanced between the good judgment (*phronesis*) of monarchy and the friendship of democracy, i.e., authority and liberty. Partially grounding the second-best city in the monarchial element in-itself aims at instituting the rule of reason, for it is the monarchial quality, which supplies the virtue of prudence. That said,

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even though democracy and monarchy are the recombinant regimes constituting the second-best city, neither approach—neither direction from the people nor monarchial fiat—delivers the quickest method to establish, at least initially, the ideal state. For that, the Athenian avers, a "young dictator" is the optimal means (710d-e).[65]

Before presenting this disquieting suggestion, the notion that a "dictator" be appointed to direct the city at the moment of its founding, the Athenian shares a brief but substantively expansive discussion connecting the particular to the universal, the art of legislation to the conditions imposed by nature, the efforts and skills of individuals to the agency and governance of God, the vagaries of chance, and the possibilities of opportunity (709a-d).[66] God and nature are the true legislators, the Athenian intones, and it is the responsibility of human legislators to acquire expertise and discernment, talents needed to manage circumstances as they are and challenges as they arise. Legislators must learn those practical arts that enable them to read and navigate both the foreseeable and the unexpected. This is particularly vital to those who are not simply legislators, but founders, or original lawgivers. Why do lawgivers need to build the foundations of that city which is to be second-best to the ideal? The answer, astonishing to modern readers, recommends placing the "state under the absolute control of a dictator," a young leader possessing the attributes needed to quickly and easily accomplish great things (709e–710e, 711d-e).[67] Someone with a dictatorial soul, certainly, but one not perverted by those abominable predilections associated with the monstrous dictatorships familiar to us today as a consequence of the grim, recurrent experiences of totalitarianism that erupted in the Dark Age of the twentieth century. Instead, the Athenian seeks vigorous leadership guided and moderated by the right counsel to meet the challenges of our circumstances in serving the city's happiness (711d).[68] A genuine lawgiver knows that any legal codex and any set of unwritten customs must be enacted or developed "with an eye to three things: the freedom, unity, and wisdom of the city for which he legislates" (701d).[69] Those who are granted any amount of political authority are accountable to the law itself in the pursuit of these noble ends, ends that can only be met within the framework of honorable liberty combined with intelligent authority (701e).[70]

The whole point of recommending a young dictator as the most effective beginning in the attempt to establish our second-best city is to in effect again illustrate what we already know from Socrates, that power, in whatever shape or type, must always be guided by reason. There is no circumstance that allows an exception. Developing this, the Athenian unequivocally describes this hypothetical young dictator as a person possessing high character, compliant, exhibiting the virtues of courage and self-control, and possessing the kind of intellect receptive to instruction (709e–710a).[71] This is important.

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A young dictator given the responsibilities of holding power must be guided by an eminent lawgiver (the philosopher). The dictator follows the advice of and learns from wise counsel, a mentor and guide who knows how to instantiate wisdom through the law and in so doing establish the government of first principles over the person who is given full authority—namely, power guided by reason. Guided by a genuine lawgiver/philosopher, restrained by his inner character, the young dictator sets an example, making of himself an embodied pattern for inspiring the new city. Only a young dictator who defers to the judgment of wise counsel will consistently encourage citizens to virtue; without the counsel of the philosopher, his actions will fall short of virtue and invite vice into city and soul.

Truly, if it is the distinguished lawgiver/wise counselor who is informally but nevertheless de facto supervising the young dictator, then it is philosophy, or reason itself, that actually rules. Consistent with, as discussed earlier, what the Eleatic Visitor holds in *Statesman*, the expert remains the genuine ruler, the one who should be granted authority, whether or not they hold formal power (*Statesman* 293a).[72] If we do not recognize the credentials that come with expertise, or if we perceive the experts to be phony, intentionally leading us to ruin under their pretense to competence, we expose the state to destruction. There would then be no acknowledged authority, everyone becoming a petty expert, one opinion as good as any other—especially the opinion of the crowd. Should such pseudo-expertise become written on the city's pillars and treated as if it were law, the entire city would rest uneasily on the shifting ground of majority appetite and ambition. Such ground is fertile medium from which demagogues easily sprout, to either wither or grow into tyrants as circumstances allow. Any dictator, or any person who aspires toward political office, who would seek power as an end in-itself, or out of the vulgar pursuit of impassioned self-interest, would have abandoned the counsel of reason and committed himself to the deviant model proposed by Thrasymachus. Wise judgment, genuine lawgivers, the mentoring of prudence, however we understand it, are all facets of the rule of reason, manifesting the Form, and consequently, a principal component in the structure of the second-best city envisioned by the Athenian and his friends.

This fact, that reason must guide power, and that the common good assumes precedence over private interests, not only controls the actions of the young, commissioned autocrat, but also tempers the partisan impulses of democratic politics and its statutes and policies. Democracy, the most inwardly competitive of regimes, is as susceptible as any other to being swayed by the desire for power. The Athenian reflects upon this issue in Book IV (714c-e), and from this develops a criticism of competitive, partisan, self-absorbed politics that Socrates would have quickly recognized (715-a-715b).[73]

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The Athenian Stranger returns to this same theme later, in Book VIII, when he, following another warning against the deleterious effects of the love of mammon upon the virtues of citizenship, rejects the proposition that democracy, oligarchy and tyranny are political communities in any sense of the word—referring to them as "non-constitutional"—owing to the fact that they are all driven by the love of dominion over others, by sheer power politics, the kind recommended by Thrasymachus at his lowest point (832c-d).[74] Plato here presents three "non-constitutional" regimes unaware of a good beyond oneself or one's party. Such regimes are incapable of virtue while also hindering prosperity. The non-constitutional regimes undercut both virtue and wealth, by contrast, a constitutional, lawful regime, can foster the former and husband the latter in a manner that allows the compatibility of both.

There is a solution for the Athenian that, while not establishing the direct rule of philosophy, nevertheless draws political affairs upward toward the rule of reason. Magnesia, a mixed-regime, half-monarchical, half democratic, that is both established on and ruled by law, has set conditions for willing rulers to embrace authority, the prominent quality of monarchy, and for willing subjects to embrace citizenship in the act of consent (the consent of the governed), a democratic characteristic. Temperate liberty—democratic liberty guided by the good judgment of the monarchial ingredient in the mix—is the consequence, a state wherein citizens live freely and without interference from each other, immune from the sway of uninhibited grasping for ever more wealth (832c-d).[75]

Abusing power and position to manipulate the laws to advance one's own interests is subversion by the Athenian Stranger's understanding of these things, and those who subjugate the law to one's own desire are the state's worst enemies, for such a person enslaves the laws and the state as a whole, subjugating all citizens in service to their own desires (856b).[76] All citizens must rebuke anyone who, driven by either insatiable desire or unbridled ambition, injects sedition or commits violence to impose their own will on the polis. The Athenian goes so far as to denounce those who responsibly hold office under such conditions, for while they do not commit subversion or demagoguery, in failing to detect and thwart such actions, they are properly deemed complicit. They are either negligent or, worse still, cowards (856b-c).[77] To serve the laws is to guard them, this sentiment is made clear in the very name "guardians of the laws," echoing the guardians imagined by Socrates in *Republic*. They must live and serve as watchdogs, docile for whom they serve, quick to detect threats, keen to repel enemies.

Whoever governs, whether single autocrat or democratically elected representatives, must recognize that they themselves obey the rule of reason in submitting to the government of laws. Properly speaking, leaders in cities and states are not rulers so much as "servants of the laws," for the law is

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sovereign, an impersonal manifestation of the Philosopher-Ruler, and the government is its subject. We are again reminded that true law, even though it may be enacted by human legislators, is divine, and to obey the law is obedience to the gods. Philosophers consort with the divine, the laws bear a spark of the divine, through which we can all participate in the common life of the city—not just the philosophers, the wise counselors, but the body of citizens themselves, governors and governed alike (*Republic*, 550d, *Laws* 714a, 715c-e).[78]

Elevating the Minister of Education to the most valuable office in the city further elucidates the necessity of the rule of reason, the core principle of the Form of the Polis, within the second-best city (*Laws*, 765d-766c).[79] Proper education remains, as it was for Socrates, the difference between realizing nature in the full-flourishing of a person's innate abilities, or distorting nature either through error about the things that are true, or simple neglect, indifferent as to whether or not anything is true. The Athenian warns that a human being, ill-formed by either no education or the wrong kind of instruction, will inevitably become "the wildest animal on the face of the earth": whereas when educated correctly, nurtured properly, human beings are most "heavenly and gentle" (766a-b).[80] Appointing a citizen who is judged to be in all ways excellent can only mean that such a person exemplifies in practice the unity of the virtues themselves.[81] That such an extraordinary qualification is attached to this office is further evidence that the divine goods, or benefits, assume primacy in the growth of the city and the souls of its citizens. Virtue enables the Minister of Education to cultivate the right habits in the city's children and to correctly understand what is to be loved and what is to be despised. The Minister of Education must, therefore, rise to preeminence among political officials, for this habituation toward virtue among citizens of all ages and both sexes is the essence of political rule. This is the Statesman as Weaver described by the Visitor from Elea; for it is in weaving the virtues of temperance—the closest kin of prudence—and courage together that the purposes of political direction are realized in their fullest (809a).[82]

We are again reminded of the priority of soul over body, which serves as an important premise to the duties of the guardians of the Laws in attending to the education of children and the care of citizens at any age (959a-b and 959e).[83] Statesmanship and education at their best are the same thing in that they are aimed at the same end, the encouragement of virtue in the souls of citizens and its infusion in the institutions of the state. Plato's Minister of Education embodies that project in a fashion that closely resembles the Philosopher-Ruler introduced in *Republic.* In a tangible way, the example of Socrates is visible in both the Minister of Education and the Wise Lawgiver who guides the young dictator, the latter, while not holding formal office, shepherds the power needed to establish and advance the political community

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under the direction of reason, while the former, who is given official authority to manage the most important function in any state, one that imparts knowledge that forms character, is premised on the awareness that our most important struggle is that which occurs within our souls. In teaching all citizens, and especially the children of the state, how to discriminate between good and bad pleasures, and how to pursue those virtues that bring both divine and earthly benefits, the former preeminent in value, the latter ancillary to the former, the rule of reason can sink deep into person and the state.

Nowhere is the Minister of Education's purpose for Magnesia more evident than in the ex officio appointment to the Nocturnal Council, itself a still further example of the primacy of philosophy in the second-best city. Far from a cabal of elite elders discreetly deliberating on the laws and morals of the city as its name might suggest, the Nocturnal Council is a mix of various citizens eminently qualified to preserve and advance the foundational principles of the city. The Nocturnal Council is responsible for grounding the city in its first principles, the laws themselves, as well as for the ongoing education of its own members toward a fuller understanding of these laws and how they shape the constitution of the city and direct its progress (951c–952d, 961a-b, 967d–968b).[84] Its educative mission is revealed by the inclusion of not only the sitting Minister of Education, who holds the office for one five-year term, but also all living predecessors to that position.[85] Given that eligibility for the office of the Minister of Education begins at the age of fifty, and that the terms cannot exceed five years, it's not inconceivable to imagine a Nocturnal Council that consists of anywhere between a pair to a half-dozen individuals who, blessed with all around excellence within the city, share the experience of having served as Ministers of Education. In this way, the wisest and most virtuous citizens, resembling the Philosopher-Rulers of the City in Theory, participate in guiding the city's most important political and moral matters. Additionally, a select group of distinguished priests are appointed to the council, representative of Plato's understanding of true law's transcendent source. Further still, an indeterminate number of distinguished citizens who have been presented with awards at some point in their past would also be invited, with no evident age requirement. Joining the group of distinguished priests, honored luminaries, and leading educators are the ten senior guardians of the law accompanied by ten younger protégés (between the ages of thirty and forty) possessing the natural talent and correct education, as the Stranger stipulates, qualifying one for membership in the council (961b).[86] Rounding out this assembly are travelers who, having visited and observed foreign cities and territories, are able to inform the council of any practices, customs or laws novel to their home city for the purpose of determining potential benefits or harm should the alien practices in question be introduced domestically. If the reporting observer's own character appears enriched by

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the experience abroad, a seat on the council is granted(*951c*–952d, 961a-b).[87] All told, the Nocturnal Council is not a small body—just by counting the ten guardians of the law and their attendant protégés along with the sitting Minister of Education, the minimum number of members would be twenty-one, adding an indeterminate number of eminent priests, all of the former Ministers of Education, the qualifying traveled observers, and any additional distinguished citizens that might be offered a seat, and the membership could and likely would run far higher.

Equally important is Professor Morrow's observation, reiterated by Professor Bobonich, of the council's unexpected fluidity.[88] The terms of at least the younger council members are limited, thus new energy and insight will be folded into the Nocturnal Council periodically. The distinguished award recipients could be few or many, depending on how many citizens earn distinction for their services; and further still, some of these luminaries could be younger citizens—there is nothing to indicate any age restriction imposed on this segment. Still more significant, according to Morrow and Bobonich, the turnover in the council requires that the citizenry in general are properly educated in the most serious concerns of the state so that a large number of qualified candidates would remain available to join the council as the need arises. Bobonich concludes that the Nocturnal Council will hardly be limited to a "tiny, philosophical elite" detached from the rest of the political community, but rather it would present as a much larger body that draws its members from all the citizens in the polis, or at least a large number among the citizenry who are properly prepared, both intellectually and morally.[89]

This educative principle informs the features of the specific laws themselves as they are written and enacted while also animating their spirit. Each law, the Athenian Stranger observes, must contain two parts: (i) a preamble, or prelude, explaining the reasoning and purposes behind the law, and (ii.) the directive that the law enacts. This directive element of the law must be guided by the reasons justifying its enactment, hence every law enjoining action in the city must be prefaced by a theoretical lesson explaining the principle behind it (721a–724b).[90] These laws serve as preambles that encapsulate the principles upon which the statute is grounded (723c-d).[91] Not only do preambles explain a law's higher principles, an important part of their educative intent serves to instruct all citizens in the requisites of virtue. Those who recognize their authority are absorbing lessons enabling virtue, and in obedience to these laws, grounded in first principles as conveyed through the preambles, citizens exercise their free agency in ways that exceed the unreflective, statutory rules enacted to be followed in ordinary cities, laws untethered from principles.[92]

These preambles and their companion directives together constitute law, reflecting the same principle expressed in the companionship between the

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wise legislator and the young dictator, for the wise legislator is to the young dictator as the Preamble is to the Directive—both pairings are to their respective components as reason is to power. It follows that reason is to power as soul is to body, inseparable but not equal companions in the journey that is mortal life, for one must rule the other, the former governing the latter: the wise legislator, the Preamble to the Law, Soul and Reason all govern the young dictator, the Statutory Directive, the Body, and Power, respectively. To legislate without these moral preambles is tantamount to issuing commands to slaves. Plato compares free legislation that is grounded in moral principle—first principles—and legislation that is enacted without any such grounding to the difference between a "free doctor" and a "slavish doctor." A slavish doctor lacks theoretical insight, and cannot offer an account for instructing a patient in the reasons behind the treatment prescribed. Lacking knowledge, the slavish doctor simply, and perhaps capriciously, relies on his own personal experiences alone, untethered to rational principles or proven theories. The free doctor educates and cures the patient, prescribing treatments only under the informed consent of his patients, and approaches healing as a cooperative endeavor that blends medical expertise with the pursuit of knowledge, both of which, when properly combined, restore health.[93] In the same way, preambles educate the citizen, in this case to the health of the soul, to virtue[94] (720c-e). And again, later in Book IX, the Athenian reiterates this point while comparing a free doctor to the philosopher, who is, unlike the slavish doctor, steeped in theory as well as skilled in practice, and who is in every sense superior to those doctors who rely on personal opinions derived from limited experience. The free doctor recognizes the causes of disease as a practical matter, appreciates the body as a whole, and understands the qualities of health and disease within this expansive context[95] (857c-d). As with medicine, legislation must aim beyond the superficial and the incomplete, elevated by a substantive knowledge of the whole, which consequently can inform all analysis of parts.

In the lessons of the Athenian Stranger, we encounter an early expression of natural law, and the attempt to connect the principles discerned in natural law—which is divine—to the laws that human beings themselves promulgate in statutes, and more significantly, adopt through the rational traditions governed by the virtue of good judgment. The second-best city approximates the Form of the Polis in that it is drawn by transcendent principles, by higher law, and seeks to ground those everlasting principles in political institutions and practices. Every law, if it is true law in the sense that it is both natural and that it can trace its ultimate origins to divine wisdom, must be enacted and applied among free citizens.[96] When working in tandem, the wise legislator (the rational preamble) and the young dictator (the enabling directive) are able to establish the platform upon which the second-best city can

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be built. Once that foundation is laid, the need for the dictatorial vanishes, but the wisdom of the lawgiver remains in the legislation and institutions of the political community, ingrained in the souls of its citizens. Humanity is, as the preamble to the Athenian's marriage law teaches, "by nature a companion of eternity," immortal in both soul and body, in the latter through our progeny, in the former because we bear reason in the divine spark of the law (721c).[97] Plato, at least in *Laws* even though passages in other dialogues reveal an alternative sentiment, views the relationship between body and soul as mutually intertwined with the eternal, with that which is divine.

As with *Republic*, Plato's *Laws* is as much about the soul as it is about the polis, and the Athenian Stranger does not hesitate to exhibit his belief that there is no more important object of study than the soul itself, accompanied by a study of the soul's ruling faculty, reason. For the Athenian, the soul is older than anything that we can observe in the phenomenal realm, indeed, it is eternal. To qualify for the Council, or for any high government office such as the Minister of Education, a citizen must comprehend such insights and achieve a level of virtue above the average citizen. Should one fall short of that requirement, one would be assigned to service as an auxiliary to those who undertake the actual government of the city, a stipulation that directly echoes the relationship between the Philosopher-Rulers and Auxiliary-Warriors described by Socrates (967e–968b, 969b-c).[98] Having studied these things, the Nocturnal Council becomes a philosophical body—perhaps not a body of philosophers matching the precise image of Socrates, but a body of lovers of wisdom nonetheless.[99] They are, according to the Athenian, in service to the state's safety; they anchor the state and the souls of those that guide it, which is in reality the highest governing body, a body of statesmen/philosophers unprecedented in ordinary experience, but nonetheless more than a mere fancy or idealistic aspiration dreamt beyond our feeble capacities (968a-b, 961c-e, 969b-c).[100] Citizens who are by nature and nurture the most intelligent and virtuous are assigned to serve this preeminent institution, and as the Wise Counselor/Legislator guides the young dictator, the Nocturnal Council shepherds all the other institutions of the city, aligning the city to its first principles. As Julia Annas reminds us, the Nocturnal Council are not the Philosopher-Rulers envisioned in *Republic*.[101] Nevertheless, they are conceived so as to lend invaluable expertise in pursuit of the enduring Socratic lesson that virtue is required of all governing, that the intellect cannot move soul or city on its own but requires the assistance of both a spirited element (as in *Republic*) and the support of law and its institutions (as in *Laws*), and above all, that without qualification, reason should ever guide power.[102]

The rule of law is indispensable to all regimes, and in *Statesman*, we might recall how the lawful regimes are naturally ranked above all lawless regimes; it is the difference between legitimate and illegitimate power. Democracy,

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more than any other regime, encourages citizen participation in not simply being governed under the law, but governing through the law. Good judgment characterizes the monarchial—the genuine lawgiver and the young dictator combined in the same person—but freedom and friendship are marks of democracy, the rule of law being fully affirmed when citizens are free persons treating each other as friends rather than competitors. It is a given that a government of laws is not to be effective without a limited amount of coercion; the rule of law nevertheless requires the assent of citizens who in some significant way share ennobling freedom and a just equality, and consequently sharing the friendship that springs from virtuous citizenship and a common purpose. Democracy lends freedom and friendship, monarchy good judgment: these qualities are at a fundamental level interdependent, for freedom can lead to excess without the tempering influence of good judgment (prudence), and good judgment is sterile if not exercised in the fertile medium of free agency. Friendship can only blossom under the guidance of good judgment, and if it is not enjoyed among those who equally share in the promise of freedom, it soon recedes, and in receding surrenders its position and its promise, seeding the vices of envy and contempt. It is incumbent upon the Athenian and his friends to weave democracy into the second-best city in the right proportion, well balanced with monarchial features. Pairing a wise counselor with a young dictator emulates the Philosopher-Ruler, who is both reason and power, and points to the constitutional monarch who is characterized by good judgment, but this pairing is also evident in democratic government nurtured by the disposition of moderation, tempered by divine wisdom discerned and practiced not in the rule of the philosopher but in the law manifesting and perpetuating the government of reason.

Reason should always guide power, but it can never exert power. Reason must rule, but it cannot coerce. This is a corollary to Plato's teachings on the Form of the Polis that is so fundamental it may well be considered a lesson in its own right. In *Republic*, reason requires the aid of the spirited ally, without which it is unable to check our non-rational enthusiasm and our irrational cravings, indeed, may even become an abased servant currying to the whims and impulses of the lower self. A mind subjugated to the appetitive part of the soul sycophantically justifies every indulgence, yoked to its role as an excusatory functionary attending the enthroned desires. Furthermore, even though it is vital to the realization of the very purpose of politics that reason guide power, it is inevitable that those who are committed to the life of the mind will shun power, and conversely, that those whom they would otherwise serve would not accept their authority—this is a reality that Socrates insists we recognize. In truth, the rule of philosophers is at bottom a paradox, for the philosopher, who according to the conditions set by nature, is the most qualified to govern other human beings, is also, according to those same natural

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conditions, the least interested in political activity. It is *both* natural and unnatural for the philosopher to rule. This may be why the Athenian Stranger welds the partnership between the Wise Lawmaker and the young dictator, together reflecting the rational lover of wisdom (Socrates) and the spirited pupil (Glaucon). The rule of reason and wisdom is mediated by the spirited and courageous, both tempered by a quiet influence, the invisible government of *sophrosune*, the indispensable virtue of self-mastery.

If we believe Plato's first iteration of the Form of the Polis to be the True City, then in order to understand the relationship between reason and power, we must again study its meaning. Recall that this first description of the roles assigned in the True City does not include any position that holds political authority, there is no formal political or governmental structure in the City in Theory prior to the addition of the guardians once Glaucon's objections prompt their necessity. Additionally, slavery is absent in the True City, which is especially evident in its first iteration, and, as argued earlier, in its continued formation. In other words, neither authority nor subservience is found in the True City. There is no need for the former, as each citizen freely contributes according to what is needed in pursuit of the self-sufficiency of the entire community; and there is no reason for the presence of the latter as the unnecessary needs, which introduce the conditions upon which slavery emerges, remain unknown and unfelt. The True City that Socrates initially establishes is the epitome of temperance, which is further embodied in each of its citizens, who do not require the direction of authorities beyond that which is supplied by their own virtues. Reason rules spontaneously in the True City, a condition that is made possible by the alignment of each person to nature's design. It is here that we observe what Plato means when he speaks of the unity of the virtues, for it is difficult to separate wisdom from temperance, for they justly rule the city as one. In a sense, Socrates implicitly anticipates the Athenian Stranger, who ranks courage as the least important of the principal virtues, not because there appears to be less occasion for its emergence, but more likely because it is so deeply intertwined with the other virtues that it is difficult, even unnecessary, to identify as a distinct quality. Perhaps courage only becomes evident to us once injustice produces discord in both soul and city, drawing forward brave resolution to support wisdom and temperance in the struggle to restore our participation, as persons and as communities, in the divine.

The True City is a natural unity at all levels, a presupposition that informs this same unity as known to us in the seamless interaction of the virtues themselves. As the unity that binds this city is natural and spontaneous, the need for authority that is separate from the government of reason is not present, and the phenomenon that we identify as political power is unrecognizable to us when we consider politics in its essence. Reason need not guide power in

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the True City as originally discerned by Socrates, for power as we know it is absent—it only becomes necessary, and thereby first appears, once injustice is ushered in escorted by unnecessary needs and the allure of indiscriminate desire. Alone, philosophy lacks the resolution, and perhaps the certainty, needed to restore justice even though it may lead us to the truth of it; and so the spirited part of the soul is conscripted—both the virtues of wisdom and courage relying on the grounded, unseen virtue of temperance, the silent governor of the True City.

The Stranger rests everything on the rule of law, for law as he comprehends it is the rule of reason justified by the divine, who is the true "measure of all things," and made practical by the virtue of moderation. We seek "the rule of law in the soul," the Athenian declaims, along with the "the preservation of laws themselves" (960d).[103] This rule of law in the soul is also a quality of the True City, which is why that, before the intrusion of injustice, the rule of statesmen over citizen is either unseen or not present—if unseen it is present in the virtue of temperance diffused throughout city and soul, if present, it is unseen due to it being indistinguishable from the body of citizens. In any case, Socrates exhibits both an aristocratic disposition and a democratic sensibility. Government by virtue itself, even without an observable governing body, explicitly recommends aristocracy. Under ideal political rule virtue is indistinguishable from the larger body of citizens, the more democratic implications of this are evident.

From the question that opens the conversation at the very beginning of *Laws*, we are made aware that, for Plato, the source of law is divine. If it were merely a human thing, it would not be law in any meaningful sense. Our political life is raised upward to transcendent principles, any lowering of our understanding of or engagement in the public sphere erodes politics, and in Plato's estimation, should the erosion of politics proceed without reversal, it will eventually become unrecognizable—something else entirely. Recall that Socrates first introduces the Form of the Polis by stating that "in a city of good men" citizens will compete not to rule, the essence of politics being about something other than power. Additionally, recall the Athenian Stranger's observation that when citizens fill offices through competitive means rather than according to the rational procedures prudently developed in designing Magnesia, the polis is deformed. Again we are left to consider, riding through the heaviest wave of objection with Socrates, that there will be no end to our troubles when engaging in what we confuse to be politics, for we have abandoned the governance of reason and succumbed to the rule of aimless wanting. To restore this governance of reason, and in so doing reanimate politics itself, we must adopt the rule of law. Here Plato assures us through the lessons of the Athenian that there can in fact be an end to our troubles even though philosophers will not seek power, for the rule of law

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realizes the essence of the True City, the Form of the Polis, and applies its core lesson. Owing to this realization, Plato assures us that, properly understood, law in-itself is the rule of wisdom liberated from our savage impulses, and that grounding all political activity, institutions, and practices on the government of law rather than human beings is as if we were to say that God himself governs.

Adopting and pledging to the rule of law realizes the lesson of rational government that Socrates delivers without the need to conscript naturally or even supernaturally superior leaders, whether divine herdsmen or wise but all-too mortal statesmen (713e–714a).[104] Absent the guidance of superior beings, or Philosopher-Rulers, or the finest example of the statesman, we are still able to establish the institutions and practices of wise government through the law under the assumption that it is true, and therefore both divine and just. For this possibility to become the reality of public life, we must avoid the rule of those, whether the one, the few, or the many, who have not learned how to harness their cravings or are incapable of understanding the importance of such knowledge, those who are unacquainted with self-restraint, a moderate temperament, or discriminating judgment. Should irascibility, bombast, or worse still, reckless, indecent, and unyielding desire prevail, a force of this sort will overtake us, it will "ride roughshod over the laws," beating them into something misshapen and false (714a).[105] The Athenian does not speak of laws in terms of human decrees issued by an autocrat, or oligarchs, or democratic assemblies, but rather law as the order of things, as the justice that the Athenian and his friends know to be divine and manifest in the world provided that the law is established by a god (624a).[106] Knowing and following this law, we learn what we need to know in order to win that unseen war within ourselves, thereby contributing to harmony in our cities (626e).[107] The Golden Chord that is the law stabilizes our character by holding us to the rule of due proportion, that right mean toward which our design is fastened. Our legislators, to understand this and apply this teaching in service to soul and city, study the way in which pleasure and pain influence both person and community (636d-e).[108] In recognizing the force of our appetites, the Athenian suggests that the intelligent rule of law is among those instruments proper to and necessary for civic education.

Law supports balance within the souls of citizens, and between person and state, overcoming in a practical, material way those baser impulses afflicting our character and frustrating our highest hopes. Divine law is manifested in public laws enacted and enforced by those who know the "boundary line where virtue and vice meet." There is no severity in these laws, to the contrary, it is our appetites and emotions, which stridently compel us; law is "noble, gentle" and pliable as gold, not rigid or intractable as those other influences that tug at and press upon our souls (644d–645b).[109] Always holding in view

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the unperturbed perfection known only in theory, the True City, or Form of the Polis, the legislator can reflect the truth of that ideal through a sympathetic understanding of our immediate, physical needs (636a).[110] Weaving together the divine benefits with the human benefits, intelligent legislation, while sensitive to the relentless and palpable influence pleasure and pain have upon us, orients them toward means and ends that elevate our character. Law alone cannot make us virtuous, but for Plato's Athenian Stranger, by clarifying what separates virtue from vice, the law provides the conditions in which character can be ennobled without evading life's troubles or altogether abolishing its many healthy pleasures. Through law, we follow those incentives that motivate our free action toward virtue's fulfillment (645c).[111]

Perhaps this is a lingering residue of the forgotten Age of Cronus, or perhaps it is the attunement of our personal conduct to the principles of the natural polis through reaching, or at least pursuing, those divine virtues previously discussed at length, namely, prudence, temperance, justice, and courage. The Athenian, recognizing that the reign of genuine wisdom might be a possibility so remote that we may just as easily expect the rule of the gods themselves, still holds to the truth that the love of wisdom that inspires true philosophers is present and at work within us. A Golden Trace, as it were, connecting us to that "divine part within us," that "most sovereign part of the soul," which "raises us up away from the earth and toward what is akin to us in heaven" (*Timaeus* 90d, 90a).[112] True wisdom, the wisdom of the philosophers, may ever elude us, but we are not hopelessly deprived of at least the possibility for wise government if we heed the laws of the polis, not as we distort them into supporting what we want, but rather as they truly are, justice that rests within our finite, mortal, reach. For we are reminded by the Stranger that "reason is embodied in law as far as it can be," instructing us in the virtues requisite to the ordering of our passions (835e).[113]

All this rests on Plato's hopeful assurance that no one is willingly evil, a position shared in several passages throughout the body of his work. This is another reason why the preambles are so vital, for they not only justify the directive part of the law enacted, but they speak to that part of us which seeks good, the higher and rational part of our soul that would never knowingly choose a wicked act or adopt a pernicious belief.[114] When the Athenian, at the opening of the conversation, asks his newly made acquaintances, still strangers to each other and yet already primed to share the conversation of friends, about the origins of their respective laws and statutes, without hesitation the company reveals a consensus already in place. True law is in essence just. The origin of law is properly ascribed to the divine (624a).[115] Owing to the divine spark residing within us, we intuitively know a true law by its justice, a justice for which neither our will nor our intellect can presume to claim

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credit, and upon which hinges political meaning. Our political life is fulfilled in those moments in which we set aside private want to the favor of public need, when we care to align ourselves with the governance of reason, and so naturally and justly oriented, rightly subordinate the incessant importunities of our multiple desires, and ever dedicate ourselves to a nobler promise.

NOTES

1. Cooper, pp. 488–489.
2. Cooper, p. 493.
3. Cooper, p. 954.
4. See also Cole, pp. 195–196; Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 166–168; Miller, pp. 106–113; Schofield (2006), pp. 167–173 and Cropsey, pp. 139–144.
5. See C. Zuckert in Salkever, p. 193.
6. Saxonhouse compares the Visitor's use of the weaving metaphor to reproduction, in contrast to more "masculine," more aggressive activities, such as warfare. Saxonhouse (1976), p. 208.
7. Cooper, p. 357.
8. See Dorter, pp. 226–227.
9. Cooper, p. 1,453.
10. Cooper, p. 1,083.
11. Cooper, p. 1,245.
12. See Benardete (2000), p. 184.
13. Cooper, p. 1,453.
14. Cooper, p. 1,471.
15. See Benardete (2000), p. 206.
16. Cooper, pp. 1,471–1,472.
17. Cooper, p. 1,473.
18. Cooper, pp. 1,082–1,084.
19. For a different analysis, see Prof. Kalkavage, "Peaceniks and Warmongers: The Disunity of Virtue in Plato's *Statesman*," *St. John's Review*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (2013), p. 93.
20. Cooper, pp. 1,473–1,474.
21. Cooper, p. 1,474.
22. Plato's views regarding the equality of men and women are murkier in *Statesman*, as he appears to avoid the subject altogether. Prof. Thomas More Robinson argues that Plato operates on "two levels" with regard to this issue, on one level Plato is a revolutionary (*Republic*), on the other, a traditionalist (*Laws* explicitly, *Statesman* implicitly). "The *Republic*, it seems to me, is both the highlight of, and the outlier in the system: the (revolutionary concept of women Philosopher-Rulers is a central feature of it), but Plato the Traditionalist might well have had feelings running counter to such a concept, given his overall view of women that merges in the same

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dialogue, . . . by the time he gets round to a third discussion . . . of whether his new society might ever see the light of day." I am unconvinced that Plato, at the writing of *Statesman*, abandons the principle that men and women should, *ideally*, share power. Nevertheless, Prof. Robinson's position is not an isolated one. See Thomas More Robinson, "Plato's Stateswoman," in Beatriz and Robinson (2018), p. 205.

23. Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 42. See also McKeen, "Why Women Must and Rule in Plato's Kallipolis," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (December 2006), pp. 527–548.

24. Morrow, p. 121.

25. Laks also notes that "The assembly (*ekklēssia*) is, on all accounts, a democratic institution *par excellence*, because it consists in the entire body of citizens (women probably included)." Laks, p. 280.

26. Morrow, pp. 167–168.

27. Morrow, pp. 329–331.

28. Morrow, pp. 393–394.

29. Okin, p. 70.

30. Okin, pp. 42–43ff.

31. Okin, pp. 47–48ff.

32. Cooper, p. 1,463.

33. Cooper, p. 1,463 and p. 1,453.

34. Cooper, pp. 1,464–1,465.

35. Cooper, pp. 1,4709–1,471.

36. Cooper, p. 1,481.

37. Cooper, pp. 1,480–1,481.

38. Cooper, pp. 1,491–1,492.

39. Cooper, p. 1,473.

40. Cooper, pp. 1,440–1441.

41. Professor Okin's explanation aptly drives the point:

> In the *Laws* . . . Plato both specifies when a certain function, such as the priesthood, is to be performed by persons of both sexes, and makes particular mention of certain offices being filled by women, frequently with the strong implication that only women are eligible for them. Thus, it is women who supervise married couples, who look after infants, whose role in the educational system is to provide the children's meals and oversee their games—in short, who perform, in positions not of the highest rank, all those domestic, nurturing, child-oriented tasks to which women have traditionally been assigned.

Okin adds that "On the other hand, there is no suggestion of any women participating in the ranks of the magistracy, or the 'divine nocturnal synod,' whose role parallels that of the philosophers in the *Republic*." Okin, p. 47.

42. Cooper, pp. 1,438–1,440.

43. Cooper, p. 1,457.

44. See Bobonich, p. 389.

45. Cooper, p. 1,443.

46. See Voegelin, pp. 226–228.

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47. Cooper, p. 1,398.
48. Laks, p. 272.
49. Cooper, pp. 335–338.
50. Cooper, p. 338.
51. Schofield arrives at the contrary conclusion. See Schofield (1999), pp. 44–45.
52. Cooper, pp. 336–346, and 1,111–1,112.
53. Cooper, pp. 347–348.
54. Cooper, p. 338 and p. 348. Prof. Pappas recognizes the presence of the Philosopher-Ruler throughout the three connected dialogues of *Theatetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman.* "Thus, the single project of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* suggests a sophisticated idea of the Philosopher-Ruler, originally proposed in the *Republic*. The genuine statesman turns out to be in the very epistemological state of the philosopher, in between the god and the sophist. On the other hand," Pappas continues, "it is also important that the philosopher and the statesman are not explicitly united, as suggested in the *Republic*." Pappas, p. 193.
55. Prof. dos Santos perceives a deep connection between the art of weaving and thought itself, further identifying the Statesman-Weaver described by the Eleatic Visitor with the Philosopher-Ruler introduced by Socrates. dos Santos, p. 179. Prof. Madrid, observing that weaving is more than a practical art, also perceives a relationship to intellect, See Madrid, in Beatriz Bossi and Thomas M. Robinson, *Plato's Statesman Revisited* (Berlin/Boston: DeGruyter, 2018), p. 188.
56. Cooper, pp. 347–348.
57. Cooper, p. 1,111.
58. Cooper, p. 1,534.
59. Ibid.
60. Cooper, p. 1,534.
61. Cooper, pp. 1,532–1,533.
62. Cooper, p. 1,090 and 1,137.
63. See Lane (2006), p. 171.
64. Cooper, p. 1,534.
65. Cooper, p. 1,397.
66. Cooper, p. 1,396.
67. Cooper, pp. 1,396–1,397 and 1,398. Professor Pangle's translation, young tyrant rather than young dictator, is more faithful to the text (*tyrannos*). Once the "tyrannized soul," as Prof. Pangle reads it (Prof. Saunders prefers "dictatorial soul" and "well-behaved dictator" to Pangle's "orderly tyrant") is tamed, the use of the word "tyrant" is no longer effective, as tyrants are by definition disorderly, at least as Plato understood the concept. "Dictator," therefore, may serve as a more apt description of what the Athenian is seeking, even though "tyrant" is a technically accurate translation. Prof. Bury preferred "monarch," even though the Greek reads *tyrannos*. Bury will proceed to contrast *tyrannos,* or what he translates as "monarchy" against *basilikes politeias*, which he translates as "constitutional monarchy." By contrast, Pangle reads "tyranny" and "monarchic regime," respectively. Prof. Schofield reads "orderly tyrant." The Athenian insists that the "young leader" must possess "absolute control" of the state, and thus could by this criteria be called a tyrant; and yet the young

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leader, who is already well-behaved and thus self-controlled, is further guided by the wise lawgiver, and thus the term "tyrant" overlooks the capacity for temperance in the young leader which is requisite to any sort of deference to another authority (the lawgiver); no tyrant could be described as temperate or deferential in any sense. See Pangle, pp. 96–98; Plato, *Laws*. Translated by R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 273; and Schofield (1999), p. 40–41.

68. Cooper, p. 1,398.
69. Cooper, p. 1,390.
70. Ibid.
71. Cooper, pp. 1,396–1,397.
72. Cooper, pp. 336–337.
73. Cooper, pp. 1,401–1,402.
74. Cooper, p. 1,494.
75. Cooper, pp. 1,494–1,495.
76. Cooper, p. 1,514.
77. Ibid.
78. Cooper, pp. 1,122, 1,400, and 1,402.
79. Cooper, pp. 1,439–1,440.
80. Cooper, p. 1,440.
81. Cooper, p. 1,440. See also Bury, p. 441; and Pangle, p. 153.
82. Cooper, p. 1,476.
83. Cooper, p. 1,607.
84. Cooper, pp. 1,600–1,601, 1,608–1,609, and 1,614–1,615. "[T]he principle of competence is epitomized in the Nocturnal assembly, whose role is precisely to preserve and deepen understanding of the law (951e-952a)." Laks, p. 282.
85. ". . . [W]hatever else the Council may be, it is first of all an institution of the higher education of its members." Morrow, p. 507. See also Bobonich, pp. 394–396. Equally important, Morrow also notes that "Few readers have failed to recognize in the Nocturnal Councillors of the *Laws* the philosopher-kings of the *Republic*." Morrow, p. 573. See also Bobonich, p. 394.
86. Cooper, p. 1,609.
87. See also Morrow, pp. 503–505ff.
88. Morrow, pp. 503–505, Bobonich, pp. 393–394, and 572fn.
89. Bobonich, pp. 393–394.
90. Cooper, pp. 1,407–1,409.
91. Cooper, p. 1,409.
92. See Nightingale, pp. 285–294; and Annas, "Virtue and Law in Plato," in Christopher Bobonich (ed.), *Plato's Laws: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 74–80.
93. Nightingale, p. 286.
94. Cooper, p. 1,406.
95. Cooper, p. 1,515.
96. In my view Plato's theory of law is squarely within the natural law tradition, even if implicitly and inchoately. Prof. Terence Irwin, while not arriving at the same conclusion, nevertheless provides sound reasoning behind the proposition that Plato's

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views at least are similar to the natural law theories prominent in thinkers such as Cicero and St. Thomas Aquinas. He writes that

> We have a powerful natural tendency to form excessive self-love, but though this tendency is natural, it does not suit our nature. The internal law contains the principle that suits our nature. This law is a rational principle that affirms the reflective supremacy of one's own happiness and the practical supremacy of the common good. It is a law in so far as it is a prescription of practical reason aiming at the common good. It does not ignore our natural tendency to self-love, but orders it appropriately in relation to the common good. If Plato holds these views, he believes in a natural law, in so far as he believes in rational, moral principles that are correct because they fit the nature of human beings. He agrees with Kant in so far as he recognizes an internal moral law that states principles of practical reason. This is a common natural law in so far as its principles are appropriate for the nature of each human being individually, and for all in common.

According to Plato, Irwin continues,

> We all have the golden cord in the soul that expresses practical reason; to this extent the provisions of the internal law are accessible to us all. Plato also implies that people who do not listen to the internal law are none the less aware of what it says. The foolishness of the foolish person does not consist in his unawareness of rational principles, but in his failure to prefer them over the suggestions coming from his non-rational part.

And finally, "If . . . we exclude Plato from the natural law tradition . . . we also exclude a number of philosophers who claim to believe in natural law,' specifically Cicero, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas, "and we make the natural law tradition rather short." Terence Irwin, "Morality as Law and Morality in the *Laws*," in C. Bobonich (ed.), *Plato's Laws: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 104–105.

97. Cooper, p. 1,407.

98. Cooper, pp. 1,614–1,616.

99. See Morrow, p. 502; Klosko, "Knowledge and Law in Plato's *Laws*," *Political Studies*, Vol. 56 (2008), pp. 456–464; Klosko (2006), p. 258; and Marquez, "Knowledge and Law in Plato's *Statesman* and *Laws*: A Response to Klosko," *Political Studies*, Vol. 59 (2011), pp. 200–201.

100. Cooper, p. 1,615, p. 1,609, and p. 1,616.

101. See also Annas (2017), pp. 141–148, especially 144–145.

102. Laks, p. 283.

103. Cooper, p. 1,608.

104. Cooper, pp. 1,399–1,400.

105. Cooper, p. 1,400.

106. Cooper, p. 1,319.

107. Cooper, p. 1,321.

108. Cooper, p. 1,418.

109. Cooper, pp. 1,338–1,339.

110. Cooper, p. 1,330.

111. Cooper, p. 1,339.

112. Cooper, pp. 1,268–1,269.

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113. Cooper, p. 1,498.

114.

> [T]he *Laws* gives the laws a foundation that is theological or "noetic" (intellectual). Yet one of the most striking features of the work is its reserve about the promulgation of laws. Not only can the legislator not content himself with producing laws (719e7–270a2), but in some sense, making laws is not his priority: his real task is "to educate the citizens, not to legislate" (857e4–5). . . .What must a law be, then, if we are to make sense of the idea that the legislator goes beyond legislating and even gladly renounces it? . . . The task of the Platonic legislator is to state "what one must do with regard to the beautiful, the just, and all the other great notions . . . relevant to virtue and vice"
>
> (890b7; cf. *Rep.* 484d1-3 and *Plt.* 309c5d4) Laks, p. 286.

115. Cooper, p. 1,319.

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