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WOMEN AT THE GYMNASIUM AND CONSENT FOR THE *REPUBLIC*'S CITY

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Abstract

The workers in the Republic's *city are expected to consent virtuously to its constitution, recognizing the governance as good. Yet working people will begin living under the regime unequipped to perceive its goodness; and the* Republic *says almost nothing about how they will change in this respect. Only one passage suggests a transformation among the workers. When Socrates describes women guardians exercising alongside men, he says that practice will arouse ridicule. The subsequent acceptance that he predicts, extending the Athenians' earlier acceptance of male gymnastic nudity, suggests a mechanism by which the city's workers will come to consent robustly.*

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The problem of women at the gymnasium

The proposal that women exercise alongside men occupies one Stephanus page in *Republic* Book V.[1] Socrates has argued that the good city's governing class will include women; now he adds that to be strong

[1] *Rep.* V, 452a-e.

on the battlefield they will have to exercise. This being Greece, that means exercising naked at the gymnasium.

When healthy men and women disrobe and exert themselves together, there is bound to be sex. So the argument leads to «erotic necessities» and to the regulations that the new city will impose to engineer future generations. But before he even speaks of the sexual consequences of naked exercise, Socrates pictures its risible effect. People will laugh, and especially at the sight of old women jumping around.[2]

Why the thought of laughing mockery before the thought of sex? Surely not because Socrates (or Plato) finds women's bodies any less erotic than men's. For in the next breath Socrates reminds his interlocutors that everyone had also laughed when *male* gymnastic nudity came to Athens. It happened not long ago, he says, implying that this is how he knows what happened and can inform the young men he is talking to. The practice reached Athens from Crete and Sparta, and the city's wits made jokes about men undressing to exercise.[3] The laughter was replaced by understanding and a preference for the new practice, and that will happen again this time, and *then* we can talk about sexual realities; as if to say that the supreme topic is how a public perceives and accepts the regime it lives under.

The past change that Socrates describes took place among Athenian men at large, for all male citizens went to the gymnasium. I take it the change he predicts will involve the general public too. The guardian women will be visible not only to male guardians but to all the other men as well. So it is not too much to call this change a moment within the great question about the public in the *Republic*, namely the question of how the citizenry will come to understand and esteem the new constitution. The topic of women guardians at the gymnasium tends to get only a passing nod from Plato's readers, except as part of the history of philosophical feminism. I

[2] *Rep.*: erotic necessities, V, 458d; laughter especially at old women's nudity, V, 452b-c.

[3] *Rep.* V, 452c.

propose that the passage in question rewrites, in a tight small script, an image of public virtue, specifically the virtue at work in the citizens' acquiescence to being governed. Citizens have changed their minds before now to accept a change for the better; they can change their minds again when the new regime arrives.

The double argument for consent

The treatment of the city's first class establishes the terms for understanding the third class's relationship to the city. A familiar problem of consent surfaces in connection with the *Republic*'s philosophers, and the challenge of convincing them to undergo the turn that their own philosophizing makes unattractive, to accept what Plato's readers know as «going back into the cave.»[4] And as different as the philosophers will be from the new city's other people, the discussion is the same in one respect. There is a distance between arguments that persuade within the established good city and those that persuade in «this» world, this one being a world that does not contain a Platonic city and has never contained people reared according to its educational proposals.

Socrates explains what argument will induce the philosophers to rule. They exist as philosophers because the city trained them in the subject, he tells Glaucon, so they owe their city a debt that philosophers in existing cities are free of. Justice requires that they serve as rulers in recognition of the benefit their city granted them.

Even if the argument strikes us as compelling it is vulnerable to a criticism.[5] Philosophers who have come to understand the good should be moved to govern in order to increase the good in the city. Who led them to the knowledge they possess should not matter; and to be a

[4] *Rep.* VII, 520b-c.

[5] I am grateful to Allan Silverman for this and related points, which occurred in a discussion that turned a very different paper into this one.

philosopher is to possess just this knowledge of the good itself, and to possess it as sufficient for motivating action.

But Glaucon, to whom Socrates offers the argument about reciprocating benefits, does not possess the mind of the philosophical ruler, and perhaps he only sees a short way into that mind's workings. Many of the *Republic*'s readers are in the same position as Glaucon, being as they are the products of something less than the full education that includes the good. Readers might understand principles of justice even without that greater study of the Good;[6] Glaucon evidently does. For him the appeal to the new city's philosophers generates as much agreement as the argument needs.

The worries over how to persuade philosophers to rule go far beyond «Fair's fair.» But it is those very worries that make my point. The less satisfying you find the appeal to reciprocal justice as grounds for the philosopher's rule, the more willing you ought to be to picture that appeal as something external to the real argument, a foreground representation of the deeper considerations that will persuade true philosophers. The *Republic* needs arguments suited to the existing world to show its readers that the city makes moral sense, even if the functioning city will proceed on the basis of arguments as yet unstated (because unheeded as yet).

The working classes

I do not want to remain on the subject of philosopher-kings. They and the other guardians occupy so much of Plato's attention that we forget how much of the city is made up of the third class. And then we forget to ask what arguments will convince the other citizens to abide by the new regime – arguments to them that we, outside the new city, will also be able to accept.

[6] The *Republic* sometimes nods at the distance between its own study of justice and a fuller understanding of the good; thus VI, 504b; IV, 435c-d.

Victor Hanson's *The Other Greeks* has the moral authority it does, in its portrayal of ancient citizen-farmers, not merely because histories neglected them but because that neglectful treatment left most people out of history.[7] Combine the farmers with all non-farming trained professionals found in a city like Athens, and this third class easily accounts for 85-90% of the new city. So dwelling on how to talk philosophers into ruling amounts not so much to putting the cart before the horse as to unhitching the horse from an enormous cart – almost to worrying about the wrong consent. I would rather unbalance the inquiry in favor of the city's third class where Plato's argument unbalances it in favor of his top-tier philosophers, a striking group but *ex hypothesi* also the group most easily convinced of the new city's merits.

The productive or working class will have to join in the political system of the city as much as the philosophical class will have to administer that system. And the treatment of the philosophers suggests two constraints on the answer we want regarding the working class. First, agreement has to come to more than barely tolerating the yoke of law and government. Nothing is worse than a grudging spirit.[8] Second, we should expect some distance to exist between what *we* find persuasive, here outside the *Republic*'s city, and what effective persuasion might look like within that city, among long-time participants in its society. The richer, thorough, philosophical approval Plato wants may remain incompletely appreciated by us outside the new city, if life in that city is one of the conditions productive of the approval.

Rachana Kamtekar makes the first point, seeking to go beyond grudging approval, when she distinguishes the agreement to be sought in the new city from the lesser consent that modern social-contract theories

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[7] Hanson 1995.

[8] Plato *Rep.*: Adeimantus complains that the rulers won't be happy, IV, 419a; Glaucon wonders why they will choose the worse life of governing, VII, 519d. Modern commentators come across a version of this complaint when worrying about the argument meant to bring philosophers back into the cave. As just men and women they should be cheered to be acting justly. Persuading them feels like persuading people to be happy. See Smith 2010.

aim at.[9] In the *Republic* the value of agreement accrues to all citizens, not only to the state being consented to. In other words Plato wants more than the political «legitimacy» that is demonstrated through consent. And as far as possible the citizens should all base their agreement on what the city is actually like. They ought to love the city for the right reason, that it is a good city.

Kamtekar may overstate the moral uplift that needs to come with *homonoia* «concord, civil harmony» but she sees correctly that mere acceptance of rule would not rise to the *Republic*'s own stated goal of *sôphrosunê* «moderation, temperance.» Wisdom resides among the rulers and courage may be found in the armed class that Plato calls auxiliaries, but the city's moderation cannot confine itself to a single class as those virtues do. If it did, I imagine, this virtue would indeed look like acquiescence to a powerful ruler. That is, if moderation were the working class's task alone, it would be a reflexive virtue, manifesting itself in just and unjust cities alike as unconditional obedience. To a thoroughly pliant populace it would not matter whether commands ought to be obeyed; their being commands would be enough; and we would lose sight of the relationship between moderation and awareness of what is good. Instead of such a condition however the *Republic* describes a reciprocity in which all parties accept the form of government they live with, the rulers agreeing to rule with moderation and the rest moderate in their agreement to be ruled. As Kamtekar puts it, «the ruled, rather than being simply dominated by the rulers, believe that their rulers should rule over them.»[10]

The working class will not even call the city's governors *despotas* «lords» and «rulers» as people do in other cities, but *sôtêres* «saviors, preservers» or *epikouroi* «assistants,» so agreeable do they find the goals

[9] Kamtekar 2004, 132. In describing and discussing Kamtekar's portrayal of the *Republic* I will not comment on her contrast with modern theories of consent. Hobbes, for one, proposes a more extensive meeting of the minds under his sovereign than simple descriptions of his theory acknowledge.

[10] *Rep.*: wisdom in rulers, IV, 428d-e; courage in soldiers, 429b-c; *sôphrosunê* throughout, 431e-432b. The ruled «believe that their rulers should rule»: Kamtekar 2004, 131.

to which the governors commit themselves.[11] These people are bringing about what the workers want. What Thrasymachus called the *sumpheron* «interest, profit, advantage» of the stronger may motivate the governors of existing cities, but in the city to come those who govern will be seen as seeking what profits everyone.[12]

In her desire to find moral uplift for all citizens, Kamtekar plays down the instrumental interest Plato might have in *homonoia*, as a preventive to civil war. Yet from Plato's perspective it would be no small matter to free his city from the permanent conflict built into the political life of Sparta, where the new governors were said to declare war on their Helots every year so as to be able to kill them at will.[13] And if Kamtekar goes too far in the virtue she expects from the working people, she expects too little virtue to develop among those who obey the city's laws.[14] Law-abiding behavior will not generate everything Plato has led us to demand from virtue, according to Kamtekar. The city's farmers and craft workers can only count as agreeing to being governed if they do so on the basis of recognition that the government is good; and the psychological justice that such recognition calls for is treated as only ever the product of a philosophically-guided education in values

You may believe, *contra* Kamtekar, that the *Republic* credits law-abiding behavior with instilling genuine virtue in the soul. Even so, her general point stands as a constraint on any account of political consent in the *Republic*. The productive workers must have some understanding of the city's goodness when they agree to be bound by its laws; to the extent they can see such a thing, they agree to being governed because they see the government as good, and not merely as useful to them as they would have been in the absence of any such city.

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[11] *Rep.* V, 463a-b; Kamtekar 2004, 158.

[12] *Rep.* I, 338c.

[13] Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28.4. Plutarch attributes this information to Aristotle.

[14] Kamtekar 2004, 147n.27; cf. 155.

From one concord to another

The second constraint in one way is optimistic, that is to say the idea that motivational principles operative before the city's existence be distinguished from those at work in the city. As the appeal to simple justice might show Glaucon why philosophers rule without exhausting their true motives for doing so, likewise the productive class as now constituted might agree to live in the good city for reasons distinct from those that will motivate the fourth generation, the first workers' great-grandchildren, born without knowledge of other systems.

Any ambitious educational program assumes some such discrepancy between initial and later motives. Many high school students begin college because they think they will earn more money with a degree. If their education has merit, they finish college glad to have experienced it regardless of how much more they earn. There is no point telling them beforehand that they are reasoning incorrectly. Their experience in school ought to take care of that. Insisting on the right motivations in place before the student begins looks like a display of confidence in the value of education but is something more like a failure of confidence.

As far as the workers in Plato's city are concerned, the substantive agreement that Kamtekar calls for must be present among the ones I am calling the great-grandchildren, those who do not have even grandparents to tell them about other ways of life. The intrinsic merit of the city presupposes that it fosters virtue in its citizens. So does its long-term survival, given that the agreement to being governed that comes from moderate people will perpetuate itself far better than grudging consent does. But the first members of this class in the newly founded city can have reasons for consenting to be governed that don't begin in virtue in the same way that they continue in virtue.

Consider one account of the producers' consent that has been proposed in numerous ways, maybe most cogently by C. D. C. Reeve. Whatever else distinguishes the city philosophically, it also has features of a laissez-faire economy. People who earn their keep as farmers or

professionals will be able to live as they had, but freed from the chore of democratic procedures and the risk of death at war. The city's auxiliaries will do the fighting while benevolent philosophers take on the drudgery of administration. And this government is cheap, with lean soldiers who own nothing of value living in open public barracks. The workers will not be able to earn too much, but they will also be saved from poverty in case they earn too little.[15] This is the city for making money in, whatever other goals the founders had in mind for it.[16] Reasoning prudentially, the city's productive workers will find its constitution a better deal, according to their own financially oriented values, than any other kind of city.

Even without accepting everything that Kamtekar says about the citizens in the *Republic*'s city, one can share her suspicion that something has gone wrong if all workers feel this way forever. For then their value is moneymaking, which would have been their goal in any existing city. Their consent is bought, in a very literal sense; and we are left imagining their moderation as a manifestation of that immoderate desire called *philarguria* «money-love.» The good city has not improved the workers' lives if their agreement depends on the same motives that had always driven them.[17]

But although the first condition for understanding the workers' consent dictates that we reject Reeve's analysis, the second condition tempers that response. Kamtekar may be right about what keeps the first workers' great-grandchildren moderate in the established city, without thereby being right about their great-grandparents' grounds for consenting to the city as it is originally organized. Money-love might do the job, as the prospect of a higher salary brings students to an education that they will come to treasure for reasons having nothing to do with money. They can come to do well but stay to do good; there's no contradiction in that. If anything it is a cheering thought.

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[15] *Rep.*: soldiers own nothing of value, III, 416d-417b; low cost of guardians, IV, 420a; limits on how rich or poor working class can be, IV, 422a.

[16] Reeve 1988, 205.

[17] Kamtekar 2004, 147.

Not every motive lets itself be transformed into every other one. Workers who sign on to the new constitution in the thought that this government will be prime for bloody takeover are not likely to be rehabilitated. The desire for wealth strikes me as closer to the best final value for the working class. Reeve calls the pursuit of wealth partially good, to which Kamtekar replies that on Plato's view it should be «simply false.»[18] She is assuming that only money-love can be at work in someone's approval of a society conducive to moneymaking. Surely that is a false assumption. If the new constitution does facilitate moneymaking, the workers will not only consent to living in the city but also will judge the city to be *good* for the pursuit of wealth. How wise the city's founders were to restrict each person to a different job ¡How bravely they enforce that rule even when it would be convenient to abandon it! Today there are people who support laissez-faire economic policies because such policies benefit them individually, others for libertarian reasons that Plato would frown at; but some see a free market as the only realistic path to feeding and housing a large population. If you believe *that*, you may support a free market on principle, and it would be facile to say you were corrupted by the love of money in doing so.

Loving money does not start you on the path to *eudaimonia*. But recognizing the city's goodness at facilitating money-making could well be the first step at understanding what makes it generally good. For if the city's workers admire the city from the beginning, out of respect for the policies through which it improves the local economy, then that goodness of the city's, while not a complete good, should (*pace* Kamtekar) be seen as partial good. These features making the city profitable for the productive class follow from the organizing principles that make the city good *tout court*.

[18] Kamtekar 2004, 147.

Mechanisms for generating consent

Habituation will not suffice to turn the first incomplete reason for consent into an adequate reason. The great-grandchildren will indeed find it easier to obey the city's laws, and not even know that alternative legal systems exist. And if the *Republic* does suggest a causal connection between obeying good laws and acquiring virtue, then several generations' worth of obedience by the city's third class may well bring out psychic balance –rule by reason– in this class. But as valuable as that change in the workers' souls is, it does not accomplish the change that moderation calls for.

Nor is it easy to find another mechanism in the *Republic* that generates the appropriate consent. In one respect the noble lie is meant to do so; in another way the expulsion of adults from the city. Most loosely we say «education.» But as George F. Hourani observed almost a lifetime ago, in among all its calls for education for rulers and auxiliaries the *Republic* only once mentions education for the working class, and that in a passing acknowledgment about cobblers' learning the shoemaking trade. While the philosophers and the troops below them are turning into new human beings, the *Republic* does not call for or plan the transformation of its farmers or wheelwrights into anything but what they already are.[19]

Indeed the very problem of the philosophers' consenting to rule is described in a way that implies that the working classes remain the same. Requiring the philosophers to descend into the dreary cave as rulers can only mean that the prisoners represent the people of the good city. Socrates has already called them *homoious hêmin* «similar to us» to suggest that they are also like people in Athens, or like human beings everywhere. But the lucky soul who leaves the cave and returns is mocked and then hated, as if to say that discontent with philosophical rule must be a trait of all working people everywhere.[20]

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[19] Hourani 1949; cf. Kamtekar 2004, 159.

[20] *Rep.*: philosopher «returns to the cave,» VII, 539e; prisoners in cave, VII, 514a-515a; similar to us, VII, 515a; returning philosopher reviled, VII, 516e-517a.

As for the plan to move everyone over ten years old into the countryside, it would be a shame if that succeeded – but really, how could it? «Everyone» over ten years old will go out to work in the fields.[21] If this means only the parents of guardians the scheme be effective, but then it is irrelevant to generating the *workers'* consent. And if all farmers, doctors, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths are moving to the villages outside the city walls, the children and their leaders will perish. Or are we supposed to imagine merry children tacking soles onto shoes, and pounding hot iron into swords? When a guardian-in-training sprains an ankle, will the philosophers bring a child doctor to wrap the joint? Not a bad premise for a TV series; as a political plan it would collapse within weeks, and with it the hopes of winning the working class over.

That leaves the noble lie. All citizens grew up together underground, but some of them with gold in their souls, others silver, the rest with bronze and iron and the like.[22] Call it the birth of political advertising or a cynical appropriation of religion to serve the state, the noble lie is the best known point at which the new regime enters the souls of its people. And so it might seem to contain or to constitute the persuasive appeal that engages the working class. So we have to realize that Plato proposes the noble lie with the guardian class particularly as its audience. Socrates says they will want to persuade *malista ... autous tous archontas* «especially the rulers themselves,» and if that fails then *tên allên polin* «the rest of the city».[23] But the rest of their city is something of an afterthought as regards the noble lie.

For one thing, the lie presupposes that other acts of education have already taken place. Socrates calls it a «Phoenician» kind of thing, because a population's birth out of earth calls to mind the founding of Thebes by Cadmus the Phoenician. That story condones betrayal and civil warfare, when the newly sprouted Theban men hack one another to pieces, so

[21] *Rep.* VII, 540e-541a.

[22] *Rep.* III, 414b-415c.

[23] *Rep.* III, 414c.

anyone knowing the original Phoenician tale would hear the noble lie and wonder how soon this city's people will start killing each other.

Therefore the state may reveal the story only under the managed conditions identified in Book II. Those ready to be told the noble lie will have heard so few other myths that they do not picture themselves joining in the anti-social behavior the myths promote. Socrates introduces this discussion in the context of producing good guardians; so they will be the only audience prepared to hear the noble lie.[24]

The censorship of myths and *mimêsis* does include loopholes that can be stretched to include the city as a whole. Socrates orders that no one hear it said that a god causes evil, and that other ugly secrets remain classified information. And if comedies and tragedies are denied a chorus, we know that no one in town will see them performed.[25] How broadly Plato intends his censorship to apply might be open to debate, though if the entire populace were going to be remade by the reforms it is surprising that Socrates does not say so. But even if all citizens receive a filtered version of Greek myth before hearing the noble lie, that fact undermines the lie from serving as foundation for the workers' consent, given that the workers will have to have been transformed by the new pedagogy before the new pedagogy comes to persuade them.

Despite the theoretical possibility that workers hear the noble lie, though, it is striking that a recent complaint about the lie and something that resembles a defense of it both read it as a tale told to rulers.

The complaint is Malcolm Schofield's, that the *Republic* elaborates the myth of metals that legitimates differences among citizens, but not the common autochthonous birth that ostensibly promotes unity among them. What the noble lie really means in the city is its social ranking not its

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[24] *Rep*. II, 376c-e.

[25] *Rep.*: no one to hear that god causes evil, II, 380b-c; some stories divulged to few, II, 378a; no chorus for bad drama, II, 383c. See II, 381e (mothers ignorant of stories about shape-changing gods), III, 386a (certain things «should not be heard, from childhood on»).

familial unanimity.[26] This message goes to the guardians.[27] Accordingly, although Schofield calls the noble lie the «charter myth for Plato's good city,» he emphasizes that it «is aimed at the rulers in the first instance.»[28] Jonathan Lear, meanwhile, developing something more like a defense of the noble lie, imagines adults in the city looking back on the story they'd believed in youth only to realize that it was truer than they'd realized.[29] But this optimistic denouement can only take place among the philosophers atop the city's hierarchy, inasmuch as only they will have undergone the education that shows them the oneiric qualities of sensory life.

By contrast, when farmers hear their children and grandchildren repeating some nonsense about having been underground –farmers who saw those children every day, out in the open air– they would wonder who ever could have believed the story. Having had no philosophy they will not reflect that all life is like a dream, any more than they will think they are prisoners in a cave. Rather than take hold with succeeding generations, as Glaucon predicts it will,[30] the lie will goad working citizens into unbelief, and distrust toward the city's mendacious regime.

Phthonos: *the problem of overcoming envy*

It is unfortunate that the metals in souls have such unequal worth – or even that they are metals, being therefore materials of some standard value. The *Republic*'s division of labor only calls for citizens to perform distinct tasks, as if one of them were a shovel and the other a saw. But

[26] Schofield 2009; some points amplified in Schofield 2007. On unequal uses of the lie's two elements see Schofield 2009, 105-106.

[27] For the rulers to remain sensible of their place in the city, they will need reminding that gold is in their souls but not in most of their fellow citizens' souls. The differentiating moral of the story is the moral that the guardians need to hear, so that they remember, for example, why they may not touch gold.

[28] Schofield 2007: «charter myth» 138; «aimed at rulers» 159.

[29] The thoughtless life of childhood, with its trust in sense-experience, really does resemble a dream, as they had been told it did; only the dream-status of childhood is to be understood metaphysically rather than mythically. Lear 2006, 33-34.

[30] *Rep.* III, 415d.

gold is worth more than silver, and both of them outrank bronze and iron in value. Picturing the newborn citizens with a hammer in one soul, a spear in a second, and a stylus in a third, would not have to imply hierarchical distinction as much as the metals do. This is to say that the lie creates a problem of consent more than it solves one. Hammers and plows have no need to envy shields or writing tables, but bronze is being invited to envy gold. A money-loving third class most of all will find functional difference transmuted into difference in value.

In citing inequality of worth as the legacy of the noble lie, I am saying that agreement among the city's classes, especially agreement by the working class to rule by the other two, is the problem of overcoming envy. Grudging acceptance of rule means tolerating a difference in power that one does not consider justified. Why those guardians in power and not me, or not all of us farmers together? The city's workers will see the rulers deciding every policy question, and being so honored for the effort that their fellow citizens put up statues after some rulers' deaths and celebrate them as if they were gods. The brave soldiers will come back from battle to heroic treatment.[31] Won't the productive class want glory too?

The expulsion and the lie have enough trouble generating consent under the conditions already identified. If they do not solve the problem of envy, at least it would reassure us if the *Republic* sometimes voiced the hope that envy would be overcome in the good city.

The Greeks had two words for envy: *phthonos* and *zêlos*. The latter was milder and even had positive meanings, implying healthy admiration and a wish to emulate. I envied your ability to wake up before dawn, so I started forcing myself out of bed earlier. The acceptability of such envy is indicated by the fact that I can *tell* you I envy your early rising; *zêlos* is the envy that dares to speak its name.

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[31] *Rep.*: statues to rulers, VII, 540c; honours to soldiers, V, 460b.

It is different with the malicious envy known as *phthonos*, which bespoke a grudging spirit. If *zêlos* sometimes implies wanting for yourself what someone else has, *phthonos* leaves you wishing the other didn't have it.[32]

Plato's dialogues recognize the *phthonos* that motivates people, especially motivating them to rebel against legitimate order. There is envy at work early in the city's decline, according to *Republic* VIII. The parallel decline into disorder that the *Menexenus* funeral speech discovers, in its history of the preceding century, is attributed to the *phthonos* with which other cities responded to the pre-eminence that Athens enjoyed after the Persian War. Other dialogues too treat *phthonos* as if it were common, as when the *Philebus* associates it with comedy's audience, or Socrates at his trial accuses his fellow Athenians of *phthonos*.[33]

Set against unseemly envying behavior we have the creator god in Plato's *Timaeus*, who makes the world by reason of not feeling *phthonos*, thus not grudging the existence of a beautiful world. The Platonic or pseudo-Platonic *Hipparchus* claims that Hipparchus, in his days as tyrant, did not think he ought to *sophias phthonein* «begrudge wisdom» to any citizen.[34]

Plato would have, or should have, expected the Athenian men of his time to respond resentfully to the political innovations in the *Republic*. The new city takes a man who voted (thus helped to rule), fought, and earned money, and it distributes his activities among three groups it keeps rigorously distinct. Choruses in Aristophanes boast of their military achievement at Marathon, a service that the plays perceive as the source of Athens's debt to those citizens. In *Wasps* the old men see their participation on juries as personal power. They introduce themselves as

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[32] On *phthonos* see Sanders 2014.

[33] *Phthonos*: in city's decline, Pappas and Zelcer 2015, 203-204; in tyrannical souls, *Rep.* IX, 579c, 580a; by other cities toward Athens, *Menex.* 242a; as pleasure at ills going to others, *Phil.* 48b; by public toward Socrates, *Ap.* 28a.

[34] Plato: creator god without *phthonos*, *Tim.* 29e; tyrant Hipparchus, *Hipp.* 228c.

veterans and jurors as if those two things went together, as if crediting their political privileges to their time at war.[35] Far from welcoming the reform that releases them from military service, they will begrudge any proposal that takes away their influence and prestige.

The possibility of this class's *phthonos* comes up in the *Republic* while Socrates is defending rule by philosophers. Adeimantus raises the sensible worry that people will not sit still for philosophers to gain kingly power. Socrates replies that people do not know philosophers. They have only seen corrupted posers to the title. Showing the public what real philosophers are like will put their worries to rest; for, aside from a few people who react harshly to government no matter what its character is, those who are treated gently and «without *phthonos*» tend to become gentle in return, and «without *phthonos*» themselves.[36]

So Plato does picture envy arising, and not the admiring kind, among the populace to be governed under the new regime. As long as the many of Athens view their putative rulers with *phthonos*, any consent they have to offer will be grudging indeed.

But if the right problem has been identified, the solution proposed is a non-starter. Grudging envy does not come into existence reciprocally as aggression and anger do. It is one thing to say that your anger toward me inspires my answering anger; even to propose (hopefully) as the *Phaedrus* does that your *erôs* toward someone gives rise to an answering *anterôs* «counter-love» in that person.[37] These reciprocations occur often enough to be expected responses to one's own desirous love or anger. *Phthonos* is not like that. Those below exhibit *phthonos* toward those above and not vice versa. Plato has flagged a problem that faces his city –a problem calling for moral acculturation for the first citizens– and then offered only platitudes.

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[35] Aristophanes: service at Marathon, *Ach.* 698-699, *Wasps* 707-711; power as jurors, *Wasps* 575, 620; chorus introduces itself, *Wasps* 230-241.

[36] *Rep.* VI, 500a.

[37] *Phr.* 255d; on «counter-love» see Halperin 1986.

Although this passage fails to justify rule by philosophers, it does notably acknowledge the threat posed by *phthonos*. Given *phthonos* among the working class, the city will know neither *homonoia* nor any other kind of *sôphrosunê*. Between the founding of the city, whatever means that founding calls for, and the time of the producers' great-grandchildren, something must bring the masses of Athens to esteem their rulers without the envy that so often hardens those out of power.

Nudity at the gymnasium

Where other stratagems failed, the example of consent that I began with might point the way toward where Plato thinks an answer lies. Several elements in what Socrates says about women guardians' nudity contribute to making the passage a comment on political consent: first that it is about *dress*, second that it invokes *laughter*, and finally that it addresses the ambiguous meaning of *sight*.

Dress. For modern readers the first of these, the fact that Socrates is talking about changes in what (if anything) people wear, might be what makes them pass by the passage. Modern audiences know very well how the public gets used to different ways of dress. They see the change every season as a new fashion catches on. Against this unreflective response we have to start by seeing that Socrates is making a different point when he predicts that the residents of his city will stop laughing at naked women exercising. Innocent of modern fashion, he hopes for something better than habituation. When athletic nudity first arrived from Sparta, he says, people came to see it as better, just as the people of the city to come will see women's nudity as better and so not to be laughed at.

The difference is partly cultural. Change in dress was not routine in classical Athens, where tales of a change were told either as traumas or as modifications serving a purpose.[38] For instance, when Athenian women

[38] I look into ancient stories about change in dress –most of the stories coming from Herodotus– in *The Philosopher's New Clothes: The Theaetetus, the Academy, and Philosophy's Turn against Fashion* (Routledge, London, 2015 [forthcoming]).

stopped pinning their dresses together and took to wearing sewn garments, Herodotus does not assume that styles simply changed. Some crisis must have brought the change about, so he tells of Athenian men's invading Aegina, all but one killed in the battle, and that one returning to find the other men's widows furious. The widows took out the pins that held their dresses together and stabbed that lone survivor to death, and this is why Athenian men no longer let their women wear pinned-together garments.[39]

In today's terms, Herodotus practices something more like social history while Thucydides is a military historian, so there is less about custom and dress in Thucydides. Even so he tells a brief narrative of Greek wardrobe changes, in the prefatory section of his history known as the «Archaeology,» that begins with all men fully armed and ends with the «recent» Spartan innovation of athletic nudity.[40]

Plato must have had the passage from Thucydides in mind when writing about female guardians. These are the only two texts from classical Athens that call gymnastic nudity a recent arrival, a considerable mistake given that nudity in Athenian gymnasia probably began centuries before the conversation represented in the *Republic* and before Thucydides composed his history.[41] It serves Plato's purposes to give nudity a recent date of arrival, for then Socrates can pretend to tell Glaucon and Adeimantus, who are both young enough not to remember some events that he does, the mechanism by which public sentiment changed. But that conveniently recent date is justified by the authority of Thucydides.

The narrative in Thucydides also gives dress as covered in *Republic* V its political significance. Thucydides begins with a stage in which all men went around armed and armored, surely a source for the image in Hobbes (who translated Thucydides) of a war «of every man against

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[39] Herodotus *Histories*: changes in dress, IV, 78-80; 189; Athenian change to sewn garment, V, 87.

[40] Thucydides *Peloponnesian War* I.6.2-6.

[41] Thucydides I.6.5. The practice seems to go back to 700; see McDonnell 1991.

every man.»[42] He passes into peacetime, during which –in Athens at least– aristocrats dressed to display their social importance. Then the Spartans take a step toward universal concord, and certainly away from *phthonos*, as each man dressed in ordinary clothes.[43] It is not that short and simple dress became the latest thing in Sparta; rather Thucydides is measuring the progress toward *isonomia* or equality under the law. In that spirit he closes with the terminus of sartorial equality, nudity at the gymnasium, which he also credits the Spartans with.

We do not call Spartan government democratic, but it illustrates the movement toward democratic imagery that takes place within an aristocratic system's governing caste. The Spartans act as *peers* do, in both senses of that word, being equals amongst themselves and lords over against their subject population.[44] But the *Republic* is conceiving a city without the terrifying governance that took place in Sparta, and what Plato takes over from Thucydides here is the fraternal side of the peerage, the social development that carries a population beyond difference, therefore beyond *phthonos*. Far from being a trivial manifestation of the progress he hopes for, the guardians' habit of dress is in his context the most natural symbol of political progress. Accepting this one small reform will work as the public's acceptance of overall reform works.

Laughter. Laughter in ancient Greece, certainly the laughter that Socrates imagines at the gymnasium – perhaps all laughter – is exclusionary and aggressive.[45] This fact alone makes laughter politically meaningful, for as Socrates pictures it the mockery threatens to finish off their new constitution before they have even established it. Being as it is the manifestation of *phthonos*,[46] laughter represents the opposite of consent.

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[42] Hobbes *Leviathan* 13.

[43] Thucydides I, 6.3.

[44] The male citizens in Sparta called themselves *homoioi* «equals» or «similar» (i.e. similar to one another) in recognition of this peerage; see Herodotus VII, 234.2, Xenophon *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* X, 7; XIII, 1; 7.

[45] For a recent discussion of the aggression in laughter see Kivy 2003.

[46] *Phil.* 48a-50a. See Harte 2010 on *phthonos* in comedy.

A local tradition held that Theseus, who unified Attica's villages into a *polis* to create the city of Athens, first appeared among Athenians in outdated clothing. He wore a *chitôn* down to his feet, as only women still did, and his hair was braided. Some men mocked him when he came to Athens, asking what maiden of marrying age was wandering around alone.[47]

That Theseus was laughed at for his unfamiliar dress establishes mockery of what is being worn as the first stage in constitutional change. His being called a girl suggests that Athenians think worthy new leadership will first appear as women coming to govern.[48]

Soon enough the *Republic* will speak of deadlier laughter, when the philosopher comes back into the cave and stumbles. As at the new city's gymnasium, this laughter aims at the governing philosophical class.[49] The *sôphrosunê* that is supposed to mark the happy integration of all three classes into the city cannot begin until after the laughter has stopped. It is a lucky thing all round, not just for the future of naked exercise, that Athenians learn how to stop laughing.

Sight. The allegory of the cave does not consider what the returning prisoner is wearing. He does not have time to change before climbing back down to the ignoramuses. But in a more oblique way the story continues the themes of the earlier passage, picking up on an ambiguity between ways of seeing that is at work in Book V.

I already said that in chronicling the change that Athenians already went through, Socrates appeals to a process distinct from the habituation that we find at work in changing fashion. The wags who ridiculed male nudity at the gymnasium changed their minds. He says *ephanê* «it

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[47] Pausanias *Description of Greece* I, 19.1. Pausanias is a late source; but the archaic poet Bacchylides spoke of Theseus in striking dress: Bacchylides 18, lines 53-54. See Davie 1982, 26.

[48] Aristophanes *Eccles.* makes the theme explicit, but talking about *Eccles.* would embroil us in the question of influence between it and the *Republic.*

[49] *Rep.* VII, 517a. On laughing at philosophers, *Gorg.* 484d-e, *Theaet.* 172c.

appeared» that it was better to exercise naked; and because it was better in *reality* to unveil or publicize the body, the humorousness of the *appearance* had to be set aside. Nudity might be *to en tois ophthalmois dê geloion* «what is funny to the eyes,» but in a truer respect shameful behavior is the only *opsis* «appearance, sight, spectacle» that deserves to be responded to with laughter.[50] The same realization will come to members of the public in the new city's gymnasium.

There is a peculiar step in this argument. When Socrates calls it *ameinon* «better» to strip for exercise than to *sugkaluptein* «cover, veil, hide» such things, he must mean that nudity is preferable by virtue of being an uncovering, and because it permits the body to be seen. He is speaking as the Greeks often did when they tried to justify their own custom of nudity. Despite later sources that implausibly explain Greek athletic nudity as having enhanced performance in competition, the dominant ancient account seems to have been that the purpose and value of such nudity lay in their exposing the body to view, as in a report that Spartans used to inspect their male population during public workouts, or a tale about trainers at the Olympics stripping to prove that they were men.[51]

The Thucydidean vision of nudity as political equality too is compatible with nudity's enabling visibility; for we find other calls to literal transparency among the *Republic*'s political reforms and as applying to the peers who constitute the guardian class. The guardians' living area inside the city is visible to all. They have no secret lives, because anyone who wants to is permitted to walk into their quarters. They send their children to battlefields to see how wars are fought. What is *not* seen implies injustice and perversion, such as the invisibility of the naked man who had hidden himself inside a bronze horse (for implicitly sexual purposes). Hiding is

[50] *Rep.* V, 452d-e.

[51] Claims about enhanced performance, Pausanias I, 44.1, Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Roman Antiquities* VII, 72.3-4; Spartans inspected their men, Aelian *Varia Historia* XIV, 7; trainers at the Olympics, Pausanias V, 6.7-8. The essential discussion remains Bonfante 1989.

what the city does to faulty guardians, i.e. to the infants born to undeserving warriors or born with a defect. The city does not want to admit those children to its governing class, so the rulers *katakrupsousin* «hide them away.»[52]

Appreciating the argument in this way steers us toward its central difficulty. The literal visibility that the exercisers' bodies have, and the metaphorical visibility of the reason for the practice, both treat vision as an image of reason or knowledge. It «appeared» to the people of Athens that it was better to strip for exercise, meaning that they understood the reasons for doing so. They did with their rational faculties something like what they did with their eyes. And yet Socrates calls the eyes the obstacle to such change in athletic practice. Those joking locals who laughed at naked wrestlers went wrong in the first place because they trusted their vision. What they laughed at was «what is funny to the eyes,» and it should not have been. As examples of the bodily senses, the eyes mislead and distract a reasoning soul.

The general form of the ambiguity occurs in the *Republic*'s metaphysics, for which sight and light represent the best knowledge while also exemplifying sense perception in its untrue and corrupting aspects. It is a commonplace to say that philosophers make vision a metaphor for knowledge, but only half true. Socrates does compare the good to the sun and the soul to the eye. At the same time he separates philosophers from «view-lovers» or lovers of sights, and the intelligible realm from «the visible.»[53] In such moments eyesight stands for the bodily senses as a whole, being one sense among the others, a part of the sensory apparatus in other words, which is to say a metonym for the senses. Thus *metonymically* vision represents the ignorant senses even though, *metaphorically* speaking, vision looks like knowledge.

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[52] *Rep.*: barracks open, III, 416d; young guardians watch battles, V, 466e; 467e; invisibility in story of Gyges, II, 359c-360b; within that story the naked corpse, II, 359 d-e; faulty births hidden, V, 460c. Ophir 1991 explores this theme.

[53] *Rep.*: vision the sun-like sense, VI, 508b; philosophers distinguished from *philotheamones* «view-lovers» in that they are view-lovers regarding truth, V, 475d-e; *noêton* «intelligible» opposed to *horaton* «visible» domains, VI, 509d.

Sight carries opposite valences in the cave, whose laughing prisoners treat the freed returning prisoner as blinded. That trip outdoors destroyed his eyes. Socrates says they do not realize that vision can be compromised in opposite ways. If it blinds and blinkers people to go from less light to more, the same thing happens to those coming from more light into less.[54] What the prisoners call a deprivation is really the exposure to a plenitude of light, because the light they see is not the light that the one returning has known; because, in short, the seeing that they do can't be compared to the seeing that takes place up outside the cave in sunlight. Thus two kinds of vision confront each other in the primal episode of failed consent.

Socrates also brings together the two meanings of sight in his synopsis of how Athenians changed their minds about nudity. Seeing (sensing) made Athenians laugh at athletic nudity, until seeing (reasoning) made them stop laughing and accept the practice. But the gymnasium promises a better outcome than the cave did. First the Athenians did no more than look, and laughed at the Spartan practice they saw. Then they troubled themselves to *look*, in this other way, and they saw that it was better. Nothing changed and yet everything did. Under its own power, the public moved to understand and consent to one new custom from Sparta; why not others? This type of persuasion is available to human beings even as those humans have been constituted by existing social relations. Such persuasion contains an essential element of virtuous consent, namely an understanding that the new practice is a good one. And when the women guardians strip to exercise, the new city's people will do the same again; and the guardian class will not face the refusal to consent that is public ridicule; and the city will survive.

[54] *Rep.*: his eyes destroyed, VII, 517a; two kinds of blindness, VII, 518a-b.

Conclusion

By the time that the founders' great-grandchildren are exercising, they will have achieved the learning regarding naked women that Athenians accomplished with respect to naked men. This is a transition from the seeing that ridicules, and that denies *homonoia*, to the insight of knowledge that facilitates acceptance and moderated agreeability; away from the vision that envies to the revision of soul to thoughts of what is better.

As the terms of the narrative in Thucydides imply, the agreeability that is achieved in this process works contrary to social differentiation. What is better about nudity at the gymnasium is the image it conduces to of social equality. Such radical sameness of dress denies the conditions for *phthonos.* If erotic thoughts do follow, they too work contrary to *phthonos* and in the interests of a society whose members can all consent to government. Kamtekar argues that «civic life in the ideal city is a continuation of education, and so is good for citizens in the way that Plato says education is»;[55] surprisingly enough, leisure time at the gymnasium has proved to contribute to such education.

What follows about consent? Going to the gym might accomplish something for citizens, but this single highly contextualized act of stripping is not going to produce the *sôphrosunê* that Socrates thinks he can foresee among the city's people. Plato's readers will think of the Athenian Stranger's grumpier remark that the cities with the most pederastic love are those with the most active participation in gymnasia.[56] Nevertheless this discussion's remarkable condensation of the essential elements of political agreement does show 1) that the agreement that matters to a polity –whether regarding nudity at the gymnasium or regarding a constitution– goes beyond mere acquiescence; 2) that the public possesses a capacity for informed agreement; 3) that they attain this higher agreement by emulating what philosophers do in looking away from what their eyes

[55] Kamtekar 2004, 161.

[56] *Laws* I, 636c.

show them to the objects seen by their minds' eyes; 4) that the content of this improved understanding is a parity among citizens and overcoming of resentful envy.

More vividly than anywhere else in the *Republic*, Plato is acknowledging the challenge that political consent creates for his proposed city. How he will meet that challenge is another story. When the guardians dress and leave the gymnasium they will need to govern the mass of the citizenry so as to generate the same agreeability through their economic policies, their adjudication of domestic problems, and above all through the example they set of lives lived in dedication to higher standards of goodness. We may hope that in an embodied good city those who rule will find ways of fostering this best kind of agreement. It is no small thing if exercising together gives all citizens a glimpse of what such concord will be like, even if it is for now only a first peek, from a distance, at a harmonious life as lived in full dress.

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