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# Plato's View of Tyranny

Antonis Coumoundouros

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PLATO'S VIEW OF TYRANNY

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty

of the Philosophy Department

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

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by

Antonis Coumoundouros

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## **Introduction.**

The aim of this dissertation is to highlight the timeless insights and enduring relevance of Plato's view of tyranny. I examine Plato's comprehensive account of tyranny and the tyrant in the *Republic*, and in so doing I contribute to our understanding of: (1) Plato's view of tyranny and the tyrant, (2) the perennial political problem of tyranny in terms of its origins, goals, function, and measures it employs, (3) the tyrant as a political figure with particular desires related to his goals, actions, and measures as a ruler, and, thus (4) the relation between tyranny as a regime and the tyrant as a type of person. Let us begin by considering why tyranny is an intriguing topic in general and why Plato's view of tyranny in particular deserves our attention.

Despite the millennia that have passed since Plato's time, it is evident that tyrannies still exist, that they still puzzle us, and that they still present us with problems. A look around the globe makes us realize that there are numerous governments in the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Americas, Africa, and Asia that we can readily call tyrannies. Contemporary or recent tyrants such as Kim Jong Il, Saddam Hussein, Pinochet, Mao, Hitler, and Stalin, or as old as Peisistratus, Dionysius II of Syracuse, Julius Caesar, and Louis XIV, have left considerable and controversial marks in history, and have not ceased to invite our curiosity.

In our own time, especially since 9/11, there has been a considerable amount of discussion concerning tyranny, terrorism, freedom, and democracy. Some wonder whether terrorism and tyranny are related, and others claim that they are fundamentally related. Others, still, wonder whether democracies can come to replace tyrannies and how this may happen. Moreover, the Nazi horrors of World War II and those of Stalinist

Russia in the twentieth century became an incentive for various thinkers to investigate such political systems and to reawaken discussions on freedom, justice, and tyranny.

Plato's personal and controversial entanglements with tyrants brought him close to the phenomenon of tyranny and might partially explain why he was astonished by it. Plato lived in an Athens which remembered the tyranny of the Peisistratids, and which had recently lived through the tyranny of the Thirty. Plato tells us quite a bit about his experience with the Thirty in the *Seventh Letter*. He tells us that the previous Athenian democracy, engaged in the Peloponnesian war, seemed a great regime compared to the tyranny, "they showed [the Thirty tyrants] in a short time that the preceding constitution had been a precious thing" (324d-e). We know that Plato's relatives, Charmides and Critias, were members of the Thirty, rich anti-democrats established by the Spartan king in 404. In fact, Critias was the head of the Thirty, which makes him a sort of tyrant of tyrants. Both Critias and Charmides were killed in 403 in the fighting that overthrew them and re-established the democracy.

Plato's involvement with the famous tyrant Dionysius II of Syracuse has fascinated and puzzled scholars since antiquity. In the *Seventh Letter*, we may find his attempts and failure to educate Dionysius and to turn him into a philosopher king in the manner described in the *Republic*. Whether this interpretation is correct or not, it still invites questions regarding the extent of Plato's involvement with politics and the particular tyrant. Dionysius looks very much like the tyrant described in the *Republic* and thus we get a rather close and curious correlation between Plato's work and his own life.



Plato's founding of the Academy shows that he was deeply concerned with the *polis* and its fate. His experience with tyranny seems to have motivated him to begin a school where he sought to improve some citizens by philosophic education, and generally to enhance the level of culture of his time. The Academy was a school that existed in competition with other schools, such as Isocrates' school of rhetoric. We also know that several members of the Academy were involved in politics which makes us suspect that political education was part of the program in the Academy. Now let us turn to tyranny as Plato discusses it in the dialogues.

Following the 4<sup>th</sup> century, tyranny was a substantial problem for Plato and other intellectuals such as Thucydides, Xenophon, and Aristotle. Plato's writings reveal to us that he was deeply concerned with it and that he sought to explain it. Plato shows this concern with his inclusion of his relatives as characters in his dialogues (see the *Charmides*). Moreover, in dialogues such as the *Republic* and the *Gorgias* Plato discusses tyranny within the larger context of justice. In the *Republic* Socrates argues against Thrasymachus that the tyrant's unjust life does not amount to happiness. Whether the life of the tyrant was a happy one, was a question that concerned many other Greek thinkers, as far back as Archilochus in the seventh century, and, in Plato's own time, Xenophon, who wrote on this topic in his *Hiero*. Socrates' claim that justice leads to happiness while tyranny leads to wretchedness, is a position that the tyrant would reject, if Plato's description of the tyrant is correct. From the tyrant's perspective, a life of justice in which one obeys laws and is just can never be good enough and, as Thrasymachus seems to claim, such a life is suited only for weak people. Plato opposes to this tyrannical perspective the state of one's soul.

Furthermore, in the *Republic* we get the famous analysis of tyranny and the tyrant in Books VIII and IX. There, Plato describes tyranny in the sharpest contrast with the most just city, the *kallipolis*, and the tyrant, in contrast to the just and happy philosopher king. Plato tries to be comprehensive and systematic. He is comprehensive by discussing the extremes in his analysis of justice; he discusses the best political community and the best person and also the worst regime and the worst person. His discussion is also comprehensive in considering the political, ethical, and psychological aspects of justice and tyranny.

Some more modern or contemporary views of political philosophy seem to make a fundamental philosophical shift from Plato. For Plato, analyzing political life involves explaining: (1) the structure of constitutions, (2) the outlook of the soul of rulers within particular constitutions, and (3) the orientation of the citizen's souls in a constitution. While some modern or contemporary thinkers seem to follow Plato's explanatory pattern, e.g. Arendt who treats both totalitarianism but also the character of Eichmann, others, such as Tocqueville or Montesquieu, leave out the person-based aspect found in Plato's discussion and focus more on the structure of tyranny.

The applicability of Plato's political philosophy has been a matter of considerable debate in the twentieth century. Since WWII there has been controversy over whether Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia were in fact tyrannies or political systems of some other sort. Hannah Arendt claims, famously in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that with Hitler and Stalin, the twentieth century saw new types of terrible regimes, which were essentially different from what the ancients understood as tyrannies. This is not to say that tyrannies did not exist anymore but rather, that the classical model of tyranny, like

the one found in Plato, is no longer relevant to our efforts to understand Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia.

Karl Popper, in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, launched a vehement critique of Plato's political philosophy as totalitarian. He claimed that "Plato's political program is far from being morally superior to totalitarianism, it is fundamentally identical with it" (87). Many intellectuals follow Popper's critique of Plato's political philosophy, and consequently his discussion of tyranny seems irrelevant to them. Even recent commentators on Plato, such as Julia Annas, doubt any value in his discussion of tyranny (*An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, 1981). Annas claims that Plato's discussion of constitutions and individuals in Book VIII is "both confusing and confused" and that "Plato's tyrant would not last a week" (294, 304). The fact that Plato's account of tyranny has met such resistance in recent times may explain why there is no single work on Plato's view of tyranny. Some of the secondary scholarship on Plato does deal with his ideas on tyranny but this is never a primary concern. My dissertation seems to be the first full-length treatment of Plato on tyranny.

Plato discusses the violence and fraud associated with tyranny, its injustice, the absence of the rule of law, the disregard of the citizen's good, the pursuit of pleasure and the interest of the ruler, and the employment of tools of propaganda. All these are practices and characteristics of older, recent, and contemporary governments we can call tyrannies. In *Republic VIII*, Plato also discusses the relation of democracy and its pursuit of freedom to tyranny. He seems to treat democracy as a regime from which tyranny results causally. This is rather controversial, but it seems relevant to our own concerns with freedom, democracy, and tyranny.

This dissertation is in seven chapters. In the first chapter I discuss the usage of the term *turannos* (tyrant) and its derivatives in the Greek in the works of authors prior and during the time of Plato. I consider the usage of the term in the tragic poets, Aristophanes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Lysias, and Isocrates among others. Such an examination allows us to explore the intellectual background against which Plato formulates his own view of tyranny. This chapter establishes that the term *turannos* was used vaguely or ambiguously most of the time. The term did not have negative connotations until the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Prior to the 4<sup>th</sup> century authors used the term to mean monarchy whereas with Plato (and Xenophon) we get a clear normative distinction between kings and tyrants as different types of monarchs. Apparently, the Athenian experience of tyranny pushes the term towards negative connotations. Plato borrows many of the negative features associated with tyranny from the tradition before him, but he seals the term's negative usage.

Tyranny seems a concern in several Platonic dialogues, but Plato discusses it most vigorously in the *Republic*. In the second chapter of my dissertation I argue that Plato offers us a preliminary account of tyranny in Books I and II that anticipates the account of tyranny in the later books.

Various commentators have argued that Plato's account of constitutions in Book VIII is plagued with problems and inconsistencies. In the third chapter I respond to some rather serious challenges to Plato's account and show that Plato's discussion does merit our serious attention. I discuss the following aspects of Plato's account of regimes in Book VIII:

- (1) The role of the account of constitutions in the main ethical argument of the dialogue.
- (2) Whether Plato's discussion of constitutions has both an *a priori* or logical perspective and an experiential basis.
- (3) The analogy of the city and the soul and how this holds together in Book VIII.
- (4) Plato's depiction of governmental change in temporal/historical terms.
- (5) The incompleteness of Plato's account of regimes.

In the fourth chapter I examine Plato's account of the development of tyranny from democracy (562a4-566d2). Plato argues extensively that the pursuit of freedom as license in a democracy partially causes devolution into tyranny. Excessive freedom encourages disobedience to the laws and civil unrest. In the midst of civil unrest an opportunist, the potential tyrant, appears a champion of the people, and takes over to become tyrant.

Chapter five examines Plato's rather detailed discussion of the tyrant in power. His description of tyranny in Book VIII picks up many of the features mentioned in Plato's tradition and in Books I and II, and adds others which make tyranny the opposite of the *kallipolis*. I discuss Plato's depiction of the measures tyranny employs as a government to fulfill its aims and/or to stay in power. I also argue that he provides us with some rather clear characteristics of tyranny which are part of its essence. Furthermore, I begin to trace the necessity inherent in tyranny. This necessity entails that while tyrants employ a number of necessary measures to serve their interests and preserve the regime, these measures cause necessary effects which are detrimental to both

the tyrant and the regime's survival. The most important of these effects is the rise of enemies and opposition to the tyrant.

In chapter six I examine Socrates' account of tyrannical soul. Following a discussion of Plato's classification of desire I discuss the origin of the tyrannical man, the compulsory grip of *Eros* and lawless desires in his soul, and the deeds which result from such a soul's effort to satisfy desires. The consideration of tyrannical psychology explains the necessity inherent in tyranny since the tyrant's state of soul pushes him to perform the actions he does in tyranny to satisfy his desires.

In chapter seven I consider Plato's arguments against tyranny both as a regime and as a type of life. Plato emphasizes having a comprehensive perspective as a condition for the adequate judgment of tyranny and the tyrannical life. Plato indicates strongly that we need a perspective by which we are able to think of lives or regimes from beginning to end and to draw out the implications of their goals, desires, and actions. Plato argues powerfully that, as a regime, tyranny is self-defeating, and bad for citizens since it makes them unhappy. Moreover, he argues persuasively that the tyrant is necessarily unhappy due to the lawless and unfulfillable desires he has in his soul, and due to his impotence to secure the external means by which to satisfy such desires. The tyrant is forced to perform such actions and take measures to satisfy his desires, that these give rise to such opposition which renders the tyrant fearful, in constant danger, and thus unhappy. Finally, in the conclusion I summarize the findings of the dissertation and point out briefly that Plato's view of tyranny is both illuminating and relevant to our concerns with, and understanding of, political life and tyranny.

## **Chapter 1. The Terminology for Tyranny Before and During Plato's Time.**

In this chapter I aim to trace the use of the term τύραννος (tyrant) and its derivatives in ancient Greek texts to show that various authors used such words with considerable ambiguity before, and during Plato's time.<sup>1</sup> This will provide background for Plato's critical view of tyranny, and it will allow us to connect this view to its literary tradition. Plato has Socrates point out that it was not so clear what tyranny meant, and as we will see, the intellectual figures before and during Plato's time do not articulate clearly or explicitly what they mean by τύραννος (tyrant) or τυραννίς (tyranny).<sup>2</sup> It only seems possible to extrapolate the possible meanings Plato's tradition attributes to the terms by examining how its authors use these terms in their texts.

My approach here suggests intertextuality, which is the idea that authors write with other texts and authors of their tradition in mind. So, to begin to understand one text one has to take into account its relation to the other texts of its tradition.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, I agree with Andrea Nightingale (2000) who points out that Plato invents philosophy as a “radically different discursive practice” in relation to other literary genres by incorporating some of the elements of those genres in his dialogues. Of course, the elements incorporated are not merely stylistic. In this chapter, I indicate that Plato responds to and puts to use many of the features associated with tyranny in his tradition.<sup>4</sup> I begin by pointing out the importance of looking at the terminology for tyranny and by suggesting a way by which to do so. Then, I analyze the prevalent Athenian self-

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<sup>1</sup> It is not my intention to make the linguistic point that the noun τύραννος is the original term from which all other grammatical instances are derived.

<sup>2</sup> See *Gorgias* 469c3-4 where Socrates asks Polus if they mean the same thing by “tyrant.”

<sup>3</sup> This is a notion developed by Julia Kristeva.

<sup>4</sup> That he does respond to, and puts to use, many of the features associated with tyranny in his tradition becomes evident in later chapters.

perception and the political conditions in Athenian democracy, which influence the meaning, understanding, and expression of tyranny. Finally, I discuss the usage of “tyranny” in the works of several Greek authors.

### 1.1 Why and How to Examine the Terminology for Tyranny.

Passing through the literary and intellectual territory of Plato’s tradition by examining the usage of the terms for tyranny will allow us to see clearly how Plato came to use such terms with negative connotations or in association with negative features.<sup>5</sup> It is not until political philosophy emerges on the Greek intellectual scene in Platonic dialogues that “tyranny” and “tyrant” begin to signify definitively a morally bad regime and person respectively.<sup>6</sup> While there is criticism and analysis of political issues prior to Plato it is not until his writings that we see the terms for tyranny used almost exclusively with negative connotations and negative features. Moreover, as I argue in this chapter, it is not until Plato’s dialogues that tyranny comes to be distinguished more clearly from other types of monarchy. I show that many authors other than Plato use the terms for tyranny in such ways as to denote monarchy without distinguishing between different types of monarchies.<sup>7</sup> With Plato begins the attempt to explain political phenomena philosophically and thus begins political philosophy. As a philosopher he seeks to understand political life analytically and comprehensively, and he makes careful

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<sup>5</sup> I will use the phrase “negative connotations” when there is something negative implied but not explicitly stated in the usage of the words of tyranny, and the phrase “negative features” where there are negative aspects associated with tyranny explicitly stated. I will also do the same in the category of positive usage of the terms for tyranny. When I use the phrases “negative use” or “positive use” this is for the sake of brevity, and these phrases mean to suggest that the words are used with negative or positive connotations or with negative or positive features.

<sup>6</sup> One could include, arguably, Thucydides, and should include, Xenophon as doing the same. See Xenophon’s *Hiero*.

<sup>7</sup> Xenophon and Thucydides are exceptions to this point.



distinctions to do so. Thus, an author like Plato comes to use language more carefully and with less ambiguity to suit his philosophic purposes.

It will also become clear that the negative use of the terms for tyranny is strongly related to the Athenian experience of tyranny, from the Peisistratids to the Thirty.<sup>8</sup> I show that the Athenian experience of tyranny pushes the terminology for tyranny towards negative connotations and negative features associated with it. The rise of the democratic *polis*, and Athens in particular, contributed to the use of the words with negative connotations. More specifically, the problematic Athenian political experience, from the Peisistratid experience of tyranny prior to the democracy, which was established in 510, to the establishment and demise of the Thirty tyrants after the Peloponnesian War in 404, leads the usage of the term τύραννος towards negative connotations. Athens experiences tyranny, democracy after tyranny, and tyranny again (I say this because they are three different experiences, we get much about the use of the terms for tyranny through the lens of the second experience), and different authors begin to characterize tyranny negatively in direct relation to, and due to, these experiences.<sup>9</sup> The Athenian democratic lens colors the way people talk about and understand tyranny, but while there are negative connotations associated with the terms for tyranny due to the Athenian democratic point of view, these are not applied critically or systematically until Plato.

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<sup>8</sup> “Tyranny was the name given to the illegal monarchy usurped by individuals in many oligarchic city-states of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E. It was not a special form of constitution or a reign of terror; that bad sense was attached to it later especially by the democratic *polis* of the 5<sup>th</sup> century which glorified the tyrannicide, and by the political philosophers, e.g. Plato, to whom tyranny meant the worst institution possible.” (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*). In this chapter I seek to provide evidence and argue more conclusively for the above two claims, namely that the democratic *polis* and political philosophy come to seal the fate, so to speak, of the usage of the terms for tyranny.

<sup>9</sup> We should note that the sources we have in which tyranny begins to have negative connotations other than in the works of Plato and Aristotle are mostly by Athenian authors (the tragic poets, Thucydides, Aristophanes, Lysias, Demosthenes, Isocrates, Xenophon), or refer to the Athenian experience of tyranny (Herodotus).

Lidell and Scott define τύραννος as

*an absolute sovereign, unlimited by law or constitution...not applied to old hereditary sovereignties such as those of Hom. or Sparta; for the term rather regards the irregular way in which the power was gained, than the way in which it was exercised, being applied to the mild Peisistratus, but not to the despotic kings of Persia. However the word soon came to imply reproach, like our tyrant, Plat., etc.*<sup>10</sup>

They tell us that the etymology of the word is probably from the same root as κύριος, ruler or master, and κοίρανος, ruler, commander, or sovereign. The definition they provide is helpful in some ways and not so helpful in others. It is helpful since it gives us an idea about what the term meant generally, and it tells us accurately that the kings of Sparta or Homeric kings were not called “tyrants.” Their etymology also suggests that the term had the connotation of someone ruling over others either as a master over slaves, or as a political ruler over political subjects.<sup>11</sup> Their definition is not so helpful however when we try to apply it to a variety of specific instances where the words for tyranny occur. As we will see many authors use the term in such a way that they mean a ruler who is a sovereign but, they do not always imply, or state explicitly, that such a ruler is unlimited by law or constitution. Many authors use the term interchangeably with terms for “king” such as ἀναξ and βασιλεύς, or for monarch. We will also see that in some cases authors use the term τύραννος to refer to the way someone usurps power, the way he exercises it, or both.

Plato, especially, as a political philosopher makes distinctions between regimes using terminology that already existed prior to, and during his time, and “tyranny” is part

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<sup>10</sup> Lidell and Scott. *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*. Seventh Edition. Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1992, pp. 824-825.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle explicitly wants to distinguish between the rule of masters over slaves which, he claims is a matter of the household, and the rule of political rulers over political subjects in I.7 of the *Politics*.

of this terminology.<sup>12</sup> Plato comes to choose many of the negative features associated with tyranny in other authors and to employ these features in his own theory and critique of tyranny. Moreover, he comes to respond to the positive connotations and features attached to tyranny as some authors present it. Some authors treat tyranny as absolute power and refer to it as something which entails great advantages—they do this themselves or they portray characters who do so—and as something which may eventually lead to happiness.

Many Greek authors use the word “tyranny” and its derivatives either to praise or condemn individuals or regimes, or they use them interchangeably with other terms that imply monarchic rule, sovereignty, absolute rule, or being a master without any clear connotations attached to them.<sup>13</sup> Even when such authors attach negative or positive connotations or features to the words, many of them do not clearly distinguish tyranny from kingship or from monarchy. Thus the negative or positive connotations or features attached to the vocabulary of tyranny often apply to monarchy generally. Plato makes monarchy a wider universal and tyranny and kingship narrower universals as the two kinds of monarchy; he portrays tyranny as bad monarchy and kingship as good monarchy.

In order to keep track of the usage of the words for tyranny I will use three categories under which one can roughly classify their usage: (1) Negative use; when the word is used with negative connotations or associated with negative features, (2) Positive use; when the word is used with positive connotations or associated with positive

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<sup>12</sup> I say “especially” since Xenophon also seems to make distinctions in the same way.

<sup>13</sup> As we will see many authors use the words for tyranny to refer to the rule of one person but some also use such words to refer to the rule of a few rulers. The primary instance where this occurs is when authors refer to the thirty tyrants of Athens.

features, (3) Neutral use, when the word is used with no clear negative or positive connotations or features, or interchangeably with other words that denote monarchic rule, sovereignty, absolute rule, and mastership.<sup>14</sup>

There are a number of passages in different authors where the words for tyranny occur both with negative connotations or features, and interchangeably with other words that denote kingship, monarchy, absolute rule, or mastership and I will classify these under the category of negative use. I will do so since in such instances we get many of the features that Plato comes to use to criticize tyranny. I will also place words for tyranny where they appear with positive connotations or features, and used interchangeably with other words for kingship, monarchy, sovereignty, or absolute rule in the category of positive use, since in such passages we also get many features that Plato comes to criticize. Any instances where the words are used only to refer to some ruler as a tyrant I will treat as neutral, since most of the time it is unclear whether the author calls someone a tyrant because he himself thought he was one, or because this was the title people generally attributed to him.<sup>15</sup>

In the texts where *τύραννος* and its derivatives appear there is often a rhetorical or dramatic context present, that we need to take into account, and which allow us to see how the terminology used delivers views of tyranny, kingship, monarchy, or absolute rule. Plato either endorses, criticizes, or expands upon such views. I will be careful not to attribute positions to authors too readily when they report what someone else said,

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<sup>14</sup> The terms with which *τύραννος* and its derivatives are used interchangeably include, but are not limited to, βασιλεύς (king), ἄναξ (king), κόρανος (lord, master, ruler), κρείον (lord, master), κύριος (master, lord), μοναρχία/ος (monar-chy/ch, king), and their derivatives. I mention “absolute rule” above since many instances where the words for tyranny and the words above occur have this meaning.

<sup>15</sup> In passages where a ruler is called a tyrant and there are negative connotations implied or negative features listed I will include these under negative use, and I will do the same with passages where there are positive connotations or features.

especially when this is done in first person voice but not in the author's *propria persona*. Authors such as Herodotus or Thucydides often present whole speeches, and in many of these cases it is extremely difficult to claim that the author agrees with what he has a speaker say.

### 1.2 Tyranny and Athenian Self-Perception.

The Greeks used the term τύραννος and its derivatives with considerable elasticity. Thus, it is a complicated matter to give a clear account of what they meant by them. They also used the terms very ambiguously at times and this ambiguity in classical Greek literature is complicated even more by its usage in other periods, including ours. Today, generally speaking, dictators, despots, brutal kings, unjust monarchs, all qualify as tyrants, that is, as unjust rulers who should not be ruling in light of better alternatives. Moreover, different thinkers have used different terms to describe unjust, violent, and brutal regimes

Tacitus labeled the rule of Tiberius a *dominatio*; Machiavelli analyzed 'princely tyrannies'; Montesquieu introduced the word *despotisme* into European discourse; Tocqueville rejected both *despotisme* and *tyrannie* as inadequate to describe what he feared, and thus fell back on words like oppression and servitude; Marx explored the 'despotism of capital'; Freud analyzed what he thought was a natural 'tyranny of the superego'; and Weber feared 'bureaucratic domination' (Herrschaft).<sup>16</sup>

Such varied modern usage of "tyranny" plagues our return to the texts of classical Greece to trace the term and its meanings.

A passage from Aristophanes' *Wasps* reveals how widely the term might have been used in ancient times. In this passage Aristophanes also suggests that the term τύραννος was abused in democratic Athens. In the comedy, Bdelycleon is trying to

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<sup>16</sup> Boesche (1996, 10).

keep his father, Philocleon, from going to trials and lawsuits to which he is addicted.<sup>17</sup>

The chorus of judges arrive at his house to get Philocleon to join them but Bdelycleon tells them that he will not let his father go free and, consequently, the chorus suggests that Bdelycleon is acting like a tyrant.<sup>18</sup> Bdelycleon in turn points out that he had not heard the term “tyrant” used in fifty years and that lately it is applied to the smallest as well as to the greatest matters.<sup>19</sup> He says that even when one buys fish in the marketplace from a fish-stand other fish-sellers accuse the buyer of being a tyrant. Xanthias, Bdelycleon’s servant, adds that even when he went to a prostitute and asked her to sit on top of him, she accused him of wishing to bring back the tyranny of Hippias, the Peisistratid tyrant before the democracy of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In Xanthias’ story the prostitute seems to react in this way since she takes his request as a command intending to restrict her from doing what she wants. Bdelycleon adds that he desires to see his father live a good life without participating in frivolous lawsuits; consequently, his restrictions on his father freedom to do what he wants lead to his accusation of being a tyrant.

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<sup>17</sup> All references to Aristophanes are from Hall F.W. and Geldart W.M. (eds.). *Aristophanes Comoediae* in 2 volumes, Clarendon Press: Oxford. 1907. Aristophanes makes a problem out of the many lawsuits in democratic Athens through presenting Philocleon’s obsession with them. He suggests that living well and many lawsuits do not go hand in hand which is reminiscent of Socrates’ discussion of lawsuits in *Republic* 3 (405a-c) as a sign of political injustice. The names ‘Bdelycleon’ and ‘Philocleon’ are significant for at least two reasons: (1) Insofar as they mean ‘disgusted with Cleon’ and ‘lover of Cleon’ respectively. These are allusions to Cleon, the political opponent of Pericles, and the general (during the Peloponnesian war) who suggested that the inhabitants of the island of Mytilene be indiscriminately killed since the island was at the head of a revolt against Athens. (2) Since we know that Cleon brought Aristophanes to court by accusing him of having ridiculed (in his *Babylonians*) the policies of Athens in the presence of foreigners while a great war was going on. Aristophanes is trying to make several points: that Cleon loved lawsuits, that Philocleon, loves lawsuits as well as Cleon who prosecuted the poet in a lawsuit, and that the son, Bdelycleon, resists the excessive degree of lawsuits and is a hater of Cleon. Thucydides was also forced to exile by a decree proposed by Cleon, in which he accused him of military incapacity.

<sup>18</sup> At 418 they tell Bdelycleon that not letting his father go and holding him against his will amounts to tyranny (τυραννίς), at 464 they tell him that he prevents them from obeying the laws and that he acts as if he rules alone like in a tyranny (τυραννίς), and at 486 the chorus refuses to withdraw since Bdelycleon wishes to exercise tyranny (τυραννίδα) over them. We can see already two possible meanings for *tyranny*: preventing freedom and opposition to law.

<sup>19</sup> 489-500. He uses the word five times in this passage.

Aristophanes' comedy portrays the extreme and deep Athenian belief that any restriction on someone's freedom is evil. Philocleon pursues his desire to attend lawsuits obsessively, his son soberly wants to restrict this, and Aristophanes suggests that the official and everyday democratic Athenian perspective is that any restriction on any desire is problematic.<sup>20</sup> The chorus of judges, a symbol of the official position of the city, calls Bdelycleon a tyrant. Xanthias' story reveals that the average person in Athens, citizen or not, thinks and speaks in the same way as the officers of the city (even prostitutes use the terms for tyranny like the judges do). Any interference with the ideal of freedom—understood negatively as the absence of limitations on one's desires, as license—is “tyrannical.” This is a strong belief, within Athenian democratic ideology, which amounts to the position that democracy, with its vague ideal of freedom, is contrary to tyranny. The poet also suggests that words for tyranny were used in efforts to ruin someone's reputation in a democracy. Calling someone a tyrant in the democracy amounts to calling their character in question, since it portrays them as an enemy of the democracy (especially as an enemy of its ideal of freedom).<sup>21</sup>

Even though Aristophanes wrote comedies, his comedies were political satires, and we can regard them as texts providing us with many objective features of Athenian life.<sup>22</sup> He suggests that the Athenians perceived themselves as anti-tyrannical in the sense explained above, while pointing out the vague usage of the terms referring to tyranny.

We see that in Athenian terms this is a vague usage based on the retrospective

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<sup>20</sup> Philocleon's maniacal or obsessive pursuit of attending lawsuits is reminiscent of Plato's portrayal of the tyrannical soul as manic in *Republic IX*.

<sup>21</sup> Many authors, especially rhetoricians, appeal to their parents or grandparents as active opponents of the Peisistratid tyrants and thus as supporters to boost up their reputation. See Isocrates' *On the Team of Horses* (sections 25-26), Lysias' *On the Scrutiny of Evandros* (22), and Andocides' *On His Return* (26).

<sup>22</sup> For an interesting argument on how classical comedy seems to be a trustworthy source on the intricacies of Athenian life see Davidson (1999, xvii ff.).

unpopularity of the Peisistratid era, rather like our own generalized application of “fascist.”

With the establishment of democracy in Athens in 510, and the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes, we see many authors using the term “tyranny” in specific ways that address a democratic audience whose mind and attitudes these authors know, share, or even exploit. This is especially the case with speechwriters and/or orators. As several authors show or imply, Athenians perceived themselves, largely and generally, as democratic in an anti-tyrannical sense. The democratic ideal of freedom is portrayed as something understood negatively for the most part, namely as the absence of limitation on someone’s desires to pursue the ends of their choice.<sup>23</sup>

Further evidence for this Athenian self-perception is the foundational tale of the tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton. Athenians generally believed that Harmodius and Aristogeiton were the people responsible for the democracy in Athens, since they opposed and murdered the tyrant Hipparchus. They believed this story even though the tyranny of the Peisistratids lasted for a while after Harmodius had killed Hipparchus.<sup>24</sup> Both Thucydides (1.20.1; 6.53-59) and Herodotus (6.123.2) point out that the tyrannicides were not the ones who ended tyranny and brought about democracy, and

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<sup>23</sup> In the *Republic*, Plato discusses the origins of tyranny in Book VIII and has it result causally from democracy. Plato challenges the prevalent Athenian understanding of tyranny as contrary to democracy and at the same time he exposes the vague understanding of freedom in Athens. In effect he seeks to explain both freedom and tyranny. McGlew also points out that “Tyranny does perform an ideological role after its collapse as a political form. This is especially true in classical Athens, where attacks against the democratic regime were defined as tyranny—a definition that, by implication, made the democracy synonymous with the polis itself.” (1993, 12).

<sup>24</sup> There was a cult established in Athens, and paid for by the state, which celebrated Harmodius and Aristogeiton as the tyrannicides, there was a statue of them in the agora, and songs sang that often compared them to Homeric heroes such as Achilles and Diomedes (See Garland. R.1992. 94-96, and 199, and Taylor M. 1981). We also know that Xerxes took the first statue of the Athenian tyrannicides with him. Taylor tells us that he stole the symbol of Athenian *isonomia* or equality (1981, 46). Alexander the Great later returned the statue in his efforts to appear as a guardian of Athenian liberty.



they imply that the story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton was merely a convenient and uplifting tale for Athenians. Such a story provided Athens with anti-tyrannical or democratic heroes to place at the beginning of the democracy.<sup>25</sup> Athenians believed strongly that the death of tyranny gave birth to democracy.

Thucydides seeks to correct the Athenian and Greek historical consciousness by reminding it that the motivations of Harmodius were due, not to political ambition but to personal differences since he only killed Hipparchus after his lover Aristogeiton suffered an insult by him.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in 514, the year of the incident, it was Hippias not Hipparchus who was tyrant of Athens. Herodotus tells us that it was the Alcmaeonidae with the help of the Spartans that really changed the regime from tyranny to democracy. The Alcmaeonidae bribed the Delphic oracle to tell the Spartans that it was in their interest to set Athens free. The confused Athenian self-perception is often colored by pro-democratic/anti-tyrannical attitude and many authors we will examine make use of this understanding.

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<sup>25</sup> A similar discussion of these passages from Thucydides can be found in Ober (1998, 53-54). Ober argues that these passages amount to a critique of the democracy in the sense that the people believe things they hear about the past too easily and uncritically. He also points out that Thucydides, as a historian looking for some accuracy, looks to undermine the foundational myth as a historical inaccuracy. See also Plato's *Hippias Major* 285d-e on the Spartan interest in legends of political origins.

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle agrees with Thucydides in the *Politics* (1311a33-1311b39) about the attack on Hipparchus being personal. Aristotle points out that some conspiracies against monarchies are prompted from anger instead of ambition and he tells us, contrary to Thucydides' claim that it was an insult on Aristogeiton that prompted Harmodius to attack Hipparchus, that it was an insult on Harmodius' sister that prompted Harmodius and Aristogeiton to attack the tyrant together. Plato in the *Symposium* (182c2-d1) has Pausanias suggest that the love of Harmodius and Aristogeiton was contrary to the ambition of rulers for absolute power and that it was detrimental to the tyrants, a position which seems to be closer to what Athenians, in general, believed. Pausanias connects love and philosophy as personal pursuits to non-tyrannical regimes, at least, where the citizens are allowed to have ambitions of their own and form bonds of friendship. Plato has Pausanias treating the personal and public/political interests in the incidents as related, unlike Thucydides and Aristotle, but still there is no reason to believe that Plato thought of the incident in this way, since it is in the context of Pausanias' speech on what love is, whose view cannot be attributed to Plato himself. It is likely that Pausanias is repeating a prominent Athenian belief.

To trace the original usage, we must avoid calling a number of rulers ‘tyrants’, or a number of regimes ‘tyrannies’, when Greek authors themselves do not. It is prudent to avoid this mistake of anachronism in order to allow the original authors to speak for themselves as much as possible. The following order of presentation of how the term is used by different authors is a mixture of chronological and thematic order. I begin with the poet Archilochus since we get the first occurrences of the terms for tyranny in two of his fragments. Then I take up Herodotus and Thucydides as historiographers, the tragic and comic poets, the orators, and then Isocrates. I think that, despite all the ambiguity, elasticity, and complexity that accompany the words for tyranny, it is still possible to clarify how the Greeks used them.

### 1.3 The First Occurrences of the Terms: Archilochus.<sup>27</sup>

Eighth century Greek authors, like Homer and Hesiod, while saying a lot about kings, do not use the term τύραννος or its derivatives in any form. The earliest occurrences we have of the term and its derivatives occur in two fragments of the seventh century BCE in the poems of Archilochus (c.710-676).<sup>28</sup> In one of the poems Archilochus compares himself to a city never conquered and tells his lover in the second person what he has done, what to do, and how people will react to what he does:

Nῦν εἶλες αἰχμῆ καὶ μέγ' ἐξήρω κλέος.  
Κεινης ἄνασσε καὶ τυραννίην ἔχε.  
Πολλοῖσι θην ζηλωτὸς ἀνθρώπων ἔσεαι.

(23. 19-21)<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Citations in this chapter of the terms include line numbers for some authors and section numbers for other authors. I only indicate whether the citations are lines or sections in the first citation of a given author, thus the reader should assume that all citations are lines or sections depending on the first citation.

<sup>28</sup> Hippias, the sophist, also tells us that the word τύραννος, was first used by Archilochus, a poet of the seventh century BCE. Cf. Jacoby, F. (ed.), (1957, 6 F 6).

<sup>29</sup> Archilochus' fragments are from West, M. L. (1971-1972).

you have now taken [me, like the unconquered city] at spear point and made off with great fame.  
Rule it and hold a tyranny.  
Many will envy you.<sup>30</sup>

The poet implies an unspecified feature of the tyrant (or the lover) who holds on to the city (or the loved one) tyrannically, namely, that something about such a person causes people's envy; it is his power or wealth perhaps. It is unclear how we should interpret the imagery of force except that the lover, and perhaps the tyrant, used it to conquer a loved one and a city respectively. Moreover, it is unclear what tyrannical ruling amounts to in the fragment.

A second fragment by Archilochus is a little more helpful and it can be used to illuminate some aspects of the first fragment:

οὐ μοι τὰ Γύγεω τοῦ πολυχρύσου μέλει,  
οὐδ' εἶλέ πώ με ζῆλος, οὐδ' ἀγαιομαι  
θεῶν ἔργα, μεγάλης δ' οὐκ ἔρέω τυραννίδος·  
ἀπόπροθεν γάρ ἐστιν ὀφθαλμῶν ἐμῶν.

(19. 1-4)<sup>31</sup>

I do not care for the things of golden Gyges,  
and envy has not yet caught me, nor am I indignant  
to the deeds of the gods; and I do not long for great  
tyranny, for that is far from my eyes.

Archilochus suggests that an actual tyrant, Gyges,<sup>32</sup> is rich, but this does not invoke the envy of the poet. What causes people to envy tyrants is their wealth (Gyges is said to be

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<sup>30</sup> Addition in brackets mine.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle in *Rhetoric* III 17 1418b31 quotes some of the first line of this passage. He does so in the context of telling us how one can make some remarks about character effective by placing them in a third person's mouth instead of praising oneself directly or saying abusive things about another in the second person. The line by Archilochus quoted by Aristotle in part serves as an example for this rhetorical technique since he tells us that the poet placed these words in the mouth of Charon the carpenter. It seems that Aristotle supposes that his audience knows the whole fragment or poem since he does not quote the whole of the first line. The passage from Aristotle also serves as evidence that the fragment is by Archilochus indeed. Cf. Herodotus' *Histories* I.12 where he tells us that the Gyges who usurped the throne of Lydia is mentioned by Archilochus as his contemporary.

<sup>32</sup> Gyges is mentioned famously by Plato in *Republic* Book II as an expression of the tyrant or the unjust person *par-excellence*.

golden in many ways). If we import this sense in the first fragment's analogy of lover and tyrant, we could say that the lover will be envied since he has a valuable possession, the loved one, like the tyrant has wealth. In the second fragment the poet criticizes tyranny, and its pursuit of wealth in particular. He tells us that he is not envious of the tyrant's wealth and neither does he wish for tyranny (either as its subject or, most likely, to be the tyrant).

Archilochus also points out that he is not indignant regarding the deeds of the gods and that he does not wish for tyranny. We could interpret the gods as tyrants in the sense that they are free to do what they want; they are absolute sovereigns over humans.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Archilochus seems to suggest that while tyrants are free to do what they want, be they gods or human, the poet facing the option of being a human tyrant, would not choose it. The poet seems to argue that being a human tyrant does not seem appropriate since tyrants, like Gyges, who seek to be able to do what they want challenge the power of the gods to the point of *hubris* or impiety.

The fragments suggest a number of features that make Archilochus' view of human tyranny negative. Archilochus suggests that: tyranny comes about by force (this makes tyrants usurpers); tyrants have wealth and the ruling power (something like absolute power) to do what they want; people envy it due to its wealth, its freedom, and its power to do whatever the tyrant desires; the life of tyranny is not a good option for

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<sup>33</sup> Some of Archilochus' fragments talk about the deeds of the gods, most notably (130. 1-5) which indicates that all things are easy for the gods and that they may help those who are destitute as well as destroy those who stand firm on their feet when they choose. In this fragment Archilochus points out that humans live in a tragic world which entails the possibility of receiving the help as well as the wrath of the gods, thus all good and bad fortune is attributed to, and depends on, the gods who are portrayed as the ultimate rulers of the universe, that is, as absolute sovereigns.

human beings.<sup>34</sup> Humans should not envy tyranny, since more fitting lives are available for them, and since only divine tyranny is justified in the universe. Archilochus' use of "tyranny" entails questions concerning the justice of tyranny, and the relation of tyranny to happiness, which we find Plato discussing in great detail. Archilochus does not make a distinction between tyranny and other types of ruling, like kingship, but, mentioning Gyges, who was a monarch, suggests that he has in mind absolute monarchy at least. Now let us turn to Herodotus' *Histories*.

#### 1.4 Herodotus' *Histories*.

Herodotus (c. 490-420) uses the words for tyranny more than one hundred times, most of the time neutrally.<sup>35</sup> There are some passages where he attaches positive features to *tyranny* or uses it with positive connotations: in 1.96.1-2 (Book 1, Chapter 96, sections 1-2) and at 1.100.1 he says that Deioces was infatuated with tyranny and went after it, that he professed to be after justice, and that after he gained power he was liked by the people for his justice since they had experienced much injustice before. Herodotus goes on to tell us that Deioces was a defender of justice, which was shown by his decisions, and in these passages Herodotus attaches justice to a tyranny. At 3.52.3 we see Periander asking his son, who had a grudge against him due to some dispute they had, and who was forced to live in the open, whether he likes his present way of life or would prefer to

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<sup>34</sup> This is suggested by the second fragment but not by the first.

<sup>35</sup> See. 1.6.1, 1.7.2, 1.14.1 (x2), 1.15.1, 1.20.1, 1.23.1, 1.59.1, 1.60.1, 1.60.2, 1.61.3, 1.64.1, 1.64.3, 1.73.3, 1.77.1, 1.109.4, 1.163.2, 2.147.4 (here Herodotus refers to twelve kings of Egypt as tyrants, so tyrants were not always thought of as monarchical absolute rulers), 3.50.2, 3.53.1, 3.53.3, 3.53.6, 3.120.2, 3.145.1, 4.98.1, 4.137.1-2 (x2), 4.138.1, 5.11.2 (x4), 5.12.1, 5.30.2, 5.32.1, 5.38.2 (x2), 5.46.2, 5.49.1, 5.62.1, 5.62.2, 5.64.2, 5.65.5, 5.67.1, 5.74.1, 5.94.1, 5.98.2, 5.109.1, 6.1.1, 6.9.2, 6.10.1, 6.13.2, 6.23.2, 6.23.3, 6.34.1, 6.36.1, 6.123.1-2, 6.126.1, 7.10C.2 (x2), 7.52.2, 7.99.1, 7.154.1, 7.155.1, 7.163.1, 7.195.1, 8.67.2, 8.85.3, 8.132.2, 8.137.1, 8.137.2, 9.90.1. All references to Herodotus consult the Greek from Godley A. D. (1920).

inherit his tyranny. Herodotus implies that Periander thinks of tyranny as something choice worthy, and that this is expected since he is a person who occupies that position. At 3.125.2 Herodotus tells us that Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, could not be compared to anyone for his magnificence except to the tyrants of Syracuse, and at 5.113.2 we find out that Aristocyprus the king (βασιλεύς) of the Solians in Cyprus was extolled by Solon as the greatest of tyrants. In these few passages Herodotus presents tyranny as good or possibly good monarchy and we may wonder whether he endorses this position. A look at passages where he uses “tyranny” negatively will prove that he does not.

Passages with negative use of “tyranny” reveal that Herodotus opposes tyranny, that he favors democracy, and that he does not distinguish tyranny from other types of governments, like kingship. We can make the case that Herodotus is very critical of tyranny, where tyranny is the same as monarchy, but in order to provide sufficient evidence for this claim it is necessary to distinguish between two types of passages in the *Histories*. We should distinguish between passages where Herodotus speaks in his own name, which allow us to know his own position, and passages where he presents someone’s speech in first person narrative. The passages above where Herodotus associates tyranny with positive features are of the latter kind, thus we cannot conclude that Herodotus thinks of tyranny favorably. Once we find passages in which Herodotus speaks in his own name and condemns tyranny, then we can conclude, with strong likelihood, that he does endorse critiques of tyranny coming from the mouths of people portrayed in the *Histories*.

At 1.61.1 he tells us that Peisistratus had married Megacles’ daughter but because he had children of his own and was aware of a curse in the Alcmaeonid family he

“refused normal intercourse with her and lay with her in an unnatural way.” Megacles saw this as an offense, joined forces with the opponents of the Peisistratids, and ousted them from Athens. Ten years later the Peisistratids returned and were joined by their supporters who loved tyranny more than freedom (1.62.1). In this passage, Herodotus is critical of the Peisistratids (Peisistratus committed unnatural and thus immoral sexual acts), and he implies that loving tyranny more than freedom is a mistake. This is the first passage in which Herodotus explicitly attacks tyranny in favor of freedom.

Later on in Book I he tells us that Croesus, after being arrested by Cyrus and placed in a pyre to be executed, shouts that he would rather talk to all tyrants than have great wealth. As Herodotus implies, Croesus’ announcement is a repetition of Solon’s saying that no one is blessed until the end of his life. Croesus seems to interpret Solon’s saying as the idea that good fortune does not last (1.86.4). Cyrus recognizing that his good fortune also may not last either decides to spare Croesus’ life. Since Croesus thought of being a tyrant as great fortune, and it did not last until the end of his life, there is a negative connotation attached to the good fortune of being a tyrant. The point is that since the good fortune of being a tyrant does not last until the end of someone’s life, and happiness or blessedness is measured at the end of one’s life, tyranny cannot make one happy or blessed. This is another passage where Herodotus reveals his own thoughts on tyranny.

In Book 3 Otanes (3.80 ff.) begins a speech in support of popular government in Persia. He says that monarchy is neither good nor pleasant since it is full of insolence (*hubris*) on the part of the ruler, the ruler can do whatever he wants with impunity, the ruler does many evil things either out of envy or insolence, he likes slander, he dislikes

and envies the best people and likes the worst, he is inconsistent since he gets angry when he does not get people's full attention and when he does he accuses them of flattery, he upsets the ways of the ancestors, he rapes women, and he kills indiscriminately. He also says that the tyrant should be free of envy since he has all good things (3.80.4). In this chapter (80) Herodotus presents Otanes' critique of all monarchies, which is the same as tyranny, since he uses both the words *μοναρχία* (monarchy) and *τύραννον* (tyrant) to speak of the badness of such a regime. Tyrants should be neither envious, nor do all the bad things they do out of envy, but they do these things and this makes all monarchies wicked in the ways listed above. Otanes goes on to say that democracy lacks all the evils of monarchy or tyranny, and it has several positive features such as equality under the law (*ἰσονομία*), the assigning of offices by lot, holding power accountable, and making deliberations publicly.

Megabazus replies to Otanes that he agrees with his critique of tyranny (*τυραννίδα*) (3.81.1) and goes on to say that, instead of democracy which will replace the insolence of the tyrant (*τύραννου*) for that of the masses, the best regime would be oligarchy which is more likely to have people ruling with knowledge instead of the masses who cannot rule with knowledge (3.81.2). Megabazus' reply is further evidence that tyranny and all monarchies are treated as the same in this chapter; such a regime is evil since it has the negative features listed above. While this critique of all monarchies as tyrannies is offered from Otanes' and Megabazus' mouths instead of Herodotus',



further passages will allow us to conclude that Herodotus endorses the idea that tyranny has all the negative features listed in Otanes' speech above.<sup>36</sup>

At 3.143.1 Herodotus tells us that Maiandrios, realizing that someone else might seize power (ἀρχήν) and become tyrant (τύραννος), went to the citadel and called people to come to him so that he could talk to them about the money of the city. But, by using this pretext he seized them instead. This is an instance where someone becomes a tyrant through violent and deceptive means.

In Book 5 we see Aristagoras of Samos, in his opposition to Darius, gave up his tyranny (τυραννίδα) of Miletus as a pretense, and installed equality of government (ἰσονομία) so that the Milesians might join his revolt (5.37.2). He proceeded to do the same things to the rest of Ionia; he banished some tyrants (τυράννων) and some others (τύραννους), he handed to their cities to please them. The fact that Herodotus calls the giving up of tyranny “a pretense,” suggests that he thinks of Aristagoras' giving up of tyranny as a strategic move. The goal of such a pretense was to expand his own tyranny or absolute rule of the region later.

At 5.44.2 we are told that the Crotonians tell a story of Callias, a diviner, as aiding them against the Sybarites when he had fled from the tyrant (τύραννου) Telys, the Sybarite ruler. We should note that Herodotus reports two stories. The first story is told by the Sybarites who say that they marched against Croton with their king (βασιλέα). The second story is the Crotonian version and when Herodotus reports it he calls Telys “a tyrant.” Perhaps he is reporting that the Sybarites thought of their ruler as a king and the

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<sup>36</sup> See my discussion of the following passages after this passage: 5.66.1 (even though in this passage Herodotus speaks of the tyranny in Athens which he does not call a monarchy), 5.78.1, 5.91.1, 6.5.1, 6.22.1, 6.43.3, 6.127.3, 7.165.1, 8.142.5.

Crotonians thought of the ruler of their enemies as a tyrant, a distinction which seems to ascribe negative connotations to tyrants and positive ones to kings.

Later on, Herodotus tells us that Aristagoras (of Samos), after being forced to leave Sparta, went to Athens, which had been freed from its tyrants (τυράννων) and he begins to tell us how this liberation took place (5.55.1). Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant (τύραννου) Hippias, was slain by Harmodius and Aristogeiton, and after this the Athenians were subject to tyranny for four years, which was even more absolute (ἐτυραννεῦντο καὶ μᾶλλον) than before. This passage presents a tyranny that became worse than it was before by becoming more absolute and this shows that both the earlier and the subsequent, more strict, tyranny were bad. At 5.66.1 Herodotus tells us that Athens which was great before became even greater after it was rid of the tyrants (τυράννων). Telling us that democracy was better for Athens than the tyranny was suggests that tyranny is not as good as democracy and that it hindered growth to greatness. Herodotus also tells us that Cylon wanted tyranny (τυραννίδι) in Athens and that he tried to take over the citadel but, his failure to do so led to a death sentence and execution (5.71.1). This passage presents a person attempting to usurp the rule of the city by violent means and one who meets a violent death.

At 5.78.1 Herodotus contrasts the democracy in Athens with the previous tyranny and we get his own endorsement of democracy as better than tyranny:

So the Athenians grew in power and proved, not in one respect only but in all, that equality (ἰσηγορίη) is a good thing. Evidence for this is the fact that while they were under tyrannical rulers (τυράννων), the Athenians were no better in war than any of their neighbors, yet once they got rid of their tyrants, they were by far the best of all. This, then, shows that while they were being tyrannized (τυραννεύομενοι), they were, as men working for a master (δεσπότη), cowardly, but when they were freed, each one was eager to achieve for himself.

Herodotus seems to endorse the presence of ἰσηγορία (freedom of speech or equality) over tyrannical rule. By having it, the Athenians were better in war and were each eager to achieve things for himself. He also treats being ruled under a tyrant as the equivalent to being ruled by a master (like a slave). In this passage Herodotus condemns tyranny and endorses democracy while he does not use the word μοναρχία as he did in the passages where Otanes and Megabazus condemn all monarchies and tyranny as equivalent.

At 5.91.1 Herodotus compares tyranny to being ruled by a master once again. He tells us that the Spartans, after realizing that the Athenians, on gaining freedom would become as powerful as them but would remain weak if they were under a tyranny (τυραννίδος) and ready to serve a master, attempted to bring Hippias back as a tyrant of Athens. This is another passage in which there is an explicit Herodotean critique of tyranny.

At 5.92A Sosicles of Corinth begins a speech in which he accuses the Spartans for having a double standard in their desire to set up tyrannies (τυραννίδας) elsewhere when they themselves guard against it. This speech amounts to a critique of tyranny while also criticizing Sparta for seeking to pursue its establishment around Greece. He points out that the world will be upside down (heaven in the earth and earth in heaven, fish will dwell on the earth and men in the sea) now that the Spartans have chosen to get rid of equal power (ἰσοκρατίας) and install tyrannies in cities, which is the most unjust (ἄδικότερον) and most bloodthirsty (μιαιφονότερον) thing for humans. Sosicles also says that if it seems good to Spartans that cities should be ruled by tyrants (τυραννεύεσθαι) they should set a tyrant (τύραννον) for themselves first and then for

others. As things are however the Spartans have taken precautions to prevent tyrants (τυράννων) from ruling Sparta. He also points out that when Cypselus gained the tyranny (τυραννεύσας) in Corinth he came to be the sort of man who drove many Corinthians into exile, took their wealth, and killed many of them (5.92E). Then at 5.92F Sosicles continues his critique of tyranny by telling the story of Periander who was to begin a rule milder than his father in Corinth but, after he held counsel with Thrasybulus, the tyrant of Miletus, he became more bloodthirsty (μιαιφονότερος) than Cypselus (his father). Periander sent a messenger to Thrasybulus to ask how he should rule. Thrasybulus cut the tallest plants in a corn field which sent the message that a ruler should murder the best people (in influence and ability) in the city as challengers to his power. After this there was no crime that Periander did not commit against the Corinthians. At 5.92G Sosicles tells us that Periander slept with his wife's dead body, that he stripped all the women in Corinth naked and that he burned their clothes due to an oracle. Then he says that this is tyranny (τυραννίς) and its works and that the Spartans should not seek it, nor attempt to bring Hippias back into power or else the Corinthians will not support them.

Later on in Book 5 Herodotus tells us of the tyrant Stesenor of Curium in Cyprus who betrayed Onesilus and his supporters in the revolution against Persian control of the island. This was a betrayal which contributed to the victory of the Persians (5.113.1). As he presents this act of betrayal as morally bad, so he attributes to a tyrant betrayal with dire consequences, thus assigning further negative connotations to tyranny. At 6.5.1 Herodotus tells us that the Milesians were glad to be rid of Aristagoras and that they had no desire to be ruled by another tyrant since they had tasted freedom. This is another

passage where Herodotus praises freedom and endorses democracy, and condemns tyranny in his own name.

The Samians resolved to sail to a colony before Aeaces the tyrant (τύραννον) and the Medes arrived to enslave them (δουλεύειν, 6.22.1). It seems that Aeaces is called a tyrant in these passages with negative connotations, given that Herodotus endorses freedom, and equality (ἰσονομία and ἰσηγορία) in earlier passages, and that he condemns being ruled by a tyrant as being ruled as a slave by a master. At 6.43.3 we read of Mardonius who deposed the Ionian tyrants (τύραννους) and set up democracies in their cities. Herodotus calls this a great marvel for the Greeks who did not believe Otanes when he said that Persia would have democracy. Thus, this is another passage in which he endorses democracy rather than tyranny. Then, we see that Phidon, the tyrant of Argos, did the most insolent (ὑβρίσαντος μέγιστα) thing done by a Greek, namely trying to manage the Olympic games himself instead allowing the Eleians do so since this was their task (6.127.3). At 7.165.1 Herodotus tells us that Anaxilaus the tyrant of Rhegium gave his own children as hostages to Hamilcar, king of Carthage, to persuade him to undertake an expedition. This passage attaches another negative feature, which shows the tyrant's willingness to carry out his plans at all costs, willing to risk even the lives of his own children. Finally at 8.142.5 we are told that the Spartans warned the Athenians that Alexander the Macedonian praised Mardonius as a tyrant, because he was the fellow worker of a tyrant and he was trying to deceive them. This accusation colors a tyrant as willing to deceive to carry out his plans.

Our survey of passages where Herodotus uses the words for *tyranny* and attaches negative connotations to it makes it quite clear that he condemned tyranny and that he

endorsed democracy instead. It is unclear whether Herodotus' critique of tyranny and his endorsement of the positions of its opponents whom he presents as speaking in their own name in the *Histories*, are really distinguishable from a critique of monarchy as such. Thus, we should interpret his critique of tyranny as a critique of monarchy in favor of democracy. Herodotus is a non-Athenian author who criticizes tyranny and who praises democracy but we know that he spent considerable time in democratic Athens. He was therefore familiar with, or at least exposed to, the Athenian experience of tyranny and the beliefs of the democratic Athenians on tyranny. It is possible that his endorsement of democracy may have been influenced by his Athenian experience. Perhaps this influence extends to the features and connotations he attaches to the terms for tyranny when he criticizes it.

### 1.5 Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War*.

In the beginning of the *Peloponnesian War*, in the midst of explaining how Greek cities acquired strong navies, Thucydides tells us how tyrannies came to be numerous in the Greek world. Following the Trojan war, there was a lot of political unrest and “Even after the Trojan war Hellas was engaged in removing and settling, and thus could not attain the quiet which must precede growth” (1.12.1).<sup>37</sup> Then he tells us:

But as the power of Hellas grew, and the acquisition of wealth became more an object, the revenues of the states increasing, tyrannies (τυραννίδες) were by their means established almost everywhere—the old form of government being hereditary kingship with definite prerogatives—and Hellas began to fit out fleets and apply herself more closely to the sea (1.13.1).

Thucydides points out that tyrannies came about after considerable political unrest, which rendered hereditary kingship less frequent a regime. What brought about tyrannies was

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<sup>37</sup> Translations from Thucydides are from Wick (1982) unless otherwise noted.

the acquisition of wealth and the means by which they came about, even though Thucydides does not tell us explicitly what these means were. We may suppose, that it was probably through violent struggle since they were not regimes that involved a hereditary handover, nor is it likely that people were too easily persuaded to be ruled by a monarch. The distinction between kingship and tyranny in this passage provides us with a way to think of tyranny as such, namely as a regime whose historical beginnings and frequency were violent and involved the presence of a considerable wealth. Such a description of tyranny, while not very clear, still treats it as a different sort of monarchy than kingship, and in Thucydides we get the first explicit distinction of monarchy into kingship and tyranny, which he seems to apply in the rest of the work.

Let us begin by looking at the passages in which Thucydides uses the words of tyranny negatively.<sup>38</sup> At 1.17.1 he tells us that one of the obstacles to the growth of the Greeks was the ruling of tyrants (τύραννοι) in many places since they were in the habit of providing for themselves, “looking solely for their personal comfort alone and family aggrandizement, made safety the great aim of their policy, and prevented anything great proceeding from them.” This, he tells us, was true of the Greek tyrants in the mainland but not of the tyrants in Sicily who accomplished great things. Thucydides treats rule by tyrants, at least in the mainland, as stifling political growth and the achievement of great things whatever these may be. He thus presents tyranny, at least in part, as bad. What seems bad about tyranny in this sense is the way it ruled, namely selfishly.

Josiah Ober, considers the same passage and argues, correctly, that in this part of the text Thucydides distinguishes between regimes or states which have either external or

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<sup>38</sup> He uses it neutrally at: Book 1, chapter 13, section 6, 1.14.2, 1.20.2, 1.26.3, 1.126.5, 2.15.5, 2.30.1, 3.104.2, 6.4.2, 6.4.5, 6.5.3, 6.54.1, 6.54.2, 6.54.3, 6.54.6, 6.55.3, 6.55.1, 6.55.2, 6.55.4, 6.59.3, 6.59.4, and at 6.94.1.

internal obstacles to growth.<sup>39</sup> He points out that Thucydides' prime example of an internal obstacle for political growth is being ruled by a tyrant as 1.17.1 indicates, and that here, Thucydides distinguishes between the selfish interest of the powerful person and the power or greatness of the state. One of the internal reasons a state cannot become great is due to the ruler serving his selfish interests. Thus, in this passage we find tyranny associated with selfish ruling which is portrayed as problematic. We can also conclude that Thucydides in this passage implies that tyrannies because of their selfish rule achieved relatively little in his experience.<sup>40</sup>

At 1.18.1 he tells us of the greatness of Sparta being able to have a stable regime with good laws, which allowed it to be free of tyrants (ἀτυρράνευτος) and to possess the same form of government for four hundred years. Given the passage at 1.12-13 and this one, where Thucydides points out that stable regimes like Sparta, were free from tyranny, we can conclude, that for Thucydides, tyrants came about during periods of political unrest. Given the passage at 1.17.1 and this one, we can gather, once more, that Thucydides thought of tyranny as bad since it stifled political growth which only stable and non-tyrannical governments like the Spartan one could achieve. Another feature that

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<sup>39</sup> Ober (1996, 64). Ober presents Thucydides as a critic of Athenian democracy. The main criticism he attributes to Thucydides is that democracy is an extremely problematic regime when it does not have competent leaders, like Pericles and Themistocles, to direct the many, and it becomes democracy in action instead of merely democracy in speech. Thucydides says that Athens under Pericles became “in *logos* a democracy, in *ergon* the rule of the foremost man (*tou protou andros*)” (2.65.9). cf. 78-79, 91-94.

<sup>40</sup> Ober argues that although Thucydides holds that human nature entails acting out of perceived self-interest, but acting so only as an individual was a rather bad extreme. Acting out of self-interest entails cooperation with others for Thucydides, Ober argues, so he talks of states acting selfishly with approval since it allows cities to thrive but not with any approval in the case of individuals since such behavior when coupled with political power hinders the thriving and growth of any city (67-69). I think this is an accurate reading of how Thucydides views the realm of politics generally. Some of the implications of such a reading is that it is unclear whether it is morally bad for Thucydides when individuals pursue their selfish interests alone or only because this does not allow cities to be stable and thrive. Another implication is that it seems that Thucydides seems to think that it is permissible for states to do anything that furthers their growth to greatness regardless of whether this is unjust. Politics seems to be more about survival and power rather than justice for Thucydides.



is important to note here is that, for Thucydides, a stable government such as Sparta owes its stability, partially at least, to the presence of good laws, something which he implies tyrannies lack. Thus, Thucydides implies that tyrannies are lawless.

Thucydides tells us that Pausanias, the Spartan general, was accused by many Greeks for being very violent during an expedition to Byzantium and Cyprus and that he was called back to Sparta to answer to these accusations (1.94-1.95). Thucydides characterizes Pausanias as mimicking tyranny (τυραννίδος) rather than generalship in many of his ways (1.95.3). Here we see tyranny associated with extreme and unnecessary violence.

At 1.122.3 the Corinthians in a speech, prior to the inception of the war, tell the Spartans that if they do not resist Athens by forming an alliance composed of various states, then the Athenians will enslave them and there will be a new tyrant state (τύραννον πόλιν), even though they choose monarchies (μοναρχίαι) in many individual states. In this passage we see tyranny associated with slavery while portrayed as equivalent to monarchy—or monarchy is treated as equivalent to tyranny—which is regarded as bad by the Corinthians. At 1.124.3 the Corinthians conclude this speech by saying:

We must believe that the tyrant city (πόλιν τύραννον) that has been established in Hellas has been established against all alike, with a program of universal empire (ήγησάμενοι επί πάσιν), part fulfilled, part in contemplation; let us then attack and reduce it, and win future security for ourselves and freedom for the Hellenes who are now enslaved.

In this passage we see tyranny associated with slavery again, and the equivalence of tyranny and empire, which present the following position: Athens is a tyrant-city which wants to have universal empire and this amounts to slavery. While this speech cannot be read as a presentation of Thucydides' position since it is in the voice of other people, we

still get the idea, that at least some people thought of tyranny as slavery and use this belief to make an argument against Athenian imperialism.

At 2.63.1 which is in the middle of Pericles' last speech in the Assembly, during the second year of the war, he tells the Athenian audience that they are not fighting only to prevent their enslavement and to be independent but also not to lose their empire. He goes on to say that it is no longer possible to pull back from the war since what they hold, i.e. the empire, is "like a tyranny" (τυραννίδα) and that "to take it perhaps was unjust (ἄδικον), but to let it go is unsafe (ἐπικίνδυνον)" (2.63.2).<sup>41</sup> In this speech Pericles attempts to divert the anger of the Athenians towards him and to restore their confidence in the war. He seeks to prevent them from giving up their empire by highlighting the dangers of appearing weak in the Greek world. Pericles also presents injustice in this passage as preferable to self-destruction or loss of power.<sup>42</sup> Here tyranny is associated with empire and with injustice. Empire is tyranny between states rather than between an individual ruler and subjects, thus it may be exercised by any sort of regime conceivably, like the Athenian democracy. In this passage we also get the idea that a regime may have double standards. Thucydides through the speech by Pericles implies that democracy is

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<sup>41</sup> Translation mine. We should notice that having Pericles suggest that taking empire was unjust but giving it up is dangerous, shows that he prefers to treat others unjustly rather than to be treated unjustly, i.e. that doing injustice is better than suffering it. See also Isocrates' *Panathenaicus* 117 ff. where he points out that the Athenians made the conscious choice of preferring to harm others to support and retain their power in the Greek world than to suffer harm by the Spartans. This is clearly connected to Socrates' opposition to this claim, i.e. that doing injustice is worse than suffering it (see for example the *Gorgias* 4763a ff.) even though Socrates speaks of individuals rather than cities.

<sup>42</sup> Ober, also points out that in this passage Pericles warns the Athenians of the dangers of giving up their empire even if it is unjust to hold it and pursue it. He goes on to explain what some of the dangers of doing so might have been: (1) loss of revenues that provided for fortified security and maintenance of the navy, (2) states that had lost their autonomy under the Athenian empire could try to get revenge for past wrongs (90-91). Ober does not point out the strong relation of tyranny and empire with injustice that Thucydides presents us with. This is not to say that such a presentation makes Thucydides hold the position that tyranny is morally bad in the political world but it is interesting given the emphasis on tyranny and its injustice in Plato and Aristotle which is part of their argument for tyranny being the worst sort of regime.

not a tyranny internally and that it is opposed to tyranny, but it is a tyranny “internationally.” “Like a tyranny” refers to not being a tyranny internally but a tyranny in relation to other states. Thucydides seems to open the door to the problem of having tyranny not only as a regime by itself but as a political arrangement between regimes.

In Book 3 Cleon, whom Thucydides describes as the most violent man in Athens, and as the one who attempts to persuade the Athenians to massacre the Mytilineans for revolting against Athens, gives a speech during which he tells the Athenians that they cannot show any compassion since this would show weakness (3.37.2). He insists that instead, they should try to get their obedience by showing their strength, i.e., by killing all the men in Mytilene, since they are running a tyranny (τυραννίδα). Here we see a violent man endorsing violence in foreign relations and we also see tyranny associated with violence once again.<sup>43</sup> Unlike Pericles’ last Assembly speech Cleon does not claim that Athens is “like a tyranny” but that it is a tyranny. The fact that Thucydides qualifies Cleon as the most violent man in Athens who suggests that the Athenians should demonstrate their strength by massacre, makes the association of violence and tyranny strong and violence a negative feature of tyranny.

Later on, during a speech of the Thebans addressing the Spartans in the fifth year of the war, the Thebans attempt to excuse their support of the Persians (3.62.3). They say that they acted in this way since they were not under a democracy or an oligarchy but under a government closest to a tyranny (τυράννου), the dynastic rule of the few, which is most opposed to law and good government. The few sovereigns hoped that the success

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<sup>43</sup> This is the Cleon in Aristophanes’ *Wasps* and the one who exiled Thucydides for military incapacity. Thus, the personal issues between Thucydides and Cleon may have influenced Thucydides’ judgment of him. It is unclear whether we should read the association of violence to tyranny as explaining tyranny in any way or as a way in which Thucydides seeks to present Cleon in a negative light, i.e. by presenting him both as violent and as tyrannical.

of the Persians would strengthen their power and they invited the Persians into the city. In this passage we get the suggestions that tyranny is most opposed to law and that it is the sort of regime that forces people to do what is in the perceived interest of the rulers and the maintenance or enhancement of their power.

At 6.15.4 Thucydides tells us of the perception of Alcibiades by most Athenians:

Alarmed at the greatness of his license in his own life and habits, and of the ambition which he showed in all things whatsoever that he undertook, the mass of the people set him down as a pretender to the tyranny (τυραννίδος), and became his enemies.

This seems to be another instance in which someone is accused of being tyrannical in the sense of not being democratic. The suggestion is that the Athenians perceived Alcibiades as tyrannical since he was acting as superior to others, not as their equal. Thucydides presents this passage as an introduction to Alcibiades' speech in favor of the Sicilian expedition. He seems to be in favor of Alcibiades' desires for the state and he implies that the Athenians did not like Alcibiades since they perceived him as superior to them.<sup>44</sup>

At 6.36 Athenagoras addresses his fellow Syracusans prior to the expedition of the Athenians to Sicily regarding rumors that the Athenians have launched an expedition against Sicily. He tells them that the Athenians would not dare to attack Sicily since it would be too dangerous for them. He accuses those who began such rumors of trying to agitate things, something which may cause a tyranny (τυραννίδας) like Sicily has known to happen before (6.38.3). Athenagoras seems to imply that making people afraid of a strong enemy like the Athenians creates such turmoil that people who aspire to tyranny may take advantage of. This fits with what Thucydides pointed out at 1.13.1 where he said that tyrannies became very common sorts of government after the political turmoil that followed the Trojan war.

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<sup>44</sup> This point is made by Ober (1996,110).

Thucydides tells us of the Athenian attitude during the investigations concerning the incident of the mutilation of the Hermae. The Athenians ended up committing a number of unjust acts, namely killing a lot of innocent people because they had not questioned informers well and took their word for the accusations they presented to them.<sup>45</sup> Thucydides attributes this attitude of intense suspicion to the Athenian's memory of how bad (χαλεπήν) Peisistratus and his son's tyranny was before it was overthrown by the Spartans (6.53.3). He also says that the Athenians, remembering the events of the early tyranny from hearsay, were suspicious of the person charged in the affair of the mysteries and thought that it was all part of an oligarchic and tyrannical conspiracy (6.60.1).<sup>46</sup> Thucydides seems to imply that the Athenians were so eager to defend their democracy as they saw it that any challenge to it, like the sacrilegious mutilation of the Hermae did not allow them to be very just or fair-minded. While the argument Thucydides makes in the first passage concerns the injustice committed by Athenians, he also reveals the Athenian memory concerning the terrible nature of the earlier tyranny. These passages present us with further examples of the Athenian state of mind in which anything challenging the democracy and its values was immediately thought to be terrible tyranny.

At 6.59.2 we read that the tyranny in Athens became worse (χαλεποτέρα) after Hipparchus was killed. Hippias killed a lot of people because he was afraid of people challenging his authority and taking over his power over Athens. This passage suggests

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<sup>45</sup> The Athenians had small statues called *hermae* throughout the city and one night in 415, prior to the departure of the Sicilian expedition, some people cut off the phalluses of the statues thus performing a sacrilegious act which was investigated by the city. This act was also seen as a bad omen for the departing expedition which was a total failure.

<sup>46</sup> The affair of the mysteries regarded the improper performance of religious mysteries and thus another sacrilegious incident.

that the tyranny was bad already since it became *worse* after the murder of Hipparchus, and it seems to be a repetition of what Herodotus told us in the *Histories* (5.55.1). Here Thucydides tells us in his own voice that the tyranny of Hippias was a bad government for Athens.

At 6.85.1 Euphemus, an Athenian ambassador, speaking to the Syracusans tells them,

Besides, for tyrants and imperial cities nothing is unreasonable if expedient, no one a kinsman unless sure; but friendship or enmity is everywhere an affair of time and circumstance. Here in Sicily, our interest is not to weaken our friends, but by means of their strength to cripple our enemies. Why doubt this? In Hellas we treat our allies as we find them useful.

While this passage does not carry any negative connotations as Thucydides presents it, it shows the double standard of Athenian politics. On the one hand, as we saw the Athenians labeled people “tyrants” to defame them and they seemed to have been afraid of tyranny at home. On the other hand, in foreign affairs, they used people in a tyrannical manner according to their interests as the passage above suggests.

At 6.89.4 Alcibiades speaks to the Spartans after he abandons his command of the Greek navy. He tells them that Athenians have always been hostile to tyrants and that those who oppose arbitrary power are called common (δημος), and this hostility to tyranny, as well as the fact that democracy was the established regime at the time encouraged him and his friends to act as leaders of the multitude (πλήθους). He says that he and his friends tried to limit the licentious temper of the people in the democracy while others tried to lead the mob (ὄχλον) astray, like the people who banished him. Then, he points out that it would have been better to have altered the democracy but that was impossible at the time. In this passage Thucydides tells us once more of the Athenian hostility to tyranny and of Alcibiades’ hostility to democracy.

Finally at 6.86.4 Thucydides tells us of one Theramenes who was one of the subverters of the democracy. He was a very able man in council as well as in debate and he led Athens away from freedom almost a hundred years after the tyrants (the Peisistratids) were deposed, which was no small matter for the Athenians. This suggests that after the democracy was subverted it returned back to tyranny which was intolerable to Athenians since they were so used to and enamored of freedom.

Thucydides also uses the words for tyranny positively one time where he says that the Peisistratids had a government that

was not so grievous to the multitude, or in any way odious in practice; and these tyrants cultivated wisdom and virtue as much as any, and without exacting from the Athenians more than a twentieth of their income, splendidly adorned the city, and carried on their wars, and provided sacrifices for the temples (6.45.5).

In this passage he suggests that the Peisistratids were an exception to what tyrants do generally, namely, pursue their personal interests and stifle the growth of their states. Thus tyrannies may be acceptable regimes for Thucydides as long as they may further the interest of the whole city. But, notice that earlier (6.59.2) Thucydides presented the tyranny of the Peisistratid Hippias as worse than before suggesting that the tyranny was bad already. Perhaps all Thucydides means here is that Peisistratus' tyranny was not as bad as that of his son Hippias.

There are several conclusion we can draw concerning Thucydides' view of tyranny. Descriptively we can conclude that:

- (1) there are two types of tyranny, an internal one which concerns the governing of citizens, and an external or international one, which concerns the governing of states by other states (empire).

(2) in internal terms, he distinguishes tyranny and kingship (at least of the hereditary type) as different types of monarchy.

(3) there are two forms a tyranny, of the internal or the external kind, may take and these are, either pursuing the interests of the rulers or, the interests and greatness of the city.

We may wonder what the interests or greatness of the city are exactly, but Thucydides seems to imply that anything is in the interest of the city as long as it furthers its possession of power and wealth, the stability of its political structure, and its ability to last or survive.

In prescriptive terms Thucydides both condemns and endorses tyranny based on the violation or the fulfillment of a normative criterion. His usage of the terms for tyranny in the above passages suggests that he saw tyranny as a problematic state only when it stifled political growth. He endorses tyranny as long as it applies the normative criterion of pursuing the city's interests and furthering its growth. Tyranny seems acceptable to Thucydides in two manners exhibited by at least two historical instances: (1) either tyranny is exercised by a state on other states, as empire, like Athens did, or (2) the tyrant, internally, like the Peisistratids did according to Thucydides, furthers the interests of the city and makes it great. Thucydides does associate violence, injustice, and slavery with tyranny but these are not what he finds problematic with it as long as these do not violate his normative criterion above. His usage of the terms for tyranny also suggests the Athenian self-perception as anti-tyrannical given the experiences with tyranny, especially that of the Peisistratid era.



## 1.6 The Tragic Poets and Aristophanes.

Aeschylus (525-456) uses the terms for tyranny in three of his tragedies: the *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Bearers*, and the *Prometheus Bound*. In the *Agamemnon* he uses the term once neutrally (line 810) and three times negatively. Aeschylus has the chorus point out that they should attack Aegisthus before he sets up a tyranny and that death is preferable to tyranny (1348 ff.). The chorus also says that it is doubtful whether Aegisthus could be their tyrant since he could not kill Agamemnon, their king (ἄναξ), himself (1617). While his use of the term in these two passages is vague we can conclude that he presents tyranny in negative terms. The chorus at 1348ff. prefers death rather than tyranny, which may suggest that Aegisthus will be an unjust ruler who would treat them like slaves. Further the chorus distinguishes between Agamemnon as their king and Aegisthus as a tyrant at 1617, and thinks of the latter as bad, which suggests that whatever tyranny means exactly in this context it is bad. It could be that Aegisthus cannot be a legitimate ruler since he is about to take over by force or that he will be a terrible ruler who would rule unjustly, or both. In *The Libation Bearers* Aeschylus uses the term neutrally to refer to rulers (354 and 479), to refer to the powers of the underworld as sovereign (τυραννίδες) (405), and to the tyrants that killed Orestes' father (973). None of these occurrences suggests that he uses the term in a negative sense in this tragedy.

Aeschylus uses the term most often in the *Prometheus Bound*, but matters there are complicated since one of the major themes of the tragedy is the extent of Zeus' justice as the new ruler of the gods. The term is used a number of times to refer to Zeus as the absolute ruler of the gods even though it is unclear if any of these occurrences suggests

that Zeus is a tyrant in the negative sense of the term.<sup>47</sup> There are other instances where the term is used along with indications that Zeus is an unjust ruler. At 196 Prometheus points out that he helped Zeus become a tyrant, that he came to power through deceptive and violent means, and that it is an inherent disease of tyranny not to trust friends; at 696 Prometheus asks the chorus whether Zeus, the “tyrant” of the gods is not violent in all his ways. The context of the tragedy pushes us to read these two passages as references to what Zeus did or does as sovereign of the gods. But we can also read them, plausibly, as pointing out features of tyrannical or monarchical ruling. In this tragedy Aeschylus mentions that Zeus is a new ruler who came to the throne by violent means, by dethroning his father, and as someone who cannot trust any friends, and this presents Zeus as a usurper. Thus, in *The Prometheus Bound* “tyrant” seems to denote “usurper.”

It is unclear whether Aeschylus, in most of the instances he uses the word for tyranny, makes any distinction between monarchy and tyranny. It is clear however that he makes the distinction between a king, Agamemnon, and a tyrant, Aegisthus, in the *Agamemnon*, and he suggests within the dramatic context of the tragedy that tyranny is something bad. Aeschylus does not show us why having Agamemnon as a king is better than having Aegisthus as a tyrant, even though the chorus tells us that death is preferable to tyranny. The general claim made about tyranny as worse than death points out that tyranny is terrible but we are not told why exactly this is. Thus Aeschylus uses the terminology of tyranny negatively to an extent, he draws the distinction between a king and a tyrant as different sorts of monarchs at least once in the *Agamemnon*, and by “tyrant” he seems to generally mean a monarch and usurper of power.

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<sup>47</sup> See lines 1, 300, 343, 742, 907, 944, 964.

Sophocles (c. 496-406) uses the words for tyranny in six of his tragedies. In the *Ajax* the messenger says that Calchas, the seer, has left the circle of tyrants (line 750), and Agamemnon says that reverence (εὐσεβείῃν) is not something practiced by tyrants (1350). The negative usage of the term in the second line does not suggest a distinction between any types of regimes but it does imply that tyrants are, or think of themselves as, so powerful that reverence comes to be beyond their reach.

In the *Antigone*, Ismene tells Antigone that they will be destroyed if they bury their brother and they defy the law (νόμον) against the tyrant's decree (ψηφρον) (58). Antigone points out that tyranny (τυραννίς) has the power to do and say what it pleases and that the people of Thebes are afraid to agree with her that she should bury her brother due to Creon (506). Later on, Teiresias accuses Creon by telling him that the race that sprang from tyrants loves shameful gain (1056). Finally, the messenger speaks of fortune and points out that Creon both did and had great things but he ended up unhappy in the end. Thus if one lives with a tyrant's pomposity and riches there is no joy living like him, so the messenger does not wish for such a life (1168). In the first passage Sophocles suggests that the tyrant's decree is the law which shows a kind of arbitrariness on the part of Creon as a ruler. In the second passage the power of the ruler is portrayed as so strong that people are afraid to disagree with him, so fear in the citizens seems to be one of the features of the rule of Creon and it is associated with tyranny. In the third passage tyranny is associated with shameful gain, and in the fourth it is suggested that riches and a pompous life will not guarantee happiness, thus the life of the tyrant is undesirable. In the *Antigone* Sophocles does not distinguish tyranny from other types of monarchy and we can assume that he speaks of it as absolute, monarchical, sovereignty and that he

gives it negative features, namely, arbitrary rule, rule by fear, pursuit of shameful gain, and lack of happiness.

In *Oedipus Tyrannus* the words for tyranny occur 15 times only five of which are negative.<sup>48</sup> Sophocles uses the term in this tragedy to denote ruling as monarch, or ruling as an absolute sovereign since he does not distinguish tyranny from other regimes. At 409 Teiresias claims that although Oedipus is the king of the land, he should be allowed to speak freely since he is not under his tyranny, that is, under his monarchic and absolute rule. This passage suggests that there is fear and lack of freedom to speak in such regimes as Oedipus rules, so he rules by fear. At 587<sup>49</sup> and at 592 Creon claims that being a tyrant, that is, an absolute, monarchical, sovereign, entails fear and that he does not wish for such tyranny since he has enough power in the city already. At 874 the chorus claims that insolence (ὕβρις) breeds the tyrant, that is, the absolute sovereign, and when wealth is added his rule comes crashing down. This suggests that too much power makes one disrespectful to the gods and that this causes one's rule not to last or make him happy. Thus the negative features attached to tyranny as absolute, monarchical ruling in this tragedy are rule by fear since people are afraid to speak their minds, that ruling in this way entails fear, and that insolence comes with such a rule that causes one's eventual downfall. In the *Trachiniae* the words for tyranny occur twice (215, 316) in a neutral

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<sup>48</sup> Sophocles uses the terms neutrally at 128, 380, 514, 532, 540, 798, 924, 939, 1043, 1087. In the *Electra* the words for tyranny are used twice neutrally: in one passage the Paedagogus asks which house is the house of tyrants, namely, the royal house (660) and in another he supposes that Clytaemnestra is the king's wife since she looks like a tyrant, that is, she has a royal look (664). In the *Oedipus at Colonus* the words are four times neutrally: when Oedipus claims that his evil son preferred to tyrannize, that is, to rule, instead of recalling him back to the city (418), when he claims that his sons wished to tyrannize, that is rule, his realm (448), when Creon calls himself a tyrant, that is, a ruler (850), and when Polyneices calls his brother a tyrant, that is, a ruler, at home (1338). In this tragedy there is no distinction between different types of regimes or rule so the meaning of the words for tyranny seems to be equivalent to monarchy, kingship, or being an absolute sovereign.

<sup>49</sup> The words for tyranny occur twice in this line.

way and they denote ruling absolutely. We can conclude that Sophocles does not distinguish tyranny from other types of monarchy and when he uses the term he means absolute, monarchical, sovereignty and he attaches to it the negative features listed above.

Euripides (480-406) uses the term very frequently in seventeen of his tragedies. He uses the term neutrally to refer to rulers, absolute sovereigns, kings, monarchs, (all of these either literally or metaphorically), queens, princes, and princesses, regimes, and royal houses many times.<sup>50</sup> He also uses the term positively in the following tragedies: In the *Alcestis*, Alcestis claims that she could have married into a tyrannical (royal) house and enjoyed many benefits (line 282), presumably wealth and honor, and Admetus connects being a tyrant with happiness at 654. In the *Electra* the chorus says that kings (βασιλείς) will rule (τυραννεύσουσι) justly (876). In this passage the poet presents tyranny and justice as possibly accompanying each other. In the *Phoenissae* Eteocles claims that he would go to all extents to win Tyranny, the greatest of the gods (504), that if he is to do wrong it should be for tyranny (absolute power) which is the fairest cause (524). Eteocles is reluctant to let his brother Polyneices have ruling power and even though he praises being a ruler or a tyrant, Euripides seems to suggest that the desire for power or tyranny to such an extent is destructive. In the *Trojan Women* Hecuba refers to tyranny (ruling as an absolute monarch) as god-like (1170). The above passages show

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<sup>50</sup> Neutral usage occurs in the following lines: the *Alcestis* (1020, 1149), the *Andromache* (2, 201, 203, 215, 302, 472, 663, 881), the *Bacchae* (44, 775), the *Electra* (90, 708), the *Hecuba* (55, 365, 809, 815), the *Helen* (5, 32, 478, 515, 550, 786, 809, 817, 1057, 1169), the *Heracleidae* (112, 360, 423), the *Heracles* (27, 63, 247, 385, 474, 565, 643, 810, 1317), the *Hippolytus* (363, 538, 842, 870), the *Ion* (235, 677, 707, 827, 1464, 1572, 1591), the *Iphigeneia en Aulois* (469), the *Iphigeneia en Taurois* (676, 741, 995, 1020), the *Medea* (38, 140, 307, 453, 457, 593, 607, 700, 739, 776, 873, 934, 956, 966, 990, 1065, 1125, 1129, 1296, 1354), the *Orestes* (1354, 1453), the *Phoenissae* (40, 51, 196, 291, 481, 521), the *Rhesus* (165, 166, 389, 406, 484), the *Suppliants* (164, 384, 400, 1189), and the *Trojan Women* (474, 745, 925).

that Euripides attaches positive connotations to tyranny mostly when he presents someone's wish to have the supposed advantages of absolute power.

There are also a number of passages where the word is used negatively: In the *Helen* Menelaus claims that he led troops to Troy unlike a tyrant who does so by force but with the voluntary consent of his soldiers (393); tyranny is portrayed as persuading by force. In the *Hippolytus*, Hippolytus asks whether to rule (τυραννεῖν) is tempting even for virtuous people, and claims that monarchy (μοναρχία) has corrupted the minds of all those who loved it (1013). He also claims that the absence of danger is a greater pleasure than having a tyranny (τυραννίδος, 1019). The criticism here is of monarchy as such which is accused of corrupting people's minds and of entailing many dangers.

In the *Ion*, Ion says that the external image of tyranny is sweet but there is bitterness in it since it is a life full of fear and suspicion (621), and that it is better to live as a private citizen than as a tyrant since tyrants like to love wicked friends and hate the virtuous because they are afraid of death (625). These two passages make an issue of the relation between private life and the life of absolute rulers or monarchs which is a prevalent theme discussed throughout much of Greek literature. Here we get two negative features attached to tyranny or ruling as a monarch, namely that it is attractive on the outside, that is, to private citizens, but it is indeed bad, and so perhaps they should not aspire to it; the second negative feature is the constant fear of death which leads tyrants to trust wicked people and hate the virtuous.

In the *Medea*, a passage tells us that the minds of tyrants are dangerous since they command but seldom obey and they are subject to violent changes in mood (119). Here

it is suggested that there is danger to be expected from tyrants since they are of such dispositions as to be in violent mood which endangers those around them. In the *Orestes*, Orestes claims that having trusted friends is more valuable than wealth and tyranny (1156) and that his father Agamemnon was worthy to rule over Greece, not as a tyrant, but still having god-like power (1167). Here we get a critique of tyranny or monarchy as not being able to have friends, and the suggestion that one can rule with a lot of power without being a tyrant or an absolute ruler.

In the *Phoenissae* Jocasta criticizes her son Eteocles' desire and praise for ruling by pointing out that tyranny is a prosperous injustice, that admiring glances are of no worth, that many riches bring troubles, that the wise find what is sufficient to be good enough, that tyranny is good only in name, and that prosperity is as transient as the day (550 ff.). Here we get a number of negative features attached to the word, namely, that ruling as a monarch is unjust, that it relies on flattery which is worthless, that too much wealth is detrimental to one's well being, that ruling throws one into excess while moderation is better according to wisdom, that it is good only from the perspective of those who desire it not of those who live it, and that the prosperity that comes with it can be lost very easily.

It is clear that Euripides makes ruling as a monarch a problem in his tragedies since the tragic events he portrays take place in royal houses and follow their members for many generations. He uses the words of tyranny quite often to express this problem even though he does not distinguish between different types of monarchy. Euripides also attaches an array of negative features to the term τύραννος as these belong to ruling absolutely, as a monarch. These are:

- (1) Persuasion by force (and thus use or threat of use of force).
- (2) Corruption of the virtuous by temptation to power.
- (3) Dangers to one's life.
- (4) Fear and suspicion which make it a bad sort of life on the inside even though it looks great externally.
- (5) Inability to obey when one has to.
- (6) Violent changes of mood.
- (7) Lack of friends.
- (8) Injustice and prosperity due to injustice.
- (9) Flattery to the tyrant.
- (10) Lack of moderation of desires.

Aristophanes uses the words of tyranny twenty three times in seven of his comedies. He uses “tyranny” and its derivatives neutrally<sup>51</sup> eight times to refer to ruling absolutely, as to the way Zeus rules. In *The Knights* it occurs only once when the chorus tells Demos that he is their all-powerful tyrant (τύραννον) in front of which they tremble and that he likes to be taken in by flattery and orations (1112). In this passage Aristophanes suggests that democracy represented by Demos—which means “the many” or “the people” when used as a noun (δημος)—is like a tyrant who rules by fear, and taken in, or persuaded by, flattery and orations. Thus, Aristophanes exposes some features that democracy and tyranny share in front of a democratic audience in Athens which thinks of itself as anti-tyrannical. This politically satirical passage has both the democracy and tyranny share the above three similar negative features and may make one

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<sup>51</sup> Six times in *The Birds* (lines 483, 1073, 1605, 1643, 1672, 1707), one time in *The Clouds* (564), once in *The Plutus* (125).



wonder whether the democracy was much different from tyranny which the Athenians despised.

In *The Lysistrata* the chorus accuses the women of plotting a tyranny to overthrow the democracy which its members say they will oppose (617, 630, 631). In these passages Aristophanes suggests that tyranny is not preferable to democracy and, therefore, that it is something bad that must be opposed. Tyranny in these passages has negative connotations but they are unspecified.

In *The Thesmophoriazusaie* the woman herald says that if someone plans a tyranny or plans to aid its coming about, then they should pray that this does not happen (332),<sup>52</sup> and the chorus points out that the hatred that has overthrown the tyrants is just (1144). In these two passages Aristophanes attaches negative connotations to tyranny as something undesirable which it is just to oppose or hate.

Finally in the *Wasps* we get further negative connotations attached to tyranny while Aristophanes satirizes democracy. At 418 the chorus suggests that by not letting Philocleon go, and keeping him captive against his will around the house, amounts to tyranny on the part of his son Bdelycleon. The fact that the chorus thinks of Bdelycleon, who has his senses and tries to rule his father Philocleon, as tyrannical, seems to show that the democracy has gone to such extremes so as to desire to allow mad people to do what they want. When one tries to rule or get a mad person to hold back from acting badly in the democracy they are ridiculously accused of being tyrannical. At 464 the chorus of judges suggests that they have been attacked by the tyranny and that Bdelycleon is like a tyrant since he prevents them from obeying the laws (from getting

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<sup>52</sup> Terms for tyranny occur twice in this passage.

his father to go to a trial) and that he claims to rule alone without any appeal to the laws. This passage carries the critique suggested at 418 even further. In democracy, even the law allows mad people to do what they want and Bdelycleon who has his senses appears like a tyrant in light of the law. At 464 Aristophanes associates tyranny with disregard for the law, but the laws of Athens are shown to be extreme since they allow mad people to behave as they like.

At 486 the chorus accuses Bdelycleon of wishing to tyrannize over them, that is, to oppress them, and they refuse to go away. At 489-500 Aristophanes uses the term five times and this is where he shows that the word was abused. As we saw earlier, he portrays fish-sellers accusing customers of other fish-sellers of tyranny and prostitutes accusing their customers of being tyrannical. In this passage Aristophanes shows that the words for tyranny were used elastically and that their elasticity was taken advantage of in democratic Athens.

In *The Wasps* Aristophanes points out some negative features of tyranny like its forcing people to do things against their will, its desire to oppress, its disregard for law, and the desire of the tyrant to rule alone and absolutely. All this, however, takes place within a context of making fun of, and criticizing the extremes of Athenian democracy. Aristophanes seems to make much more fun of the democracy and to comment on its extremes and problems than he seems to comment on tyranny. The references to tyranny in the passages above, especially those from the *Knights* and the *Wasps* use tyranny and the negative features attached to it to criticize democracy and to suggest that the democracy is perhaps not as different from tyranny as Athenians thought it was. Aristophanes also shows that the Athenian understanding of democracy was largely anti-

tyrannical and that this negative understanding of democracy was not so beneficial to Athens since it allowed it to go to extremes. It allowed Athenians to aspire to extreme freedom or license and to refer to tyranny as an unjust frustration of that ideal.

### 1.7 Athenian Orators of the Fifth and Fourth Century.

Given the political culture in Athens, especially the fact that people generally understood the democracy and themselves as anti-tyrannical, authors such as the Athenian orators Lysias, Andocides, Aeschines, and Demosthenes use “tyranny” in its anti-democratic sense to persuade their audiences on a variety of political matters.<sup>53</sup> The ways these orators use the words related to tyranny show further that the Athenian experience of democracy and tyranny framed the terms for tyranny and attached negative connotations to them.

Lysias (c.445-380)—son of Cephalus and brother of Polemarchus—uses the words for tyranny in five of his speeches and he does so negatively most of the time. In *Against Andocides* he points out that neither a democracy, nor an oligarchy, nor a tyrant will accept Andocides in their cities (section 30). Lysias intends to indicate that Andocides is a really bad person, since not even a tyranny will take him in.

In *Against Eratosthenes*, a speech against the person who arrested Polemarchus who was eventually tortured and killed by the thirty, Lysias points out that if the judges do not judge Eratosthenes’ case well, then the rest of the thirty will know if their actions will be punished or if they can be the tyrants of the city (35). Lysias suggests that the

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<sup>53</sup> It is important to note that often when speaking to a democratic Athenian audience these authors do not provide arguments—nor do they need to do so—for why the values such an audience holds are good but they merely take them for granted and argue for or against something using tyranny-laden talk as a rhetorical device intended to persuade.

judges should punish Eratosthenes to show that tyranny is unacceptable and that people with aspirations for tyranny or those who help them will, and can, be punished. The rest of the speech suggests that tyranny, specifically that of the thirty, was very unjust since it executed innocent people like Polemarchus. In his *Funeral Oration* Lysias points out that their ancestors created such conditions that no city was ruled by tyrants (55) and that the Persians after defeating the Greeks set up tyrannies everywhere (59). These two passages attach negative features to tyranny, the first in the sense that tyranny is antithetical to freedom, which is assumed to be good, and the second that once Persians won over the Greeks they set up tyrannies instead of allowing democracies to exist (democracy is assumed to be good here since it allows for freedom and the Persians stifled that).

In the *Olympic Oration* Lysias assigns the founding of the Olympic contests to Heracles who had crushed tyrants (2). He associates Heracles crushing tyrants with the Olympic contests. He thus politicizes the games for rhetorical effect to show that the Olympic games are to be associated with democracy, or anti-tyranny, which one of the seminal Greek heroes upheld. Then Lysias goes on to say that Greece is in a terrible state since many of its cities are ravaged by tyrants (3), that the tyrant of Sicily has many ships which seem to be a threat to Athens (5), and that the Athenians ought to compete with their ancestors who expelled the tyrants and made people free (6). Thus, in this speech, Lysias associates tyranny with violence and with lack of freedom.

Finally, in *On the Scrutiny of Evandros* Lysias claims that his own ancestors were not ruled by the tyrants (the Peisistratids) since they had opposed them (22). This is another instance where the speaker invokes the character of his ancestors and tyranny as

evil to make himself likeable to an audience indirectly, in this case an Athenian democratic audience which thinks of tyranny as evil.

Andocides (440-390), a contemporary of Socrates and Plato, was among those accused of mutilating the Hermae, but he was eventually acquitted.<sup>54</sup> In *Against Alcibiades* he warns Athenians against liking Alcibiades too much since people who become too great eventually set up tyrannies (section 24). He accuses Alcibiades of not treating people as his equals since he robs them, strikes them, imprisons them, extorts money from them. To this he adds that Alcibiades talks like the champion (δημαγωγῷ) of the people but he acts like a tyrant, taking care of tyranny in words but neglecting tyranny itself (27). In *On his Return* he tells us that his grandfather led a revolt of the people against the tyrants (the Peisistratids) even though he could have ruled with them and married into their house, and that this fact gives Andocides a good reason to act in support of the people (26). In *On the Mysteries* he speaks of an Athenian decree concerning various violations that ought to be punished including attempted tyranny, namely, the attempt to seize power and become an absolute ruler (78). He also points out that there is a law that urges Athenians to slay by deed and word anyone who opposes the democracy including people who attempt to be tyrants or those who help such people (97).<sup>55</sup>

Andocides, in these passages, uses the terms for tyranny negatively. In his accusations of Alcibides, he paints a picture of the tyrant's character as unjust and terrible to his fellow-citizens. He credits his family and himself as anti-tyrannical and thus as a

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<sup>54</sup> He uses the terms for tyranny eight times in three of his speeches.

<sup>55</sup> This was a law of the democracy encouraging tyrannicide after the Persian wars and Solon's failed reforms.

friend of democracy, and endorses anti-tyrannical measures as pro-democratic and thus as good. It is evident that he uses the terms with some awareness that they have anti-democratic connotations. This usage is further evidence for the claim that the Athenian experience of tyranny and democracy frames the way the terms for tyranny were used.

Aeschines (390-314) was an opponent of Demosthenes, especially on the issue of Philip II's rise to power and influence in the Greek world, and a contemporary of Plato. He uses terms for tyranny in three of his speeches.<sup>56</sup> In *Against Ctesiphon* (section 6) and *Against Timarchus* (4) he points out that there are three types of regimes: tyrannies, oligarchies and democracies and he points out that only democracies are ruled according to laws whereas the other types of regimes are ruled according to the temper of their rulers. We should note that he uses the term τυραννίς to refer to monarchical regimes when he distinguishes the three types of regimes, so in his mind any monarchical regime is inferior to democracy. In other words, all monarchical regimes are tyrannies in a very negative sense for him.

Aeschines points out further negative features of tyranny: in *Against Timarchus* he says that in democracies it is the laws that protect people whereas tyrants seek protection in suspicion and guards (5), and that it is wicked men that support tyrants to put down democracies and slay their fellow citizens (191); in *On the Embassy* he refers to Dionysius of Sicily as a tyrant who was an enemy to democracy (10), and to the tyrants of Phocis using mercenaries to overthrow democracies (131). He also uses the term twice in *Against Ctesiphon* to accuse Demosthenes and one of his ancestors for being bribed by tyrants in an attempt to attack Demosthenes' credibility (103, 171). Aeschines'

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<sup>56</sup> He uses the term five times in *Against Ctesiphon*, four times in *Against Timarchus*, and five times in *On the Embassy*.

use of the term is negative in a very strong sense since he presents tyranny as wicked. The wickedness of tyranny is due to the fact that only wicked men support it, that it does not rule according to law, but arbitrarily. The fact that he accuses Demosthenes of being bribed by tyrants has two facets that seek to discredit Demosthenes, namely, that he was bribed and that he was bribed by a tyrant. Aeschines' speeches present tyranny as an anti-democratic and democracy an anti-tyrannical.

Demosthenes (384-322) was also an Athenian and a contemporary of Plato, and he was opposed to Macedonian expansionist tendencies as dangerous to democratic Athens. He uses the terms for tyranny extensively and negatively in many of his speeches to express his disapproval of Macedonian expansion, but also to portray many regimes and individuals as unjust or inferior to Athenian democratic culture and practices. In *Philippic 2* he tells us that Philip has corrupted many cities, that communications with tyrants corrupt (section 21), and that it is a good tool for democracies to mistrust tyrannies (24). He also warns that tyrants are the enemy of law and freedom, and that if Athens does not go to war with Philip it will soon find itself under a master (25). In *Philippic 3* Demosthenes tells us that Philip dictated to the Thessalians their form of government by sending mercenaries to end the democracy and set up a tyranny (33), and he warns Athens that it lost its valuable mistrust of tyrants (38). In *Philippic 4* he tells us that Athens is the last democracy since Philip set up tyrannies everywhere else (4), and that he took advantage of Athens' neglect of Euboea and set up a tyranny there which now threatens Athens (8). In this speech Demosthenes suggests that Athens is the last democratic bulwark, that it must defend itself against tyrannies everywhere else, and thus, perhaps, it will save democracy as such also.

In *Against Leptines* Demosthenes points out that oligarchies and tyrannies have the advantage over democracy that they can make people instantly rich but that democracies are better in honoring people and securing their possessions (15). He calls the Spartan regime a tyranny (70), and he warns Athenians that political situations change so easily that the people in Syracuse, which was once a democracy, came to be ruled by a clerk (Dionysius I) who became a tyrant (161).

In *On the Accession of Alexander* he tells us that the victims of tyranny (τυραννούμενους) can be seen to be executed without a trial (3), and that Alexander is unjust since, by following his tyrannical disposition, he set up tyrants in Messene violating the peace with Athens (4). He urges the Athenians to pay attention to the terms of the peace and to notice whether regimes change from democracies to tyrannies (14). In *On the Crown* he claims that it is among the Macedonian acts of injustice to have set up a tyrant in Oreus (71). In *Against Aristocrates* he tells us that the Areopagus has never lost its authority to judge cases of murder as a legal body not even under the tyrannical constitution (66).

It is clear the Demosthenes uses the term negatively to denote tyranny as an unjust political regime, which employs many unjust and violent political practices, has the tendency to corrupt people and other regimes, and which is a serious threat to democracy in Athens. This usage contributes to, and takes as granted, the Athenian democratic identity as largely anti-tyrannical. He also suggests that the Spartan regime was tyrannical, that people of low positions may become tyrants, as Dionysius I did in Sicily, and that it is important for democratic Athens always to regard tyrannies with suspicion.



Our consideration of these Athenian orators reveals that their use of the vocabulary of tyranny is full of negative features and that they use the terms in this way in relation to the Athenian experience of democracy and tyranny. All four have in mind an Athenian democratic audience and thus they use the terms for tyranny in such ways so as to be persuasive to such an audience. It is evident from the ways they make use of the terms for tyranny that the Athenian experience of democracy and tyranny shapes the way the terms are used.

### 1.8 Isocrates (436-338).

Isocrates was Plato's contemporary and while he was not a public speaker himself,<sup>57</sup> he ran a school of rhetoric. I include him in a different category from the other orators since he was not just a writer of speeches but something of a writer of political pamphlets also. His usage of the vocabulary for tyranny is relative to the context he writes, to the speaker, and to the audience, and such usage often ends up being contradictory. In speeches like *Nicocles or the Cyprians*, a speech written in the voice of the ruler Nicocles addressing his subjects, Isocrates attaches a number of positive connotations to tyranny as monarchy, and argues for why tyranny is good and better than other regimes, thus giving Nicocles a way to justify his rule. In a speech like *On the Peace*, which is addressed to an Athenian audience, he uses the terms for tyranny negatively and as equivalent to monarchy in an attempt to persuade the Athenians that their empire through their strong navy goes against their anti-tyrannical principles.<sup>58</sup> He uses the words for tyranny neutrally seventeen times in his speeches and numerous times

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<sup>57</sup> For evidence that he did not speak publicly see *To Philip* 81 where he tells us that he did not have a good voice for it or self-assurance to be good at public speaking.

<sup>58</sup> For an analysis of the pertinent passages from these two speeches see the discussion that follows.

both negatively and positively.<sup>59</sup> Let us begin by looking at the passages where the word appears with positive connotations.

In the *Archidamus*, a speech written in the Spartan king's voice, we are told that in addition to Athens, the tyrant (τύραννος) Dionysius I of Syracuse was a good example of the benefits one derives from daring to resist one's enemies, and that one of his companions said that tyranny (τυραννίς) was a great way to protect oneself (section 44). Even though the terms denote "absolute rule" at best, the positive connotation is that it is beneficial to be such a ruler. In Letter 6 *To Timotheus* Isocrates advises Timotheus to study and to find ways by which he can get his citizens to do their jobs and act temperately, and to get them to live more happily than in the past. He should do so since this is the goal of those who tyrannize or rule correctly and wisely (ὀρθῶς καὶ φρονίμως τυραννεύοντων, 3). In this passage we get the positive feature that tyrants can rule well and make their citizens happy.

In the *Evagoras*, a speech praising Evagoras as a great ruler, and the speech in which most of the passages where the words of tyranny occur positively, Isocrates points out that it should be clear to everyone, once they have seen how Evagoras ruled, that tyranny (τυραννίδα), is the greatest good among human and divine goods, the one most strived for, and the most dignified (σεμνότατον, 44). Later on he tells us that Evagoras

Fell in no respect short of the qualities which belong to kings, but choosing from each kind of government the best characteristic, he was democratic in his service to the people, statesmanlike (πολιτικός) in the administration of the city as a whole, an able general in his good counsel in the face of dangers, and tyrannical (τυραννικός) in his superiority in all these qualities (46).

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<sup>59</sup> He uses the terms neutrally in the *Archidamus* (section 63), in the *Areopagiticus* (26), where the people of Athens are called a "tyrant" (τύραννον) meaning "in charge as rulers", in the *Evagoras* (26, 27, 28, 31, 34, 39, 63, 64, 66, 71, 78), in the *Helen* (34, 37), in and in the *Nicoles or Cyprians* (11, 55).

In this passage Isocrates attaches a positive flavor to someone being tyrannical with all the good qualities of a ruler, and in this context the word τυραννικός means “royal” or “princely.”

In the *Nicocles or the Cyprians* we encounter a number of passages with positive features and connotations where “tyranny” and “monarchy” are used interchangeably; these passages launch a defense of monarchy. At 16 we are told that tyrannies (τᾶς τυραννίδας) keep a better view of people’s characters and actions more than other governments do and that everyone should wish to be a part of such a form of government. This is because one’s worth will be recognized instead of being lost in the commotion of the many. It is also right to say that such a regime is a milder government since it is easier to pay attention to the will of a single person than to the will of the many. The argument for why such regimes are better than others continues in 17 where Isocrates has Nicocles say that monarchies (αἱ μοναρχίαι) are better than other governments in planning and executing any action, and it is better for people to hold office for a long time, rather than to enter into office annually,<sup>60</sup> since they gain political insight and experience. At 22 he tells us that monarchies (αἱ μοναρχίαι) excel also in war since they can raise troops easily, and handle them so that they can mislead and hinder the enemy. He continues in this section by saying that tyrannies (τυραννίδες) can get people to do things either by persuasion, force, or bribery and thus such regimes are more efficient as the facts show. At 23 he cites Dionysius I as a tyrant who was efficient in war by beating the Carthaginians, and at 24 he tells us that states which do not like tyrannies (τυραννίδας) send out many generals to the battlefield and meet disaster. The

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<sup>60</sup> Isocrates has in mind democratic distribution of political offices here.

argument continues at 25 where he tells us that those under tyranny (τυραννεύόμενοι) have the greatest powers and those under oligarchy appoint one man for the most important tasks. At 26 he tells us that even the gods live under a monarchy and while we do not know whether this is true, the mere belief that they do shows that people hold monarchy in higher esteem than other governments. This defense of monarchy associates a number of positive features to tyranny as the word is used in these passages.

In the *Panathenaicus* Isocrates tells us that the democracy in Athens afforded power to many people by giving them political offices which allowed them to punish and bring justice to those who offended them, something which is the same position enjoyed by the most happy tyrants (τύραννον τοῖς εὐδαιμονεστάτοις, 146). This passage suggests that many tyrants, meaning “absolute rulers,” are happy.

In *To Nicocles*, a speech that precedes the *To Nicocles or Cyprians*,<sup>61</sup> Isocrates advises Nicocles to make himself both courteous (ἄσπεῖος) and to be full of dignity (σεμνός) since dignity is in keeping with the position of a tyrant and courtesy is in important in his social intercourse (34). This admonition, Isocrates continues, is difficult to carry out since those who appear dignified are regarded as cold and those who are courteous appear to lower themselves. However, trying to cultivate both of these qualities is beneficial since one may avoid the dangers that come with both. Isocrates presents the tyrant as someone who should be dignified and courteous while attaching dangers to each of these qualities of the tyrant’s character, the danger of being thought arrogant by being dignified and the danger of appearing weak by being courteous. Dignity and courtesy together are presented as qualities beneficial to the tyrant.

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<sup>61</sup> For evidence that *To Nicocles* precedes *To Nicocles or Cyprians* see the beginning of the latter speech.

Now let us take up the passages where the words of tyranny are used with negative connotations. In the *Antidosis* Isocrates refers to the accusations against him as an irresponsible teacher who corrupts young men, and as a teacher, not only of private men but also of generals, kings, and tyrants, from whom he makes a lot of money (30). In this passage the accusations are three: corruption of the young, having even tyrants as his students, and making a lot of money.<sup>62</sup> The accusation of having tyrants as his students and the distinction of tyrants from kings here shows that there are negative features attached to tyranny. In the same speech he makes the claim that people who have studied speeches or argumentation turned out to be the best statesmen, like Cleisthenes, who was expelled by tyrants (the Peisistratids) and who was able to find allies to expel the tyrants (232).<sup>63</sup> Mentioning the expulsion of tyrants by Cleisthenes serves as evidence for the goodness of Cleisthenes as a statesman and for the idea that studying speeches or argumentation makes one a good statesman. Expelling the tyrants is portrayed as a good event so the tyrants are given a bad name in this passage.

In the *Areopagiticus*, Isocrates claims that the only way to avoid future misfortunes and to deliver Athens from the ills of the present is to restore the earlier democracy established by Cleisthenes and Solon who drove the tyrants out of power (16). This passage seeks to present democracy as a solution to political trouble by reminding the audience that democracy was good partly because it was established by getting rid of tyrants; it is implied that the tyrants were bad.

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<sup>62</sup> Notice how these accusations are reminiscent of what Plato tells us about the sophists on the one hand, and the accusation against Socrates in the *Apology* on the other.

<sup>63</sup> At 306 Isocrates makes the same claim about Cleisthenes, namely, that he was a great statesman who expelled the tyrants, and two further claims, namely, that he united the people and brought democracy in Athens.

In Letter 6 *To the Children of Jason* Isocrates speaks in favor of private life over the life of those who tyrannize (τυραννοῦντων), and he tells us that Euthynus' friends were urging him to tyrannical power (τυραννίδα) not looking at the nature of the whole thing and thinking only of its rewards, power, profits, and pleasures, neglecting the disturbances, fears, and misfortunes that come to rulers (τοῖς ἄρχουσι) and their friends.<sup>64</sup> In Letter 7 *To Timotheus* Isocrates is happy that Timotheus did not acquire his wealth forcibly and tyrannically “at the cost of much hatred” and that he inherited it from his father instead (6). Isocrates portrays tyranny as something which entails force and tyrannical acquisition as the source of much hatred.

The *Peace* is the speech with the most passages in which the words of tyranny carry negative connotations, and many of the negative features that Isocrates attributes to tyranny are found in Plato's dialogues as we will see in later chapters. Isocrates tries to make a case against the empire Athens pursued after the Persian wars and he claims that more Athenians have died under the empire than in the Persian wars or the civil conflict under the tyrants (88). Whether he has in mind the earlier Peisistratid tyrants or the thirty tyrants, it is clear that the civil conflict he mentions resulted in something bad which was caused, partly, by the fact that tyrants ruled. Isocrates proceeds to say that the Athenians should not imitate those who hold tyrannies or those who hold larger territories than what is just, but imitate those who get honors from free people (89). Here he emphasizes the goodness of the democratic spirit which he presents as an opposite to tyranny. At 91 he tells us that those who came to power in Athens after the Persian wars wanted to tyrannize but not to rule (οὐκ ἄρχειν ἀλλὰ τυραννεῖν), two things, which seem the

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<sup>64</sup> As we will see Plato reveals that the attraction to tyrannical life is due to having a limited perspective on it.

same but are in fact very different. It is the work of rulers (ἀρχόντων) to make their subjects happier (εὐδαιμονέστερους) by tending to them while it is the work of tyrants (τυράννοις) to provide pleasures for themselves through the gains and labors of others, and it is also necessary that those who attempt to tyrannize meet great misfortunes. In this passage we see a clear distinction between ruling and tyrannizing, and the portrayal of tyranny as an unjust and self-serving sort of regime. It is possible that Isocrates has in mind other monarchical regimes, namely kingship, in which the ruler serves his subjects instead of himself. In 99 he accuses Sparta of setting up tyrants in Sicily and Italy and this is also a passage in which “tyranny” carries negative connotations since Isocrates talks about in the context of an accusation.

At 112-122 Isocrates launches into a direct attack against Athenian imperialism and lists a number of evils that befall absolute rulers. At 112 he says that they make war upon all the citizens, that they suspect their friends, that they entrust their safety to strangers, that they fear those close to them as much as those who plot against them, and that they even suspect their own families. In 113 he says that the above happens quite naturally since they (presumably both the tyrants and everyone else) know that the ones who held tyrannical power (τετυραννευκῶτας) have been put out of power either by their parents, their brothers, their wives, or their children. But many people still pursue this kind of life and this causes many people to think that such a sort of life is good and worth pursuing. Isocrates continues in 114 and he says that while tyrants meet murderous fates and the Athenian audience agrees to this, still, they do not accept the idea that a similar fate awaits them while they pursue empire in the Greek world. In 115 he says

But you have never given this (the fact that empire and tyranny are alike) a thought; on the contrary, while you consider tyrannies (τυραννίδας) to be harsh and harmful not only to others but to those who hold it, you look upon the empire of the sea as the greatest good in the world, when in fact it differs neither in what it does nor in what it suffers from monarchies (μοναρχιῶν).<sup>65</sup>

In this passage Isocrates tries to drive home the idea that monarchy or tyranny and empire are very similar and only different on scale. At 122 he accuses Athenians of desiring to have as rulers people similar to those who destroyed Athens, namely tyrants. Finally at 142-144 he says

But I have yet to touch upon the chief consideration of all—that upon which centers everything that I have said and in the light of which we should appraise the actions of the state. For if we really wish to clear away the prejudice in which we are held at the present time, we must cease from the wars which are waged to no purpose and so gain for our city the hegemony for all time; we must abhor all tyrannical powers (τυραννικᾶς ἀρχάς) and imperial power (δυναστείας), reflecting upon the disasters which have sprung from them; and we must emulate and imitate the position held by the kings (βασιλεῖς) of Lacedaemon: they, it is true, have less freedom than their private citizens to do wrong (they are controlled by the Ephors) yet are much more enviable than those who hold tyrannies (τυραννίδας) by force; for those who take the lives such a sort of people are given the highest rewards by their fellow citizens, whereas those Spartans who are not ready to lay down their lives for their kings in battle are held in greater dishonor than men who desert their post and throw away their shields. This, then, is the kind of leadership which is worth striving for. And this very position of honor which the kings of Lacedaemon have from their citizens we Athenians have it in our power to win from the Hellenes, if only they become convinced that our supremacy will be the instrument, not of their enslavement, but of their salvation.

While the case Isocrates tries to make in these passages is one against Athenian imperialism he does so by treating empire as equivalent to tyranny in the bad sense of the term. In order to make his argument he ends up claiming that tyranny is bad first. Then he claims that empire is like tyranny and since it is, imperialism must also be bad. In these passages he also seems to speak of tyranny as such not monarchy as such since he distinguishes tyranny from kingship in 142-144.

In *On the Team of Horses* he speaks of his family as being against the tyrants and in support of democratic values and the people (25-26); this is another instance in which

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<sup>65</sup> Addition in parenthesis mine.



an author tries to praise make himself liked by a democratic audience by referring to his democratic and anti-tyrannical ancestors. His Alcmaeonid ancestors refused to share the tyranny of Peisistratus, they preferred exile than to see their fellow citizens enslaved (δουλεύοντας), and they were the ones who drove the tyrants out eventually. Here tyranny is associated with slavery and democracy is associated with freedom in an attempt to show that democracy is good. The conclusion Isocrates wants us to draw is that he is also good since he comes from democratic ancestors.

In the *Panathenaicus*, a speech praising Athens, Isocrates mentions that it is difficult to find any examples of royal houses or houses of tyrants that remained in power for too long, thus he is criticizes monarchical regimes as not lasting long (124). In 148 he criticizes Peisistratus for doing too much harm to the city, driving out the best citizens by accusing them of being oligarchs,<sup>66</sup> ending democracy and setting himself up as tyrant (τύραννον). This passage suggests a number of evils that tyrants do, namely, driving out the best citizens of a city, accusing such citizens falsely as oligarchs, and ending the good regime of democracy. At 243 Isocrates mentions that the eulogists of Sparta, whom he assumes to speak falsely in the context of this speech, think of the extreme self-seeking (πλεονεξία) of the Spartans, kings, and tyrants as a gift from heaven and as something which all humans are after.

In the *Panegyricus* Isocrates tells us that Athenians in their relations with other states tried to command but not to tyrannize (τυραννεῖν) other Greeks in battle, wanted to be addressed as leaders rather than masters, as saviors rather than destroyers, and they won the support of the Greek cities by being kind instead of subverting them by force

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<sup>66</sup> Socrates in the *Republic* (565d-566a) tells Glaucon that tyrants come to power by setting the people against the few rich people in a city, the oligarchs.

(80). In this passage we see a pairing of commanding with being a leader, a savior, and kind, and a pairing of being tyrannical with being a master, a destroyer, and a person who subverts by force. Isocrates then tells us of Athenians not liking tyrannical rule since this was like the rule of masters over slaves (104), that they set up democracies in many places with the effect that people did not experience tyrannies anymore (106). He also mentions that some places are so removed from freedom and autonomy that they are ruled by tyrants (117), that the Spartans used to expel tyrants and bring salvation to the people but lately they have reversed this policy (125). All these passages suggest negative features associated with tyranny or imply that tyranny is bad in general terms.

In *To Nicocles* Isocrates points out that private citizens are educated under better conditions than tyrants since tyrants do not get much admonition but get flattery instead and many debate whether the life of a private citizen or that of a tyrant is better (4). He also says that even though tyrants have a lot of wealth and authority over great affairs they often misuse these, and when one looks at the honors of kings they are enviable but when one looks at their history they are not since they are slain by those near them. They are forced to do terrible things to those close to them, and they have terrible fears and dangers in their lives (4-5). While Isocrates uses the terms for “king” and “tyrant” as equivalent and to mean absolute ruler, we still get some negative features that come with such lives, namely, flattery, murderous fates, unjust action, fear, and danger. In the same speech Isocrates advises Nicocles to look at the fortunes and accidents in the lives of both private citizens and tyrants to be able to plan better for the future (35). Presumably Isocrates encourages Nicocles to look at these lives to be able to plan better for himself

and for his subjects. This passage seems to assume the features and differences between private life and the life of a tyrant discussed at 4-5.

Finally, in *To Philip*, a speech addressed to Philip II of Macedon asking him to unite the Greeks under his reign in the interest of Panhellenism, Isocrates tells Philip that he has expressed his opinions boldly like he did when he wrote to Dionysius of Syracuse after he had established his tyranny (81). This passage suggests that there is some element of fear to be bold in speech in front of tyrants since Isocrates makes sure to mention that he expressed himself boldly after Dionysius was tyrant. In the same speech Isocrates also tells Philip that he should try to unite the Greeks under his reign to save Greece, and that he should rule the Macedonians as a king not as a tyrant, and that this will win him the kindness of the Greeks (154).

Isocrates' speeches provide us with a variety of usage of the words of tyranny and as we saw depending on context he uses the terms either with positive or with negative connotations. This ambiguous usage may make one wonder about the nature of tyranny as such as does Plato who develops a critical view of it.

### 1.9 Concluding Remarks.

In this chapter I have traced the usage of the term τύραννος and its derivatives and I have shown that such terms were used with elasticity, complexity, and ambiguity. As we have seen, Plato's literary tradition, which existed in a complex and volatile political environment, exhibits a wide variety of features associated with tyranny. Plato's critical response to this tradition, which also exhibits his employment of some of the features it associates with tyranny, entails three major steps:

- (1) He clears us the ambiguity with which his tradition confronts and discusses tyranny. He does this by using *tyranny* negatively, and by distinguishing it from kingship. More specifically, he associates tyranny consistently with clearer features such as injustice, pursuing the interest of the ruler alone, insecurity, instability, violence, and lack of happiness.
- (2) He formulates more clearly some of the problems with tyranny itself. He does this by presenting tyranny as essentially unjust and devoid of happiness on all levels, and by seeking to explain the features mentioned in (1).
- (3) He explains and addresses the problems and implications of the ways others understood tyranny. This includes both: (a) the positions of those who opposed tyranny, such as the Athenians whose understanding of tyranny was related to their understanding of freedom and happiness, and (b) the positions of those who admired tyranny for its power, and its capacity to make the tyrant happy.

Now let us begin our consideration of Plato's view of tyranny by turning to the first two books of the *Republic*.

## **Chapter 2. Plato's Preliminary Account of Tyranny in *Republic I and II*.**

Plato discusses tyranny most extensively in the *Republic*. He presents tyranny as a problem several times and he presents us with characters other than Socrates who point out what tyranny is, namely Thrasymachus, Glaucon, Adeimantus.<sup>67</sup> In this chapter I argue that Plato offers a preliminary account of tyranny in Books I and II of the *Republic*. Such an account amounts to a general description of tyranny, and it is an account prior to the prescriptive arguments Socrates offers concerning tyranny, injustice, and happiness in the latter part of the dialogue. Moreover, such a description also sets up the problem of tyranny and its relation to justice and happiness as these are discussed in Books VIII and IX.

Plato, in *Republic I and II* provides an account of tyranny as complete injustice, which anticipates the idea that tyranny will be the complete opposite of the just city or *kallipolis*. Since the *kallipolis* is the most just regime conceivable, tyranny is its opposite. Among the essential features Plato assigns to tyranny in the first two books of the dialogue are injustice, deception of subjects, serving the interests of the ruler instead of those of the citizens, and use of violence or fraud. These, in turn come to play a central role in the account of tyranny in Book VIII. Furthermore, we see Socrates' interlocutors, especially Thrasymachus, suggest that tyrants can be happy due to their power, while Socrates resists this idea.

### **2.1 *Republic I*: Thrasymachus' Position on Justice and Tyranny.**

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<sup>67</sup> We could say the same about the *Gorgias* and Polus and Callicles' positions.

While commentators have paid much attention to *Republic* I they have barely discussed the relation between Thrasymachus' position on (in)justice and tyranny. Moreover, when commentators mention tyranny in the *Republic* they go directly to the account in Books VIII and IX. Plato has Thrasymachus explain what tyranny is in his exchange with Socrates concerning what justice is and whether it is better than injustice.<sup>68</sup> He claims that injustice, for which tyranny is the best example, is beneficial to the one who commits it, and that the most unjust person, the tyrant, will be happiest. In this way, Plato begins to set up the challenge for Socrates to show that tyranny is undesirable as a political regime insofar as it is an unjust regime, and that being a tyrant is also undesirable since it does not lead to happiness. Let us begin by looking at how Thrasymachus enters the discussion.

At the end of the argument with Polemarchus, Socrates suggests that the view that justice is helping friends and harming enemies has to be the position of some people who thought themselves possessing great power.<sup>69</sup> "Do you know whose saying I think it is, that it is just to benefit friends and harm enemies?...I think it is a saying of Periander, or Perdiccas, or Xerxes, or Ismenias of Thebes, or some other wealthy man who thought he had great power" (336a1-7).<sup>70</sup> Socrates suggests that in Polemarchus' account, justice is

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<sup>68</sup> The arguments with Cephalus and Polemarchus center more on the question of what justice is and proceed on the assumption that justice is good, i.e., that it is a virtue. Beginning with Thrasymachus, however, the assumption that justice is good is exposed and criticized, so Socrates is prompted to discuss both what justice is and to prove that justice is good in the rest of the dialogue.

<sup>69</sup> It is worth noting that Polemarchus initially presents his position on justice as an interpretation of Simonides' saying that justice is returning what one owes, thus the origin of his view seems to be poetry. Socrates, by the end of their exchange, claims that Polemarchus' position must originate from powerful rulers not from poetry. This seems to be a subtle way Plato calls our attention to the question of the relation of poetry and politics or that of poetry and justice.

<sup>70</sup> All translation is from C.D.C. Reeve (2004). *Plato: Republic* unless otherwise noted. Annas (1981) says "The conclusion (336a) is that the view that justice is helping friends and harming enemies cannot be the thought of a wise man, but rather of some jumped-up and morally coarse dictator, of which type some examples are given" (31). While I agree with her claim that Socrates tries to show that Polemarchus' position cannot be that of a wise man by using some historical people as examples, she uses the word

related to power erroneously and that the definition of justice is biased. Socrates suggests that this position is biased since it originates from people already in power who think that justice is (the ability) to help one's friends and harm one's enemies. Polemarchus' account does not imply that justice is the desire to help one's friends and harm one's enemies but, rather, the ability or power to do so. In order to be able to help one's friends and harm one's enemies one needs the appropriate means, i.e. political power. Powerful people may think that justice is helping one's friends and harming one's enemies, but such an account makes justice dependent on power and thus relative to it. Socrates doubts that power and justice are related in this way. As the rest of the *Republic* makes clear, Socrates argues that justice and power are not related in the sense that power makes justice what it is, but only justice can make the exercise or possession of any sort of power good.<sup>71</sup>

Socrates uses the names of some rulers with reputations for being powerful and thereby hints at the political aspect of Polemarchus' definition of justice.<sup>72</sup> Socrates' mention of rulers by name, points to the fact that he is pushing the discussion to broaden its scope to politics—ruling in particular—and its relation to the question of justice; this is something which Thrasymachus' account takes up explicitly.

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“dictator,” a term very ambiguous for the discussion here and one not used by Plato. This is a problematic term to use in the discussion given the emphasis on the relation between tyranny and injustice that follows in the discussion with Thrasymachus. Irwin (1995) forms the same conclusion as Annas about this passage and explains rather helpfully that “Socrates means that a tyrant exercising his power to help his friends and harm his enemies, as the Thirty did at the expense of Lysias and Polemarchus, might well find it convenient to make his behaviour appear just, but we acknowledge that his claim would be a fraud” (172).

<sup>71</sup> I do not intend to claim that helping friends and harming enemies is a frivolous account of appropriate rulership, but only that Polemarchus seems mistaken in thinking that justice is only the ability to help friends and harm enemies. Moreover it seems that even Platonic justice depends on power

<sup>72</sup> Cooper (1997) in his edited volume *Plato: The Complete Works* notes that the first three names on the list were “notorious tyrants or kings, the fourth a man famous for his extraordinary wealth” (981). For other passages in Plato where Periander and Perdicas are associated with tyranny see *Theages* 124c ff.

Since Polemarchus' definition of justice has just been refuted, the implication is that such rulers and any other rulers who hold such a position must be mistaken. Socrates implies that having political power does not necessarily imply wisdom on any matter, and particularly on the question of what justice is. Thus, Socrates tries to distinguish power from knowledge and from justice, insofar as we may think that the truly powerful are those who know and those who can tell us what justice is.<sup>73</sup> Dramatically, it is irrelevant whether the refutation of Polemarchus' position was convincing. What matters is that Socrates attributes the origin of the position of Polemarchus to some rulers who were real historical figures with seeming political power. This matters since Socrates places himself, as a philosopher seeking the truth, in opposition to politically powerful rulers as people who suppose themselves correct about justice. In other words, Socrates denies that having power gives one good insight.<sup>74</sup> This is dramatically and philosophically relevant since the discussion that follows with Thrasymachus involves contention on precisely this point.

The curious fact that Socrates mentions the names of actual rulers in this passage before Thrasymachus enters the discussion to attack Socrates venomously, suggests that the association of these powerful rulers with ignorance concerning what justice is brings Thrasymachus to a boiling point.<sup>75</sup> Thrasymachus is irritated by the whole discussion, but what brings him to the edge is the suggestion that powerful people cannot be right in their conception of what justice is, in this case, helping friends and harming enemies.

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<sup>73</sup> Compare this to Socrates' claim in the *Meno* that the famous Athenian statesmen of the past could not teach virtue and thus, that they did not know what virtue is (93a ff.).

<sup>74</sup> He also denies this in the *Gorgias* where Polus assumes that since tyrants and rhetoricians seem to be able to do what they want, i.e., have power, they must know what is to their real interest or advantage (466a-468e, for Polus' assumption see 466b)

<sup>75</sup> A similar incident occurs in the *Gorgias* when Socrates claims that rhetoric is a powerless knack, which prompts Polus to suggest that rhetoricians, like tyrants, are very powerful, and should thus be admired.



While Thrasymachus does not call Socrates on this point immediately and explicitly,<sup>76</sup> his subsequent position entails the two following claims: that justice is indeed what is to the advantage of the stronger or the powerful (338b-c) and, after some opposition from Socrates, that rulers, strictly speaking (true rulers), are never wrong about what is to their advantage (340d-341a).<sup>77</sup> There may be people who rule cities who do not know what is to their advantage but these are not ‘true’ rulers for Thrasymachus, since true rulers have both power and know what is to their advantage. Thrasymachus wants knowledge closely related to power more than Socrates seems to allow for. His two claims above amount to a disagreement with the claim that the rulers mentioned by Socrates at 336a hold a false position about what justice is. Such rulers cannot be wrong about what justice is provided that these powerful rulers stick to what is to their interest.

Thrasymachus wants political power to be coupled with wisdom but in such a way that one’s wisdom is recognizable due to his ability to have power; Socrates will not have this.

Thrasymachus’ reasons for wanting power and wisdom coupled in this way have to do with the fact that this is what he offers as a teacher, namely, rhetoric which may permit one to gain political power. Thrasymachus claims to educate people to become true rulers who know what is to their advantage and able to gain and hold power. If Thrasymachus is simply a positivist or conventionalist, i.e., if he holds that whatever those in power think is right, then this would jeopardize his usefulness as a teacher who

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<sup>76</sup> Initially Thrasymachus complains about how Socrates has been approaching the question, namely that he is not serious about it (336b8-c2) and that he has been exploiting the fact that it is easier to ask questions than to answer them (336c2-6).

<sup>77</sup> The second claim amounts to the distinction of reality or being and appearance in the sense that Thrasymachus, unlike Polus in the *Gorgias* (466b), has rulers knowing what is indeed to their advantage and not thinking that what seems to be to their advantage is to their advantage. This distinction is clearly relevant in the rest of the *Republic* and in the Platonic corpus also. I take this point from Ober (1998) p. 217-218.

may aid those who desire to be powerful to become so by imparting to them some knowledge he possesses.<sup>78</sup> Given Thrasymachus' subsequent position, that justice is the advantage of the stronger, he seems to think that if the rulers mentioned by Socrates use Polemarchus' position to serve their advantage and think this to be justice, then criticizing them, as Socrates does, must be false.<sup>79</sup> Thus, what prompts Thrasymachus to enter the discussion at this precise point in the dialogue is Socrates' suggestion that an erroneous idea of justice originates from people in power, since this seems to threaten his position as a teacher of rhetoric.<sup>80</sup>

Thrasymachus begins to clarify what he means by his definition of justice as the advantage of the stronger, which he presented at 338b-c, and discusses the relation between justice and the manner in which cities are ruled. He says:

Don't you know, then, that some cities are ruled by a tyranny (τυραννοῦνται), some by a democracy (δημοκρατοῦνται), and some by an aristocracy (ἀριστοκρατοῦνται)? ...And that what is stronger in each city is the ruling element (τὸ ἄρχον)?...And each type of rule makes laws that are advantageous for itself (τίθεται δέ γε τοὺς νόμους ἐκάστη ἢ ἄρχη πρὸς τὸ αὐτῇ συμφέρον): democracy makes democratic ones, tyranny tyrannical ones (δημοκρατία μὲν δημοκρατικούς, τυραννὶς δὲ τυραννικούς), and so on with the others. And by so legislating, each declares that what

<sup>78</sup> Notice the similarity between Thrasymachus position that intends to have his profession be what provides one with the knowledge to gain power and Polus reaction to Socrates' suggestion that rhetoric is a powerless knack. Polus insists that rhetoricians, like tyrants, are very powerful indeed and thus connects rhetoric to political power (466b ff.). The suggestion implies that rhetoric is the means to political power and that rhetoricians are important teachers. Notice also the connection to Meno's second and third definitions of virtue in the *Meno*. Meno apparently repeats what he learned from the rhetorician Gorgias: virtue is "to be able to rule people" (73d), and then, "virtue is to desire beautiful things and have the power to acquire them" (77b). In the *Meno* we see Meno repeat what Gorgias presents as virtue, i.e. political power which is an end which justifies the importance of rhetoric as a means to it.

<sup>79</sup> Both Cephalus' and Polemarchus' positions may be included as instantiations of Thrasymachus' position that justice is the advantage of the stronger. This would be the case if paying one's debts is (or is thought to be) to the ruler's advantage or if helping friends and harming enemies is (or is thought to be) to the ruler's advantage.

<sup>80</sup> It seems that nothing in the discussion with Polemarchus invites Socrates to explain the origin of the position that justice is helping friends and harming enemies so it is plausible to suggest that Socrates claims that the position originates from powerful people to upset Thrasymachus so much that he enters the conversation. At the same time, it is plausible to argue that Plato has Socrates include this particular comment to show that Thrasymachus has to be prompted personally (taking into account who he is and what he thinks), although carefully and indirectly, to join the conversation. We could make the same point about how Polus enters the conversation in the *Gorgias*, i.e., due to an indirect personal "attack."

is just for its subjects is what is advantageous for itself—the ruler—and it punishes anyone who deviates from this as lawless and unjust. That, Socrates, is what I say justice is, the same in all cities: what is advantageous for the established rule (338d7-339a1).

Whereas the discussion on justice, which began with Cephalus' account that justice is paying one's debts, was about individuals, the discussion with Thrasymachus has expanded to include political justice explicitly.<sup>81</sup> The discussion with Polemarchus is potentially about politics since both private individuals and rulers may be able to help their friends and harm their enemies.<sup>82</sup> In this passage it is clear that for Thrasymachus the rulers of a city are the strong, that justice depends on power, and that ruling should aim at serving the interests of the ruler. Thus his vehement reaction to Socrates' mention of rulers by name as ignorant about justice, amounts to the rejection of the idea that possessing political power cannot determine what justice is. Moreover, Thrasymachus mentions tyranny first in his list of the ways cities are ruled which suggests that he is responding to Socrates' earlier comment that had famous tyrants be ignorant of justice.<sup>83</sup>

During the cross-examination of Thrasymachus, Socrates tries to persuade him that any experts in any of the arts, including the art of ruling a city, exercise their art for

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<sup>81</sup> The distinction and relation between individual justice and political justice is a theme that takes up much of the dialogue. Consider the analogy or parallel of the soul and the city.

<sup>82</sup> The argument with Polemarchus makes the implicit distinction between a friend in private and a public or political friend. This distinction seems to me to merit separate discussion.

<sup>83</sup> In his explanation of his definition of justice at 338d7-339a1 Thrasymachus lists regimes in two ways. The first time he lists them in the following order: tyranny, democracy, aristocracy, as the ways different cities are ruled. The second time he mentions democracy, tyranny and "the others," omitting mention of aristocracy and switching the places of tyranny and democracy. I get this point from Stauffer (2001, 66). Stauffer further claims that "Thrasymachus' emphasis on tyranny and democracy, and their seeming interchangeability in his account, is an implicit assertion that democracy (the regime in which freedom and the rule of law would seem to have their most natural home) is at root no different from tyranny (the regime least characterized by freedom and the rule of law)" (66). While it is interesting that Thrasymachus does not bother to keep his lists of regimes consistent it is not so clear that he only equates tyranny and democracy at this point in the discussion and not all regimes. His point is that any regime which makes laws makes these for the advantage of the ruling class and thus justice is the advantage of the ruling class which is furthered by such laws. What is more interesting is that his first, descriptive, list of the types of regimes is in opposite order than Socrates' prescriptive list in Book VIII (kingship/aristocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny).

the benefit of their objects or subjects and not for the benefit of themselves (341b-342e).<sup>84</sup> Socrates tries to argue that the art of ruling a city is like the other arts which aim for the benefit of its objects, or subjects, and not for the benefit of the expert. This line of argumentation becomes possible upon Thrasymachus' insistence that ruling necessarily entails knowing what is advantageous to the ruler, which turns ruling into an expertise or a field that requires knowledge. Socrates does not have to argue that ruling is an expertise or an art since Thrasymachus implied that it is at 340d-341a.<sup>85</sup> Socrates' model in this argument is the doctor who uses his knowledge or expertise to heal patients but does not heal patients for his own interests. Thrasymachus denies that experts exercise their art or knowledge for the benefit of their subjects and not for their own interests, because he seems to understand that admitting this would be detrimental to his account of justice. If experts exercise their art for the benefit of their subjects, and rulers are experts of this sort, then justice cannot be what is the advantage of the expert ruler, but only what is to the advantage of the one being ruled.<sup>86</sup> Admitting that experts exercise their

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<sup>84</sup> This is a criterion that both Plato and Aristotle consider essential in separating good regimes from bad ones, namely, whether the rulers aim for and serve the common advantage. See Plato's *Laws* 715b2-6 and Aristotle's *Politics* 1279a17-21, where he makes aiming at the common advantage the basis for his distinction between correct and just regimes and deviant regimes. A similar point is made by Stauffer (2001, 67). Moreover, Thrasymachus buys into the assumption that there is such a thing as an art of ruling since arts can be taught. He claims to be able to teach skills for ruling, so having ruling be an art allows him to argue for his importance as a teacher. Socrates seems to recognize this and this is why, in part, he treats ruling as an art; he knows the assumption will go on unchallenged by Thrasymachus.

<sup>85</sup> A point to keep in mind when ruling a city is discussed as being analogous to other arts is that in the Greek it does not sound as odd as it does in English to suggest that, say, a doctor rules (ἄρχεται) over a patient. The verb ἄρχειν may mean either ruling politically or having authority over another in a more general sense, like a doctor may have some authority (epistemic or otherwise) over a patient, or a parent have some authority over a child. Such a verb seems to have been used both in reference to private settings like the relation of parents to children, and in political settings. For an excellent discussion of Plato's conception of art or *technē* and issues related to it see Roochnik(1996).

<sup>86</sup> Several commentators have pointed out that there are changes in Thrasymachus' position, especially once he turns rulers into expert knowers of what is to their own advantage, even though he seems to think that his position is the same all along. Cf. Annas (1981, 35-43), Bloom (1968, 328-329), Sallis (1986, 338), and Reeve (1988, 13-15). My argument here does not rest on whether Thrasymachus actually holds the same position all along or changes it in the course of the argument.

knowledge for the benefit of their subjects would also call into question his abilities as a teacher. He is supposed to be able to educate potential political rulers on how to pursue their interests, that is, he is supposedly able to impart the ruling art to them.

In the following passage, Thrasymachus gives a speech (the shepherd speech) in which he says that experts practice their arts for their own sake and claims that ruling is rather like these arts. In this long passage we get a detailed discussion of tyranny, even though the passage is primarily directed towards showing that injustice is better than justice, and that rulers are the sorts of experts who aim at what is to their advantage.

Thrasymachus says:

You think that shepherds and cowherds consider what is good for their sheep and cattle, and fatten them and take care of them with some aim in mind other than what is good for their masters (δεσποτῶν) and themselves. Moreover, you believe, that rulers (ἄρχοντας) in cities—true rulers, that is (οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄρχουσιν)—think about their subjects (ἀρχομένους) in a different way than one does about sheep, and that what they consider night and day is something other than what is advantageous for themselves. You are so far from understanding justice and what is just, and injustice and what is unjust, that you do are ignorant of the fact (ἀγνοεῖς) that justice is really the good of another person than the one being just (ἀλλότριον ἀγαθὸν τῷ ὄντι), what is advantageous for the stronger and the ruler (τοῦ κρείττονός τε καὶ ἄρχοντος συμφέρον), and harmful to the one who obeys and serves. Injustice is the opposite, it rules those who are truly simpleminded (ἀληθῶς εὐηθικῶν), and just people, and the ones it rules make what is advantageous for the other who is stronger: and they make the one they serve happy (εὐδαίμονα), but they do not make themselves the least bit happy.

Consider it as it follows, most simpleminded (εὐηθέστατε) Socrates: a just man must always get less than an unjust one. First, in their contracts with one another, when a just man is partner to an unjust, you will never find, when the partnership ends, that the just one gets more than the unjust, but less. Second, in matters relating to the city, when taxes are to be paid, a just man pays more on an equal amount of property, and unjust one less; but when the city is giving out refunds, a just man gets nothing while an unjust one makes a large profit. Then, when each of them holds political office, a just person—even if he is not penalized in other ways—finds that his private affairs become worse due to neglect, that he gains no advantage from public affairs because of his justice, and that he is despised by his relatives and acquaintances because he is unwilling to do them an unjust favor. The opposite is the case for an unjust man in every respect. I mean, indeed, the person described before, namely, the man who outdoes anyone else due to having power (τὸν μέγιστα δυνάμενον πλεονεκτεῖν). He is the one you should consider if you want to figure out how much more advantageous it is for the individual to be unjust than just. You will understand this most easily if you turn your thoughts to injustice of the most complete sort (ἐπὶ τὴν τελεωτάτην ἀδικίαν ἔλθης), the sort that makes the one who does injustice happiest (ἢ τὸν μὲν ἀδικήσαντα εὐδαιμονέστατον ποιεῖ), and the ones who suffer it—those who are unwilling to do injustice—most wretched

(ἀθλιωτάτους). This is tyranny (τυραννίς), because it uses both covert means (καὶ λάθρα) and force (καὶ βίᾳ) to appropriate the property of others—whether it is sacred or indeed hallowed, public or private—not to a small scale, but all at once. If someone commits a part of this sort of injustice and gets caught, he is punished and greatly reproached—temple robbers, kidnappers, housebreakers, robbers and thieves are what these partly unjust people are called when they commit those crimes. When someone appropriates the possessions of the citizens, on the other hand, and then kidnaps and enslaves the possessors as well, instead of these shameful names he is called happy and blessed; not only by the citizens themselves, but even by all who learn that he has committed the whole of injustice (τὴν ὅλην ἀδικίαν). For it is not the fear of doing injustice, but of suffering it, that elicits the reproaches of those who revile injustice (ὄνειδίζουσιν οἱ ὄνειδίζοντες τὴν ἀδικίαν). In this way, Socrates, injustice is stronger (ισχυρότερον), freer (ἐλευθεριώτερον), and more masterful (δεσποτικώτερον) than justice if it is committed on a large scale (ικανῶς γιγνομένη). And, as I was saying from the beginning, justice is what is advantageous for the stronger, while injustice is profitable and advantageous for oneself (343b1-344c8).<sup>87</sup>

In this passage Thrasymachus tries to argue for a number of things related to his account of justice. He tries to argue that the art of ruling is similar to the arts which do not seek to benefit those they are exercised upon, but those who exercise them. Socrates is so naïve as to think that even shepherds do not aim at anything further than the good of the sheep, but anyone knows that they aim at the benefit of themselves or that of their masters.<sup>88</sup>

Thrasymachus also attempts to clarify what he means by justice and what by injustice, and while he does so he tells us which is better to exercise and for whom. Justice is what is to the benefit of another, namely to the benefit of the powerful person who is unjust and whom the just person ought to serve. Injustice is what is to the benefit of oneself and to the detriment of others; thus injustice is beneficial to oneself and justice is not.<sup>89</sup> The extent to which injustice is beneficial is such that it leads those who are

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<sup>87</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>88</sup> Stauffer (2001) in his consideration of the speech suggests correctly that having shepherds possess an art analogous to ruling and saying that shepherds have masters suggests that the good of some human beings may depend, sometimes, on serving the good of others (79). Of course Thrasymachus goes on to talk about rulers as masters rather than shepherds who have masters.

<sup>89</sup> Many commentators have stressed correctly that Thrasymachus' explanation here of justice as the good of another that brings misery, and of injustice as the good for oneself that affords happiness is a turning point in the dialogue. See, for example Annas (1981, 45), Bloom (1968, 334-335), Irwin (1995, 176).

unjust to happiness and those who are just to misery. Only “most simpleminded” or naïve people, like Socrates, would think that justice is better than injustice.<sup>90</sup>

Thrasymachus then goes on to provide evidence for his claim that injustice is superior to justice. He lists the benefits that unjust people may garner both in private affairs, and more importantly, in public or political affairs. First, privately, unjust people benefit through contracts or partnerships since they come out of them with more than just people do. Second, in public affairs when it comes to paying taxes and getting financial benefits from the city the unjust person also, always, pays less and gathers more than the just person. The third sorts of benefits Thrasymachus discusses have to do with holding political office or ruling. These benefits are directly relevant to his definitions of justice and injustice. People in office who are just find that their private affairs deteriorate since they neglect them, they do not gain much money, and their relatives hate them since they show no favoritism. Thrasymachus assumes that a just person neglects his private affairs when in political office since he tries to do what is to the benefit of everyone else, the citizens, but not to the benefit of himself.<sup>91</sup> Unjust people in office do much better than just people and in order to drive this point home Thrasymachus makes his discussion more narrow by talking about a person who has great power and does much better than, or is able to outdo, anyone else (τὸν μεγάλα δυνάμενον πλεονεκτεῖν).<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Regarding the question of Thrasymachus’ prudence in exposing the view that people who want to be just are naïve, which seems to desire to awaken the just to the benefits of injustice and thus to prompt them to pursue it see, Stauffer (2001, 84-86) and Henderson (1970, 222-223). Thrasymachus seems to imply, at least, that as a teacher of rhetoric he may aid people to pursue the benefits of injustice in politics. We should also keep in mind that Thrasymachus exposes the idea that injustice pays more than justice in front of a few people, in closed quarters so to speak.

<sup>91</sup> This is reminiscent of Socrates in the *Apology* where (23b-c, 30a, 31a-c) he says that he neglected his private affairs to serve the city.

<sup>92</sup> The term πλεονεκτεῖν (lit. to have more or to outdo), here portrayed as good, becomes important in the rest of the dialogue. Socrates treats πλεονεξία as a vice later, meaning “greediness” and he associates it

He tells Socrates that in order to understand why the unjust person is better off than the just one, and how much so, he must look at the case of complete injustice, that is, tyranny.<sup>93</sup> Thrasymachus sets up his account in extreme terms: the most unjust person is happiest and the most just person most miserable. He hopes that the presentation of his position in these extremes will prove him correct. Thrasymachus portrays justice as an obstacle or a restraint to happiness. In order to avoid restraints to happiness in the case of injustice, like punishment and reproach, he makes injustice complete; this allows him to argue that injustice is better than justice.<sup>94</sup> It is here that we can see that Thrasymachus' speech while about justice and injustice is also about tyranny. He portrays tyranny as extreme or complete injustice, which makes the tyrant the most unjust person and the happiest in Thrasymachus' terms.

In the shepherd speech there are a number of points made which amount to a preliminary description of tyranny as a regime and of the tyrant as a person. Let us enumerate and discuss these:

(1) Thrasymachus argues that the unjust person is happier than the just person. In order to drive this point home, as I indicated above, he claims that tyranny, the most complete form of injustice, is the best example by which one may realize that the most unjust person benefits and is happy. Thus, in this passage we get the ideas that: (a) tyranny is the most unjust of regimes, (b) that it is the regime in which the tyrant, as the most powerful and unjust person, is the most happy, and thus (c) that tyranny is the best regime

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with the dominance of the appetitive part of the soul. Πλεονεξία is also the term used to express the idea that the unjust person tries to outdo everyone.

<sup>93</sup> This is the expression of an early version of the analogy of the city and the soul/individual as Socrates comes to employ it later, first in Book II and throughout the dialogue. Thrasymachus goes on to talk about and examine tyranny, a political regime, to argue that the individual who is unjust is better off than the individual who is just; this assumes the analogy of the city and the individual.

<sup>94</sup> I take this point from Stauffer (2001, 83).



provided that one is a tyrant. Thrasymachus argues that tyranny is completely unjust and that the tyrant is absolutely powerful. He also argues that complete injustice or tyranny contributes to the benefits and happiness of the ruler, thus tyranny is also the best regime. For Thrasymachus, one of the criteria for the best regime is that the ruler must benefit or be able to do what is to his advantage.

Socrates will try to separate claims (a) from (b) and (c), will agree with (a) but not with (b) or (c). Socrates, in the *Republic*, never denies that tyranny is the most unjust regime; thus he agrees with (a). But in the rest of the dialogue he argues against the idea that injustice can make anyone happy and, in effect, he argues against the idea that tyranny, the most extreme form of injustice, can make anyone happy. He will point out several times that tyrants are not able to do what they want; thus their power and happiness come into question even on their own terms. Socrates will agree that tyrants try to outdo or to have more than everyone else, but he will doubt whether they are really able to do so to the degree they desire. Moreover, the hierarchical listing of regimes in terms of justice, and thus in terms of goodness in Book VIII makes it clear that for Socrates tyranny is the worst and not the best regime.

Another way we can think about the portrayal of tyranny in this passage is as injustice *par excellence*. In effect the tyrant is the unjust individual *par excellence*. This theme colors much of the rest of the dialogue, especially Books VIII and IX, since Socrates agrees with the idea that tyranny is injustice *par excellence*, but not with the idea that it is good or that it should be desirable. If tyranny is injustice *par excellence* and the tyrant is the unjust person *par excellence*, then Plato, in all the arguments in which he

rejects injustice as bad and non-conducive to happiness, implicitly, also argues the same about tyranny.

(2) Thrasymachus presents tyranny as extreme or large-scale injustice (ἰκανῶς γιγνομένη),<sup>95</sup> and which aims at the ruler's individual advantage alone. This amounts to a general definition of tyranny: tyranny is the regime which exercises extreme, large-scale injustice and which aims at the ruler's advantage alone. Petty thieves or criminals may get benefits for their injustice but they are negligible examples of injustice for Thrasymachus. Since they do not do enough injustice without the restraint of punishment to achieve happiness. Apparently, other regimes which are unjust are not so on such a large scale as tyranny; tyranny is the regime which is completely unjust and other regimes are less so. As we will see, the central meaning of this definition of tyranny is picked up, used, and clarified in Book VIII, but the following points also show how Plato clarifies this definition a bit further in Thrasymachus' speech.

(3) Thrasymachus also prescribes the proper aim of rulers and the position of citizens in the *polis* in this passage. Rulers ought to care for themselves and treat their subjects like the herders or their masters treat herd animals, namely, according to what is to their own interest but not according to what is to the interest of the subjects. Citizens are analogous to herd animals and should be treated only as means to the interests of the rulers like herd animals are treated as means to the benefit of the herder or his employer/master. This passage shows what tyrannies aim at and how this aim is related to how they treat their subjects or citizens. Since tyranny is complete injustice and

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<sup>95</sup> The phrase ἰκανῶς γιγνομένη literally means “done sufficiently” or “done competently” which, in the case of injustice comes to mean “large scale” since only thus injustice may be done sufficiently or exhibit the competence of the one who does it.

injustice amounts to serving one's own interests, tyrannies aim at the interest of the ruler alone and they do this, at least in part, by using the citizens as means to the interests of the ruler. Tyranny is portrayed as treating citizens like domesticated animals or like slaves<sup>96</sup> for the interest of the tyrant alone. Under tyranny citizens are reduced to slaves.

(4) In the last part of the speech Thrasymachus also points out some of the means by which tyrants rule. They use covert means (λάθρα)<sup>97</sup> and violence (βία) to get the property of others whether it is sacred, public, or private. That tyrants may confiscate property that is sacred, that is, money from temples, is a suggestion that the tyrant may be impious. One may suggest, quite plausibly, that the tyrant uses covert means or violence in all sorts of activities, and not merely in confiscating property. Furthermore, Thrasymachus' claim that tyranny uses covert means *and* violence (λάθρα καὶ βία) is ambiguous and we may read it both as a disjunction and a conjunction. Tyranny may use both covert means and violence at the same time, or it may use either one. "Covert means" may amount to fraud, lies which are used to persuade people to believe or support the tyrant, or anything the tyrant does imperceptibly to further his interests. Using violence may amount to doing so openly and actually, in order to get rid of the tyrant's enemies, or merely as a threat to scare people into submission. The tyrant may also employ violence covertly, as when he assassinates political opponents while making sure this does not come out in public.

That tyranny may use covert means or violence in these ways also suggests that there are two types of tyranny: (a) one which rules violently and openly so, and (b) one

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<sup>96</sup> Thrasymachus claims that injustice on a large scale, namely, tyranny, is more masterful (δεσποτικώτερον) than justice. Δεσπότης (despot) was a word usually used to denote a master of slaves.

<sup>97</sup> This could mean 'covertly', 'stealthily', 'imperceptibly', or 'without one's knowledge of.'

which tries to present itself as just and fair to its citizens by pretensions to justice and with lies that persuade the citizens. The thrust of Thrasymachus' argument suggests that he thinks of tyranny as operating in way (a), but the ambiguity of whether we should read the use of violence and covert means as a conjunction or a disjunction allows for the possibility of these two types of tyranny. Since either type of tyranny is possible we may hold that Plato was aware of the possibility also.<sup>98</sup> This is important in light of Aristotle's discussion of tyranny in the *Politics*. Aristotle, in *Politics* V 12, criticizes the account of regimes from Book VIII of the *Republic* and he suggests that Plato's discussion of tyranny and regime change do not allow for the possibility of different forms of tyranny.<sup>99</sup>

(5) Thrasymachus claims that the large-scale injustice of tyranny makes people consider the tyrant the happiest or most blessed person, unlike petty criminals who are punished and reproached. The claim is that large-scale injustice not only wins happiness for someone, but also the reputation for it. The tyrant is admired for his ability to pursue his interest through unjust means without getting punished like a petty criminal. He argues that this admiration comes from people's deep belief that suffering injustice is worse than doing it, and that it is fear of suffering it that makes people think of injustice as an evil. In effect he argues that all people, deep down, want to do injustice without getting punished and they admire the tyrant for being able to do so; deep down, everyone

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<sup>98</sup> We may hold this position since Glaucon's speech in the beginning of Book II is explicit on the person who seems just but is unjust, and Socrates, in Book VIII speaks of the potential tyrant seeming but not being the just defender of the people.

<sup>99</sup> Aristotle in that chapter discusses two ways tyrannies may be preserved and they may do so either by being openly violent and unjust, or by imitating kingship and trying to appear just while not being so in actuality. He argues that the second way allows for tyranny to preserve itself longer. In effect Aristotle argues that a tyranny which uses covert means rather than violence openly may last longer. Plato seems to anticipate the distinction of tyranny into these two types. Aristotle's second tyrant may not be as unjust as the first tyrant but he is still unjust since in both cases he aims at his own benefits and not to those of the citizens. We have seen earlier that serving the interests of the citizens is a criterion by which both Plato and Aristotle distinguish just from unjust regimes.

wants to be a tyrant. Socrates will try to show that tyranny is really undesirable since it does not pay.

(6) Finally, Thrasymachus mentions that injustice on a large scale, i.e. tyranny, is comparatively stronger, freer, and more masterful (ισχυρότερον, ἐλευθεριώτερον, δεσποτικώτερον) than justice.<sup>100</sup> Being a tyrant makes one stronger or more powerful than being just. Tyranny also allows the tyrant to be free in the sense that it allows the tyrant to do what he wants and to pursue his interests; freedom here means having the license to do what one wants. Socrates challenges this notion of freedom in Book VIII as the element that may cause democracies to devolve into tyrannies, and he denies the tyrant's ability to do what he wants. Thrasymachus portrays tyranny as more masterful than justice since it commands citizens with complete authority much as a master commands his slaves.<sup>101</sup>

It is helpful to distinguish Thrasymachus' claims about injustice and tyranny into prescriptive (normative) claims on the one hand, and into descriptive claims on the other. We should realize that Plato endorses Thrasymachus' description of what tyranny is but

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<sup>100</sup> Compare this claim with Otanes' account of monarchy in the *Histories* (3.80.3) as the government that "can do what it wishes without giving an account." For such a comparison see McGlew (1993, 30).

<sup>101</sup> In the *Gorgias* Polus and Callicles present a similar image of tyranny and the tyrant, thus Plato presents a preliminary account of it there also. At 466b ff. Polus compares rhetoric to tyranny and suggests that tyrant do what they want, unjust things due to their power while assuming that possession of power is great. Thus, he seems to tell us that tyranny entails for the tyrant to do what he wants to do, i.e., extreme injustice to serve their advantage. He also gives a brief definition of the tyrant as the person for whom there is "the ability to do in the city whatever seems good to him" (469c). Moreover, he claims that people who are able to do extreme injustice, like tyrants are happy (470d). As evidence for this he tells the story of Archelaus who came to rule a kingdom by being very unjust. At 473d he suggests that plotting a tyranny and succeeding without paying a penalty amounts to a happy life. He thus implies that if one is able to be a tyrant for long he will be happy. Callicles supports Polus's position on tyranny and on the fact that tyrants are happy. See 490a-b where he claims that superior and intelligent people in politics are able to do what they want. He also points out that happiness is allowing one's desires to grow as large as possible and through courage and intelligence to fulfill them (491e-492a). He goes on to say that it would be a shame to have a chance to be a tyrant and give it up, so he thinks that being a tyrant contributes to happiness since it allows the tyrant to satisfy his extravagant desires. Thus we see that Polus and Callicles largely agree with Thrasymachus' points above. The only disagreement seems to be that Callicles holds that tyranny is just.

not his prescription that we must seek tyranny or injustice because they benefit.<sup>102</sup> Given the discussion of the rest of the dialogue we see that Socrates does not disagree or argue against what Thrasymachus says tyranny is or what it is like (what it does, its policies and structure).<sup>103</sup> If Socrates does anything to this descriptive account of tyranny is to expand it. He does so primarily by looking into the tyrant's soul. Consequently, Socrates opposes the claims that it is better to be unjust than just and that rulers ought to serve their own interests and not those of their subjects. Thrasymachus intends the claim that tyranny makes its ruler happy to be both descriptive and prescriptive. Such a claim is prescriptive on the assumption that all people want to be happy, and hence we ought to desire to be tyrants to secure happiness. Thus, Plato presents us with a description of what tyranny is (extreme large scale injustice on the political level with the aim of serving the rulers), and with a description of what it is like (measures and actions) via Thrasymachus, but he does not endorse the prescriptive or normative claims that Thrasymachus makes about it or about injustice. In this passage Plato begins to set up the problem of tyranny in connection with injustice and happiness that will be addressed in the remainder of the dialogue.

While the shepherd speech is largely about justice and injustice it shows that for Plato the question of justice and injustice is directly related to the problem of tyranny. This passage allows us to conclude that any discussion of justice and injustice has tyranny in the background to some degree (and any discussion about just or unjust individuals has the tyrant in the background). Further, we may conclude that the

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<sup>102</sup> We can only make such a claim after we have read the whole dialogue of course (and perhaps a few other dialogues, like the *Gorgias*), and so retrospectively.

<sup>103</sup> I think that it is safer to assume that Socrates is closer to being Plato's prescriptive and normative mouthpiece than Thrasymachus is, and that both Thrasymachus and Socrates may be merely descriptive mouthpieces.

discussion of tyranny in the dialogue has a double edge: (a) tyranny is clearly an exemplification of injustice done on an extreme level or on a large scale, which may help Socrates (or Plato) explain what injustice amounts to; whether it is better than justice or not, and consequently whether it ought to be desirable. Thus discussing tyranny does some explanatory work for the question of injustice and justice in the dialogue. (b) Injustice has tyranny in the background and so learning about injustice (in passages where tyranny is not mentioned explicitly) allows us to glean something about tyranny or the tyrant also. This is especially the case where injustice or the unjust person is portrayed or discussed in its extreme form.<sup>104</sup> If one is concerned with the problem of injustice, and tyranny is large-scale injustice, then one should be concerned with the problem of tyranny. Plato sets up this strong correlation between injustice and tyranny from the beginning of the dialogue.

## 2.2 Republic Book II: Glaucon and Adeimantus' Challenge and Further Description of Tyranny.

In Book II Socrates is challenged to show that justice is better than injustice positively and this requires him to give an account of what justice is. Glaucon renews Thrasymachus' position and proposes to: (1) explain what justice is according to most people, (2) to show that people practice justice not as a good but as something necessary and unavoidable against their will, and (3) to show that the unjust person is happier than

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<sup>104</sup> This is the case in Glaucon and Adeimantus' portrayal of the unjust person and injustice in Book II where they set up the challenge to Socrates to show that justice is better than injustice both in itself and for its consequences. As part of the challenge the unjust person is described as completely unjust with the reputation for justice and such a person may be understood to be the tyrant.

the just person (358b-c). In Glaucon's renewal of Thrasymachus' position, we can also see a further discussion of the nature of tyranny and its relation to injustice.

In discussing the second point above Glaucon claims that according to most people, practicing justice is done out of necessity since whenever they can get away with injustice they try to do so. People are just due to fear of punishment, not by choosing to be so willingly. They consider justice good because they are not able to do injustice without punishment and thus they are each protected from suffering injustice (359b-c). In order to explain where human appetites may lead those who practice justice unwillingly, namely to injustice, if they had the ability to do what they wanted without fear of punishment, Glaucon tells the story of Gyges' ancestor and his ring (359d-360b).<sup>105</sup> The story is supposed to illustrate how all humans are essentially only after their own interest and thus unjust by nature. It is important to note that in the story it is the power of the ring, which Gyges' ancestor discovers accidentally on a dead corpse, that allows him to act on his desire to be unjust, whereas prior to the discovery of the ring we may assume that he was law abiding out of fear of punishment.<sup>106</sup> Gyges' ancestor was completely unjust because the ring of invisibility protected him from detection and punishment, and because it allowed him to gain the power to do whatever he wanted. The ring does not only give one freedom to do what he wants but also the power or ability to do so.<sup>107</sup> Unlike most people Gyges' ancestor was able to do whatever he

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<sup>105</sup> Gyges is familiar to us from the account we get from Herodotus' *Histories* (I. 8-15) and from Archilochus' poems. Herodotus' account does not mention Gyges' ring but he does mention that he came to power by murdering the previous king Candaules and marrying his wife and that he made considerable monetary contributions to the temple at Delphi.

<sup>106</sup> We may even wonder if the story of Gyges' ancestor reveals that we are naturally unjust since it is only upon the possession of extraordinary ability that the desire to be unjust awakens in Gyges' ancestor.

<sup>107</sup> This fits with Thrasymachus' claim earlier that complete injustice, i.e. tyranny, is stronger, freer and more masterful than justice (344c5-6).



wanted without any consequences, he was able to fulfill his desire for license because he was given power through the ring.<sup>108</sup>

Glaucon presents Gyges' ancestor as completely unjust and happy, and since Thrasymachus in his speech suggested that such a person is a tyrant, Gyges' ancestor is really a tyrant even though he is not called this. Much of the portrayal of Gyges' ancestor in Book II fits what Thrasymachus told us about the tyrant or tyranny. Glaucon renews Thrasymachus' claim that the completely unjust person, the tyrant, is happier than the just person in every way. Thus, Glaucon does not only renew Thrasymachus' claims about justice and injustice but also about tyranny. Gyges' ancestor takes people's property at will, kills whoever gets in his way, seduces whom he wants, and assumes political power by becoming the ruler, and he does all this in secret with the help of the ring (360a7-b3). Here we see that Glaucon repeats the ideas that a tyrant confiscates property and that he uses violence. Glaucon presents the tyrant, Gyges' ancestor, as assuming power and as being unjust covertly (at least initially), whereas Thrasymachus had suggested that tyrants are unjust either covertly or with violence openly.<sup>109</sup>

The discussion of Gyges' ancestor brings Glaucon to demand that they should compare the just person with the unjust person by giving them opposite reputations: the completely unjust person has the reputation for justice, and the completely just person has the reputation for injustice (360e-362a ff.). This methodological measure in the analysis

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<sup>108</sup> The relation of freedom as license and power is essential in the dialogue. As we will see in the discussion of democracy and tyranny in Book VIII, people in democracies desire freedom to do what they want, i.e. license, but they often lack the means to do so, and the tyrant is able to pursue his desire for license further than any citizen in a democracy. In this sense the tyrant is a "democrat" with means or power. Also, by having the apparent power to do what he wants, the tyrant is envied or admired by most people.

<sup>109</sup> Polus points out several times that what is admirable in tyrants is that "they can kill whomever they wish, and confiscate their possessions, and expel from the cities whomever it seems good to them" (466b11-c2, see also 468e6-9). He also suggests that plotting a tyranny and not getting punished for it would bring happiness (473b).

of justice guarantees that justice in-itself, without its good external consequences, will be compared with injustice in order to discover which one is better. Glaucon portrays both justice and injustice as complete and thus in the extreme. Thrasymachus presented the tyrant as a completely unjust person, and thus the injustice Glaucon mentions here is equivalent to tyranny, and the unjust person is equivalent to the tyrant. When Glaucon talks about a completely unjust person who comes to rule a city and who receives all sorts of rewards, due to his reputation for justice and his ability to do injustice, he provides an account of the tyrant as a ruler believed to be just. The tyrant will get some benefits provided by others due to his reputation, and some benefits due to his own ability to be undetected while unjust.

First, he rules his city because of his reputation for justice (δοκοῦντι δικαίῳ εἶναι). Next, he marries into any family he wishes, gives his children in marriage to anyone he wishes, has contracts and partnerships with anyone he wants, and, besides benefiting himself in all these ways, he profits because he has no scruples about doing injustice (μὴ δυσχεραίνειν τὸ ἀδικεῖν). In any contest, public or private, he is the winner and does better (πλεονεκτεῖν) than his enemies. And by doing better than them, he becomes wealthy, benefits his friends, and harms his enemies. He makes adequate sacrifices to the gods and sets up magnificent offerings to them, and takes much better care of the gods—and, indeed, of the human beings he favors—than the just person. So he may reasonably expect that the gods, in turn, will love him more (θεοφιλέστερον) than the just person (362b1-c6).

In effect, Glaucon talks about tyranny here since he follows Thrasymachus' lead in talking about a person who is completely unjust. Here we see Glaucon following Thrasymachus' speech at 343b1 ff. very closely while making some additional points we should note. The tyrant, as he is presented here, commits injustice covertly—at least until he gets into a position of power—and is thought to be with the reputation of justice, thus he may be thought to be a king, if we assume a king to be a just monarch who rules over willing subjects. The above passage presents the completely unjust person, or the tyrant, coming to rule the city because of his reputation for justice so it seems that he will

do so with the approval of those he rules. Thus, here, we encounter a possible way a tyrant may come to rule, namely, by having enough reputation for justice to win the trust of his potential subjects.

In this passage Glaucon repeats the idea that a tyrant (with the reputation for justice) will be able to rule in such a way so as to do what he wants and get all sorts of benefits from ruling. This may be the case since he may commit injustice and remain unpunished for it because no one is able to detect his injustice. The above passage adds to Thrasymachus' portrayal that the completely unjust person, or the tyrant, may even win a reputation for piety because he becomes able to offer magnificent sacrifices to the gods. Some people may think of the unjust person as capable of winning the favor of the gods through magnificent sacrifices, if they think that this is all the gods require. Hence, Glaucon presents the completely unjust person as able to get benefits from the gods through his injustice. Some people might think of the unjust person as capable of winning the favor of the gods through magnificent sacrifices. Thus, it also seems possible that the completely unjust person may offer sacrifices to the gods to win the reputation for piety among the citizens.<sup>110</sup>

Glaucon's "defense" of injustice repeats and strengthens some of the themes from Thrasymachus' position while defending the life of the tyrant as that of most unjust and best person and tyranny as the most unjust regime.<sup>111</sup> Glaucon seems to present us with a view of tyranny implicitly, and he seems to defend the covert sort of tyranny as the best

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<sup>110</sup> See the *Euthyphro* where piety is the part of justice in relation to the gods (12d-e) and where Euthyphro claims that caring for the gods means to offer sacrifices to please them (14b ff.).

<sup>111</sup> I put "defense" here in brackets since Glaucon offers this defense only for the sake of argument, not because he buys into his argument.

whereas Thrasymachus was not clear on whether the openly violent tyrant or the tyrant who rules covertly is better.

As if the case for injustice was not made difficult enough for Socrates to refute and to defend justice, Adeimantus joins the conversation to say more in favor of complete injustice at 362d1-367e5. Adeimantus points out that it is the reputation of justice that makes justice desirable but not justice itself, since if one is only thought to be just he may get all sorts of benefits from mortals and even from the gods. This amounts to the claim that the appearance of justice is better than actual justice. With this point he reinforces Glaucon's argument that as long as someone remains unjust with the reputation for justice he will be better off than the person who is actually just and has the reputation for justice. Adeimantus goes on to say:

“But surely,” someone will object, “it is not easy for evil to remain always hidden” (οὐ ῥάδιον αἰεὶ λανθάνειν κακὸν ὄντα). We will reply that nothing great is easy. And, in any case, if we are to be happy, we must go where the tracks of the arguments lead. To remain undiscovered (τὸ λανθάνειν) we will form secret societies (συνωμοσίας) and political clubs (ἐταιρίας). And there are teachers of persuasion (πειθοῦς διδάσκαλοι) who provide wisdom in dealing with assemblies (σοφίαν δημηγορικῆν) and law courts (δικανικῆν). Therefore, partly by persuasion, partly by force (τὰ μὲν πείσομεν, τὰ δὲ βιασόμεθα), we will contrive to do better than other people, without paying the penalty (365c6-d6).

This passage suggests some measures by which one may hide from punishment for injustice, namely by persuasive skill in assemblies and law-courts and by the formation of secret societies or political clubs. These are measures by which one will remain undetected and able to do injustice on a large scale. Persuasive skill in assemblies will allow the completely unjust person to persuade large crowds of his justice while committing all sorts of injustice. Persuasive skill in the courts will allow him to defend himself against accusations of injustice effectively. Persuasive rhetorical skill is presumably what Thrasymachus may impart to students to make them politically

powerful and able to be unjust without detection.<sup>112</sup> The formation of political clubs and secret societies especially suggests that such groups will conspire to keep people undetected for their injustice and thus able to do it. These are measures that allow one to gain political power and, given that tyranny is defined as large-scale injustice, these are measures that allow one to acquire a tyranny, or they are measures the tyrant may use while in power.<sup>113</sup> But, as we will see Socrates will deny that tyrants can appear just, at least for too long. The passage also points out a number of covert means by which one may either gain tyranny or practice it, and it also mentions the use of some force. Adeimantus implies that force should be used as little as possible while pointing out that at least some force will be necessary.

The measures mentioned here explicate further the types of measures that Thrasymachus mentioned in Book I, namely covert measures and force (344a). Adeimantus repeats the idea that tyrannies use force but he provides some instances of covert measures. This is further evidence that Adeimantus, while coming to the aid of Thrasymachus' position (after Glaucon does first) that justice is better than injustice, elaborates on what tyranny is. He also seems to emphasize that tyrants will have the reputation for justice and thus support from citizens.

Adeimantus continues,

On the basis of what further argument, then, should we choose justice over the greatest injustice (μεγίστης ἀδικίας)? For if we possess such injustice with a false façade, we will do as we have a mind to among gods and humans, both while we are living and when we are dead, as both the masses and the eminent claim (366b3-7).

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<sup>112</sup> The issue of rhetorical skill in law-courts is an issue discussed in the *Gorgias* when Callicles tells Socrates that he would not be able to defend himself in court if accused of a crime.

<sup>113</sup> Of course these are measures that a private unjust person may use to avoid prosecution for injustice.

The reference to “greatest injustice” is further evidence that the unjust person Glaucon and Adeimantus have been talking about is equivalent to the tyrant and that the conditions under which this injustice is possible are equivalent to tyranny (greatest injustice which remains hidden). Here we can see that Adeimantus has picked up the definition of tyranny from Thrasymachus’ speech in Book I. Our reading of the “defense” of Thrasymachus’ position by Glaucon and Adeimantus, which amounts to the formulation of the challenge to Socrates in the *Republic*, has shown that they defend, reinforce, and make more explicit not only Thrasymachus’ position on injustice being better than justice, but also the idea that complete injustice is equivalent to tyranny. Thus we gather that in the first two Books of the *Republic* Plato presents us with a general view of what tyranny is and with some of the measures it utilizes or which it may use.

In this chapter I argued that Plato offers a preliminary account of tyranny in Books I and II, which sets the stage for its discussion and clarification in Books VIII and IX. Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus present tyranny as the most unjust regime, which employs measures to serve the interests of the tyrant, and they indicate that such a regime contributes significantly to the tyrant’s happiness, since it is the place where he can do what he wants. It thus becomes necessary for Socrates to argue prescriptively that tyranny is the worst of all political regimes and that the tyrannical man is the worst of all individuals, and that both such a regime and such an individual are the most unjust and most unhappy.

### Chapter 3. The General Argument of *Republic VIII*.

Plato's central account of tyranny in *Republic VIII* comes after the completion of the account of the just city or *kallipolis*. Socrates resumes his consideration of the ranking of the various regimes in terms of justice and injustice from Book V, where he was interrupted to talk about the role of the family and women in the just city (450a). He takes up the discussion of regimes to fulfill the promise he made at the end of Book IV, namely, to argue that it is in someone's interest to be just rather than unjust (444e7-445b8).<sup>114</sup>

Before we get to Plato's account of tyranny in Book VIII, however, we need to consider some of the problems with the account in Book VIII as a whole, that commentators since Aristotle have pointed out. Such commentators seek to convince us that Plato's account of political regimes does not merit our attention since it is plagued with problems and inconsistencies.<sup>115</sup> Our consideration of the problems they bring up will allow us to open up the ground for the closer examination of Plato's account of tyranny in particular. In this chapter I discuss the following aspects of Plato's account of political regimes in Book VIII:

- (1) The role of such an account in the main ethical argument of the dialogue, i.e., that justice is better than injustice.
- (2) The fact that the account of political regimes seems incomplete since each regime is presented in the manner of a sketch.

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<sup>114</sup> See 545a2-b2 where Socrates tells us explicitly that the discussion of regimes and individuals that follows, intends to answer Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenge, i.e. to show that justice is better than injustice and that we ought to pursue justice rather than injustice.

<sup>115</sup> I do not claim to consider all possible problems one may find, or which commentators have found, with the Book, but only some major ones that have something to do with Plato's account of tyranny.

- (3) Whether Plato's discussion has both an *a priori* or logical perspective and one based on experience.
- (4) The analogy of the city and the soul and whether this holds together.
- (5) Plato's depiction of regime change in temporal/historical terms.

### 3.1 The Role of the Account of Regimes in the Main Ethical Argument: Instrumentality and Incompleteness.

Let us begin by recalling how the discussion in the dialogue leads into the subject matter of Book VIII. At the end of Book IV Socrates begins to defend justice by making it analogous to health. He also promises to begin to argue explicitly that living justly is better than living unjustly and thus to answer the challenge posed by Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book II.<sup>116</sup> While he attempts to begin such an account in Book V he is interrupted and he is unable to fulfill his promise until Book VIII. The account he is about to embark on in Book V would entail looking at deviant regimes in order to explain that the different types of unjust souls are worse off than the just soul.<sup>117</sup> To do this in Book VIII, Socrates takes the city/soul analogy as granted and argues that the various regimes and their justice, or the lack of it, have a corresponding individual with a soul, which is just and unjust in different degrees.<sup>118</sup> He compares the types of regimes and the types of individuals in terms of justice and then in terms of happiness to argue that justice is better than injustice. Thus, the account of the deviant regimes seems instrumental to

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<sup>116</sup> See 444e-445a. We should remember here that Glaucon and Adeimantus challenge Socrates to show that justice is better both in itself and for its consequences.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. 449a1-449b1.

<sup>118</sup> It is clear that Socrates portrays the regimes in decline each as having progressively more injustice and less justice so the description of regimes involves both degrees of justice and degrees of injustice.



showing that justice is better than injustice for individuals.<sup>119</sup> Some commentators have noticed this instrumental feature of Socrates' account of regimes and have used it to argue that this account is problematic.

Moreover, Socrates admits at various points in the discussion that what he says concerning political regimes is not only instrumental, but somewhat incomplete; this may be partially due to instrumentality. For example at 548c9-d4, after he has talked about timocracy's origin and about what it is like he says:

That, then, is how this regime would come to exist, and that is what it would be like. It is just an outline sketch of the regime in words, not an exact account of it (ὡς λόγῳ σχῆμα πολιτείας ὑπογράφαντα μὴ ἀκριβῶς ἀπεργάζεσθαι), since even from a sketch we will be able to see the most just man and the most unjust one. It would be an incredibly long task to discuss every regime and every character without omitting any detail.

Socrates attributes the admitted incompleteness of the account of regimes to the fact that such accounts are instrumental to the larger argument he is trying to make. Given this feature of Socrates' account some commentators have used it to argue, once again, that what Socrates says about regimes is doubtful. Despite the arguments which use the instrumentality and incompleteness of Plato's account of regimes in Book VIII to devalue it, we can show that such arguments are misguided. I think that there is much of value in Socrates' discussion of regimes since we can show that while Socrates' account is instrumental and incomplete on some level, it is neither inaccurate nor untrue. As Roochnik (2003) points out accurately concerning the description of the timocratic man,

Socrates does not characterize his account as a strict explanation or theory. This measure of self-awareness should be reassuring, for only by understanding the passage as an informal narrative, whose moves are bound not by the bonds of necessity but by probability, will the passage make good sense (98).

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<sup>119</sup> For the account that follows being instrumental see, again, 545a2-b2. Commentators who point to the account being instrumental are Julia Annas and Terence Irwin whose arguments I take up below.

I return to the issue of incompleteness at the end of the chapter and I argue that this is the case with the description of regimes also, i.e., that Plato offers a likely, but comprehensive account of regimes, rather than an account which is exhaustive in detail and bound by necessity.

Julia Annas (1981) argues that the instrumentality of Plato's account, as well as several other features, render Plato's account of regimes questionable. Annas presents a rather detailed case for why Plato's account in Book VIII is rather weak and confused, so responding to her case puts us a good way towards showing that Plato's account of regimes, and, by implication, of tyranny, is of philosophical value after all. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, also mentions further problems with Plato's account of regimes in Book VIII, so we will consider the problems he points out also to find out if Plato's discussion merits our attention.

Some commentators have chosen to pay more attention to what Socrates ends up saying about souls rather than regimes due to the apparent instrumentality of the account of deviant regimes. Both Annas (1981, 294), and Terence Irwin (1995, 281) point out that the drive of the discussion in Books VIII and IX is to treat the deviant regimes as instrumental to arguing that justice is better than injustice.<sup>120</sup> Annas points out that "the focus of these books is the individual rather than the state" (294), and Irwin mentions this instrumentality and goes on to disregard what Socrates says about the various regimes and to move on to consider justice and injustice in the soul.<sup>121</sup> In effect, they both point out that Plato's interest is psychology rather than political philosophy since the discussion of political philosophy is, according to them, in the service of psychological concerns.

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<sup>120</sup> Roochnik (2003) also concentrates on the psychology of Books VIII and IX.

<sup>121</sup> See his discussion in chapter 12 in *Plato's Ethics* 281-297. Annas has more arguments that intend to show that Plato's discussion of regimes is problematic and I take these up below.

While they are both correct to point out that the account of regimes entails the instrumental feature of illuminating the psychological aspects of justice, which will show that justice is better than injustice, the fact that an account is instrumental to making a further argument hardly makes such an account negligible, or most importantly, untrue. Moreover, if the account of regimes, while instrumental, is also implausible, then this would not help Socrates' argument that justice is better than injustice.<sup>122</sup> We should also point out that Socrates' account of regimes is not only instrumental, as Annas and Irwin suppose, since considering and ranking regimes in terms of their justice and injustice is politically relevant; thus, the account is both instrumental to the main argument, but also politically relevant and appropriate. Both Annas' and Irwin's claim that Plato's interest is psychology rather than political philosophy is unconvincing. Irwin's approach in particular is problematic since his only reason for neglecting Plato's discussion of regimes is that it is instrumental to the main ethical argument intending to show that justice is better than injustice.

Unlike Annas and Irwin, Myles Burnyeat claims that "The city side of the analogy takes over" in Book VIII and that "The soul is depicted in ever more vividly political terms" (1997, 226). Burnyeat's claims, together, imply, minimally, that we should not neglect the discussion of regimes since Plato places much emphasis on it by having the soul and its possibility for injustice be intricately connected to regimes and politics. Burnyeat's comments suggest, correctly, that for Plato ethical/psychological and political concerns are intricately related. Moreover, as I mentioned above, dealing with regimes by ranking them in relation to justice is politically relevant; thus paying attention to

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<sup>122</sup> Given the instrumental feature of the discussion of regimes, the discussion seems to work like a premise in an argument. If the account of constitutions is doubtful or untrue, and it operates as a premise, then the argument would run into trouble.

Plato's discussion of regimes seems appropriate.<sup>123</sup> But, there are other arguments that urge us to neglect the discussion of the deviant regimes in Book VIII. Now let us begin to look at Annas' and Aristotle's objections more closely.

Annas (1981) launches a series of arguments to show that Plato's discussion of regimes should not be taken seriously, but I think that each of her arguments can be challenged effectively. Her general complaint is that

Plato traces the decline of the just state and individual through four stages: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny. The resulting eight vignettes of state and individual have been admired for their literary power, but they leave a reader who is intent on the main argument unsatisfied and irritated. Plato's procedure is both confusing and confused (294).

Her general complaint amounts to the claims that Plato confuses the reader because his discussion of deviant regimes and corresponding individuals is itself confused, and that what Plato has to say has only literary, but not philosophical power. We should notice that from the beginning, she seems merely interested in the main ethical argument of this part of the dialogue, which, as I have shown is a questionable approach. As we will see in more detail, and as is the case elsewhere in Plato's dialogues, his discussion is not so one-sided or linear. Annas, in effect, identifies the good reader of this part of the dialogue with one who is interested in the main argument alone. This focus on the main argument seems to drive her objections to Plato's discussion of the deviant regimes.

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<sup>123</sup> J.J. Mulhern in an essay on Aristotle's *parrhesia* or frank speech (2004), takes up the issue of the relation between ethics and politics in the ancient tradition, as opposed to the modern which wishes to separate them considerably and understand politics as opposed to ethics/morality. Among the moderns who push for the radicalization of the distinction he considers thinkers such as Descartes and De Tocqueville. His main point is that for thinkers like Plato and Aristotle ethics and politics are different objects when thinking of their causes, but they belong to the same analysis from the standpoint of practice of the political actor and his attending of circumstances (331-335). Mulhern suggests, I think correctly, that *Republic* VIII shows this continuity of ethics and politics rather strongly. He also goes on to point out that Annas' claim that the *Republic* is either political or ethical but cannot be both is problematic, since she merely assumes and tries to impose the modern distinction between ethics as morality and politics to the dialogue (334). I agree with Mulhern's point that the *Republic* is both an ethical and a political dialogue even though here I seek to emphasize its political aspects which have been neglected by several commentators.

She goes on to point out three further problems with Plato's discussion to justify her claim above that Plato's account is confused. Let us consider each of these to try to argue, against these complaints, that there is much about Plato's discussion that is of value.

### 3.2 The Logical and Empirical Perspectives of the Account of Deviant Regimes.

Annas' first complaint is that it is not clear in Plato's description of regimes where he is discussing these *a priori* and where he is describing what happens in experience, a feature which makes his account confused (294-295). By *a priori* Annas seems to mean "schematically" and "independently of experience" in the sense that one follows and uses an argument's logical implications without paying any attention to experience. For her it seems clear that Plato's classification of regimes into just and least just is an *a priori* one and that other possible regimes, over and above the four deviant regimes described—Socrates admits there are other regimes at 544d1-4—are to be regarded "as mere eccentricities" (295). But attributing or applying the *a priori* to Plato's discussion of political regimes seems misleading and problematic. On the one hand applying the *a priori* to Plato's account seems anachronistic and, on the other hand it seems that because of her application of the *a priori* to Plato, she ends up construing "experience" too narrowly. In this context she takes "experience" to mean taking into account how regimes have existed historically. Annas' complaint here is that Plato mixes up the *a priori* aspect of his discussion with the one based on experience in such a way that makes things confusing. But this complaint seems ambiguous since we are not exactly clear what she would have Plato do in his discussion of regimes. Her argument

seems to amount to two possible complaints: (1) the complaint that Plato should have either been clearer about where he used a description on an *a priori* level, and where he used a description based on actual experience of regimes, or (2) the complaint that he should have used only one of these perspectives to keep things clear. Let us begin with the second possibility.

Nothing seems to necessitate that Socrates discuss regimes either on an *a priori* level or based on experience for his account of them to be accurate or helpful so (2) hardly constitutes a problem. As I already suggested this is an attempt to impose a distinction the two sides of which, *a priori* and “based on experience of regimes in history,” do not fit what Plato discusses here. Moreover, on the one hand, the demand for a description of regimes based on experience alone, by merely looking at how these exist in the world, seems to be one of modernity. However, such a demand is based on the assumption that only by looking at what happens in experience (or history) will we learn the truth about politics, and Annas endorses this approach and buy into this assumption.<sup>124</sup> She points out that there is nothing wrong with looking at experience to figure out how political developments ought to go (295). But, Socrates or Plato does not have to buy into that assumption. On the other hand, a demand for a purely *a priori* description of regimes would make the account irrelevant to experience and to the everyday reality of political life.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> For an example of the modern demand that looking at experience is necessary and sufficient in order to know the truth about politics in general cf. Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* (1996). In the Preface he claims that the reason that regimes have not improved is lack of knowledge of history, that is, lack of looking at experience enough to order regimes (5-6).

<sup>125</sup> Aristotle in the *Politics* follows a similar approach, that is, he discusses politics or regimes from both of these perspectives and his account hardly seem confused.

Moreover, Socrates seems to classify regimes logically, given what the nature of justice is, and to describe them both logically, as unjust—given the preceding discussion of justice and the just city—and based on experience of what these regimes do as they exist in the world. However, this is still not to say that his discussion entails an *a priori* perspective; “logical” is not the same as *a priori*. Even the description of *kallipolis*, which is a city in speech not in reality, and the considerations of justice and injustice, is based on the experience of human nature as naturally political, as Socrates begins to argue for it in Book II; this is the level of the discussion that Annas seems to miss.<sup>126</sup> Plato and Socrates seem to understand “experience” very broadly, something Annas does not seem to allow for. Now let us turn to the first possibility.

Socrates’ account does not entail an *a priori* perspective at all so to demand that he should have been clearer about where he used this perspective seems misguided. Thus, Socrates’ description of regimes is not confused, but rather demanding of careful reading. What makes things confusing is Annas’ application of the distinction between *a priori* and “based on experience.” She seems to apply this problematic distinction to Plato’s account of regimes and because it does not fit it well, she complains that Plato’s account is confused.<sup>127</sup> Annas’ first complaint seems unwarranted and unjustified.

### 3.3 The Analogy of the City and the Soul.

Her second complaint concerns the difficult issue of the analogy of the city and the soul which colors the whole dialogue. She points out that it is not clear why there should be precisely four kinds of breakdown that are parallel exactly in city and person.

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<sup>126</sup> See the discussion on the origin of cities at 369b ff.

<sup>127</sup> This seems analogous to trying to fit a shoe on a foot when the shoe is of smaller size than the foot and complaining that there is something wrong with the foot.

Plato is making a large and unwarranted assumption in taking it that the parallel between unified city and unified person will be followed by precise parallels between four kinds of differently disunified cities and persons. This assumption makes much of Books 8 and 9 artificial, and at many points the parallel of the unjust city and person breaks down in a way not true to the parallel of just city and person (295).

Concerning Annas' question why there have to be exactly four kinds of breakdown from the ideal just regime, Plato has Socrates explain that there are other regimes which they could talk about, but these can be explained by the four he does talk about; they are variations of the main types of regimes. Thus, he presents his account as comprehensive enough which does not necessitate the discussion of all possible variations of regimes.<sup>128</sup>

Annas' main complaint here concerns the extent of the analogy of state and soul and why the devolved states as Plato describes them and the souls of the different individuals said to correspond to them have to be exactly analogous. She makes this problem as she sees it explicit when she considers the timocratic regime and the timocratic individual. She tells us that Plato does not only want us to see the disharmony of the timocratic man's soul as the result of his allowing the wrong part of the soul to rule, but he wants the soul to be exactly parallel to the disharmony of the timocratic state (298). She continues,

This claim is not plausible. For a disunified state corresponds better to conflict between two or more kinds of person than to one kind of internally conflicting person. This problem will recur through all the sketches. The parallel with the state is less convincing than the claim that can be independently made about the individual in terms of the soul's parts, and the present case is no exception; (298).

But Annas seems to misread the explanatory power of the city soul analogy in Book VIII. She seems to think that Plato wants to have the internal conflict of the soul of an individual explain the disunity in the city directly or immediately. Annas seems to think

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<sup>128</sup> See 544c8-e2. Of course whether other regimes not discussed in detail here can be so explained by the four deviant regimes remains to be done, but Socrates at least mentions that his account is meant to give us the basic explanatory tools or principles by which to be able to talk about any regime (that falls short of the just city).



that Plato wants to say that having my soul being ruled by the spirited part which pursues honor explains why, or causes, immediately or directly, the disunification of the city. By doing this she misses some essential aspects of Plato's discussion, and she does not emphasize others: (1) She does not emphasize enough that the city soul analogy seems to work both ways, the city and the soul are supposed to explain each other. (2) She misses the fact that Plato wants to look both at disordered souls of individuals and relations between people with certain types of souls in a regime. She seems to think that Plato wants to explain the disorder of a regime just by looking at a disordered soul by itself, without looking at the relations of the individual with such a soul to other people in the regime. (3) She also misses the increased complexity of the analogy, something which is different from the way the analogy holds in the case of the just city.

As far as (1) is concerned, it is clear that in Plato's account political aspects help shape and explain how different souls are formed, and that different types of souls account for why there is one type of regime rather than another. As far as (2) goes Plato does not try to explain a disordered city by looking at the disordered soul of an individual alone. We may defend him by pointing out that a disunified state or regime is explainable as disunified in the sense that the ideal pursued by a regime, say, honor by the timocracy, is what causes different individuals in it to be in conflict with each other. This would be the case since such an ideal dictates a system of education and upbringing, and thus the state becomes disunified and unjust. In other words, since the aim is honor and the spirited, rather than the rational part, is the dominant part of people's souls, persons pursue honor and they come into conflict with others and, consequently, the city suffers from disunity and declines further from the ideal regime; it ends up having its classes in

conflict. It is the pursuit of honor in different individuals that makes the timocracy deviate from the just city and it is individuals who pursue honor according to how their soul is ordered. Socrates claims this much at 544d6-e2 where he claims that the variety of regimes is the result of the condition of the soul of individuals in them. Apparently, we get a timocratic regime when the people who rule pursue honor more than any other value.

As far as (3) is concerned, I think that it is part of Plato's point, in his account of decline, to show that the analogy of the city and the soul does not hold simply as it did in the ideal regime where the parts of the soul and the classes of the city corresponded exactly, and that this happens as soon as decline begins. On this I am in agreement with, and indebted to, Jonathan Lear (1992) who argues that the point of Book VIII is precisely that what he calls the 'isomorphism' between the city and the soul is no longer simple, as it was in the case of the just city and soul, because of the processes he calls internalization and externalization. Externalization, he explains, is "the process, whatever it is, by which Plato thought a person fashions something in the external world according to a likeness in his psyche" (192). Internalization is "the process, whatever it is, that Plato thought grounded cultural influence" (190). Externalization is what an individual does in the world of the *polis* given the order of his soul and externalization has to do with external, cultural influences, on an individual's structure of soul.

Lear argues that internalization and externalization explain the presence or the absence of isomorphism between the city and the soul. In the just city these processes work in such a way that the city and the soul are isomorphic, in the unjust and deviant regimes this is not the case. "The point of Plato's argument is that there is only one

relatively stable equilibrium position between inside and outside. Only the just polis and citizens are so structured that the various internalizations and externalizations will maintain harmony in each” (207). Of unjust cities and souls Lear says,

So for any pathological structure F\*, one should not expect that an F\* polis is an immediate and simple externalization of F\* citizens. Nor should one think that F\* citizens are shaped by a simple externalization of the structure of the F\* polis. The whole point of F\* being pathological is that no such simple mirroring relationship can occur (207 n. 112).

In effect, Lear argues that the absence of harmony between the city and the soul is the mark characteristic of pathology or injustice. The analogy between the city and the soul in unjust regimes is not proper precisely because they are pathological or deviant, and they are deviant because there is not a proper relation between them. Plato maintains a parallel between cities and souls, but his point is that each part of the isomorphism is skewed due to its improper relation with the other.

In highlighting Plato’s increasing complexity of the relation between cities and souls Lear explains,

So, for example, the democratic polis is shaped not only by the degenerate son of the oligarchy, but also by the rebellious poor (556c-557a). However, the rebellious poor also had their psyches shaped via internalizations of previous externalizations of oligarchic rulers. And both they and the democratic man—the metaphorical and literal sons of the oligarchy—help to shape the democratic polis via externalization of the structure of their psyches. (207 n. 112).

As Lear highlights the relation, it is still exclusively between the city and the soul or the external (public) and the internal (private). He suggests that Plato’s account of the formation of souls is complicated by arguing that different souls may be the product of the same process of internalization. He desires to portray Plato’s account here as “a dynamic account of psychological transactions between the inside and the outside of a person’s psyche, between a person’s inner life and his cultural environment, between intrapsychic and interpsychic relations” (184).

If we read Socrates' descriptions of deviant regimes and individuals in this way we seem to avoid Annas' second objection and the city and soul analogy still holds, at least to some extent. The analogy does not hold simply as it did in the ideal regime, and while she is correct to point this out, she attempts to make it a reason not to take Plato's account of regimes and their relations to individuals seriously. But, we need not draw this conclusion and, rather, once we notice that the analogy of the city and the soul, is not as simple as before, we should conclude that Plato makes his account of the relation of deviant cities and souls more complex. I do not claim to have solved all issues concerning the analogy of city and soul here but to have shown that Annas' objection can be avoided so we may begin to take the discussion of regimes in Book VIII more seriously.<sup>129</sup> There is still a third argument she launches against Plato.

### 3.4 Plato's Depiction of Regime Change

Annas' third complaint has to do with the character of the description of the devolution of regimes or, in other words, with how Plato talks about regime change. She indicates that the degenerate states are presented as temporal or historical progressions from one another and she points out that the ideal state is something the deficient forms of states "fall short of, not something that they result from" (295).

Aristotle launches a similar complaint in *Politics* V.12 (1316a1 ff.), which is the last chapter of his discussion on *stasis* or regime change. There, Aristotle complains that, among other things, Socrates' description of the devolution of regimes follows an unjustified circular path. Aristotle objects that Socrates has one regime changing into

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<sup>129</sup> For interesting and illuminating discussions of the city/soul analogy in the *Republic* see Murphy (1951, Chapter 4), Vlastos (1971b, 123 ff.), Neu (1971); Williams (1973, 196-200), Irwin (1977, 331) and (1995, 229-230), Cooper (1977, 153), Lear (1992), Wilson (1976, 121 ff.).

another necessarily and exactly in the temporal order he describes them in, or, possibly in the exact opposite order, (*kallipolis* into timocracy, or possibly, timocracy into *kallipolis*, and so on with the other regimes), but this circular way hardly seems to be the only way regimes may change into one another.<sup>130</sup> This objection to Plato's account amounts to the claim that Plato's account of regime change is problematically incomplete. Aristotle, prior to this complaint, argued at length, that regimes may, and do, change in a number of other ways which do not follow the circular order of Socrates. Both of these complaints are instructive since they allow us to think of Plato's description in two ways: (1) as classifying the regimes in a hierarchy of justice or goodness, in an ethical order, and (2) putting the regimes into time or history, an order of change. Thus Plato has Socrates talk about the deviant regimes in two matching orders, one is the order of justice and the other is the order of regime change in time.

The difference between Annas and Aristotle however is that Annas, in effect, denies that regimes may change into each other in this order, but Aristotle does not. Annas, on the one hand, says that the deviant regimes "fall short of" the ideal regime but they do not "result from it," which amounts to the claim that such a change in time is impossible (295).<sup>131</sup> This, in turn, amounts to the accusation, that Plato's description is completely inaccurate, and thus we should neglect it. Aristotle, on the other hand, seems more careful, and points out, correctly, that this is not the only way in which regimes may change into one another, and in effect that Socrates' account is not exhaustive or

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<sup>130</sup> One problem with attributing a circularity to Socrates' depiction of regimes is that this would imply that tyranny may change into the just city. This does not seem to be something that Socrates would be willing to admit, so characterizing the description as circular does not seem exactly right.

<sup>131</sup> With this claim, Annas could possibly mean that the deviant regimes do not follow naturally from the *kallipolis*. She points out however, that the regimes "are presented as historical progressions one from another," a claim which has to do with the relation among these regimes not just the relation of these regimes to the *kallipolis* (295).

complete as he thinks his own is.<sup>132</sup> Further, Annas points out, in effect, that the first order seems to be justified in the dialogue but the second order is not. Aristotle would agree with this, insofar as his own discussion of regimes does follow the first order, that is, he classifies regimes as better or worse in terms of their justice, but it does not follow the second since he does not see such an order as exhaustive of possibilities.

Now let me discuss two questions, the answers to which may allow us to avoid the objections of both Annas and Aristotle and to show that they both tend to misread Plato. First, both of these objections assume that Plato intends to describe regime change as such in his discussion of the deviant regimes. But, do we have a reason to suppose that he is doing so? Further—this speaks to Annas’ complaint more than it does to Aristotle’s—we may ask why may the deviant regimes not result from the ideal regime, assuming, for a minute, that the ideal regime, could exist? Is such a devolution totally impossible?<sup>133</sup>

First, nothing compels us to read Plato’s description of deviant regimes as a discussion of regime change as such. We need not read this discussion as intending to tell us exhaustively how regimes may, and do, change and in what exact order. Aristotle does this in Book V of the *Politics* where he discusses *stasis* and regime change as such. Plato seems to flag that he does not intend his description of regime change to be exhaustive or very accurate historically, since he portrays regime change from the *kallipolis* to tyranny taking place within four generations, something which is very

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<sup>132</sup> In effect, Aristotle does not seem to be arguing that we should not pay attention to Plato’s discussion, but that if we want a fuller account of regime change we should read *Politics* V.

<sup>133</sup> We may wish to argue that the *kallipolis* cannot possibly exist so the devolution of other deviant regimes from it cannot happen in time. But, we should notice that even if this is correct the question of regimes changing from one to the other in the temporal order Socrates talks about them, from the timocracy to tyranny, is, arguably, possible in time.

unlikely.<sup>134</sup> Second, the problem with Annas' complaint in particular is that it is not impossible for the regimes to deviate from each other in the way that Plato describes, even though we may wish to say: (a) that it is unlikely, or that (b), with Aristotle, even if this progression of devolution (or, possibly, evolution) is possible, it is not the only way regimes change into each other. But, if Plato is not giving us an account of regime change as such here, and the way he depicts regime change is not impossible, why would he include the discussion of the devolution of regimes changing one to the other, within one generation, in a temporal or historical progression at this point in the *Republic*?

In order to answer the above question we should not forget that one of the directions of describing the change of regimes from better to worse is to aid the argument for justice being better than injustice for its possessor (to help answer the challenge of Glaucon and Adeimantus from Book II). We cannot lose sight of this aspect of the description, but as I have suggested above this is not all that is going on in Book VIII and the beginning of IX. Thus, we should read Plato's account in all its complexity. Further, rather than suggesting that the historical devolution of regimes is to be taken seriously, the generational aspect of the discussion highlights the importance of the family and the household in consideration of the relation between the city and the soul, or between political life and individuals. Highlighting this relation makes paying attention to Plato's account of regimes imperative. Furthermore, the way the progressive devolution of regimes is portrayed seems to work on a number of compatible levels and consequently to have several compatible aims:

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<sup>134</sup> The likelihood of regimes changing like this, within four generations, seems to highlight the importance of the relation of the soul and the individual to political life rather than to be a real and constant characteristic of regime change as such.

- (1) To show that there is some real relation between these constitutions in terms of causality and change into each other—even though the causes of change are, again, not meant to be exhaustive. Doing this might persuade the interlocutors and the reader that the discussion of the just city and justice is relevant to actual political life, that it is relevant to politics on a concrete level. Plato in Book VIII, at least, clues us into the idea that regime change has several causes which we can think further for ourselves. This is indeed what Aristotle does in the *Politics* where he devotes a whole book on the causes of regime change.
- (2) To point out that constitutions vary in terms of justice not only in speech but possibly in experience. The plausible order of change suggests that regimes are, and may change into more just or less just ones in time.
- (3) To highlight the importance of the family in a discussion which seeks to relate forms of government with individuals. Rather than suggesting that the historical devolution of constitutions is to be taken seriously, the generational feature of the discussion emphasizes the relevance of the family and the household in consideration of the relation between the city and the soul, or between political life and individuals. Plato inserts the family or the household in the middle of the causal relation between city and individual, and the generational aspect of the discussion keep this in focus. Emphasizing the role of the family in a discussion of constitutions and how these change is a rather realistic feature in Plato's account, insofar as people exist in relation to states as members of families, not as isolated individuals.



- (4) To show how individuals are less just and ultimately less happy than the just person in relation to the regimes they live in. This keeps in mind the instrumental aspect of the account highlighted at 545a2-b2.
- (5) To give a persuasive (to the interlocutors and to the reader), possible, but not exhaustive, narrative of regime change which also allows it to be instrumental to the overarching argument that justice is better than injustice for its possessor.

Another way to look at this is that Plato presents a moral devolution in logical terms in a historical or temporal context but the temporal context is not to be taken as seriously, or as narrowly as Annas and Aristotle, each from their own perspective, take it. On the one hand, Plato presents us with a possible narrative of regime change, thus Annas' complaint is unjustified; on the other hand, it does not seem that Socrates anywhere presents his account of the temporal order of change of regimes as exhaustive, thus Aristotle's complaint, in turn, is unjustified also.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.5 The Incompleteness of the Account of Regimes

In the beginning of this chapter I suggested that perhaps the incompleteness of Plato's account of deviant regimes is a problem since Socrates admits that he presents the regimes in question in sketch form.<sup>136</sup> Plato flags that the account of deviant regimes is somewhat incomplete by having Socrates talk about the accounts being in sketch form, and I think that this is highly instructive. We should notice that Plato is aware of the fact

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<sup>135</sup> There are two further issues that make Plato's account of the deviant regimes difficult. The first has to do with Socrates account of the cause that originates change in regimes at 545c8-d4. There Socrates claims that "in all regimes, change originates in the ruling element itself when faction breaks out within it; but that if this group remains of one mind—however small it is—change is impossible." The second issue has to do with the cause of change in political life in general which Socrates discusses at 546a ff. I talk about these briefly in the next chapter.

<sup>136</sup> see 548c9-d4.

that he is presenting us with an incomplete account of unjust political regimes and the fact that he flags it shows that he wants us to know this. But why would Plato do this? Plato seems aware that regimes in reality are mixed, i.e. that they contain and incorporate elements from each other.<sup>137</sup> Thus, by choosing to speak of regimes in a sketch form, he talks about them mostly as pure or unmixed, and he seems to be pointing that all accounts of political regimes have to be incomplete on some level. This is especially the case in terms of detail and in terms of accounting for all the ways regimes may be mixed. One can always talk in more and more detail about democracy or about tyranny for example. It also seems plausible to suppose that Plato indicates that more analysis is possible and required, to be more exhaustive in understanding and explaining political regimes in more detail.<sup>138</sup> Aristotle does this himself and picks up much of what Plato leaves unfinished in the discussion of regimes in Book VIII, like the causes of *stasis* or conflict that lead to regime change as we saw above.

We should also notice that accounts may be incomplete in different ways and that we can distinguish between completeness and comprehensiveness. Something comprehensive need not be complete in all senses. Plato's account is not incomplete in the sense that it is missing essential aspects, or in the sense that it is not comprehensive. Rather, it is incomplete in terms of further details and in terms of working out all the implications of the principles and the basic kinds of regimes he presents us with. Socrates describes regimes in a sketch form, i.e., he highlights their primary goals (honor, money, freedom, gratification of desires) and traces the implications of the pursuit of

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<sup>137</sup> See 548c9-d4 again and Thucydides 6.45.5. The tyrant Peisistratus was famous for ruling without disturbing democratic elements too much.

<sup>138</sup> It is shocking enough to the interlocutors and to the readers that the regimes they are familiar with in experience are portrayed as unjust and on their way to doom.

such goals in the different regimes. We also see Socrates at 544c8-e2 pointing out that the kinds of regimes they will talk about are the basic types under which all other regimes may be subsumed and be explained by. The suggestion is that his account is incomplete, i.e., he does not talk about all possible mixed regimes, but also comprehensive, i.e. the basic types of regimes he talks about can explain all mixed regimes. This may be compared to an account of colors where I know the basic colors by which I can explain all other colors as combinations or mixtures of the basic ones.

In summary, we have considered a number of problems mentioned by commentators and if our considerations of these and our responses to them are correct, then we have at least made it possible to look at Plato's discussion of regimes, including tyranny, as illuminating. Now let us turn to Plato's account of tyranny in Book VIII.

## **Chapter 4. The Origins of Tyranny: Democracy and the Potential Tyrant in**

### **Republic VIII.**

In Book VIII Glaucon remembers Socrates' earlier discussion from the beginning of Book V. He tells him he was about to list and explore the four kinds of incorrect or deviant regimes (ἡμαρτημένους is contrasted with ὀρθή) and their faults (ἄμαρτήματα) (544a-b). In this chapter I examine Socrates' account of the transition of democracy to tyranny and his account concerning how a person thought to be the champion or protector of the people—the potential tyrant—comes to be an actual tyrant (562a4-566d2). This comprises the first of the three steps in which Socrates discusses tyranny, namely how tyranny may originate from democracy. He discusses each regime and individual in a pattern which addresses the following: (1) how a regime may come about from a previous regime, and similarly with the different types of individuals, (2) once established or formed, what each regime or individual is like, and (3) how each regime or individual fares in terms of justice and, eventually, happiness, in contrast to the *kallipolis* and the just man respectively.<sup>139</sup> Before we get to Socrates' discussion of the origin of tyranny from democracy let us discuss Socrates' opening remarks in an illuminating passage from the beginning of Book VIII, where he lays out the order of deviant regimes in a general manner.

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<sup>139</sup> Socrates points out explicitly that this is his approach, at least in the case of discussing democracy at 553b3-6. Roochnik (2003) claims that the boundaries between the discussion of deviant regimes and corresponding individuals are regularly blurred (101). One of the passages he uses to justify this claim is 562a, the announced transition from discussing the democratic man to discussing tyranny. Roochnik claims that Socrates continues talking about democracy rather than tyranny. But, he seems to miss the fact that while Socrates does still talk about democracy he does so to explain the possible origin of tyranny. Thus the account is both about tyranny's origin, and about democracy's demise, and the boundaries of the discussion seem more clearly drawn than Roochnik appreciates.

#### 4.1. The Place of Tyranny in the General Order of Deviant Regimes.

Glaucon remembers that Socrates in Book V pointed out four remaining kinds of regimes worth discussing (περί λόγον ἄξιον εἶη ἔχειν, 544a4). This comment suggests that there may be other regimes but as Socrates indicates these may fall somewhere in between the regimes he does discuss. Socrates goes on:

It won't be difficult for you to hear them (the four deviant regimes). You see, the ones I mean are the very ones that already have names (αἴπερ καὶ ὀνόματα ἔχουσιν): the one that is praised by the many (ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ἐπαινουμένη), your Cretan or Laconian one. The second—and second in the praise it receives—is called oligarchy, a regime filled with many evils. At variance to it (διάφορος), and next in order, is democracy. And noble tyranny, at variance with all of them, is the fourth and the extreme disease of a city (γενναία δὴ τυραννὶς καὶ πασῶν τούτων διαφέρουσα, τέταρτον τε καὶ ἔσχατον πόλεως νόσημα). Can you think of another kind of regime—I mean, another kind distinct from these? For, no doubt, there are dynasties and purchased kingships and other similar regimes in between these, which one finds no less among barbarians than among Greeks (544c1-d4).

Socrates repeats that there are four kinds of regimes remaining to discuss. He says that they already have names which may suggest that he is not making these regimes up like he did the just city. These regimes, he implies, will not be cities in speech but types of unjust regimes the description of which fits regimes in actual experience. The fact that Socrates mentions these regimes have names also points to a slight shift from his discussion of the *kallipolis*, a shift other than turning his focus from justice to injustice. This shift has to do with the idea that the deviant regimes are such that they exist in experience, at least in some form, since people are so familiar with them that they have named them. Moreover, Socrates says that such regimes, which people have named, are praised to different degrees also, which suggests further that these regimes are found in experience in some way. But, even though these regimes have names, and might be regimes found in experience, this still does not necessitate that Socrates will describe them exactly as one they might conventionally be described. We should expect however,

some close parallels between what Socrates says and how people conventionally perceive these regimes.

Socrates lists these regimes in two hierarchical orders, from better to worse, or from more just to least just, and from more praised to least praised. Thus, we encounter an order of goodness or justice and an order of praise. He lists these types of regimes in the order of praise, at least in the case of timocracy and oligarchy, and makes it clear that the order of praise does not fit his own order of justice, when he calls tyranny, the worst regime, “noble” rather jokingly, and when he does not mention any praises in the case of the democracy. Socrates says that many praise timocracy and that oligarchy comes second in praise; thus far the order of praise and the order of justice correspond to each other. As soon as we get to tyranny we see him apply to it the praising adjective “noble” (γενναῖα), and thus we begin to suspect that Socrates is serious only about the order of goodness. People generally, might praise regimes, but unlike Socrates, they do so due to how these appear to them not based on knowledge of their goodness. The order of praise is an apparent order of regimes, and it is one we can discover by considering what people think of regimes.

Socrates tells us that tyranny is last in order and mentions two things that are supposed to remind us of the discussion of Book I: (1) that tyranny is “noble,” and (2) that it is at variance with all the other regimes (πασῶν τούτων διαφέρουσα).<sup>140</sup>

Socrates calls tyranny “noble” ironically to remind us the way Thrasymachus described it

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<sup>140</sup> διαφέρουσα could mean either “different from” or “at variance/hostile to.” The context of the passage suggests that it means the latter since it is obvious that the regimes are different from one another and would be redundant for Socrates to point it out again. Burnet’s edition of the Greek text has διαφέρουσα (being different or hostile to) whereas Sling’s new edition has διαφεύγουσα (deviating). He suggests that διαφεύγουσα is in more of the manuscripts. Διαφεύγουσα emphasizes how much tyranny deviates from the other regimes and the *kallipolis* in terms of justice or disease (Socrates calls it “the most extreme disease for a city”) rather than its hostility to other regimes.

and praised it, namely as complete injustice which accords happiness to the tyrant (cf. 343b1-344c8). He suggests that tyranny is at variance or hostile to, all the other types of regimes and this reminds us of Book I once more; there, the unjust person was said to be hostile to, or trying to outdo all people—was full of *pleonexia* (cf. 348c-350c). Similarly, tyranny is in opposition to all other regimes and we may anticipate that this hostility will take the form of war. Socrates makes a point about the relation of one regime to another and his consideration of regimes includes what we would call “international politics.” The analogy of the city and the soul, which he assumes here, does not only concern the relation of the parts of each, but it extends to the idea that the ways individuals relate to one another is analogous to the way regimes may do so. If unjust individuals are in conflict with everyone, as Thrasymachus claimed, then tyranny, the most unjust regime, will be in conflict with all other types of regimes.<sup>141</sup>

Given the subsequent discussion, where Socrates presents deviant regimes other than tyranny, as somewhat just since they have, to different and lesser degrees, justice like the *kallipolis*, he implies that such regimes may not be in opposition to one another necessarily or always. They might even be in friendly terms at times, given the degree to which each is just. Tyranny however cannot be in friendly terms with any other type of regime, at least for too long, due to its injustice and *pleonexia*. Furthermore, insofar as we, and some of the interlocutors, expect just regimes to bring people in the city together and to minimize conflict given the connection of justice and unity in the city, tyranny is the regime which fails to do this most of all.

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<sup>141</sup> If we read the passage with calling tyranny διαφεύγουσα (deviating from other regimes) my point about tyranny’s hostility to the other regimes cannot be made here. But we can see that Plato makes this point implicitly anyway, since the tyrant is *pleonexic* and there is no reason to suppose that his desire to outdo others extends only to individuals within his own city. Moreover later on he will tell us that the tyrannical city has to go to war with other cities.

Socrates also calls tyranny the most extreme sickness or disease for a city (ἔσχατον πόλεως νόσημα), which suggests that its extreme injustice cannot contribute to happiness.<sup>142</sup> Socrates portrays tyranny at the bottom of the pathological scale and it is the worst regime. The analogy of justice to health and their connection to happiness is a prevalent theme in the dialogue and it applies both to the city and to the soul. A just city or soul are both like a healthy body which contributes to happiness.<sup>143</sup> By pointing out that tyranny is the worst regime since it is the most unjust, Socrates inverts Thrasymachus' claim that tyranny is the best regime, but not the claim that it is the most unjust. Now we expect Socrates to fill in his claim that tyranny is the worst regime in the subsequent discussion, which analyzes the pathologies of democracy as leading to tyranny, of tyranny, and of the tyrant. These pathologies will take into account desires insofar as an analysis of these will be politically and ethically illuminating.

#### 4.2 The Implications of License or Excessive Democratic Freedom.

Socrates begins his discussion of tyranny explicitly and in detail at 562a4 where he says that “The finest regime (καλλίστη πολιτεία) and the finest man (κάλλιστος ἀνὴρ) remain for us to discuss: tyranny and the tyrant (τυραννίς τε καὶ τύραννος)” (562a4-5). In these lines we see Socrates joking on two levels. On the one hand, he is still poking fun at Thrasymachus' description of tyranny and the tyrant as happiest, both being the most unjust regime and individual respectively (cf. 344a-c). Thrasymachus

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<sup>142</sup> The fact that Socrates tells us tyranny is the regime which is the most extreme disease *of or for* a city suggests that Socrates makes a distinction between regime (*politeia*) and city (*polis*) in that a regime is something that is characteristic of a city but not the same thing as the city. This distinction is logical distinction; we can be sure here that the distinction does not hold in actual experience for Socrates or Plato, i.e., that there are cities without having or being a certain regimes at the same time.

<sup>143</sup> See for example 444c-445b, 490c5.



also mentioned a number of regimes in the following order of goodness: tyranny, democracy, aristocracy (338d). Socrates portrays regimes, especially democracy and tyranny, in exactly the reverse order in terms of goodness. On the other hand, Socrates pokes fun at people's perception of the goodness of regimes by pretending to adopt their limited perspective—he does this at 557c4 also where he calls democracy the finest or most beautiful of regimes (καλλίστη τῶν πολιτειῶν) due to its variety of types of people and ways of life. Some of those listening to Socrates presently and many of the dialogues readers think democracy a great regime due to the variety of lifestyles and pursuits it allows.<sup>144</sup> Also, some of the people in the audience either support the idea that tyranny and the life of the tyrant are best sincerely, like Thrasymachus perhaps, or playfully and for the sake of argument, like Glaucon and Adeimantus.

The life of the tyrant may seem attractive to some people with democratic inclinations since it is close to the aspirations and goal of the democratic man described earlier, namely his desire for freedom understood as the license to do what he wants (557b5-10). The democratic man wants the license to pursue his desires for whatever he finds worthwhile at the time. The tyrant, as portrayed and perceived by Thrasymachus already, is a person who is able to do what he wants, he is a person with the ability or the power to fulfill his desires whatever these are. Whereas the democratic man may aspire to do whatever he wants, Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus portray the tyrant as a person who is able to fulfill this aspiration.<sup>145</sup> What keeps the democratic man satisfied

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<sup>144</sup> See 561e.

<sup>145</sup> One of Socrates' arguments against the life of the tyrant being the best sort centers on the refutation of the idea that the tyrant, who has a lot of power, is able to do what he wants. See *Republic* IX 577d, where he says that the tyrant is most enslaved since he allows the appetitive part of his soul to rule, and *Gorgias* 466d ff. where Socrates argues that the tyrant is the person least able to do what he wants. I take up this line of argument in chapter 7 where I consider Plato's arguments against tyranny. On the connection

with, and non-resistant to democracy, which allows him to pursue his desires for whatever end, is that he does not yet have unnecessary and unlawful desires—he still has some moderation—like the tyrannical man does.<sup>146</sup> The democratic man has unnecessary (but not unnecessary unlawful) desires which do not push him to aspire to tyrannical power yet, but which at least may allow him to admire it.<sup>147</sup>

We have seen commentators complain about Plato's discussion of regime change in this book but I think that the description of tyranny in particular, as coming after democracy, is illuminating. This is only as long as we keep in mind how such an account highlights the causal proximity and connections between the essential goals or values of these regimes and of the individuals in them. As I argued in the previous chapter, Plato does not intend to give us an exhaustive account of regime change in history but only a plausible one, which captures the principles with which we may talk and understand any regime. The value essential in a democracy is freedom which takes the form of desire for license; the democratic man wants to be free to do whatever he wants, and this is his goal or primary value.<sup>148</sup> The tyrant wants the same but, unlike the democratic man, the tyrant has unlawful unnecessary desires which lead him to take over the city by himself,

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between tyranny and freedom see also Connor who claims that “to the tyrant his rule is a blessing; to the city it is a curse. And in each case the reason is the same; the tyrant can do what he pleases.” (1977, 102).

<sup>146</sup> Plato distinguishes necessary (the desires which we cannot resist and/or which may benefit) from unnecessary desires (we can learn to resist these and which may harm) at 558d ff. and tells us that the democratic man has unnecessary desires. He uses the example of eating and points out that eating to the point of health is a necessary desire and eating beyond that is an unnecessary desire. He also divides unnecessary into lawful and unlawful at 571c ff. The tyrannical man has unnecessary and unlawful desires. These are unnecessary desires in the utmost extreme which preclude one's ability to be moderate. For a more thorough discussion of desire see my discussion in chapter 6.

<sup>147</sup> Socrates' partial adoption of the perspective of those who think democracy or tyranny and the tyrant *most beautiful* suggests that their perspectives entail a contradiction. The contradiction is that both of these regimes (or individuals) cannot be *most beautiful* at the same time. We see Socrates continually pointing out that his perspective is comprehensive and that the limited perspectives of others entail inconsistencies and contradictions.

<sup>148</sup> Plato mentions another sort of freedom associated with the democracy, namely political freedom. Political freedom is equal access to office in the city; people are assigned to offices by lot (557a5).

concentrate all political power in his own hands, and thus acquire the means by which he will be able to realize the fulfillment of all his desires. The tyrant's freedom or license to do what he wants is equivalent to his possession of the means by which to do so; the tyrant turns what the democratic man calls freedom into possession of power. The democratic man expects that freedom is something which the regime allows and which comes to him from outside. The tyrant, however, wants his ability to pursue his desires to come from his own efforts, that is, by his possession of absolute power; Thrasymachus' depiction of the tyrant in entailed this idea already. Moreover, whereas the democratic man may be happy for others to be free also, the tyrant begrudges anyone else' freedom.

The essential difference that causes the democratic man and the tyrant (or the tyrannical man)<sup>149</sup> to value freedom and power in these different senses is only the extent to which they have unnecessary desires.<sup>150</sup> Whereas the tyrant is competitive in his desires and the means to their fulfillment, the democratic man may not be so. Read in this way, we may see that democracy and tyranny are essentially close to each other, in that, democracy may possibly change into tyranny. Moreover, Plato, in his discussion of how democracy changes into tyranny seems interested in the respective values and

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<sup>149</sup> Socrates seems to distinguish between a tyrant which is a political designation, and a tyrannical man (τυραννικός ἄνθρωπος), which is a psychological one. He does, however, consider the two intricately related. For a defense of this claim see further my discussion of *Republic* IX in chapter 6.

<sup>150</sup> Aristotle in *Politics* II 7 points out: "The fact is that the greatest crimes are caused by excess and not by necessity. Men do not become tyrants in order that they may not suffer cold; and hence great is the honor bestowed, not on him who kills a thief but on him who kills a tyrant" (1267a12-16). This suggests, in agreement with Plato that it is excessive desire which brings about tyranny. As we will see however, once one becomes excessive like a tyrant, his life is bound to a necessity due to this excess.

desires of each which may, in turn, allow for the transition of democracy into tyranny in history, though by no means necessarily.<sup>151</sup>

Socrates tells us that tyranny comes to be from democracy in a similar way as democracy came to be from oligarchy (562a10-b1). Thus, considering the origin of tyranny entails discussing democracy further, especially the implications of its ideal of freedom which is pursued to extremes to eventually allow for tyranny.<sup>152</sup> Plato places great emphasis on values or ideals of regimes or individuals going to extremes and of their desires reaching excess. Discussing the detrimental aspects of excess and extremes helps him discredit *pleonexia*, namely, the desire to outdo everyone or to have increasingly more things.

Throughout all the sketches of the regimes, Socrates traces the causes of the origin of a subsequent regime to the causes of the destruction of the previous regime. Oligarchy came to be for the sake of wealth and its insatiable desire (ἀπληστία) for it, and its neglect of other things for the sake of money caused its destruction (562b2-6). The insatiable pursuit of wealth allowed for the cultivation of unnecessary desires due to

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<sup>151</sup> One could ask whether the desires of the democratic man (unnecessary) and those of the tyrannical man or the tyrant (unnecessary and unlawful) are different in kind or different in degree. If they are different in kind and having desires is largely what makes one a democratic man or a tyrannical one then these types of people are clearly different in kind. If these desires are different in degree alone then the democratic man and the tyrannical man are different in degree. If we follow the city/soul analogy and consider the same about the respective regimes then this would make democracy only different in degree from tyranny. Socrates seems to suggest difference in kind which takes care of this problem, but he still suggests a causal proximity between extreme democracy and tyranny.

<sup>152</sup> It should not surprise us that Plato's discussion of democracy is the second longest only shorter than that of tyranny in this book. As regimes get more unjust Socrates seems to spend more time talking about them. This seems to be a pattern of his account that comes in as part of his efforts to argue that justice is better than injustice. He seems to think that the worse something is the more he should talk about it to discredit it and to prevent people from pursuing it. Socrates' consideration of democracy lasts from 555b3-558b8 (if we include the discussion of the democratic man it lasts up to 562a2) and his discussion of tyranny from 562a4-569c9 (if we include the discussion of the tyrannical man it lasts up to 580a). Socrates' discussion of tyranny and the tyrannical man lasts almost exactly as much as the total number of pages devoted to the other regimes and individuals. I get this from Roochnik (2003, 88) who also claims that the length of the discussion of tyranny is one of the clues as to its philosophical importance.

lack of temperance, which made the city pursue such desires instead of wealth eventually, and thus oligarchy changed into democracy.<sup>153</sup>

Extreme democracy has an insatiable desire for freedom which goes to extremes and this causes its destruction since it does not pay attention to much else which is important to the preservation and possible happiness in the city. It is clear that Socrates discusses a democracy in an extreme sense, as a regime which pursues unlimited freedom as license (individual freedom) and which allows equal access to office to all by lot (political freedom). He takes the fundamental value of democracy, freedom as license, and tries to draw out the ethical and political implications of what might happen in a regime which pursues such a value exclusively.<sup>154</sup> In this way Socrates presents the potential dangers for more moderate democracies should they become extreme. Socrates talks about freedom (ἐλευθερία) in such a way that we should understand it in a negative

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. 555b8 ff.

<sup>154</sup> We should note that Plato's discussion of democracy has been the subject of much controversy. It is imperative to note that he discusses extreme democracy since some commentators miss this and take him to be criticizing modern or contemporary democracies as we understand them, namely as much more limited since they do not allow for absolute freedom as license or for equal access to political office by lot. Such readings seem to cause some commentators to reject Plato's discussion of democracy in particular as inaccurate, irrelevant, or false. For an example of such an approach see Annas (1981, 299-301). Drawing out the implications of the pursuit of freedom as license or of negative freedom is rather illuminating, politically relevant, and far from useless. Popper (1963) and St. Croix (1981, 412), among many others also argue that Plato was an enemy of democracy (1981, 412). For arguments to the contrary and for Plato being more friendly or open to democracy see Euben (1996, 333) who calls Plato a "critical friend of democracy" rather than an "anti-democrat," Monoson (2000), and Roochnik (2003, esp. Chapter 3). Saxonhouse points out that Plato has at least an ambiguous response towards democracy: on the one hand he is critical of it, and, on the other hand he "acknowledges the centrality of democracy for the pursuit of philosophy" (1996, 91). While the above critiques of Plato may imply that his political philosophy is not too helpful for us since he is an anti-democrat, the arguments for his being rather friendly to democracy may turn him into a fan of democracy too quickly. We should be careful that in our efforts to determine whether Plato is relevant we do not go so far as to turn him into a modern thinker. I agree with Roochnik's claim that "the *Republic* does not champion the unadulterated goodness of democracy but does find it the source of much that is potentially interesting...it is home to both goods and bads—mostly bads. But when the fever is allowed to burn, sufficient heat can be generated to fuel the mad pursuit of the extraordinary." (2003, 86). I would add that Plato's discussion of extreme democracy suggests, at least, the need for limitations on negative freedom or license, it may lead us to formulate a more positive sort of freedom (see *Meno* 86d6-7 where Socrates claims that unless I can control or master myself I cannot be free), and it prompts us to think about the importance of the rule of law as a limiting principle.

sense, or as we would say, negative freedom.<sup>155</sup> He attributes a negative sense to the freedom pursued and valued by the democracy. It means the absence of obstacles or hindrances on individuals or citizens to pursue whatever it is they want. Socrates talks about freedom “from” rather than freedom “for” and he attributes this understanding of freedom to the democracy and to those who support it. He does mention that democracy allows equal access to political office by lot (political freedom), which is a freedom “for,” but this is not what he seems to find problematic with democracy here. Freedom in the negative sense is equivalent to license (ἐξουσία),<sup>156</sup> and this narrow meaning of freedom colors his whole discussion of democracy.

In the beginning of his criticism of the ideal of freedom as license, Socrates brings up the imagery of a drinking party in which people get drunk by drinking wine undiluted with water. This happens since the cupbearers are bad at their job which is to mix and serve the wine. In an analogous manner, bad leaders provide too much freedom, or they do not provide enough and are accused of being oligarchs (562c7-d4). The problem with drinking wine mentioned in the extant literature is usually drinking wine undiluted, which is considered boorish. Socrates, in effect, suggests that being a good statesman is analogous to being a good cupbearer who should mix wine properly, i.e., he should mix freedom with limits like a cupbearer dilutes wine with water. Moreover the drinking

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<sup>155</sup> This seems to be what Isaiah Berlin means by “negative freedom” (1998,194-203). Earlier conceptions of freedom in this sense are those of Helvetius and Hobbes among others. Helvetius says “The free man is the man who is not in irons, not imprisoned in a gaol, nor terrorized like a slave by the fear of punishment...it is not lack of freedom not to fly like an eagle or swim like a whale” (*De l'esprit* or first discourse, chapter 4). Hobbes says: “A free man is he...that is not hindered to do what he has will to” (*Leviathan*, chapter 21, p. 46). Of course we can argue that Socrates suggests a notion of freedom which is more positive (see again *Meno* 86d6-7). He seems to have in mind something like autonomy or self-sufficiency, i.e., having my desires limited and under control and having the capacity to be able to judge well which desires are good and to choose to follow those which bring real benefits.

<sup>156</sup> For a passage where Socrates treats freedom as the equivalent to license see the beginning of his discussion on what democracy is like as a regime at 557b6-10.

imagery implies that the statesman should not mix freedom with too many limits, just like a cupbearer should always offer the right mixture and amount of wine. Socrates does not seem to suggest that freedom is not important, but to notice that in its extreme it is as dangerously “intoxicating” and harmful as unmixed wine.<sup>157</sup> This is an implicit argument for the idea that the pursuit of freedom should be limited by other measures, like considerations of justice or temperance, since freedom negatively understood does not obviously respect any limits. It is also a subtle critique of democracy insofar as it emphasizes freedom too much and entails the danger of allowing it to go to extremes.

Democracy and its desire for unlimited freedom also conflates traditionally accepted roles such as that of rulers and subjects in the sense that it calls those who obey rulers “slaves” and praises the rulers who behave like ruled subjects. Socrates portrays democracy as having so much freedom that it leads to anarchy even among the beasts (μέχρι τῶν θηρίων τὴν ἀναρχίαν ἐμφυομένην, 562e4-5). Anarchy, i.e., the absence of the imposition of limitations concerning one’s desires or conduct, seems to be the result of too much freedom and equality. The prevalent pursuit and permission of license implies the absence of distinguishing limits and the absolute equality of all, which, in turn, implies that any such limits will not be followed, i.e. anarchy.

License and the extreme equality of all imply that the distinction between rulers and subjects becomes blurred. Socrates goes on to say that it is not only roles with public functions that are confused, but even the distinction of unequals in private is blurred.

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<sup>157</sup> The standard ratio for mixing wine was five parts water to two of wine. For an interesting discussion on this and the drinking of wine in classical times see Davidson (1997, 40 ff.). Also, remember that earlier I suggested that a prevalent image of politics is that of sheep and shepherds, and the problem of what one does with sheep and weaving of sheep wool, since this highlights the relations between citizens and rulers. This imagery is close to, and complemented by, that of mixing, serving, and drinking wine since this also highlights citizen/ruler relations.

Fathers behave like children and children behave like their fathers; nothing causes any shame or makes them feel any fear, and all this is due to the ideal of freedom which, when pursued exclusively goes to extremes (562e). Thus, anarchy sneaks into the household also, or alternatively, we may argue, the anarchy of the household gives rise to anarchy in the regime. Plato seems to highlight, once more, the importance of the structure and value system of the family and its relation to political life.

Furthermore, there is anarchy even in the relationship of students and teachers since, often, the teachers come to be afraid of their students and to flatter them, while the students belittle their teachers. The young are the equals of their elders and compete with them, and the old stoop to the level of the young and imitate them out of fear of appearing too masterful. Socrates then says:

Summing up all these things together, then, do you notice how sensitive they make the citizen's souls, so that if anyone tries to impose the least degree of slavery (δουλείας), they get irritated and cannot bear it? In the end, as I am sure you are aware, they take no notice of the laws—written or unwritten—in order to avoid having any master (δεσπότης) at all (563d4-e1).

Socrates talks about “slavery” and “mastership” here from the perspective of the people of the democracy who consider any limitation on their freedom to be the equivalent of slavery.<sup>158</sup> In this subtle way he points out and critiques the attitude which leads to anarchy. The prevalent value of license causes the eradication of all limitations on one's conduct or desires since one considers all limitation absolute. Freedom is the natural opposite of slavery, of being absolutely limited and determined in one's choices, but the citizens of the democratic city dangerously apply this distinction falsely by considering all limitations equivalent to slavery.

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<sup>158</sup> Remember Aristophanes implying this in the *Wasps*.



Socrates, in this part of his discussion, points out the connection between anarchy (not recognizing any limitations of any sort), freedom and injustice. Extreme freedom has numerical equality as its coimplication, and thus all people and their desires seem numerically equal. The fact that the democratic regime regards people as absolutely equal, in any and all aspects, due to its ideal of freedom as license, eliminates all hierarchies in human relations—old and young, ruler and ruled, teacher and student and so on—and all hierarchy in ethical terms. This amounts to an argument, and a critique, that the pursuit of freedom in the extreme, which implies numerical equality necessarily, destroys all ethical or normative distinctions. The destruction of all hierarchy eventually leads to the disobedience of law—law being a standard or limit of justice higher than individuals—since what people value are freedom and equality not the rule of law that may impose any limitations on these. Individuals come to think of themselves as equal to the lawgivers and higher than the laws, something which makes the laws lack authority in their mind. Thus freedom, in its extreme, breeds anarchy, which eventually leads to lawlessness.<sup>159</sup> Insofar as tyranny is worse than extreme democracy, we expect that it is also lawless.

#### 4.3 From Freedom to Slavery: The Principle of Excess.

Socrates continues his discussion of the devolution of democracy by pointing out that

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<sup>159</sup> In his depiction of extreme democracy as lawless Plato probably has Solon in mind who tried to give laws independent power, i.e., Solon seemed to have thought that laws by themselves could be sufficient for a city's justice. Plato seems to highlight that justice does not only require the presence of laws but also the presence of other conditions which will make the citizens obedient to the laws, such as having limited enough desires and not pursuing negative freedom to extremes.

The same disease (νόσημα) that developed in oligarchy and destroyed it also develops here (in democracy)—only more widespread and stronger because of permissiveness/license—and eventually enslaves democracy (ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἐγγενόμενον καταδουλοῦται δημοκρατίαν). In fact, excessive action in one direction sets up a great change in the opposite direction. This happens in seasons, in plants, in bodies, and indeed not least in regimes (καὶ τῶ ὄντι τὸ ἄγαν τι ποιεῖν μεγάλην φιλεῖ εἰς τούναντίον μεταβολὴν ἀνταποδιδόναι, ἐν ὥραις τε καὶ ἐν φυτοῖς καὶ ἐν σώμασιν, καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐν πολιτείαις οὐχ ἥκιστα) 563e6-564a1.<sup>160</sup>

Here Socrates mentions two important things, namely, a disease that is applicable to the democracy, and the application of the principle that excess of action in any direction is so destructive that it brings about the contrary of what is intended or desired.<sup>161</sup> For example, if I desire to be strong and healthy, but I exercise too much, I end up with the contrary, that is, with weakness or illness. Let us discuss this principle of excess and its application to democracy first.

This principle implies that the virtue of moderation is important since moderation entails the application of limitations to avoid excess; this is also an argument against *pleonexia*. In a way analogous to the example above, a democracy, when it desires freedom to an excessive degree, and takes several extreme steps to secure it becomes a regime full of slaves and ruled by a master, the tyrant.<sup>162</sup> We may wonder whether Socrates is justified in applying the principle of excess to democracy and treating the case of pursuing too much freedom as analogous to harmful excess in bodies. He has been arguing that the pursuit of license as an ideal entails, necessarily, absolute or numerical

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<sup>160</sup> Translation and additions in parentheses mine. Notice that Plato treats regimes as analogous to natural things such as seasons, plants and bodies, implying that regimes are natural and that humans belong in them by nature.

<sup>161</sup> I call this principle “the principle of excess” in the rest of the chapter. We should notice how the application of this principle attacks excess or *pleonexia*. This principle is equivalent to saying that anything A I do in the extreme for the sake of X, or as an instantiation of X, in one direction will lead to change in the contrary of X. Socrates, by this principle, does not mean that if I do action X too much I end up with the contrary of X. A few examples will suffice here: (1) If I exercise too much for the sake of health, then I will become ill. (2) If I apply too much paint on a house for beauty, then the house will be ugly. (3) If I pursue wealth too much for the sake of happiness, I will be unhappy. (4) If I follow all my desires as an instantiation of freedom, or if I take extreme steps to secure freedom, then I end up with slavery.

<sup>162</sup> We recall that excess destroyed oligarchy also.

equality, which, in turn implies the eradication of all hierarchy, which, in turn implies anarchy. But, how does complete anarchy, in turn, lead causally to slavery or tyranny?

The two cases, exercising too much and pursuing freedom in the extreme seem analogous, insofar as we have each person or most people in the democracy trying to do what they want, that is pursuing their numerous and constantly shifting desires. If this is the case then each person will inevitably be after the means by which he may satisfy his desires, and since the city makes available limited means, the poorer classes will come into conflict with the richer classes to acquire these means. Extreme democracy changes into tyranny as freedom needs more and more means to satisfy desires. This drives the rich oligarchs who possess most property and money into opposition with the poorer class and this opposition allows for the demagogue-tyrant who comes in defense of the poor. This is the causal narrative Socrates goes on to tell us. The principle of excess does seem applicable to democracy as Socrates talks about it, and anarchy along with the pursuit of license do seem to lead, eventually, to tyranny or slavery. Socrates goes on to argue how this may happen exactly and to justify his application of the principle of excess to extreme democracy in the discussion that follows.

While Socrates repeats the prevalent Athenian idea that tyranny amounts to slavery, he does so while presenting democracy and its freedom leading causally to tyranny. Given that the Athenians generally considered themselves democratic and free in the sense that they were not enslaved like people in other regimes, and as anti-tyrannical,<sup>163</sup> the claim that freedom leads to slavery would surprise them. Tyranny was the equivalent to slavery in political terms and since democracy emphasized and pursued

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<sup>163</sup> As I argued in the first chapter many of the writings we have point out that the Athenians considered themselves democratic and free in an anti-tyrannical sense. This fits well with the idea that democracy as Socrates talks about it entails an understanding of freedom in a negative sense.

freedom it was understood to be anti-tyrannical. Plato's critique of extreme democracy and its value of extreme freedom emphasizes the importance of placing limits on extreme freedom. This may amount to the suggestion that democracy may be improved or be a better regime if it is coupled with virtue or limits on license.<sup>164</sup> Limitations would change license into something else, perhaps into freedom which looks more like autonomy or self-sufficiency, i.e. the capacity to choose rationally which desires are good for one to follow. Plato seems to intend to shock his readers a little since he goes on to place what an Athenian reader would consider furthest away from democracy, namely, slavery and tyranny as a regime which treats people like slaves, at the democracy's doorstep.

Now that Socrates laid out the implications of the pursuit of freedom in the extreme—that it eventually leads to anarchy—and suggested that too much freedom leads to slavery, he goes on to talk about how tyranny begins to enter into the picture.

Tyranny probably (εἰκότως) does not evolve from any regime other than democracy (οὐκ ἐξ ἄλλης πολιτείας τυραννὶς καθίσταται ἢ ἐκ δημοκρατίας), then—the most severe and cruel slavery (δουλεία πλείστη τε καὶ ἀγριωτάτη) evolving from what I suppose is the most extreme degree of freedom...But I think you were asking, not that, but rather what sort of disease develops both in oligarchy and democracy alike, and enslaves the latter...Well, then, I meant that class of idle and extravagant (ἀργῶν τε καὶ δαπανηρῶν) men, with the bravest as leaders and the more cowardly as followers. We compared them to drones: the leaders to drones with stings, the followers to stingless ones (cf.552c2-e3)...These two cause problems in any constitution in which they arise, like phlegm and bile in the body. And it is against them that the good doctor and lawgiver of a city must take no less in advance precaution than a wise beekeeper. He should preferably prevent them from arising at all. But if they should happen to arise, he must cut them out, cells and all, as quickly as possible (564a6-c4).<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Aristotle suggests that extreme democracy and oligarchy become tyranny since there is lawless ruling. See *Politics* V 5 (1304b19ff.) and V 6 (1305a37ff.).

<sup>165</sup> In quoting the above passage I omit Adeimantus' responses to what Socrates says since they are affirmative and indicate agreement with what Socrates says. Notice that Plato adds the imagery of bees and drones to his discussion of politics. This imagery emphasizes the role of desires in citizens and rulers and it complements the images of serving and drinking wine, and rearing sheep.

Socrates links explicitly the ideal of freedom pursued in the extreme in the democratic regime, to the origin of tyranny which he calls the “most severe and cruel slavery.”<sup>166</sup> By linking these explicitly here he begins to explain further how democracy devolves into tyranny since the pursuit of democracy fits the principle of excess.

But notice that he says it is only likely or probable that tyranny comes to be from democracy. Earlier (563e6-564a1), he told us that the principle of excess applies to democracy and to regimes in general, but he did not qualify the application of this principle with any likelihood. In other words, the application of the principle earlier was strict and the idea that tyranny always follows democracy is put in much looser terms here. We may be troubled about how to read these two passages since Socrates may seem to contradict himself: (a) on the one hand, in the first passage, he seems to say that since the principle of excess is applicable to all regimes, democracies will necessarily change into tyrannies, since they pursue extreme freedom; (b) on the other hand, in the second passage, he says that it is likely, not necessary, that tyranny comes to be from democracy. (a) seems to entail that historically or temporally tyranny always comes after democracy and (b) denies this. However, we may read these passages as telling us that the principle of excess is applicable to regimes, and to democracy, precisely, and only when these pursue their ideals to excess, but not otherwise. This allows us to conclude that Socrates does not contradict himself in these two passages and so he claims that democracy, may change into a regime other than tyranny, and that it will do so, historically, when it desires freedom in an excessive manner. In order to read these passages in this way we may need to attribute to Socrates or Plato the use of two senses

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<sup>166</sup> We should note that Socrates does mention that the devolution of democracy into tyranny is likely or probable, but not certain which shows that he does not consider his account of regime change to be exhaustive.

of democracy. In the first passage he means democracy as he describes it strictly, namely in the extreme, thus the principle of excess is applicable to it. In the second passage he means democracy in general terms and as it is possibly found in experience, i.e., as a mixed regime which may end up excessive but it need not do so. Both of these senses seem to be used throughout the discussion; Socrates keeps in mind what democracies are like in experience and he also pushes their main ideal of freedom to an extreme.

The principle of excess is applicable precisely, and only, in the cases where there is excess, and given the above reading of these passages, it is still possible that a mild democracy may change into an oligarchy, where the many may subordinate to the few rich, and this, still will not be turning the citizens into slaves. Socrates implicitly allows for the fact that democracy need not change into tyranny, but he still shows that the two are in causal proximity when the democracy is extreme in its pursuit of freedom.<sup>167</sup> For Plato, money and freedom (and numerical equality) tend to excess since they have no obvious limit. Thus both oligarchy, which pursues wealth, and democracy which pursues freedom entail the proximate danger of pursuing these to excess and being destroyed. We may read the discussion of democracy pursuing freedom in the extreme as a warning for democracies in general to avoid pursuing freedom in the extreme, that is, to be more moderate or limited, if they want to avoid destruction or tyranny.

Socrates, in the above passage, also calls tyranny the most cruel sort of slavery which is reminiscent of Thrasymachus' description of tyranny from Book I. There he

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<sup>167</sup> We may also show that Socrates applies the principle of excess in all the sketches of regimes changing into each other in a devolving manner and this may aid the way we read Socrates' account of devolution. It seems that we must read his account as an account of regimes, which pursue their respective ideals to extremes. Timocracy pursues only honor and oligarchy only wealth and both do so to extremes which eventually causes their destruction. Oligarchy, for example, changes into democracy when the pursuit of wealth is so extreme that the devastating poverty of the many pushes them to take over.

told us that tyrants kidnap and enslave people and that they treat the citizens under their rule as means. Thrasymachus also presented these as acts of tyrants, which should cause admiration of the tyrant's life.<sup>168</sup> Continuing in pathological terms, the disease Socrates refers to in both of the above passages (536eff and 564a6-c4) that is common to the democracy and the oligarchy is the conflict between a small class of rich citizens and a large class of poor citizens. "Disease" (νόσημα) as Socrates uses it here—and where he calls tyranny the extreme disease of a city (544c7)—refers to the city's suffering injustice which leads to conflict among the citizens and to destruction.<sup>169</sup> Any regime which entails conflict which may lead to its destruction is thus diseased. Democracy allows for the creation of a large class of poor people in the city who come into conflict with the few rich, the oligarchs.

Socrates argues that the democracy and its pursuit of extreme freedom seems to fit the principle of excess or of extremes leading to their opposites, because, as he seems to think, once there is anarchy the pursuit of freedom as license gets undermined. This happens because, as he proceeds to show, the eventual anarchy leads to a considerable amount of conflict between different classes of citizens who pursue different ends (oligarchs and democrats) under the guidance of no rules or laws. Such conflict guarantees the opposite of what is originally desired—the guarantee of freedom or license—and one group usually hinders the other from pursuing what it wants. Eventually an opportunist (the biggest drone) promises the weak, and numerous group, freedom, they support him, and he takes over as tyrant, thus enslaving all the citizens.

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<sup>168</sup> Polus and Callicles do the same in the *Gorgias*.

<sup>169</sup> Much as disease is the conflict of heterogeneous elements in a body.

#### 4.4 The Rise of the Tyrant

Socrates goes on to give a plausible account of the origin of the tyrant coming into power and of the class relations in democratic politics which allow him to do so (566 ff.). He divides the democracy into three primary classes: (1) the drone types; some of them speak in the assembly and carry out actions in the city (drones with stings), and others follow those who speak (stingless drones), together controlling the assembly. (2) The few oligarchs who possess property and means. (3) The working class, which is the largest and which generally refrains from taking part in politics.<sup>170</sup> In oligarchies the drones were neither in political office nor honored,

However, in a democracy with few exceptions (ἐκτὸς ὀλίγων), it is surely the dominant class. Its fiercest part does all the talking and acting, while the other one settles near the speaker's platform. It buzzes and it does not tolerate any dissent. As a result, this class is in charge of everything in such a regime—with a few exceptions (564d7-e2).<sup>171</sup>

The drone imagery depicts the rather idle citizens who spend resources quickly in the pursuit of their desires and who need to acquire more resources to do so.<sup>172</sup> These citizens are characteristic of the democratic regime since they embody its ideal of freedom in the extreme, something which causes them to be extreme individualists in a negative sense. This is not to say that Socrates thinks that the working class does not embody this ideal of freedom also; they have to work to get the resources to pursue their desires whereas the drone class tries to get a free ride if it can. Socrates implies that the

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<sup>170</sup> Socrates points out that the working class which is the majority in the democracy refrains from politics and that they only come to the assembly if they are paid (565a4-5). Traditionally citizens who had to work every day to meet ends had to be paid a sum close to a day's wages to be able to attend the assembly. It is also possible that Socrates suggests that the members of the working class come to the assembly because it is to their perceived interest, since the leaders of the assembly give them some of what they take away from the rich, thus also winning their support.

<sup>171</sup> Note, again, that Socrates admits that there are exceptions to his discussion of regimes.

<sup>172</sup> In the oligarchy the footed drones with stings become criminals and the footed stingless drones become beggars (552c-d).



drone types do not contribute much to the city except insofar as doing so may allow them to pursue their interests.

Socrates goes on to tell us that the drone-class and the class of the rich are in opposition since those drones who control the assembly try to seize the wealth of the rich to pursue their desires. When the rich try to oppose them, then the drone class accuses them of being enemies of the people (the working class) and calls them oligarchs. In the end, the people, due to a misapprehension—misled by the accusers of the rich—try to do injustice to those who have money and the rich end up becoming oligarchs, i.e., they begin to pursue power according to oligarchic standards. Once this happens there are impeachments, judgments and trials on both sides (565c6). Socrates attributes the conflict that arises in the democracy to the drone-class wedging itself between a small rich class and a large poor class, and to its accusing the rich class of acting against the interest of the poor. Socrates suggests that the conflict between the many poor and the few rich begins with some class or third party in the middle stirring things up. Furthermore, he implies that the existence of a large poor class and a small rich class is something structurally necessary for democracy to change into tyranny. This seems to be the case since, only then does the drone class seem able to set the two classes in conflict.<sup>173</sup>

Socrates does not tell us that the oligarchs are successful in their attempts to protect themselves from attacks on them by the poor, or that they take the regime over,

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<sup>173</sup> This seems to refer to Peisistratus who inserted himself as a third party in the middle of the conflict of the two classes in Athens and became a tyrant. This was after Solon was called to be an arbitrator in the conflict between the rich and the poor in Athens and who could have assumed tyrannical powers but he did not. McGlew points out that Peisistratus got the *demos* to support him and to help him replace Solon's legal system for punishing injustice with his own (1993, 122).

since this would change the regime back to oligarchy.<sup>174</sup> It is enough for his account that the oligarchs try to protect themselves by opposing the many and becoming their enemies, since this describes the conflict necessary for the coming about of the tyrant.

This conflict of classes eventually allows for the springing of the person who will come to be tyrant.

Is it not the case that the people, always, tend to set up one man as their special leader, nurturing him, and making him great?...And it is clear that whenever a tyrant arises, the position, of popular leader (or protector) is the sole root from which he springs. (Οὐκοῦν ἓνα τινὰ ἀεὶ δῆμος εἴωθεν διαφερόντως προΐστασθαι ἑαυτοῦ, καὶ τοῦτον τρέφειν τε καὶ αὔξειν μέγαν... Τοῦτο μὲν ἄρα, δῆλον, ὅτι, ὅταν περ φύηται τύραννος, ἐκ προστατικῆς ρίζης καὶ οὐκ ἄλλοθεν ἐκβλαστάνει 565c9-d2).<sup>175</sup>

This passage considers the state of the poor citizens of the democracy and how it gives rise to a popular leader or potential tyrant. Moreover, it is further explicating how democracy fits the principle of excess. The people, made to feel insecure, look up to the one who appears to support their interests and support him as their special leader or protector. The popular leader (the potential tyrant), to gain popular support would have to appear as capable of defeating the oligarchs and/or to guarantee the freedom sought by the citizens of the democracy. The aspect of the subjects of the democratic regime, which allows the potential tyrant to gain popular support is, again, the dominant value of license. The democratic citizens are nervous as long as oligarchs are around since they perceive them as obstacles to their freedom. Furthermore, the origin of the tyrant is the

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<sup>174</sup> But notice, once again how Plato's account implies the possibility of change in a different order than the one he describes here, i.e., from democracy to oligarchy.

<sup>175</sup> Addition in first parenthesis mine. Ferrari (2000), mentions that this narrative, while general, fits two particular instances of struggle between oligarchic and democratic factions: "the turmoil in late fifth-century Athens, and the rise of Dionysius I as popular champion in Sicily." There was no people's champion who became tyrant at Athens in Plato's time. What this fits is rather the rise of Dionysius, as well as of Pisistratus, ruler of Athens in the mid-sixth century, when the city was first becoming prominent" (279, n. 33). Ferrari's comment here allows us to realize that Plato's description takes into account and fits political life in experience. We should also note that whereas earlier Socrates admitted exceptions to his account of regimes, here his language is rather strong and it suggests that he does not admit of any exceptions on the idea that whenever a tyrant arises he does so by being (or appearing to be) a protector.

appearance of protection, but not its actuality and it comes when a city is in much conflict. Taking up Socrates' pathological theme we may say that a city, like a body, is subject to further disease when it is already somewhat diseased. Conflict between classes allows for the tyrant to enter the political sphere and take over the city.

This passage also offers, in effect, both an immediate warning to those who want to avoid tyranny, and advice to those who want to pursue it. The warning seems to be: “beware of protectors when a city is in much conflict” and the advice is “if you want to be tyrant gain support as protector when the city is in much conflict.” But since it is the people of the democracy who set up and support such a protector the warning comes much earlier than here, when we are told the negative implications of the pursuit of extreme freedom. Socrates tries to warn us all along that it is pursuit of extreme freedom that allows for too much conflict and, thus, for the possibility of tyranny and it is against this that we should guard. Thus, while Socrates tells us how a regime like democracy is destroyed, he seems to also tell us how such a regime may be preserved. The preservation of democracy would entail avoidance of the pursuit of extreme freedom and this may happen by placing limits on it, like laws, which imply the consideration and reintroduction of justice, and which must be in effect.

Socrates, having now explained, via a narrative of class conflict in the democratic regime, how the pursuit of freedom as license by the citizens of a democracy allows for the potential tyrant to gain their support, now goes on to explain how the popular leader comes to be tyrant. He tells us that the way the tyrant emerges from the popular leader is similar to what happens in the story told about the temple of Lycon Zeus. The story of

the temple of Zeus as Plato presents it here had it that once a human tastes human flesh along with the flesh of other sacrificial animals he becomes a wolf.<sup>176</sup>

Isn't it the same, then, with a popular leader (δήμου προεστώς)? Once he really takes over a docile mob (σφόδρα πειθόμενον ὄχλον), he does not restrain himself from shedding a fellow citizen's blood (μὴ ἀπόσχηται ἐμφυλίου αἵματος). But by leveling the usual unjust charges and bringing people into court, he commits murder (μιαφονῆ). And by blotting out a man's life (βίον ἀνδρὸς ἀφανίζων), his impious tongue and lips taste kindred blood. Then he banishes and kills and drops hints about the cancellation of debts and the redistribution of land.<sup>177</sup> And after that, isn't such a man inevitably fated either to be killed by his enemies or to be tyrant, transformed from a man into a wolf? (ἀνάγκη δὴ τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο καὶ εἴμαρται ἢ ἀπολωλέναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἢ τυραννεῖν καὶ λύκῳ ἐξ ἀνθρώπου γενέσθαι)...He is the one that stirs faction against the rich (ὁ στασιάζων γίγνεται πρὸς τοὺς ἔχοντας τὰς οὐσίας)...And if he happens to be exiled (ἐκπεσὼν) but, despite the enemies, manages to return, doesn't he come back as a full fledged tyrant?<sup>178</sup>...And if they are unable to expel him (ἐκβάλλειν αὐτὸν) or put him to death by accusing him before the city (ἀποκτεῖναι διαβάλλοντες τῇ πόλει), they plot a violent death for him by covert means (βιάϊῳ δὴ θανάτῳ ἐπιβουλεύουσιν ἀποκτείνουσαι λάθρα)...And everyone who has reached this stage soon discovers the famous tyrannical request (τυραννικὸν αἴτημα τὸ πολυθρύλητον)—to ask people to give him bodyguards (φύλακας τοῦ σώματος) to keep their popular leader (δήμου βοηθός) safe for them...And the people give it to him, I suppose, fearing for his safety but confident of their own...So when a wealthy man sees this and is, because of his money, an enemy of the people (μισόδημος), then, comrade, in the words of the oracle to Croesus, “he flees without delay to the banks of the many-pebbled Hermus, and is not ashamed at all of his cowardice.”<sup>179</sup>...If he is caught (the rich man), I would imagine he is put to death...As for this popular leader (προστάτης)<sup>180</sup> of ours, he clearly does not lie on the ground “mighty in his might,” but, having brought down all those others, he stands in the chariot of the city as a complete tyrant instead of a popular leader (565e3-566d2).<sup>181</sup>

Socrates explains how the popular leader or protector of the people comes to be a tyrant, like someone who tasted human flesh comes to be a wolf in the tale of Zeus Lycon. An opportunist takes advantage of the trust he gains from the people as their protector in

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<sup>176</sup> The most common story concerning this seems to be that Lycaon, an Arcadian king, insulted Zeus by offering human flesh for him to eat in a sacrifice or a banquet, and that Zeus turned Lycaon into a wolf (Gk. λύκος), hence the name “Lycon Zeus.” For this account see Apollodorus (On the Gods, iii 8) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

<sup>177</sup> The cancellation of debts and the redistribution of land concerns the poor mob who consider the few rich their enemies and take the popular leader to be just since he is furthering their interests. I discuss the tyrant's pretended interests in the economic welfare of the citizens in the next chapter.

<sup>178</sup> Plato seems to be alluding to Peisistratus. He had made himself tyrant with the aid of a bodyguard granted to him by the Athenian people. He was expelled after five years, and eventually returned to establish himself as a tyrant with the help of mercenaries. See Herodotus' *Histories* 1.59-64.

<sup>179</sup> See *Histories* 1.55

<sup>180</sup> *Prostates* is the word Socrates uses for what is a potential tyrant.

<sup>181</sup> Adeimantus' affirmative responses are omitted once again.

opposition to the so-called enemies of the people namely the few rich. The popular leader exploits what the citizens of the democracy perceive as their goal, freedom, and the way they perceive themselves in order to be perceived, in turn, as their popular leader. Plato makes much of what people perceive to be the best goal and the best way to reach it. The popular leader claims he will redistribute the land and cancel the debts people owe to the few rich, a claim which amounts to the promise of furnishing the poor with financial means to pursue their desires. It is a promise to allow them to have the means to pursue license which would allow them to fulfill their desires whatever these may be. Moreover, at the same time, this is a promise which enhances and multiplies people's desires. With power, or the promise of it, people think they can accomplish more, i.e., with enhanced ability (actual or perceived) come more extreme desires.

The potential tyrant is an opportunist who finds it convenient to exploit the fact that people value freedom and desire a life of license. He exploits this desire by promising the guarantee of means to pursue it such as money and property, and the removal of the obstacles in the way of such a desire, like the few rich. Moreover as we have seen the tyrant's promises for means or power to pursue desires tends to enhance people's desires. This promising amounts to the potential tyrant's pre-tyrannical propaganda. What is interesting about this passage from the perspective of the discussion of tyranny is:

(1) That Plato really talks about a sort of ideological propaganda or, to avoid using anachronistic terms, some sort of rhetoric of promises, employed by the potential tyrant as an opportunist. The potential tyrant employs a rhetoric of promises that takes into account and promotes one kind of life as better than any other, in this case that of the

democratic citizen. This shows that Plato is aware of such strategies and awakens us to its aspects and to the importance of political rhetoric.

(2) That he recognizes, and points out, that the potential tyrant can only win power by allying himself with a group of people in the city against another group. The potential tyrant has much chance of success if he inserts himself in the middle of a conflict, and finds ways to exploit the presence of such a conflict. Of course tyrants do contribute to existing conflicts becoming more heated up and extreme so that he can finally exploit them.<sup>182</sup>

Socrates also points out that the potential tyrant is resourceful and clever since even when exiled he may return and take over after all. This may amount to an argument in support of tyrannicide, that in order to avoid the return of tyranny it is better to kill tyrants rather than exile them.

Tyrants come about with popular support as the protectors of the people who end up giving them guards to protect themselves from immediate enemies, and eventually from the people themselves. Plato shows that considerations of the concentration of power for a tyrant have to do with gaining the favor or support of military power. The potential tyrant requires a guard from the people by telling them that he is in danger and that he needs to protect his life to further their interests as he has promised. The potential tyrant is after power and he knows and plans to treat many people differently after he gains power, that is, unjustly. In order to get his own guard in time, that is, in order to become able to treat people the way he wants without much danger of being harmed, and before he possibly falls out of favor with them, he pretends to be in danger and to require

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<sup>182</sup> We may think of the prosecution of Jews by the Nazis in these terms since the Nazis did not create anti-semitism but rather, they expanded and exploited its presence to present an immediate enemy to the German people and to justify both the presence and the need for Hitler and the party.

his own guard. The fact that potential tyrants require their own guard signifies part of the shift from being a potential tyrant to being an actual one since once he has a way to protect himself he can begin to be unjust. The shift seems to entail that the potential tyrant may treat his supporters and the people in general well initially but as soon as he comes to power he treats them in any way he can to further his own perceived interests. In order to do so and get away with it he requires his own personal guard. Once he gets it he has power and he becomes an actual tyrant.

The potential tyrant opposes those who oppose him as enemies of the people and accuses them of being oligarchs. In this way he gets the people to be against them and he is able to kill them, exile them, confiscate their property unjustly without much opposition. The people buy into what the potential tyrant says about oligarchs since being accused of being an oligarch signifies someone who is not in favor of the democratic ideal of freedom and equality desired by the many. This suggests that accusing someone of being an oligarch may be equivalent to accusing him of being a tyrant since “tyranny” in democracies may mean anti-democracy, anti-democracy being anything which places limitations on license. Thus the tyrant is even more able to conceal his true self since the people are likely to perceive the rich class as tyrannical.

The so-called enemies of the people whom the potential tyrant opposes hold (or are portrayed to hold) a different way of life as ideal, in this case, the type of life that pursues and hold valuable wealth, not freedom. The many must perceive this type of life as a hindrance to their freedom so the potential tyrant has to portray the rich class as accumulating and owning the property and money which may allow for freedom. The potential tyrant presents two opposing ideals of life as so opposed that one has to be rid

of, and he proposes that he be the one to do it. This is part of the potential tyrant's rhetoric of promises or propaganda. Plato points us to the idea that gaining political power unjustly may entail getting rid of enemies with the least opposition possible or even with support from the people. This allows for the eradication of enemies to seem justified and just.

Another aspect of the above passage, which likens the potential tyrant to the story of Lycon Zeus, is that the potential tyrant is not much like a human anymore but more like a bloodthirsty beast. This suggests that the devolution from the philosopher, who is most human since he aspires to the highest human goals of wisdom and justice, ends up bringing a human to his most beast-like state; it turns a human into a wolf. The wolf imagery suggests that a human has devolved from being a political animal by nature to being an apolitical animal like the other beasts, he has devolved into a creature willing to devour anything in its path. We recall that the tyrant comes from the drone class, and wolf seems to be the stinged drone. The drone imagery points to extravagant spending and the tyrant becomes like a wolf due to his endless need to spend. His need to spend requires that he acquire more resources which eventually forces him to be violent to the citizens. Furthermore, if we remember Socrates likening the guards of the just city to dogs—which are the most philosophic animals since they are able to make the distinction between friends and enemies and be gentle to friends and harsh to enemies—the imagery of the wolf suggests that the tyrant makes no such distinctions anymore and places philosophy in opposition to tyranny. Dogs represent humans as political animals who only try to outdo enemies, and wolves represent humans as apolitical, unjust and pleonexic (trying to outdo everyone). Socrates plays off of Thrasymachus' shepherd



speech, where citizens were likened to sheep, and he likens tyrants not to shepherds or their masters, but to wolves who kill and eat the sheep to satisfy their hunger.<sup>183</sup>

Moreover, this portrays tyrants as rulers who do not possess the art of ruling.

Socrates, so far in the discussion of tyranny, has been talking about how a tyranny comes about from a democracy which is extreme. He spends a lot of time talking about the pathology of democracy before he gets to tyranny and this seems to be rather prophetic when we consider the dramatic date of the dialogue. Socrates is presented as telling the people listening to him that democracies turn into tyrannies and from this perspective he is prophesying the coming of the Thirty.<sup>184</sup> Polemarchus who is present in the discussion gets killed by the Thirty and is accused of being an oligarch.<sup>185</sup> Socrates has tyranny result causally from democracy while he is talking to some rich people who live in a democracy. Plato writes the dialogue after the Thirty have already come and gone and uses the character of Socrates to point out some of the problems of democracy to his own audience.

In the discussion above, Socrates suggests that in extreme democracies some people inherit, or pursue and acquire wealth (in the regime where everyone is allowed to pursue what they want) and these people are made a target by opportunists who claim to support the many who are poor. The rich are blamed for the poor being poor and not as free as they could be, thus the poor support the potential tyrant who eventually enslaves

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<sup>183</sup> In the *Statesman* we get the famous imagery of the art of weaving of wool as analogous to the art of the statesman. Notice, that the imagery there suggests that the statesman is like a person who weaves sheep wool well but not like a shepherd who fattens sheep for eating. Thus in Plato, the question of rulers seems to use frequently the imagery of sheep and what one does with them, and to center around the question of what a ruler ought to do with citizens in a city.

<sup>184</sup> This is what Ruby Blondell (2002) calls “historical irony,” that is, Plato’s exploitation of the reader’s knowledge of historical events, which have taken place from the perspective of the reader but not from that of the characters of the dialogue.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Lysias’ *Against Eratosthenes*.

everyone. In dealing with the pathology of democracy Socrates has accounted for the origins of tyranny. He has told us a lot about the demeanor and cunning of the potential tyrant and the systemic conditions in a democracy that allow for the coming about of tyranny. Such conditions include the pursuit of extreme freedom with the coimplications of extreme equality and anarchy, the presence of classes whose pursuits or ideals bring them into conflict, and the presence of enough people to support the tyrant, i.e. drone types like him. He has also talked about the transition from protector of the people to tyrant where he presented us with some of the actions and measures of the potential tyrant which we are to take as characteristic of potential tyrants. These are:

- (1) Exploiting, furthering, and placing oneself in the midst of, political conflict among other classes to gain political support and serve his interests.
- (2) Confiscation of property by unjust and arbitrary means.
- (3) Deceit through a rhetoric of persuasion (or propaganda): the persuasion of people of false accusations against political opponents, appearing as the champion of the people by appearing to be interested in pursuing their true interests.
- (4) Violence: murder and exile.
- (5) Gaining the support of guards and military means in attempts to gain power, remain in power, and to be able to get away with injustice.

In the above passage, which describes the transition from potential to actual tyrant (565e3-566d2), Socrates seems to talk about the tyrant and his coming about alone, but it is the passage where he begins to present some of the essential features of tyranny. Socrates describes tyranny and what it is like essentially after all—especially in the

passage where he describes the transition of the popular leader into a tyrant—even though he seems to talk much about the devolution of democracy. Moreover, it is not necessary to take these features of tyranny as present only when tyranny comes to be from democracy but we may regard them as features of tyranny and its origins as such. Finally, we see that Socrates presents tyranny arising both with considerable popular support, and with violence against perceived enemies, both of which seem necessary conditions for its birth. Now let us move to the part of the discussion where Socrates describes the means by which an actual tyrant rules his city some of which we have touched upon in this chapter.

## Chapter 5: Tyranny in Power.

Having discussed tyranny's originating causes, Socrates goes on to give an account of tyranny in power. In this chapter I consider Plato's account of tyranny in power as this continues filling in the general definition of tyranny, which Plato employs in the *Republic*. This general definition is that tyranny is the unlimited and unjust rule exercised by a single person in service of his own perceived benefits or interests. We remember that Socrates analyzes every regime and analogous individual in three ways: (1) by providing an account of their origin, (2) by providing an account of what each regime or individual is like once established or formed, and (3) how each regime or individual fares in terms of justice and, eventually, happiness, in contrast to the *kallipolis* and the just man respectively.

After the consideration of the origins of tyranny Socrates asks Adeimantus whether they should look into the question of the happiness of the tyrant and of the tyrannical regime (566d5). But before arguing about this explicitly Socrates describes the characteristic actions and measures by which the tyrant rules when in power. We need to know what tyrants and tyrannies do in order to be able to judge such a regime and type of life. Now let us turn to the long passage in which Socrates describes tyranny in power. A consideration of this passage will reveal several essential features of tyranny.

Socrates tells Adeimantus and the others that once the tyrant comes to power,

Socrates: To start with, in the early days of his reign (ταῖς μὲν πρώταις ἡμέραις τε καὶ χρόνῳ), won't he give everyone he meets a smile (προσγελά) and greet them with a friendly word (ἀσπάζεται), he will not say that he is a tyrant, promise all sorts of things in private and public, free the people from debt, redistribute the land to them and to his followers, and pretend to be gracious and gentle to all (πᾶσιν ἰλεώς τε καὶ πρᾶος εἶναι προσποιεῖται)?

Adeimantus: Necessarily (Ἀνάγκη).

Socrates: But once he has dealt with his exiled enemies (ἔξω ἐχθρούς) by making peace with some and destroying others, and all is calm on that front, the first

thing he will do, I imagine, is to be constantly stirring up some war or other, so that the people will need a leader (πρῶτον μὲν πολέμους τινὰς ἀεὶ κινεῖ, ἴν' ἐν χρεῖα ἡγεμόνος ὁ δῆμος ἦ).

Adeimantus: Very likely (Ἐικός γε).

Socrates: And also with the intention that their contribution of money to the war will impoverish them, they will be forced to concentrate on their daily needs and be less likely to plot against him (ἦττον αὐτῷ ἐπιβουλεύωσι)?

Adeimantus: Clearly (Δῆλον).

Socrates: And in addition, I suppose, so that if there are some free-thinking people he suspects of challenging his rule (ὑποπτεύη ἐλεύθερα φρονήματα ἔχοντας μὴ ἐπιτρέψειν αὐτῷ ἄρχειν), he can find a pretext (μετὰ προφάσεως) for leaving them to the enemy and destroying them? For all these reasons, isn't it necessary for a tyrant to be always stirring up war (τούτων πάντων ἕνεκα τυράννω ἀεὶ ἀνάγκη πόλεμον ταραττεῖν)?

Adeimantus: Necessarily (Ἀνάγκη).

Socrates: Does not doing all these things tend to make him more hateful to the citizens (ἀπεχθάνεσθαι τοῖς πολίταις)?

Adeimantus: How could they not?

Socrates: And don't some of those who helped establish his tyranny (συγκαταστησάντων) and hold positions of power (ἐν δυνάμει ὄντων), the ones who are bravest, speak freely (παρρησιάζεσθαι) to him and each other, criticizing what is happening (ἐπιπλήττοντας τοῖς γιγνομένοις)?

Adeimantus: Very likely.

Socrates: Then the tyrant will have to do away (ὑπεξερεῖν) with all of them if he is to rule, until he is left with no friend or enemy who is of any benefit at all...He will have to keep a sharp lookout, then, for anyone who is brave (ἀνδρείος), magnanimous (μεγαλόφρων), wise (φρόνιμος), or rich (πλούσιος). He is so happy (εὐδαίμων), that he is forced by these people (ἀνάγκη αὐτῷ) [by their presence], whether he wants to or not (εἴτε βούλεται εἴτε μὴ), to be their enemy and plot against all of them until he has purged the city (πολεμῶ εἶναι καὶ ἐπιβουλεύειν, ἕως ἂν καθήρη τὴν πόλιν).

Adeimantus: A fine purge that is.

Socrates: The opposite (purge) of the one doctors perform on our bodies. They draw off all the worst and leave the best, whereas he does just the opposite!

Adeimantus: Yes, that is what he has to do, it seems, if he is to rule.

Socrates: It is a blessed necessity he is bound by, then (ἐν μακαρίᾳ ἄρα ἀνάγκη δέδεταί), which requires him (προστάττει αὐτῷ), either to live with the many bad people and be hated by them, or not live at all!

Adeimantus: It is.

Socrates: And the more he makes the citizens hate him (ἀπεχθάνηται) by doing those things, this much more in number and more trustworthy a guard he will need won't he?

Adeimantus: How could he not?

Socrates: And who will these trustworthy people be? And from where will he get them?...Drones again, by the dog! That is what I think you are talking about. Foreign multifarious ones (ξενικούς τε καὶ παντοδαπούς)!

Adeimantus: Yes, you seem right.

Socrates: What about the domestic ones (αὐτόθεν)? Wouldn't he be willing to deprive the citizens of their slaves, set them free, and make them his guards?...What a blessed thing this tyrant business is as you say, if these are the sorts of friends and trusted men he must employ after destroying the former ones!...And these friends and new

citizens admire and associate with him, whereas the good ones hate and avoid him?  
(566d8-568a6).<sup>186</sup>

The tyrant will appear friendly and gentle to the citizens during the early days of his reign and when he takes care of his exiled enemies, he will turn to stirring up wars constantly. Plato reveals that tyranny entails both a persuasive side and a coercive or violent side. Socrates begins this passage by listing a number of measures the tyrant will employ in his efforts to secure, consolidate, and preserve political power. These include, but are not limited to, appearing beneficent, settling things with external enemies (killing them off), and putting the city on a war footing continually. Clearly the tyrant preserves his power only so long as he is able to preserve the fiction of his necessity and so long as he is able to remove enemies.<sup>187</sup> Plato also reveals the tyrant's intense and constant worry with securing power and with his personal safety. Let us begin our analysis of the above passage with the tyrant's efforts to appear friendly and beneficent.

### 5.1 Appearing Just and Beneficent.

The tyrant, as Socrates describes him generally, both in the passage above, and as a potential tyrant earlier, is only interested in appearing just and beneficent and he does all that he can to appear so. The tyrant is not who he appears to be. Socrates refers to pretension (προσποιεῖται) of justice and beneficence following Glaucon and

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<sup>186</sup> Translation and additions in parenthesis mine. Also notice that the word necessity (ἀνάγκη) appears five times which suggests that tyrants are forced to do certain things.

<sup>187</sup> The tyrant's pursuit or lust for power is present prominently in Plato's account of tyranny, but this is not what the tyrant's final end is. Plato makes it clear that the tyrant's obsession with acquiring power follows his overarching pursuit of unnecessary and unlawful desires; in other words, pursuing political power is in the service of other more powerful desires. I clarify this helpful feature of Plato's account in response to a sort of general image of tyrants as being thirsty for power alone as if one could just want to amass power. Such a conception is problematic since people seem to desire power in order to be able to do what they think is right or what they want. For a discussion of the tyrant's desires see chapter 6.

Adeimantus' lead from Book II where the unjust person has the appearance or the reputation for justice. The tyrant rules for his own benefit and not for the interests of the citizens, and this is an essential feature of an unjust regime, which takes an extreme form in tyranny. This is also a repetition of the end of ruling entailed in Thrasymachus' shepherd speech.

Socrates portrays the tyrant attempting to control his own reception in the city by trying to appear friendly, beneficent, or just in the early days of his reign. Let us consider how the tyrant may do this and why he needs to do so. In line with the earlier claims about the means by which a potential tyrant attempts to come to power, the tyrant needs to appear friendly and beneficent in order, to win support from the people on his way to power, but also, possibly, eventually to secure and preserve his political power with such support. From the beginning of his discussion of tyranny in power Socrates emphasizes not only the tyrant's concern with preserving and securing power, but more specifically, the constant and intense worry about enemies. Opposition to tyranny comes when the citizens can notice a considerable disparity between the tyrants' actions and what they consider legitimate or appropriate behavior. The tyrant employs measures to prevent the citizens from noticing such a disparity. Plato suggests that the semblance of justice allows the tyrant to pursue his ambitions with the support of the citizens.<sup>188</sup>

In the beginning of the passage Socrates suggests that appearing friendly, beneficent, and just requires four measures, which may also allow the tyrant to consolidate or preserve his power: (1) smiling and speaking gently to people in public view, (2) the tyrant not calling himself a tyrant, (3) promising things in public and in

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<sup>188</sup> McGlew (1993, 81) points out that “*Dike* provides the point of intersection between the personal ambition of the aspiring tyrant and political expectations of his fellow citizens.”

private, and (4) freeing people from debt and redistributing land and property to them. With (1), Socrates suggests that the tyrant comports himself in his everyday demeanor and dealings with people in ways that make him seem friendly and liked. This may bring to mind a tyrant holding a baby in public, an image very common in modern times. The point is that the tyrant puts up a façade when dealing with people in public. Such a measure is a sort of performative rather than a verbal argument towards the conclusion that the tyrant is beneficent and friendly.

The fact that the tyrant avoids calling himself “tyrant,” amounts to the measure that the tyrant has to pass himself as someone else, such as the champion or protector of the people. He does not want to attach negative connotations to what he does, and avoids the name “tyrant” since it carries such connotations.<sup>189</sup> The idea that the tyrant avoids calling himself “tyrant” and tries to give himself other titles or names is part of the rhetorical strategy to pass his regime and himself as good, just, and beneficent. This is the case with (1) also since being friendly to people may get them to think of someone as being good. Furthermore, the fact that the tyrant avoids calling himself “tyrant” while adopting other personas suggests that some rulers in Plato’s time were called “tyrants” by critics. Plato makes the politically relevant distinction, between what one calls himself and what others, primarily his critics, may call him or his regime. This distinction suggests that, for Plato, tyrants were aware of rhetorical strategies or propaganda and that they used these in efforts to support and guarantee their rule or authority.<sup>190</sup> Socrates

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<sup>189</sup> We see that Socrates assumes that the name “tyrant” carries negative connotations which suggests that this is an assumption shared by his interlocutors and by Plato’s readers. Plato seeks to turn this connotations into a more explicit negative view of tyranny. For the term having negative connotations, especially in Athens, see the discussion of the usage of the term “tyranny” in chapter 1.

<sup>190</sup> For a list of such rulers and for the suggestion that they came to power by being demagogues, not through some other way, see Aristotle’s *Politics* 1310b30 ff.



continues the theme that has the tyrant employ some sort of propaganda or rhetoric to persuade the citizens to support him.<sup>191</sup>

Making promises in public and in private is also part of the tyrant's propaganda or rhetoric which aims at making him appear beneficent and friendly. He tells people what they want to hear and wins their support with promises. The tyrant may hardly intend to keep his promises, or only insofar as this will serve his pursuit of power.

The tyrant also cancels debts and redistributes some of the land, to appear as if he is really interested in furthering the interests of all people.<sup>192</sup> This shows that the tyrant employs a measure which appeals to such economic concerns of the people that affect their lives in direct and immediate ways.<sup>193</sup> The cancellation of debts and the

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<sup>191</sup> We have some evidence that historical tyrants prior to Plato tried to adopt other personas which included names with positive connotations. Aristagoras of Miletus identified himself specifically as general (στρατηγός) instead of a tyrant during a revolt against the Persians (see Herodotus' *Histories* 5.30 ff). Gelon of Syracuse, the first of the Deinomenid tyrants, after launching a victorious campaign against Carthage, offered to quit his tyranny but the Syracusans proclaimed him "benefactor, savior, and king (εὐεργέτης, σωτήρ, βασιλεύς, Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 11.26.5-6). McGlew points out that that Gelon was a tyrant who presented himself as a servant to the citizens of Syracuse by offering to quit his tyranny and who was regarded a king by them in the end (137-138). Hieron, Gelon's brother appeared as the liberator of other cities which were oppressed by a tyrant and which he allowed to establish democracies in Sicily (Diodorus Siculus, *Library* 11.53.4 ff.). Several other tyrants tried to associate themselves with founders of cities to appear as non-tyrants. Cypselus of Corinth sought to present his sons as founders (οἰκιστᾶί) and solicited the support of the temple of Delphi to do it. (I get this from McGlew's references to Nicolaus of Damascus and Ephorus 1993, 174. See pages 157-173 on founders as mythical, legendary, and on their significance in Greek politics). Peisistratus sent his bastard son Hegesistratus to Sigeum as a founder (*Athenaion Politeia*, 5.94). McGlew points out helpfully that the Cypselids and Peisistratids revived the founder paradigm to subvert it and make it part of an ideology that served their interests (178). Hippocratus of Gela named himself οἰκιστής of Camarina which he repopulated (Thucydides 6.5.3). The Deinomenid tyrants followed Hippocratus' lead (Herodotus 7.156, Diodorus Siculus 11.38.5). Hieron followed his brother Gelon's lead in cultivating power and honor due to a founder in founding Aetna and where he was buried as a civic hero (Diodorus Siculus, 11.64.4). "Foundation legends and the founder's cult present and support images of autonomy: the autonomy of a new city's territory and its collective activities and political functions. Yet the political language was easily manipulated. It possessed a distinct attraction for both cities and individual rulers, and it served both as a tool of political subjugation and as an image of autonomy" (McGlew, 179).

<sup>192</sup> One of the tyrants who redistributed limited pieces of land to the commoners to win their support in Athens was Peisistratus. Of course tyrants may only promise to cancel debts and redistribute the land to win popular support.

<sup>193</sup> We could even understand communist ideology in this terms, insofar as it leads to tyranny, since it often entails either the promise of the economic improvement of the citizens lives, or partial and temporary concrete steps which seem directed at achieving it.

redistribution of land amounts to providing some means for livelihood and to seeming efforts to fight poverty.

We know that one of the measures Solon employed during his arbitration among the rich and the poor in Athens affairs was to cancel debts—the *seisachtheia*—but he avoided redistributing any land.<sup>194</sup> This had the effect that it prevented people from becoming slaves due to being in debt, but it did not begin to alleviate poverty, which was partly due to the few rich people possessing most of the land and exploiting this position. Solon wanted to maintain the division of the citizen body into economic groups with different political privileges since he did not think that erasing them would alleviate poverty.<sup>195</sup> The fact that the tyrant employs both of these measures suggests that the tyrant pursues appearing interested in alleviating poverty and in allowing people to remain free (where there were laws that forced them into slavery when in debt). In the meantime such measures also allow him to attack the rich effectively by taking away the means by which they can remain wealthy and a threat to him.<sup>196</sup>

The tyrant tries to appear interested in improving the citizens' standard of living in immediate ways and thus to persuade the people that he is their friend and champion indeed. We can gather that making promises, canceling debts, and redistributing some of the land entail several advantages for the tyrant. Benefits to citizens, such as canceling debts and redistributing some land have the advantage of being concrete from the tyrant's perspective; they are something that the tyrant can show as concrete evidence for his

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<sup>194</sup> For an interesting account of Solon's arbitration and introduction of legal system see Plutarch's biographical account of him as well as Diodorus Siculus' *Library* 9.

<sup>195</sup> I take this point from McGlew (99). See also *Athenaion Politeia* 7.3.4 and Plutarch's *Solon* 18 1-2.

<sup>196</sup> The tyrant does not redistribute all the land he confiscates from the rich to others but only insofar as distributing land serves his efforts to appear just, friendly, and beneficent.

intentions as a just benefactor of the city.<sup>197</sup> Moreover, the tyrant can claim that he is truthful by fulfilling some promises, if he promises to redistribute land and cancel debts. A further advantage from the tyrant's perspective is that doing such things allows him to conceal his overall intentions, since this persuades the citizens who benefit in these short-term ways that the tyrant intends to be beneficent in the long-run. In more contemporary terms we may think of the tyrant as providing such means of livelihood as creating jobs for those who do not have them.

The tyrant may hope that the few concrete benefits that he provides—these amount to another performative argument—will push the people to support him and to like him. This will be due to committing the informal fallacy of hasty generalization by generalizing about the benefits the tyrant bestows. He may hope that they will take into consideration the few concrete and immediate benefits and conclude that all the things the tyrant intends to do will be like these benefits. The tyrant hopes that the citizens will take a few good actions (or seemingly good actions) and conclude that he is a good person or that his regime is a good regime. This is also part of the tyrant's rhetoric or propaganda.

By employing such rhetoric or propaganda to instill the belief in citizens that he is a good leader for them, the tyrant also intends to persuade people of his authority or legitimacy to rule. During the early reign of the tyrant, measures 1-4 are part of the tyrant's propaganda which is in the service of securing power. Plato seems careful in his choice of types of measures he talks about. Canceling debts, redistributing the land or property, conferring other such immediate benefits to people, and smiling and greeting

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<sup>197</sup> I call these short-term benefits since the tyrant will do other things to the city and its citizens, which will be long-term harms, such as take them to wars and impoverish them.

people in friendly ways are deeds rather than words. Making promises and calling himself other names than “tyrant,” are measures which employ words. This suggests that the tyrant’s rhetoric or propaganda has both a performative aspect and a verbal one. The tyrant employs both performative arguments and verbal arguments in his efforts to appear beneficent and this suggests the possibility of the employment of a rather complex rhetoric or propaganda beyond just measures 1-4.<sup>198</sup> We know from the discussion of the *kallipolis* and from other dialogues that Plato is quite aware that both images and words can be persuasive. Plato’s account of tyranny’s employment of rhetoric in these ways seems to be quite relevant where tyrants employ both images or performative arguments, and words or verbal arguments, to instill certain beliefs in citizens.<sup>199</sup>

Performative arguments often need some verbal support to contextualize them and thus to push the audience to draw a certain conclusion. For example, the tyrant may call attention to the fact that he cancels debts in such a way that the action would seem to speak on its own regarding his character as a ruler. At other times the context is already present and certain actions make the audience reach a desired conclusion. For example, if people in a city are quite poor and the tyrant redistributes land to some of them, it seems possible that they may conclude easily and implicitly that the tyrant is a good

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<sup>198</sup> By a “performative argument” I mean a deed or set of deeds in such a context which pushes the viewer to draw a particular conclusion.

<sup>199</sup> The author of the Peripatetic *Athenaion Politeia* tells a story about Peisistratus and a farmer, who does not recognize the tyrant, and who complains to him that the tyrant’s taxes are too high (16.2 ff.). Peisistratus goes on to make the farmer exempt from all taxes. J.J. Mulhern (2004), points out correctly that “the farmer’s *παρρησία* (free-speech or candor) was pleasing to Peisistratus, since it showed him that his method of preserving his tyranny was working in this case at least and that he had nothing to fear from the farmer” (325-326). Mulhern’s point is that the tyrant does not have to rule by fear and force since his pretense of beneficence is working. I would like to add that, among other things (e.g. that by being exempt from taxes the farmer keeps working the field and is away from the requisite leisure to engage in politics), making him exempt from taxes also amounts to a performative argument for the tyrant’s goodness. See Herodotus’ account of Peisistratus in addition for further actions as performative arguments for his goodness.

ruler.<sup>200</sup> A historical incident that points to this is Peisistratus' request for bodyguards. We know that the tyrant Peisistratus wounded himself and requested a bodyguard of club-bearers.<sup>201</sup> The significance of this incident is that his bodyguards carried clubs, weapons used for punishing injustice without necessarily killing, not spears or swords which would punish by death. Moreover, the club was the weapon of Heracles who was closely associated with the Athenian's self-perception as just (Heracles was extremely liked and favored by the goddess Athena).<sup>202</sup> Thus, by having his bodyguards carry the club, Peisistratus associated himself with Heracles' justice, honor, and benevolence, and this amounted to a performative argument providing him with a persona different from that of a tyrant.<sup>203</sup>

When Socrates tells us that the tyrant will appear friendly and beneficent in the early days of his reign this suggests that he will not appear so later on. Here we may ask three questions: (1) When will the tyrant cease to appear friendly and beneficent? (2) Why will the tyrant cease to appear so? (3) Is this something the tyrant does by his own choice or something necessitated by his being a tyrant?

Socrates implies that during the early period of his reign, the tyrant is not confident that his power is secure and thus attempts to appear friendly and beneficent by employing measures 1-4 above. The phrase Socrates uses to designate the early period of the tyrant's reign, "during the first days and time," (ταῖς μὲν πρώταις ἡμέραις τε καὶ

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<sup>200</sup> The relation of verbal to performative arguments merits much more analysis.

<sup>201</sup> Herodotus *Histories* 1.59.

<sup>202</sup> See *Gorgias* 484b where Plato has Callicles quote Pindar saying that the deeds of Heracles show how law makes violence just. This is part of Callicles' argument to show that it is natural that justice is for the stronger and better person to get their advantage. Callicles in effect uses Heracles' deeds which were highly regarded in Athens and connected to the issue of justice to argue for tyranny as just. See also, Lysias' *Olympic Oration* where he assigns the founding to the Olympic games to Heracles who crushed tyrants (2). Lysias associates Heracles heroic status and justice with opposition to tyranny.

<sup>203</sup> See McGlew (1993,74) and, Boardman J. (1989, 158-159) who has an interesting discussion of the club bearers as symbols and as ideological support for Peisistratus.

χρόνω, 566d8) is rather ambiguous so we cannot be sure exactly what these early days amount to in temporal terms. How many these early days will be seems to depend on other conditions. It seems that as long as the tyrant thinks that his power is not so secure, and that securing such power requires the support of the citizens, he will have to employ some measures to appear just and beneficent. Thus, for some tyrannies the “early days” will be more and for others they will be less, depending on whether the tyrant thinks he has secured power or not. The ambiguity of the phrase also allows us to think of tyrannies that never get beyond “the early days” of trying to put up an appearance of beneficence, as long as tyrants think that their power is not secure and that this requires the support of the citizens.

Socrates does go on to mention that when the tyrant takes care of the threat of enemies in exile, either by killing them or by making peace with them, he will turn to war (566d6-8), but it is still not clear that once this happens his efforts to appear beneficent will cease. One of the reasons the tyrant goes to war so that he can eliminate enemies from within the city (567a5-8), thus it is not clear that he thinks his power is so secure so as to give up his efforts to appear beneficent.

But, Socrates does point out that eventually the tyrant will be hated and will be unable to appear beneficent even if he tries. Taking the city to wars which will impoverish the citizens and which allow the tyrant to exterminate enemies will cause the citizens to hate him (567a1-11). The citizens come to dislike the tyranny eventually since it has to become so unjust that its injustice cannot be concealed. Of course, as Plato discussion reveals later on (Book IX) what ultimately necessitates the regime’s degree of injustice which wins the tyrant many enemies is the tyrant’s state of soul. His soul has

unnecessary and lawless desires, which cannot be restrained for too long and which push the tyrant to perform unjust actions. Thus the tyrant's psychology will necessitate such degrees of violence and injustice which will make the tyrant hated and unable to appear beneficent.

It seems that Socrates would deny the claim that the most unjust person, the tyrant, can have the reputation for justice, at least for too long. Only the tyrants who are not full-fledged tyrants may be able to appear beneficent for some time since they are not fully unjust.<sup>204</sup> The point is that there is such tension between being most unjust and having the reputation for justice (concealing injustice) that one cannot have both of these for too long. Of course, Socrates does not deny that tyrants may appear beneficent, but only that they will not appear so for too long.

Historically, we know that some tyrannies lasted longer than one generation and that the tyrants of the second and third generations ruled much more harshly than the first generation. Such tyrannies include the Cypselids of Corinth, the Orthagorids of Sicyon, and the Peisistratids in Athens.<sup>205</sup> It seems that the tyrants of later generations were forced to rule more harshly since they were no longer able to persuade their citizens that they were not tyrants by hiding the gap between their personas and their actions. Plato himself tells us in the *Seventh Letter* that Dionysius II ruled much more harshly than his father and that this brought about increasingly more enemies for him (348a-349b).

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<sup>204</sup> Notice that often, when Plato mentions full or extreme injustice in the *Republic* (344aff.) and *Gorgias* (466d ff.) it accompanied by examples of extreme violence, such as killing whomever one wishes, kidnapping, and exiling.

<sup>205</sup> For a discussion of this feature in ancient tyrannies see McGlew (1993, 133). For evidence that later generations of tyrants ruled more harshly than earlier ones cf. Aristotle's *Politics* 1312b21-25 on Periander of Corinth, Hippias, Thrasydaeus (son of Theron), and Dionysius II. Nicolaus Damascenus in Jacoby. F. ed. (1923-58) *Fragmente der Griechische Historiker*, Leiden, 90 F 58.1 on Periander's cruelty. Herodotus' *Histories* 5.62.2-3, Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* 6.53.3, 6.59.2, and *Athenaion Politeia* 19.1 on Hippias. Diodorus Siculus' *Library* 11.53.2 on Thrasydaeus. Diodorus Siculus 11.67.3-5 on the increasing harshness of the Deinomenid tyrants after Gelon.

Here, we find evidence which permits us to answer a challenge posed to Plato by Aristotle. He complains that Plato portrays tyranny only in the form of an unjust and openly violent regime when this is only one of the forms a tyranny may take. Our response has to be that Plato does allow for both forms of tyranny that Aristotle has in his *Politics*.<sup>206</sup> Plato allows for a type of tyranny which tries to hide its injustice and violence and which tries to put up the appearance of a good and just regime. This is the case, since his account begins with tyranny as a regime with a ruler who tries to appear beneficent and to hide the regime's injustice and violence and who is successful at doing so. But, tyrannies can take the form of appearing beneficent only for a while, and that despite the tyrant's possible efforts to hide his injustice and violence, these eventually becomes obvious and the tyranny becomes apparently violent and unjust. A tyranny that is openly unjust and violent can only attempt to preserve itself by fear, force, and coercion which cannot be very effective measures for long.<sup>207</sup> Tyranny seems bound to be short-lived even with quite favorable conditions, which may allow it to exist for longer than a single generation.<sup>208</sup>

Socrates' suggestion that appearing beneficent cannot last for too long as soon as the tyrant becomes disliked points to the several other measures tyrannies employ to consolidate power and to serve his interests. These may cause the eventual inability of

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<sup>206</sup> For Aristotle's distinction between these two types of tyranny see *Politics* V 11. For a discussion pointing to Plato's awareness of the two possible forms of tyranny see my chapter 2.

<sup>207</sup> This seems to be closer to how Thrasymachus thinks of tyranny. Glaucon and Adeimantus on the other hand demand the most unjust person to have the reputation for justice and this entails having a tyrant (like Gyges' ancestor) who persuades people that he is just. The ways Thrasymachus, one the one hand, and Glaucon and Adeimantus on the other, speak of injustice, entail the two possible forms of tyranny already.

<sup>208</sup> Such favorable conditions may include, among others, partisan rivalries which allow the tyrant to take over, economic conditions which do not allow citizens to pursue politics and oppose the tyrant thus allowing him to be a bit mild in ruling. Mulhern (2004) points out that Peisistratus might have been a tyrant with a manner of ruling that did not need to disturb democratic elements of the city too much to remain in power (326, n. 20). The suggestion is that in addition to his intelligence as a tyrant he faced some favorable conditions he exploited in his favor.



the tyrant to appear beneficent insofar as they are such measures that harm the citizens and reveal his injustice. Socrates seems quite aware of the question concerning the preservation of regimes and its complexity, since he presents us with several of the measures the tyrant employs to do so. Now let us turn to the further means by which a tyrant tries to consolidate or preserve his power and serve his interests.

### 5.2 Going to War.

Socrates claims that when the tyrant is able to rid himself of his external enemies then he will go to war constantly:

Socrates: But once he has dealt with his external enemies (ἔξω ἐχθρούς) by making peace with some and destroying others, and all is calm on that front, the first thing he will do, I imagine, is to be constantly stirring up some war or other, so that the people will need a leader (πρῶτον μὲν πολέμους τινὰς αἰεὶ κινεῖ, ἵν' ἐν χρείᾳ ἡγεμόνος ὁ δῆμος ᾗ).

Adeimantus: Very likely (Ἐϊκός γε).

Socrates: And also with the intention that their contribution of money to the war will impoverish them, they will be forced to concentrate on their daily needs and be less likely to plot against him (ἥττον αὐτῷ ἐπιβουλεύωσι)?

Adeimantus: Clearly (Δῆλον).

Socrates: And in addition, I suppose, so that if there are some free-thinking people he suspects of challenging his rule (ὑποπτεύη ἐλεύθερα φρονήματα ἔχοντας μὴ ἐπιτρέψειν αὐτῷ ἄρχειν), he can find a pretext (μετὰ προφάσεως) for leaving them to the enemy and destroying them? For all these reasons, isn't it necessary for a tyrant to be always stirring up war (τούτων πάντων ἕνεκα τυράννω αἰεὶ ἀνάγκη πόλεμον ταραττεῖν)?

Adeimantus: Necessarily (Ἀνάγκη) (566e5-567a9).<sup>209</sup>

The tyrant takes the city to war to persuade the citizens that they need him as a leader, to impoverish and distract them from politics, and to find a pretext to destroy internal enemies. Socrates indicates that the tyrant has to direct his attention to both internal and external factors in his efforts to secure and preserve his power. He also makes dealing with exiled enemies seem like a priority for the tyrant. The internal factors we mentioned

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<sup>209</sup> The reference to “external enemies” (ἔξω ἐχθρούς) suggests that tyrannies have to face both enemies in exile but also other cities.

so far are appearing beneficent to the citizens, and eliminating possible internal enemies. The external factor is to either make peace with or destroy external enemies, which may be both enemies in exile or foreign cities (often working together).<sup>210</sup>

While Socrates suggests that there may be a transition, from dealing with exiled or foreign enemies, to going to war in order to persuade the citizens that they need the tyrant as their leader and to distract them from politics, we should not read this as being necessary. Moreover we should not suppose that the tyrant has to deal with the external enemies first, before he can stir up wars for these other reasons. Socrates uses tentative language when he claims that the tyrant will turn to wars whenever he is done with dealing with external enemies.<sup>211</sup> Reading the transition from dealing with external enemies to stirring up wars in this tentative manner allows Plato the possibility that tyrants may use both of these strategies in succession, or together, or in a different temporal order. The point relevant to making the description of tyranny accurate here is that tyrannies do employ both of these measures.

Socrates tells us that the tyrant will necessarily have to turn to some war or other constantly (πολέμους τινὰς ἀεὶ κινεῖ 566e8, and, ἀεὶ ἀνάγκη πόλεμον ταραττεῖν, 567a8), to preserve power and serve his interests. This seems to suggest that going to wars is something the tyrants cannot refrain from doing, that it is a practical necessity. But why is this the case? As we will see, Plato attributes a practical necessity to tyranny and the tyrant and this ultimately follows from psychological factors; the tyrant has to

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<sup>210</sup> Of historical tyrants who had enemies in exile we know of Plato's friend Dion who was exiled by Dionysius II and who returned to overthrow him.

<sup>211</sup> He uses the subjunctive a number of times and he tells Adeimantus that he supposes (οἶμαι, 566e6) that this is what the tyrant does. Another indication that Plato does not intend to claim that this is a necessary transition is that Adeimantus responds with Εἰκός γε (566e10) which indicates that he takes Socrates' claim that the tyrant moves to stirring war after he has taken care of external enemies as nothing but tentative.

necessarily perform certain deeds and to adopt certain measures given his pleonexic desires and his aims.<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, Plato begins to attribute this practical necessity to tyranny here. Going to war is a measure the tyrant employs to preserve or consolidate his power, and to serve his interests. War serves the functions of persuading citizens that they need the tyrant as their leader, of distracting them from politics internal to the city by keeping them poor and concentrated on their everyday needs, and of eliminating citizens the tyrant perceives as enemies.

Leading the city to wars may persuade citizens that they need the tyrant as their leader, since in war people are threatened more immediately than by other problems, and solutions are required more immediately than in the case of other problems. Moreover, the tyrant's efforts to secure and preserve his power by appearing beneficent may include destroying or coming to peace with existing enemies. Thus, trying to appear as a leading figure necessary to the city through war could be part of the tyrant's efforts to appear beneficent, but this need not be the case.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, as long as the tyrant can instill the belief that there are external enemies about to destroy the city, that they are an immediate threat, it is also unlikely that the citizens would desire to plot against him.

Keeping the citizens poor by taking the city to war and making them contribute to it, seems directed at making them concentrate on their immediate, everyday, and private needs. This keeps them distracted, out of public or political affairs, and less likely to plot against the tyrant's life. As long as the citizens are poor, perceive the immediate threat of an external enemy, and think that the tyrant is their savior, they will be less concerned

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<sup>212</sup> I discuss the tyrant's desires and the necessity that follows from them much more thoroughly in the next chapter.

<sup>213</sup> Gelon of Syracuse offered to give up his tyranny after coming back from a successful campaign against Carthage but the citizens of Syracuse demanded that he remain their leader.

with the issue of ruling in particular. Moreover, making the citizens contribute financially to the war also seems to fill up the tyrant's treasury.

The tyrant cannot have the citizens be too poor, or thinking that the cause of their poverty is himself, since this may direct their attention away from their own economic affairs and towards the tyrant and his management of the city's economy. Socrates already told us that tyrants cancel debts and redistribute land, which may make it seem that the tyrant allows the citizens the means to get out of poverty. But while this may be the case taking them to war has the contrary effect which they may not notice due to the tyrant's earlier "efforts" to alleviate poverty. Nevertheless, Socrates insists that taking the city to war and impoverishing them eventually causes the tyrant to be hated.

The third reason the tyrant goes to war is so that he can have a pretext to eliminate further opposition from within the city. He removes people whom he "suspects to be thinking freely and to be challenging his rule" (ὑποπτεῦη ἐλεύθερα φρονήματα ἔχοντας μὴ ἐπιτρέψειν αὐτῷ ἄρχειν, 567a5-6) by sending them to war, and this may coerce potential opposition to obey him and not resist. But, while making others an example makes the tyrant feared it also makes him hated and opposition is not eliminated completely.

War is a necessary aspect of tyranny, and the three reasons the tyrant leads the city to war have as their goal to preserve power and serve the interests of the tyrant. But, as Socrates shows, taking the city to war also necessarily entails the eventual birth of much hatred and opposition for the tyrant. Thus, while it is necessary for the tyrant to go to war to preserve his power and serve his interests, it is also necessary that going to war will be an eventual cause of his undoing.

### 5.3 Suspicion and Elimination of Citizens as Enemies, the Need for Bodyguards, and Lack of Friends.

We already saw that the tyrant tries to remove both enemies in exile and domestic enemies. Plato tells us quite a bit about the tyrant's suspicions and behavior towards other citizens whom he perceives as threats. Another necessary and essential feature of tyranny is that the tyrant cannot trust anyone and, thus, he is plagued with the constant worry of enemies. The tyrant is constantly suspicious of those who think freely as plotting against him (ὑποπτεύη ἐλεύθερα φρονήματα ἔχοντας μὴ ἐπιτρέψειν αὐτῷ ἄρχειν) and finds pretexts (μετὰ προφάσεως) to get rid of them by taking the city to war (567a5-8). After the discussion of war Socrates says:

Socrates: Does not doing all these things [taking the city to war with the above results, i.e. poverty and killing of citizens] tend to make him more hateful to the citizens (ἀπεχθάνεσθαι τοῖς πολίταις)?

Adeimantus: How could they not?

Socrates: And don't some of those who helped establish his tyranny (συγκαταστησάντων) and hold positions of power (ἐν δυνάμει ὄντων), the ones who are bravest, speak freely (παρρησιάζεσθαι) to him and each other, criticizing what is happening (ἐπιπλήττοντας τοῖς γιγνομένοις)?

Adeimantus: Very likely.

Socrates: Then the tyrant will have to do away (ὑπεξερεῖν) with all of them if he is to rule, until he is left with no friend or enemy who is of any benefit at all...He will have to keep a sharp lookout, then, for anyone who is brave (ἀνδρεῖος), magnanimous (μεγαλόφρων), wise (φρόνιμος), or rich (πλούσιος). He is so happy (εὐδαίμων), that he is forced by these people (ἀνάγκη αὐτῷ) [by their presence], whether he wants to or not (εἴτε βούλεται εἴτε μὴ), to be their enemy and plot against all of them until he has purged the city (πολεμῖω εἶναι καὶ ἐπιβουλεύειν, ἕως ἂν καθήρη τὴν πόλιν).

Adeimantus: A fine purge that is.

Socrates: The opposite (purge) of the one doctors perform on our bodies. They draw off all the worst and leave the best, whereas he does just the opposite!

Adeimantus: Yes, that is what he has to do, it seems, if he is to rule.

Socrates: It is a blessed necessity he is bound by, then (ἐν μακαρίᾳ ἄρα ἀνάγκη δέδεταί), which requires him (προστάττει αὐτῷ), either to live with the many bad people and be hated by them, or not live at all! (567a10-d3).<sup>214</sup>

Tyrants do not want to allow much freedom of thought (ἐλεύθερα φρονήματα) or free speech (παρρησία) since these may potentially give rise to ideas that will bring the

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<sup>214</sup> Additions in brackets mine.

downfall of the tyrant.<sup>215</sup> We saw that the tyrant, while at war removes enemies with ideas that he perceives as contrary to his own. In this passage Socrates adds that tyrants even turn on those who helped establish their tyranny if they tend to speak their minds too freely. The feature of trying to control free thought and free speech is peculiarly close to the censorship and banishing of the poets required in the *kallipolis*, but Socrates makes getting rid of enemies by false pretext take place while the tyrannical city is at war.

The tyrant does not allow for much free speech or thought since he perceives these as threatening to his rule and this suggests that he desires complete control of his citizens to such a great extent, which includes their speech and even their thought. This is reminiscent of the *kallipolis*, such regimes as Hitler's or Stalin's, or the fictional regimes from Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. The tyrant's attempts to forbid free speech in particular, imply that many people will be afraid to tell the tyrant what they think of him and will be forced to flatter him. Socrates suggests later (575e3-5) that having flatterers is a necessary and problematic characteristic of being a tyrant. Moreover, flattery suggests further that the tyrant is after honor and recognition. This seems the case for Socrates since he portrays flattery as a necessary and problematic feature that comes with being tyrant. For flattery to be a problematic feature of tyranny, we have to presuppose, like I think Socrates does, that the tyrant is after recognition of his worth, happiness, or authority as a ruler and that he does not get it.<sup>216</sup> Thus, the bad people who will surround the tyrant will not only be potential enemies who may harm

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<sup>215</sup> On the important of *parrhesia* in Athenian democracy and on Plato's adoption of it see Monoson (2000) esp. chapter 6.

<sup>216</sup> Dionysius I held two weddings on the same day as an exhibition of his happiness. McGlew suggests that "The happiness of the tyrant is, therefore, the happiness that looks for, and is compounded by, a large number of admirers..." (1993, 31).

him physically but also people who will flatter him instead of giving him the recognition he desires.<sup>217</sup>

Socrates also tells us that the tyrant is bound to have critics, some of which will criticize him openly and that these will be people with positions of some power. This suggests that the tyrant's propaganda or ways to persuade the citizens that they need him will not go unnoticed. Moreover, his policies with the goal of keeping him in power will not go on without criticism. The tyrant will have to do away with such critics and with anyone who is "brave (ἀνδρείος), magnanimous (μεγαλόφρων), wise (φρόνιμος), or rich (πλούσιος)," since such people may be threats to his rule (567b10-c1); the tyrant has to be afraid of tyrannicide. Getting rid of all such people will mean that he gets rid of all people of true worth in the city.

Plato seems to make the same point as a story we know from Herodotus and Aristotle. Herodotus (5.92.2) and Aristotle (*Politics* 1284a26-33) both refer to the story of Periander and Thrasybulus where a servant was sent to one (Herodotus has Periander ask for advice by sending a messenger to Thrasybulus, and Aristotle has the story in reverse) to offer advice on ruling for the other. Thrasybulus (or Periander in Aristotle's rendition of the story) took the messenger to a corn-field where he cut off the tallest and healthiest ears of corn ruining the crop. The messenger returned and told Periander what

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<sup>217</sup> Plato suggests that there is a strong relation between rhetoric, flattery, and tyranny both in the *Republic* and in the *Gorgias*. See 463a ff. where Socrates points out that rhetoric is a sort of flattery which is directed to the production of pleasure. This suggests that at least some of the flatterers next to tyrants (actual or potential) will be rhetoricians or sophists, like Thrasymachus, Polus, and Callicles.

he had seen and Periander understood that he should get rid of all the citizens

“outstanding in influence or ability.”<sup>218</sup>

Socrates’ list of classes of people, whom the tyrant has to fear and remove, due to some quality they possess, seems exhaustive. Brave people would be dangerous to the tyrant because they may try to take over; they would be the ones least afraid to plot against him. The magnanimous would be dangerous since they would be the ones that desire to be beneficent to the rest of the citizens contrary to what the tyrant does with them, i.e. use them as means for his own benefit. The magnanimous could act against the tyrant themselves, if they are brave, or they may get others to act. The wise would be a threat to the tyrant, presumably, because they would see through the tyrant’s pretended care for the city and oppose him. Finally, the rich would be dangerous since they could finance plots against the tyrant, and as we have seen the tyrant tries to eliminate the rich from the beginning.

Socrates tells us that either the tyrant gets rid of all people of true worth or he risks his death; everyone is potentially a tyrannicide in the tyrant’s mind. Thus, in order to survive he will have to surround himself with worthless people. This is not to say that the city will be full of base people, since many people may conceal traits they have which the tyrant may perceive as dangerous to himself. Nevertheless, Socrates’ point seems to be that the people who will be close enough to the tyrant to influence his life are very likely to be base. “It is a blessed necessity he is bound by, then (ἐν μακαρίᾳ ἄρα

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<sup>218</sup> *Histories* 5.92.g. Aristotle points out that Thrasybulus, in his version of the story gathered that he should get rid of the outstanding men of the city (δεῖ τοὺς ὑπερέχοντας ἄνδρας ἀναίρειν). On Plato’s thinking of Periander as a tyrant see *Theages* 124e.



ἀνάγκη δέδεταί), which requires him (προστάττει αὐτῷ), either to live with the many base people (φάυλων) and be hated by them, or not live at all!” (567d1-3).

Socrates tells us, ironically, that the tyrant’s life is so blessed that he is forced to either live with wicked people who will hate him or not to live at all. Socrates suggests, once again, that the tyrant is bound by necessity, like he was in terms of going to war. Notice once again the emphasis on necessity (ἀνάγκη) to which the tyrant is bound. Socrates uses the term προστάττει which literally means “to give orders,” thus Socrates portrays the tyrant as someone who is bound by a necessity which orders him around, when we would suppose that his political power allows him to be the one giving out all the orders. The tyrant

is so happy (εὐδαίμων), that he is forced by these people (ἀνάγκη αὐτῷ) [by the presence of the brave etc.], whether he wants to or not (εἴτε βούλεται εἴτε μή), to be their enemy and plot against all of them until he has purged the city (πολεμίζω εἶναι καὶ ἐπιβουλεύειν, ἕως ἂν καθήρη τὴν πόλιν) (567c1-3).

His fear and suspicion of potential enemies necessitate the elimination of anyone of true worth and this, in turn necessitates that the tyrant is surrounded by base people who hate him. The implication is that the tyrant may have life, but the absence of good people in such a life cannot make his life good, beneficial, or happy. Socrates implies that the tyrant cannot combine life and true benefits or happiness, but if he is to live and rule he is forced to live a life without true benefits or happiness.

Socrates also points out that the tyrant, in having to purge the city from all good citizens whom he suspects, is unlike a doctor who purges only the bad and diseased elements in a body (567c5-7). This disanalogy between the tyrant as a ruler and the doctor points out that unlike a doctor the tyrant is no expert in ruling since he does what is to no one’s interest, not even his own. Being surrounded by base citizens is bound to

harm the tyrant so not only does he not do what is good for the city, but he is unable to do what is good for himself. Socrates rejects Thrasymachus' earlier claim in the shepherd speech (343b1-344c8) that the tyrant may possess the expertise of ruling, which consists in knowing how to secure what is in the tyrant's interest alone. The tyrant is not an expert in ruling like the doctor is in medicine; he is ignorant about the true purpose of ruling (he is the opposite of the true statesman) and he is thus bound to rule badly or unjustly.

While we may agree with the ideas that the tyrant is bound to have critics and enemies, that he has to get rid of them to try to secure his power over the city, and that he will be left only with bad people to live with if he gets rid of people of true worth, still, why does Socrates suggest that the bad people he rules will hate him? Does he mean that all of them will? We may think so, since he says that the tyrant is forced either to live with bad citizens who will hate him or not to live at all. Could not a good number of them truly like the tyrant and support him because it would be to their perceived benefit to do so? Earlier (564a4-7) he pointed out that tyrants come about with the support of other dronish types. Later on he admits that the tyrant will have some of the wicked people be his supporters, "these friends and new citizens admire and associate with him, whereas the good ones hate and avoid him?" (Καὶ θαυμάζουσι δὴ, οὔτοι οἱ ἑταῖροι αὐτὸν καὶ σύνεισιν οἱ νέοι πολῖται, οἱ δ' ἐπεικεῖς μισοῦσι τε καὶ φεύγουσι, 568a4-6). The friends he has in mind are the base people left in the city, freed slaves, and foreign mercenary bodyguards (freed slaves and foreign mercenaries are also the new citizens he refers to). Thus, Socrates at 567d1-3 does not claim that the tyrant will have

no supporters or that he will be hated by all the base citizens he leaves in the city.<sup>219</sup> His point seems to be rather, that the tyrant's efforts to be rid of potential enemies never end. Even those who like the tyrant might prefer to be in his place. Moreover, Socrates emphasizes the fact that the tyrant will always have harsh and dangerous critics, even though it's clear that he may have a significant amount of genuine supporters who admire and associate with him (θαυμάζουσι καὶ σύνεισιν).

Another necessary and essential feature of tyranny is that the tyrant needs a larger and stronger guard as time passes by

Socrates: And the more he makes the citizens hate him by doing these things (ἀπεχθάνηται ταῦτα δρῶν), this much more in number and more trustworthy a guard (πιστοτέρων δορυφόρων) he will need (δεήσεται) won't he?

Adeimantus: How could he not?

Socrates: And who will these trustworthy (πιστοί) people be? And from where will he get them?...Drones again, by the dog! That is what I think you are talking about. Foreign multifarious ones (ξενικούς τε καὶ παντοδαπούς)!

Adeimantus: Yes, you seem right.

Socrates: What about the domestic ones (αὐτόθεν)? Wouldn't he be willing to deprive the citizens of their slaves, set them free, and make them his guards?...What a blessed thing this tyrant business (μακάριον τυράννου χρῆμα) is as you say, if these are the sorts of friends and trusted men (τοιούτοις φίλοις τε καὶ πιστοῖς ἀνδράσι) he must employ after destroying the former ones!...And these friends and new citizens admire and associate with him, whereas the good ones hate and avoid him? (567d5-568a6).<sup>220</sup>

The tyrant becomes progressively more hated by the people due to the things he does (carrying out violent purges, taking the city to wars and impoverishing it) and this will necessitate (δεήσεται) the requirement for a larger and stronger guard. This guard will

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<sup>219</sup> See 575b-c where Socrates claims that for tyranny to come about a critical mass of tyrannical people is required.

<sup>220</sup> Translations mine. Notice that the word for guards here (δορυφόρων) is not the same as that for the guards of the *kallipolis* (φύλαξ). Δορυφόρος literally means spear-bearer and it is the word used to refer to mercenary guards. Another sense of the term is "satellite". Also notice the parallel that Socrates draws later on in the dialogue where he suggests that the tyrannical soul is guarded (δορυφορεῖται) by mania (573a8). See also 573e6 and 574d7 on the sorts of pleasures that surround Eros.

be composed of foreigners and by freed slaves.<sup>221</sup> Socrates emphasizes the need for a strong guard which also suggests that tyrannies have and require the presence of a strong police or military component. Since the tyrant purges the city from good or prominent people who may have been loyal to the city's interests, the tyrant has to have a mercenary army, which has no emotional attachments to the city's favor. Socrates' point seems to be that the tyrant's guard will consist of people who aim at their own benefit alone like the tyrant does—he calls the guards dronish types, and dronish types aim at their own benefit alone, are after money, and are spendthrift. Since these guards are dronish Socrates implies that the tyrant will eventually not be able to trust them either especially when their benefits and his are not aligned. Moreover, his reference to freed slaves seems to suggest that tyrants tend to lift people from positions of no power to positions of considerable power.

Socrates points out that being a tyrant is such a “blessed business” (μακάριον χρῆμα) so that ones has dronish types as friends and loyal guards (τοιούτοις φίλοις τε καὶ πιστοῖς ἀνδράσι) (567e7-568a1). Thus, he seems to emphasize that the tyrants has no friends, or if he has any these are bad friends whom he cannot really trust. Socrates presents the tyrant's companions either as base people, since he purges the city of good or prominent people, or as people he cannot really trust. Either way, Socrates highlights the tyrant's necessary suspicion, fear, and mistrust of the people around him and the constant possibility that these people may harm him. Thus, while the tyrant may benefit in some ways from such people, i.e., they keep him in power, he will fail to benefit from them in substantial ways. First, the tyrant does not seem able to trust his companions and this

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<sup>221</sup> See 575b1-5 where Socrates points out that if there are not enough tyrannical people in a city they tend to travel and become mercenary guards of tyrants elsewhere.

implies that his life is still full of anxiety and fear. Second, while such people may keep him in power they are the ones very likely to attack and harm him, especially when he does not serve their interests. Third, Socrates implies that having base people around and counting on their support, recognition, and friendship do not benefit the tyrant since he does not get the recognition or friendship he would like, i.e. recognition and friendship from people equal to him. Finally, we gather, that these three harmful features contribute to the tyrant's lack of happiness.

Having discussed the tyrant's companions thus far, Socrates, in the remainder of Book VIII, talks about two related issues regarding tyranny in power, namely the relation between tyrants and poets and the financial resources by which tyrants will be able to finance their tyrannies. Let us turn to tyranny's relation to poetry first.

#### 5.4 Tyranny and Poetry: Propaganda and Ideology.

Socrates mentions that “the companions and new citizens” (mercenaries and freed slaves who become part of his guard, and people who do not care for the city) admire and associate with tyrants “while the decent people hate and avoid him” (οἱ δ' ἐπιεικεῖς μισοῦσι τε καὶ φεύγουσι, 568a4-6). Immediately after this comment there is the following interesting exchange between Socrates and Adeimantus:

Socrates: It isn't for nothing, then, that tragedy in general has the reputation of being wise and that Euripides is thought to be outstandingly so (ἢ τε τραγωδία ὅλως σοφὸν δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ Εὐριπίδης διαφέρων ἐν αὐτῇ)...because among other things he said that ‘tyrants are wise who associate with the wise’ (‘σοφοὶ τύραννοι’ εἰσι ‘τῶν σοφῶν συνουσίᾳ’). And by ‘the wise’ he clearly means the sort of people that we have seen be the tyrant's associates (οἷς σύνεστιν).

Adeimantus: Yes. And he and the other poets eulogize tyranny as godlike and say lots of other things about it (ὡς ἰσόθεόν γε τὴν τυραννίδα ἐγκωμιάζει, καὶ ἕτερα πολλά, καὶ οὗτος καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ποιηταί).

Socrates: Then, surely, since the tragic poets are wise, they'll forgive us and those whose regimes resemble ours, if we don't admit them into our city, since they praise tyranny (τυραννίδος ύμνητάς).

Adeimantus: I suppose that the more sophisticated (κομψοί) among them will.

Socrates: And so I suppose that they go around to other cities, draw crowds, hire people with fine, big, persuasive voices, and draw their regimes to tyranny and democracy (καλὰς φωνὰς καὶ μεγάλας καὶ πιθανὰς μισθωσάμενοι, εἰς τυραννίδας τε καὶ δημοκρατίας ἔλκουσι τὰς πολιτείας).

Adeimantus: They do indeed.

Socrates: And besides this, they receive wages and honors (μισθοὺς λαμβάνουσι καὶ τιμῶνται), especially—as one might expect—from the tyrants and, in second place, from the democracies, but the higher they go in ascending scale of regimes, the more their honor diminishes (μᾶλλον ἀπαγορεύει αὐτῶν ἢ τιμῆ), as if unable to keep up with them for lack of breath.

Adeimantus: Absolutely (568a8-568d3).<sup>222</sup>

Socrates suggests a close relation between poetry and tyranny (and democracy), and continues the theme of the political influence of poetry from the earlier parts of the dialogue. Having told us that decent people despise tyrants and that tyrants associate only with base people, Socrates, in effect, attacks poetry in general, and Euripides in particular, for being unwise. He calls Euripides and the associates of tyrants, particularly the other poets, “wise” ironically, and he thus expresses the idea that philosophy and poetry compete as disciplines which may lead to wisdom.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>223</sup> See also the discussion in the *Theages* where Socrates quotes the same line from Euripides to suggest ironically that wisdom is associated with tyranny (125b). There the issue is what do tyrants become wise in when they associate with the wise? Socrates suggests to Theages that being wise in politics cannot amount to being a tyrant. Theages who wants to be wise agrees that he does not want to be tyrant since tyrants like Hippias and Periander rule by violence not over voluntary subjects (124e, 126a).

Plato has Callicles quote Euripides in the *Gorgias* quite extensively (484e, 485 ff.) as support in an argument that philosophy is unwise and silly business since it does not help one defend against enemies or acquire a good reputation for being intelligent which is what everyone should pursue. The point in Callicles' use of Euripides is that we can use poetry to show that philosophy is unwise and to argue for which pursuits it is wise to pursue, thus poetry competes with philosophy for wisdom. Socrates quotes Euripides later on in the dialogue (492e) to argue against Callicles that the people he considers happy are like dead people who are like jars with holes in them, i.e., nothing can satisfy them. In the *First Letter* Plato quotes Euripides and other tragic poets to argue that tyrants are wretched. We may complain that Plato attacks poetry while at the same time he uses it to further some of his own arguments. But this need not trouble us so much since Plato's attack and use of poetry are consistent with his claim that poetry is problematic. His attack and use are consistent with his claim since he portrays the poets not knowing what they say, which implies that some of the things they say may happen to be true or good. We can see that part of the problem Plato has with poetry is that part of its content is problematic, but not all of it since he uses some of its content to argue for his own positions. Plato seems to think that poets may say wise

Adeimantus adds that the poets praise (ἐγκωμιάζει) tyranny as “godlike” (ἰσόθεον), or, more accurately, “as equal to something/being divine,” among other praises.<sup>224</sup> *Encomia* were pieces of poetry, which praised the deeds of individuals or cities, thus Adeimantus suggests that other kinds of poetry than tragedy approved of tyranny.<sup>225</sup> Socrates also mentions that poets go to cities and put up such a spectacle, by hiring actors with fine, big, and persuasive voices that they draw or attract regimes toward tyranny or democracy.<sup>226</sup> Presumably, the spectacular presentation of the content in poetry, which may include praising tyranny or democracy by underlining certain aspects of them as exceptional, may draw many people to admire these regimes. The aspect of tyranny they mention here, as one used in poetry, and as one that would attract the admiration of people is that tyranny is godlike or equal to being a god (ἰσόθεόν). This amounts to pointing out that tyrants are as powerful as gods so that they can do what they want.<sup>227</sup>

Tyrannies, along with democracies, also praise and honor poets as wise. This suggests not only that the poets praise tyranny and democracy, but that such regimes require and employ the services of poets. This may be the case since the poets serve the

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things, but since they write by inspiration, not by thinking things through they are not themselves wise. See also the discussion of poetry in *Republic X*.

<sup>224</sup> As I suggested in chapter 1 tragedians often point out the dangers and possible wretchedness of monarchs (not of tyrants in Plato’s sense explicitly), as well as the perceived benefits of being a ruler. Thus tragedy both praises and lambasts monarchy. Plato exploits the ambiguity of tragedy’s discussion of monarchy and criticizes its praise of monarchy as a praise of tyranny.

<sup>225</sup> *Encomia* were songs sung in κῶμος, or praising mode, and which were sang during κῶμοι or celebrations. Plato refers to the celebrations the tyrant’s life will be full of at 573d2-5. We see that Plato’s attack on poetry includes genres other than tragic poetry here.

<sup>226</sup> Socrates uses the verb ἔλκουσι to point out that the poets draw regimes towards tyranny or democracy. This verb also means “to attract” as when one finds something beautiful. Thus poetry seems to present tyranny and democracy as beautiful by accentuating aspects of it that people may find attractive, like power and freedom respectively.

<sup>227</sup> Remember Thrasymachus’ praise of extreme injustice or tyranny in Book I where he claimed that it is stronger, freer and more masterful than justice (344c5-6). This suggests a common praise used both by the people who admired tyranny and by the poets. See also chapter 1.

political purpose of justifying tyranny or democracy, of winning honor, recognition, or admiration for it, and of possibly establishing values conducive to the approval and preservation of such constitutions.<sup>228</sup>

The tyrant employed poets to write encomiastic poetry, which was performed in public occasions or state functions, such as athletic contests and public feasts. A species of encomiastic poetry were the *epinicia*, or victory odes, which celebrated the athletic victories of individuals.<sup>229</sup> Many of these celebrated the athletic victories of individual rulers and especially of tyrants. The tyrants praised in these poems were usually sponsors of horse teams, not riders or drivers of carriages, and often were not even present at the games. The poets Pindar and Bacchylides wrote *epinicia* in praise of 5<sup>th</sup> century tyrants of Sicily.<sup>230</sup> *Epinicia* were poems in which the poet attempted to present the victor as virtuous and his victory and virtue as a gift from the gods. The poets exploited the widespread popular assumption that virtue was god given, and the poet's challenge was to persuade the audience that there was virtue in athletic victory. The poets argued that since the gods admired and honored the victor with victory and virtue, the audience must do also. But, such poems did not simply present the tyrant/victor as virtuous; the community which he ruled was praised as virtuous also, since its ruler was victorious

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<sup>228</sup> Also note that tyranny honors and praises poetry more than any other regime and that the more just the regime the less honor the poets receive. This may suggest that the more unjust regimes need poetry more than just regimes do to help them influence the citizens and to justify and integrate their aims into the community.

<sup>229</sup> When scholars refer to *encomia* they often mean poems which were performed at drinking parties in front of small audiences, whereas *epinicia* were performed in front of larger audiences. Thus, we may suggest that *encomia* may refer to praising poetry in general of which *epinicia* are a species, or to praising poetry performed at drinking parties in particular.

<sup>230</sup> Bacchylides' odes 3, 4, 5 and Pindar's *Olympian* 1, and *Pythian* 1, 2, and 3 honor Hieron. Pindar wrote *Olympian* 2 and 3 for Theron (ruler of Acragas from 489-473). The titles of some of these poems point out for which games the poet was praising the victor, i.e. Olympic or Pythian games. For further references of *epinicia* devoted to tyrants or to their associates see McGlew (1993, 35, esp. n.44). McGlew also has an excellent discussion of *epinicia* and their significance for archaic Greek tyrants (see 35-51) to which I am indebted.



with the aid of the gods. Such poems served the political function of attempting to integrate the tyrant and his aspirations, as the victor, into the city which he ruled, and to win him the recognition he was after. The poets presented the tyrant's virtue as permeating the whole community also and thus as a benefactor to the city. Buying into this argument could make the citizens content with the tyrant as a ruler and supportive of his aims. Moreover, envying or wishing to overthrow the tyrant would seem foolish for someone who bought into the argument of the poem since the gods' gift of victory is at the same time an approval of the tyrant's authority to rule the city.<sup>231</sup> Thus such poems were parts of the tyrant's efforts to preserve his power over the city and to serve his own interests.

At this point we may consider a possible challenge posed to Plato's account of tyranny, namely, that he does not seem to tell us whether the tyrant places his actions and what he demands of the citizens under what we may call an ideology. Such a challenge is relevant to Plato's discussion of tyranny since ideology is a prominent feature in regimes both modern and contemporary, which we may seek to understand as tyrannies. We saw that the tyrant does employ a sort of propaganda to further his interests and to consolidate power, but does Plato present him as placing such propaganda under an ideology?

Furthermore what is ideology?

C. C. W. Taylor, in an article which seeks to argue that and how Plato's idea of the *kallipolis* is totalitarian, defines ideology as "a pervasive scheme of values, intentionally promulgated by some person or persons and promoted by institutional means in order to direct all or the most significant aspects of public and private life

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<sup>231</sup> This seems a version of the divine right of kings.

towards the attainment of the goals dictated by these values.”<sup>232</sup> While he argues that Plato’s account of the *kallipolis* does include an ideology, he also claims, following Andrewes (1956) that ancient tyrannies did not. Such regimes had the principal aim of preserving power for the tyrant and his cohorts, and while public resources were devoted to the maintenance of power (building temples, athletic events), there is no indication that ancient tyrannies attempted to direct the private life of citizens for public ends towards the goals dictated by a value system as part of an ideology (Taylor, 1986, 31). We could extend this point and ask whether Plato’s discussion of tyranny includes the employment of ideology by the tyrant? Does Plato leave considerations of ideology out because, as Taylor and Andrewes claim, the ancient conceptions of tyranny and ancient tyrannies did not have such a thing as an ideology?

Our discussion of epinician poetry above suggests, first that Taylor and Andrewes are both mistaken to claim the absence of ideology in ancient tyrannies. It seems that tyrants who employed poets to write victory odes for them were using institutional means, such as athletic events or feasts, to promote values pervasively, which would direct the public life of citizens in the interest of the tyrant. If such propagandistic measures as *epinicia* could persuade citizens of the tyrant’s authority to rule, to honor him, and to act in such ways so as to promote his interests, does not this become part of the tyrant’s ideology as Taylor defines it? It seems that this is the case. Moreover, Plato, does suggest that the tyrant employs various measures by which to appear beneficent and as having the legitimate authority to rule (including poetry), which attempt to instill

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<sup>232</sup> Taylor, C.C.W. (1986, 31).

values and direct public life in the tyrant's interests; thus, we do find ideology as part of Plato's account of tyranny.

We have seen Plato reveal that tyrants may have a considerable amount of support in the city. He highlights the idea that what the tyrant takes seriously, such as enemies to himself (the oligarchs) and the possession and preservation of his power, many of the citizens will take seriously also, and align their interests and values with his own. In the previous chapter we saw that the tyrant aligns himself with one group against another and that he fuels and exploits an existing conflict between these two groups. It would seem that to get one group of people to follow him he would have to employ some ideology that allows him to align and incorporate his aims with those of that group. The tyrant is able to persuade some of the citizens that the purges and the wars he carries out are necessary and in their interest. Thus, some of them come to support and perhaps participate in these. This highlights the tyrant's employment of an ideology since he is able to persuade some citizens that their interests and his own are the same, or that their interests depend on his own. Now let us turn to a final passage in Book VIII where Socrates discusses tyranny's funding and resources.

### 5.5 Tyranny's Resources, the Tyrant as Parricide, and Tyranny as Slavery.

The way tyrants may finance their tyranny reveals their terrible character even further.

Socrates: But all that is a digression (ἐξέβημεν). Let's return to our tyrant's camp (στρατόπεδον)—the one that is beautiful, populous, complex, and never the same (τὸ καλὸν τε καὶ πολὺ καὶ ποικίλον καὶ οὐδέποτε ταῦτόν)—and ask from what resources he is to maintain it (πόθεν θρέφεται).

Adeimantus: If there are sacred treasuries on the city, he will obviously use them for as long as they last, as well as the property of those he has destroyed, so the taxes he will require from the people will be smaller (ἀναγκάζων τὸν δῆμον εἰσφέρειν).

Socrates: What about when the resources give out?

Adeimantus: Clearly, his father's estate will have to support him, his drinking companions, and his boyfriends and girlfriends, too.

Socrates: I understand. You mean the people who gave rise/birth (ὁ δῆμος ὁ γεννήσας) to the tyrant will have to support him and his friends.

Adeimantus: This will be necessary for them (ἀνάγκη).

Socrates: What if the people get irritated (ἀγανακτῆ) and say it is not just for a grown-up son to be supported by his father? On the contrary, the father should be supported by his son. They did not give rise to him and establish him in power, they say, so that, when he had become strong, they would be enslaved to their own slave and have to support him, his slaves, and other assorted rabble as well; but so that with him as their popular leader, they would get free from the rule of the rich and the so-called fine and good people in the city. At that point, they order him and his friends to leave the city, as a father might drive a son and his troublesome drinking companions from his house. What do you think would happen then?

Adeimantus: Then, by Zeus, the people will learn what kind of offspring they gave birth to (οἷον θρέμμα γεννῶν), welcomed and made strong (ἡσπάζετό τε καὶ ἠΰξεν), and that it is a case of the weaker trying to drive out the stronger.

Socrates: What do you mean? Will the tyrant dare to use force against his father or hit him if he does not obey (τολμήσει τὸν πατέρα βιάζεσθαι, κἂν μὴ πείθεται, τύπτειν ὁ τύραννος)?

Adeimantus: Yes—once he has taken away his weapons (ἀφελόμενος γε τὰ ὄπλα).

Socrates: A tyrant is a parricide (πατραλοῖαν) as you describe him, then a harsh nurse of old age (χαλεπὸν γηροτρόφον); and we do now seem to have an acknowledged tyranny. And so the people, by trying to avoid the proverbial smoke of enslavement of free men, have fallen into the fire of having slaves as their masters; and, in exchange for the excessive and inappropriate freedom they had before, have put upon themselves the harshest and most bitter slavery to slaves (ὁ δῆμος φεύγων ἂν καπνὸν δουλείας ἐλευθέρων εἰς πῦρ δούλων δεσποτείας ἂν ἐμπεπτωκῶς εἶη, ἀντὶ τῆς πολλῆς ἐκείνης καὶ ἀκαίρου ἐλευθερίας τὴν χαλεπωτάτην τε καὶ πικροτάτην δούλων δουλείαν μεταπισχόμενος).

Adeimantus: That is exactly what happens.

Socrates: Well, then, wouldn't we be justified in saying that we have adequately described how tyranny evolves from democracy, and what it is like once it has come to exist (ικανῶς διεληλυθῆναι ὡς μεταβαίνει τυραννίς ἐκ δημοκρατίας, γενομένη τε οἷα ἐστίν)?

Ad.: We would. Our description is entirely adequate. (568d4-569c9).<sup>233</sup>

Socrates emphasizes the tyrant as a spendthrift with no restraint, willing to acquire resources from anyone. Moreover we return to the idea that tyranny is the worst sort of slavery, which the citizens come to gradually realize and experience despite their initial judgment of the tyrant as their champion. This happens once they notice the disparity

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<sup>233</sup> Translation mine.

between the tyrant's actions and their interests, try to oppose him, and the tyrant turns more violent.

The tyrant will finance his regime with the money present in treasuries and with the money of his destroyed enemies. These enemies will have to be rich people whose properties he appropriates. The tyrant opposes the rich, not only to win the favor of majority as Socrates mentioned earlier, or to eradicate them as enemies, but to acquire their wealth and finance his regime. Socrates also mentions that using the property of the people he destroys the tyrant will be able to avoid creating opposition by requiring only low taxes from the people (568d6-e1). The tyrant may seek to preserve his regime by being rather careful, at least initially, with finances and taxation.

Socrates suggests once again that necessity will push the tyrant to spend all the financial resources from treasuries and acquired property to have to turn to the resources of the ones who supported him. The tyrant is a drone type, which suggests that he is a big spender.<sup>234</sup> Spending too much will push the tyrant to try to acquire more resources and to become openly violent to do so. Plato employs the imagery of the family to suggest that the tyrant will turn against the ones who “gave birth” to him both literally (his parents) and metaphorically (the people of the city). Plato suggests that good rulers should be like children who respect and care for their parents. If the people complain about the tyrant's exploitation of their resources—like fathers could complain to their children, that they supported the tyrant in order for him to serve their interests, not for

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<sup>234</sup> The tyrant's big spending in public may have been another reason he was thought happy. We know that several ancient tyrants were big spenders openly. They built sanctuaries, altars, temples and so on as public demonstrations of their wealth which also allowed them to express some programmatic purposes (McGlew, 1993, 30). See Boersma (1970), Kolb (1977), and Shapiro (1989) for discussions of the Peisistratid building program in Athens.

him to treat them as his slaves—he will use force against them, like a parricide would against his parents.

By calling the tyrant a parricide Plato suggests, once again, that tyranny is unnatural.<sup>235</sup> If cities are like families and there is something natural in children taking care of their parents, then it seems natural for rulers to care for the good of the city since it is responsible for their upbringing.<sup>236</sup> Plato calls attention to the tyrant turning the citizens into slaves once again and he mentions that while people were trying to avoid the appearance of slavery (at the end of the democracy), they fell into actual slavery in tyranny.

We remember the principle of excess to which the democracy falls victim from 563e6-564a1 and the previous chapter. The idea Socrates portrayed there was that any extreme action A I do for the sake of effect B in one direction will lead to change in the contrary to B. The people in the democracy wanted more freedom, which the tyrant claimed to be able to secure for them by attacking and removing the oligarchs in the city. But this, instead of winning more freedom for the poor citizens of the democracy it turned democracy into its opposite, i.e. tyranny or slavery. Thus, the democrat's extreme efforts to become more free, i.e. supporting the tyrant, result in slavery instead of freedom. Before we proceed to the tyrant's psychology in the following chapters let us say something about the prevalent theme of necessity that we find in Plato's discussion of tyranny in power.

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<sup>235</sup> We remember that earlier the tyrant was likened to a wolf.

<sup>236</sup> This is similar to Socrates' argument in the *Crito* where he suggests that disobeying the laws of the city cannot be good since one owes his existence and upbringing to the city and its laws (50c ff.).

## 5.6 Tyranny and Necessity

Our examination of Plato's account of tyranny in power revealed several of its essential features and the measures it employs. We also saw that Plato attributes several of the tyrant's actions or measures, and the results or effects that follow from these to a necessity which binds him. Socrates points out several times that the tyrant does some action  $x$  by necessity which in turn necessitates effect  $y$ . Let us highlight where this occurs:

- (1) Socrates claims that a necessity leads the tyrant to wars to take care of several of his domestic concerns. It is practically necessary for the tyrant go to war to persuade the citizens that they need a leader, to keep them poor and concentrated on their private affairs rather than on politics, and to eliminate people he perceived as enemies (πολέμους τινὰς ἀεὶ κινεῖ 566e8, and, ἀεὶ ἀνάγκη πόλεμον ταραττειν, 567a8). As Socrates shows however, taking the city to war, impoverishing and purging the city of enemies, also necessarily entails the eventual birth of much hatred and opposition for the tyrant.
- (2) He also claims that it is necessary for the tyrant to purge the city of many of its good citizens because he suspects them as his enemies, and that this necessitates that he either has to live with base citizens, many of whom will hate him, or not live at all (567c1-d3).
- (3) Socrates tells us that, since the tyrant becomes progressively more hated in the city, due to his actions and measures directed at preserving his power and serving his interests, this necessitates the creation and installment of a larger guard (567d5-568a6). Since these guards are dronish the tyrant will eventually not be able to trust them either, especially when their benefits and his are not aligned. Moreover, the tyrant's necessary

suspicion and fear of the base people around him and the constant possibility that they may harm him make it doubtful whether the tyrant can benefit much from those around him. He will still be anxious about such people, he will get not get the recognition he desires from them, and they are people likely to attack him.

Socrates shows that tyranny entails an inherent principle of practical necessity, which is at the same time a principle of its destruction. Tyranny is a self-defeating or contradictory regime, since the measures and actions the tyrant is forced to carry out, while intended to preserve tyranny and serve the tyrant's interests, are necessarily followed by effects which are detrimental to tyranny and its aims. Finally, while we see that Socrates does apply this principle of necessity to tyranny in Book VIII, his ultimate reasons and justification for doing so do not become clear until we consider the psychology of the tyrant that follows.



## Chapter 6. The Tyrant's Psychology.

Plato analyzes both tyranny as a disordered regime and the tyrant as an individual with a disordered soul. In this chapter I consider the tyrant's soul which Plato portrays as the one with the most problematic desires. An analysis of Plato's discussion of the tyrannical soul will explicate further tyranny's connection with a self defeating necessity, insofar as this follows from the tyrant's disordered soul. Moreover, such an analysis will prepare for an examination of Plato's arguments against tyranny which I consider in the next chapter. Let us turn to the discussion of the tyrannical man in Book IX.

### 6.1 The Tyrant and the Tyrannical Man.

Book IX begins with the introduction of some new terminology. Plato is careful to distinguish between the tyrant (τύραννος) and the tyrannical man or person (τυραννικός ἀνὴρ).<sup>237</sup> In the opening lines of Book IX Socrates says “the tyrannical man himself remains to be investigated: how he evolves from a democratic one, what he is like once he has come to exist, and whether the way he lives is wretched or blessedly happy ” (571a1-3).<sup>238</sup> Socrates, so far, accounted for how tyranny (τυραννίς) arises and for what the tyrant does in the city. The shift in terminology, from “tyrant” to “tyrannical man,” points to a slight shift in the focus of the discussion. Socrates moves from talking about the tyrant and political regimes exclusively, to talking about the relation of

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<sup>237</sup>The introduction of τυραννικός ἀνὴρ (tyrannical *man*) does not mean to suggest that only men can be tyrannical. See 544d6-10 where Socrates claims that there are as many types of humans (ἀνθρώπων) as there are of regimes (πολιτειῶν). Thus Plato has humans in mind not only men.

<sup>238</sup> Αὐτὸς δὲ λοιπός, ἦν δ'εγώ, ὁ τυραννικός ἀνὴρ σκέψασθαι, πῶς μεθίσταται ἐκ δημοκρατικοῦ, γενόμενός τε ποῖός τις ἐστὶν καὶ τίνα τρόπον ζῆ, ἄθλιον ἢ μακάριον. Notice how μεθίσταται (comes to be) sounds like μεθυσθεῖς / μεθυστικός (being drunk, 573b10, 573c9). Also notice that Plato continues the explanatory method of considering the origins, essential features, and happiness or lack of it for individuals.

psychology or the soul to politics. This happens in the discussion of the other types of regimes and their corresponding individuals also and it is part of the parallel of the city and the soul. In discussing the city and the soul as parallel Plato assumes correctly that there is a strong relation between regimes and individuals (their souls or psychology) that needs to be considered.<sup>239</sup> Before we consider the psychology of the tyrannical man in detail, let us clarify further the distinction and relation between the tyrannical man and the tyrant.

The tyrant is a tyrannical man, i.e. he has the type of soul that comes with being a tyrannical man. “Tyrant” is a name with a political designation, it designates a political ruler, a person with actual political power. “Tyrannical man” is a name with a psychological designation related to political life. Any citizen of the city can be tyrannical, but the same citizen need not be a tyrant; a tyrant however, has to be a tyrannical man. This allows Plato to account for how the tyrant comes to be, not as a ruler (this was the subject matter of Book VIII), but as a person; this is at the heart of explaining how psychology is related to political life.<sup>240</sup> The tyrant is a person who has the order of soul of a tyrannical man and who at some point in his life comes to rule a tyranny.<sup>241</sup>

Moreover, it is part of Plato’s argument to suggest that people in tyranny will be like the regime. This does not mean that most people will be like it, but at least some will be, and he takes these people to be characteristic of the tyrannical regime. To account for how the tyrannical man turn into a tyrant Socrates says that

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<sup>239</sup> He attempts to do much of this explaining in the *Republic* and many other dialogues.

<sup>240</sup> See 575e3-4 where Socrates suggests that tyrants are private tyrannical men before they come to power.

<sup>241</sup> See 575c3-d1 where Socrates suggests that the tyrant is the worst tyrannical man, i.e., that his soul is controlled by *eros* or lust the most.

When you get a large number of these people [tyrannical people] in a city, and others follow them, when they become aware of their own numbers, then it is they, aided and abetted by the folly of the common people, who give birth to the tyrant—that one who stands out among them as possessing the greatest and most bloated tyrant in the soul within him (575c4-9).

In effect, the person most characteristic of a regime is the one who embodies its ideals and goals. In tyranny such persons will be the tyrant (most of all) and other people with tyrannical souls. Furthermore, no single man can keep control or take a city over by himself, thus a considerable amount of assistance from other tyrannical types seems necessary. Finally, for the community to be tyrannical, even for a while, there have to be enough tyrannical people in it.

### 6.2 Necessary, Unnecessary, and Unnecessary and Lawless Desires.

Plato analyzes the individuals corresponding to political regimes by telling us how their tripartite souls are ordered and which desires drive their lives. The discussion of souls having different orders includes three considerations: (1) which part of the soul rules, (2) how the three parts of the soul relate to each other, and (3) what the soul desires, that is, which objects the soul's parts pursue and to what degree; this is the question of *Eros*.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> The extensive secondary literature on Plato's tripartite division of the soul has recognized both merits and faults. These have to do either with the division itself and the interaction of the parts, or with the role the division plays in the analogy of the city and the soul. See Annas (1981, 109 ff.), Bobonich (1994 and, 2002 esp. 216-259), Cooper (in Kraut 1997, 17-30), Irwin (1995, 203-220), Kahn (1987, 77-103), Lear (1992, 184-213), Lesses (1987, 147-161), Penner (1990, 35-74), Reeve (1988), Roochnik (2003), Williams (in Kraut 1997, 49-61). It is not my intention here to solve the controversies in the secondary literature, but it is my intention to examine what Plato says about the tyrannical man's soul given this division. I concentrate much more on his discussion of the role of desires in the tyrannical man's soul than on the intricacies of the division of the soul into three parts. But, let me at least mention some of the merits and possible problems of the division and to offer some suggestions about how to avoid the major problems. The merits of the division of the soul into three parts are several. Each part has its own desires and motivations and this allows for a theory of non-rational motivations which explains internal conflicts about what to do and ultimately the problem of *akrasia*. Bobonich (2002) argues that Plato's account of the soul in the *Republic* helps him explain how *akrasia* is possible. Penner (1990, 96) argues the same and takes it to be a rejection of Socrates' position that *akrasia* is impossible. Since the parts of the soul have their own

In analyzing the tyrannical man's soul Socrates suggests that he is the sort of person who has his soul ruled in an order contrary to that of the just person, since his rational part (and his spirited part) is subordinate to the appetitive part. We remember that reason's desires have "the good of the whole soul and of the body" as their object (442b6-7), and that only the rational part of the soul "has within itself the knowledge of

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motivating desires, which may be rational or non-rational, the parts may fail to interact rationally with each other and thus *akrasia* becomes possible (2002, 217 ff.). Reeve also points out that "the beauty of this account of *akrasia* is that it preserves all of our initial intuitions intact," i.e. that *akrasia* can occur and it is caused by desire overpowering belief or knowledge about what it is best to do, and that "no one voluntarily goes for what he thinks bad over what he knows or believes to be good" (1988, 134). This seems to be partly the merit of tripartite division observed by Freud who suggests that some of the parts of the psyche have non-rational motivations conflicting or taking over rational motivations. Another helpful aspect of the tripartite division is that having each part be the subject of different psychological states allows for an explanatory scheme which appreciates the complexity of psychological states. More specifically, this division allows Plato to discuss desires in a very helpful way since each part has its own desires which may either be harmonious with the desires of another part or not. This is the primary aspect of the division of the soul which comes to play in my discussion of the tyrannical man. There are two possible major problems with the tripartite division of the soul. The first is a problem of regress. Bobonich (2002), among others, argues that Plato's account of *akrasia* which has the soul have three parts each of which has its own desires, beliefs, and is able to set ends for itself, falls prey to a regress problem. The problem is that it seems possible that each part of the soul may experience *akrasia* itself by having opposing desires within it (248-254). Irwin suggests that this problem may be avoided if we read the principle of contrariety (436b8) as applying to the soul but not to each of its parts (1995, 216-217). A further problem related to that of regress is whether tripartition threatens the unity of the soul. Bobonich argues that having the soul's parts act as distinct agents with their own beliefs, desires, and opinions threatens talking about the soul as a soul of a single person (254 ff.). A further aspect of Plato which threatens the unity of the soul is how the three parts interact. More specifically it may be difficult to see how the non-rational parts are supposed to agree and be convinced by the rational part (Bobonich, 255). Irwin points out that Plato "seems to have pressed his political analogy too far and to have introduced a self-defeating anthropomorphic element into his description of the parts of the soul. If he treats the two non-rational parts of the soul as though they were capable of behaving like reasonable people, he seems to be treating each part as though it were an agent with its own rational part" (218). Irwin goes on to provide an account for how Plato is able to account for how the non-rational parts of the soul may have a conception of their ends and be persuaded by the rational part and thus be able to avoid destroying the unity of the soul (see 218-222). I suggest that both of these problems may be avoided if we allow the anthropomorphic elements attributed to the lower parts of the soul, such as the capacity to obey or listen and the capacity to reason to be attributes ascribed more metaphorically than literally to explain the relations and capacities of those parts. A further suggestion is to begin to pay more attention to the important role Plato places on desire as largely driving his division of the soul and its relation to the city. To my knowledge this is done only by Reeve (1988). Paying more attention to desire may allow us to look at these problems in a new light. Finally, another way to approach these problems is to pay more attention to the increased emphasis on narrative rather than formal argument (which Plato uses to argue for the soul's parts based on the principle of non-contradiction in Book IV) in the discussion of the soul and desires in Books VIII-X. This may help us appreciate the tension and intricate relation between formal argument and the literary aspects of Plato's approach. For such an approach see Roochnik (2003, 93-110). For a helpful discussion on the analogy of the city and the soul and for an excellent account of the dynamic and developmental aspect of Plato's psychology in *Republic* VIII and IX see Lear (1992, 184-213).

what is beneficial for each part, and for the whole composed of the community of these three parts” (442c5-8). Moreover, we should remember that Glaucon’s rejection of the “healthy city” or “the city of pigs” was driven by the fact that such a city did not allow for much variety of desires (372e). Thus, from the beginning of the dialogue, Plato’s discussion on politics and the related psychology revolves around the problem of desire. The disorder of the tyrannical man’s soul accounts for the fact that his *pleonexia*, the desire to have more and more, rules his life. Explaining the tyrannical man’s soul revolves around giving an account of its desires or appetites (ἐπιθυμῖαι), so Socrates begins Book IX with some further explication of these. He clarifies the earlier discussion of desires as necessary and unnecessary where he explained the origin of the democratic man from the thrifty oligarch (558d8-559d2).

Even though Socrates does not explicitly discuss the distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires until Book VIII, the distinction is implied in several parts of the dialogue, which suggests that it is behind much of what Socrates says. Remember that the “feverish” city is brought about partly due to the idea that the city of pigs is “without relishes” (372c) thus the “feverish” city becomes different from the city of pigs to accommodate more desires. Whether Socrates is correct to call the kind of city Glaucon wants “feverish,” or Glaucon is correct to call Socrates’ simple city “a city of pigs,” or whether they are both correct in some way, are questions the answers to which presuppose a clear distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires. Thus, the distinction of desires into necessary and unnecessary plays a major role in the discussion from the beginning of the dialogue. Moreover, the four vignettes of cities and

corresponding individuals that follow the just city in Books VIII and IX describe the possible and ever expansive power of desire from limit to unlimitedness.

Some commentators find the distinction or definition of necessary and unnecessary desires rather obscure or problematic, but I think that we can read it in a clear way that once we make some qualifications.<sup>243</sup> In Book VIII Socrates defined and distinguished between necessary and unnecessary desires (ὀρισώμεθα τὰς τε ἀναγκαίους ἐπιθυμίας καὶ τὰς μὴ, 558d9). (1) Necessary desires are: (a) those we cannot do without or potentially resist, *and/or* (b) those whose satisfaction is beneficial to us; both of these are natural to us. (2) Unnecessary desires are: (a) those we could learn to do without, and (b) those which *may* harm us.<sup>244</sup> Unnecessary desires would include those desires which do not benefit us and those which harm us. We can imagine several desires which may be neither beneficial nor harmful such as the desire to drive my car around town, or the desire to eat a small piece of cake.

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<sup>243</sup> White (1979) argues that the distinction applies only to the desires of the appetitive part of the soul (1979, 215). As I show below the distinction applies to all desires instead. White also suggests that Plato “makes no provision for the possibility that a desire might be ineradicable but yet produce harm or be eradicable but yet produce benefit. And he speaks of those that are both ineradicable and beneficial as natural” since he thinks that the criteria of whether a desire is beneficial or not and whether it can be gotten rid of by practice and education coincide (215). As I show below these criteria do not coincide simply but they do so only with some qualifications which allow us to apply the distinction to desires in general.

<sup>244</sup> “Well then, wouldn’t those [desires] we cannot deny rightly be called necessary? And also those whose satisfaction benefits us ((οὐκ ἂν οἶοι τ’εἶμεν ἀποτρέψαι, καὶ ὅσαι ἀποτελούμεναι ὠφελοῦσιν ἡμᾶς)? For we are by nature compelled to try to satisfy them both. Isn’t that so? Of course...What about those someone could get rid of if he started practicing from childhood, those whose presence does not good but may even do the opposite (ἄς τέ τις ἀπαλλάξειεν ἂν, εἰ μελετῶ ἐκ νέου, καὶ πρὸς οὐδὲν ἀγαθὸν ἐνοῦσαι δρῶσιν)? If we said that all of them were unnecessary, would we be right? We would be right” (558d 11-559a7). I read the καὶ (and) in the case of necessary desires loosely and read it as either conjunctive or disjunctive. Thus, above I say necessary desires are desires which we cannot deny *and/or* those which are beneficial. Unnecessary desires have to be both the ones we may do without with some practice and those which may be harmful. Moreover, reading it in this way allows for an ambiguity which is helpful to Plato since it makes the inclusion of all desires within the distinction possible. Reading the distinction in this way is the only way we can make sense of it while being faithful to Plato’s ethics. I discuss this in more detail below.

The distinction assumes an understanding of what is beneficial and what is not. The Platonic understanding of what is beneficial would exclude the sort of hedonism in which all things which cause pleasure are beneficial precisely due to their being pleasurable.<sup>245</sup> It would definitely exclude desires for small pleasures as beneficial, such the ones in the examples above, while not necessarily relegating such desires to being harmful. Minimally we should suppose that we are talking about sorts of desires which are beneficial, neither beneficial nor harmful, or harmful, to the body or to the soul. Assuming that we have an understanding of beneficial in a Platonic sense then we can show that the distinction may be able to hold together and be useful.

Socrates provides as an example of necessary desires the desire for food (bread and relishes) to the point of health. This is a desire which we cannot deny (1a) and which is beneficial (1b). The example of an unnecessary desire is desire for food (bread and relishes) to such a degree that it harms the body and the soul's capacity for wisdom and moderation (559b8-c1). This is a desire which we can both resist with some effort or practice (2a) and which is harmful (2b). This distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires may seem rather obscure, but I think it entails an ambiguity which allows Plato to cover a lot of explanatory ground and to avoid making the distinction problematic. The distinction seems problematic initially since it is unclear what kinds of desires we are talking about and how widely we are supposed to understand these.

First, let us note that “desire” (ἐπιθυμία) is a broad term which Plato applies throughout the *Republic* to cover both the narrow case, where by “desire” we mean *appetites*, i.e., the desires of the lower part of the soul such as those for food, drink, and

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<sup>245</sup> See 505b5-c11 and *Gorgias* 494c ff. where Socrates rejects extreme hedonism and brings up the examples of a person who likes to scratch and of a catamite as cases meant to reveal the problems of extreme hedonism.

sex, and the broad case, where by “desire” we mean anything we may want (food, philosophy, power, wisdom, honor, a house etc.).<sup>246</sup> Second, while the examples above cover the narrow case of desires since they have to do with desiring food, once we think about the distinction in light of the wider application of “desire” we can see that it can cover much more explanatory ground.

Necessary desires are the desires we cannot resist *and* which are beneficial to us, say food in moderation, or shelter (meet qualifications 1a and 1b), and desires we can deny or resist with some effort which are beneficial to us say, philosophic wisdom, education, or a boat (meet only qualification 1b).<sup>247</sup> Desiring a boat for example, is certainly not a necessary desire in the sense that one is not able to resist it (1a). In this way it looks like an unnecessary desire since we can learn to resist such a desire (2a) and possessing it may even be harmful (2b). But, such a desire *may be* a necessary desire in

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<sup>246</sup> We can point to several passages for the broad application of “desire.” At 580d7-8 Socrates points out that since there are three parts of the soul there are pleasures and desires (ἐπιθυμῖαι) peculiar to each which suggests the broad application of “desire.” At 580d10-e5 where Socrates points out that he called the lower part of the soul “appetitive/desiring” (ἐπιθυμητικὸν) only because of its multiformity and intensity of desires which suggests that even the appetitive part has desires broader than those for food, drink, and sex: “the third part of the soul, because it is multiform, we had no one special name for it but named it after the biggest and strongest thing it has in it. I mean we called it the appetitive element because of the intensity of its appetites for food, drink, sex, and all the things that go along with them. We also called it the money-loving element because such appetites are most easily satisfied by means of money” (τὸ δὲ τρίτον διὰ πολυειδίαν ἐνὶ οὐκ ἔσχομεν ὀνόματι προσειπεῖν ἰδίῳ αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ ὁ μέγιστον καὶ ἰσχυρότατον εἶχεν ἐν αὐτῷ, τούτῳ ἐπωνομάσαμεν. ἐπιθυμητικὸν γὰρ αὐτὸ κεκλήκαμεν διὰ σφοδρότητα τῶν τε περὶ τὴν ἔδωδὴν ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ πόσιν καὶ ἀφροδίσι καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα τούτοις ἀκόλουθα, καὶ φιλοχρήματων δὴ, ὅτι διὰ χρημάτων μάλιστα ἀποτελοῦνται αἱ τοιαῦται ἐπιθυμῖαι). Thus, once again, the appetitive part of the soul is not the only one which has desires.

<sup>247</sup> On this point I agree with Reeve who points out that necessary desires may be desires which are both undeniable and beneficial, or desires which are merely beneficial (44). Reeve however fails to clarify the qualifications of unnecessary desires. He also points out that the division means to include considerations for different types of people (45). He suggests that “the explanation of this sort of relativity of the division of desires to character-types” is that each type of person believes his own desires to be pleasant and good (46). While he seems correct about the fact that the division of desires in this way fits how each person may perceive their own desires, he misses the additional helpful fact that the explanation of the division is that it is a flexible/relative but objective standard like Aristotle’s moral virtue. This allows us to take into account what sort of person someone is and the context in which someone desires something. Where Plato draws the distinction among desires (558d11-e3) it seems that he does so objectively and it is not drawn from the perspective of the types of people he talks about.



the sense of its being beneficial given a certain context. If I am a sick person who needs to cross a river to visit a doctor then desiring a boat seems necessary in the sense that it is beneficial for me (it meets qualification 1b but not 1a). If I am a drunk who desires a boat to cross a river to go drinking then the desire seems unnecessary in the sense that it is harmful and also a desire that we can possibly resist (it meets both 2a and 2b). Plato suggests that if a desire is beneficial in some true sense, even if we can resist it with some effort, then it has to be necessary. Thus we begin to see the explanatory utility of the distinction since it allows to classify all sorts of desires.

Let us consider a more extreme example as a limit case to clarify the distinction further. Let's suppose that I have a sickness which upon drinking anything I will die. At the moment I am thirsty and I desire to drink a glass of water. Is this a necessary or an unnecessary desire? Which qualifications does it meet? First, given Plato's distinction it is clear that the desire is harmful (2b) thus so far it seems that the desire is unnecessary. But, before we are able to classify this desire we need to know to what extent I can resist it or not. If we say that I cannot resist the desire to drink if I try to do so (1a) then it seems that Plato's distinction would collapse since I would desire something which I cannot resist and something which is harmful (1a and 2b). Thus the desire for drink in this case would seem to be both necessary, since I cannot resist it and unnecessary since it is harmful. But, if we are able to claim that I can resist the desire to drink in this case (2a) then we can see that the distinction holds since such a desire would meet both of the qualifications of unnecessary desires (2a and 2b) and none of the qualifications of

necessary desires (neither 1a nor 1b). In fact it seems quite possible to be able to resist such a desire and thus such a desire is unnecessary.<sup>248</sup>

Read this way Plato's distinction allows desires to be classified as necessary when they meet qualification 1b (beneficial) alone, or when they meet both qualifications 1a (irresistible) and 1b (beneficial). Plato's distinction entails that if a desire is non-beneficial or harmful (2b) then we have to be able to resist it (2a). Thus Plato has to deny that I can have a desire which at the same time I cannot potentially resist (1a) and which is non-beneficial or harmful (2b).<sup>249</sup>

There are several matters one has to take into account to distinguish necessary from unnecessary desires and Plato seems aware of this. He draws a distinction that is objectively true but one that is flexible enough to allow considerations of contingent conditions (like being a sick person or being a drunk). To distinguish between necessary and unnecessary desires adequately we need to take into consideration the nature of the object desired and its possible effects (these could be immediate effects or effects in the long-run), the degree of desire (how much of something I desire), the person desiring (his abilities, needs etc.), and, finally, the circumstances under which one desires (these may include the end for which one desires something and other contextual matters).<sup>250</sup>

Plato's distinction between desires seems to be a flexible but objective standard. In its objectivity and flexibility it seems similar to Aristotle's moral virtue. Aristotle tells us that "moral virtue is the disposition to choose the mean with respect to us, determined

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<sup>248</sup> See 439c where Socrates suggests that resisting the desire to drink is possible and uses this conflict in the soul to account for its division into several parts. Moreover we know that in medical practice they sometimes give ice chips to those for whom it is harmful to drink.

<sup>249</sup> Summarizing the possibilities allowed by the distinction: Necessary desires may be 1a and 1b, or 1b but not 1a. Unnecessary desires may be only 2a and 2b. The distinction does not allow for desires to be 1b and 2b.

<sup>250</sup> As I argued above such a distinction presupposes an understanding of what is beneficial which will guide the above considerations for distinguishing among desires.

by reason and as a person of practical wisdom would determine.”<sup>251</sup> Aristotle is able to speak of a virtue such as courage objectively, as a mean, but also with some flexibility in relation to the person, the conditions under which one acts, and so on.

Plato’s distinction between necessary and unnecessary desires allows him to cover a broad range of desires and thus his account of desires is quite comprehensive. In the context of the discussion in which the distinction is first drawn, it allows him to explain a psychological difference between the thrifty oligarch and his democratic son. The thrifty oligarch spends money on food and drink very carefully thus he spends only on necessary desires while restraining the other desires he has. The democratic son begins to pay attention to sex, food, and drink with a little more excess than his father. The example of necessary desires used, i.e., for food in moderate amounts—here we see the consideration of degree—fits what Socrates tries to explain in that discussion. Speaking of “beneficial” desires as part of necessary desires also allows Plato to include other desires than those for food, drink, and sex such as honor, wisdom, justice, and thus to cover the whole gamut of desires. This fits with the idea that all the parts of the soul have desires peculiar to them. Furthermore as we will see Plato’s division of desires into necessary and unnecessary lies at the basis of his psychopathology.<sup>252</sup> Now we are ready to turn to the further classification of unnecessary desires in Book IX and its relation to the tyrannical man’s soul.

Socrates tells Adeimantus that he cannot begin to discuss the tyrannical man’s soul and be clear until they have determined and distinguished among desires more adequately (571a7-9). He says:

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<sup>251</sup> Ἔστιν ἄρα ἡ ἀρετὴ ἕξις προαιρετικὴ, ἐν μεσότητι οὖσα τῇ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὠρισμένη λόγῳ καὶ ζῷ ἅν ὁ φρόνιμος ὀρίσειεν (*Nicomachean Ethics* II. 6, 1106b36-1107a3).

<sup>252</sup> On this point I am also in agreement with Reeve (1988, 47).

So, consider what I want to look at in them. It is this: among unnecessary pleasures and appetites (τῶν μὴ ἀναγκαιῶν ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐπιθυμιῶν), there are some that seem to me to be lawless (παράνομοι). These are probably present in all of us, but they are held in check by the laws and by our better appetites allied with reason (κολαζόμεναι δὲ ὑπὸ τε τῶν νόμων καὶ τῶν βελτιόνων ἐπιθυμιῶν μετὰ λόγου). In a few people they have been eliminated entirely or only a few weak ones remain, while in others they are stronger and more numerous (571b3-c1).

Socrates points out that among the unnecessary desires discussed earlier there are some which are unnecessary in a lawless way.<sup>253</sup> This means that such desires are uncontrollable, insatiable, and always harmful. We remember that the oligarchic man desires wealth which is also an insatiable desire but his desire for it need not be lawless, i.e., unnecessary and harmful. Socrates suggests that lawless desires are in all people in some way (at least at some point in their lives or potentially), but they are held in check by laws and other desires allied with reason. This already suggests a rather rich understanding of controlling or placing limitations on desires.

Having laws *and* the desires allied with reason keep the unnecessary and lawless desires under control, seems to mean: (a) that the soul follows some general limitations in desiring, and (b) more specifically, that by having desires, which are closer to what reason dictates, the soul becomes unable to pursue the unnecessary and lawless desires since the latter desires are incompatible with the former. For example, if I already have a desire for gaining a moderate amount of money justly through work, and such a desire is what reason dictates, it would seem quite difficult for me to have a desire for endless gain in any way possible. This suggests one of the important ways in which the parts of the soul may relate to each other so that one can rule over the other, i.e., by having certain desires in one part which exclude the pursuit of desires in another. By talking about laws

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<sup>253</sup> We should notice that Socrates adds pleasures (ἡδονῶν) to desires here. This anticipates the discussion that follows which will link desires to pleasures more explicitly. It is also a statement of the simple fact that people often desire to do things which they find pleasurable, or in other words, that pleasure often drives desire.

(*nomous*) Socrates tries to emphasize the importance of placing limits on desires and the suggestion is that what is largely problematic about unnecessary and lawless desires is that they are unlimited. The emphasis on laws or limits parallels the discussion of anarchy or the disobedience to laws (*anomia*) in the democratic regime which resulted from the desire for unlimited freedom. Socrates in effect highlights the importance of the obedience to law or limits in both cities and individuals.<sup>254</sup>

“Law” in this context seems to refer both to laws as found in a city which are rules of conduct external to individuals, and to laws as limits on desires within the soul. Insofar as law refers to internal limits, education is supposed to place such laws in the soul. Education in this sense has to do with the removal, or moderation of unnecessary appetites as much as one’s nature allows.<sup>255</sup> Having too active lawless desires in the soul suggests that one’s education has been deficient, and also that such a person can no longer be educated to place limits on his desires. As we will see the tyrannical man has his soul in such an order that there are virtually no limitations on his desires as would be dictated by reason and instilled by proper education, and that this has devastating implications for both his own and other’s happiness. An implication of not having internal limits on desire is that externally, the tyrant will not obey any laws or operate his tyranny with laws in a substantial way. In this sense tyrannies are lawless.

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<sup>254</sup> Such limitations in the city and in the soul are effective and can be in place if they are reciprocal. This reciprocity reveals a difficulty inherent in political life. The city may have its laws dictated by reason obeyed if individuals have laws dictated by reason they obey within their own souls. At the same time, whether individuals obey such laws in their own souls depends to some extent to the laws of the city which may cause this.

<sup>255</sup> On this point I follow Reeve (1988, 50). See 518c8-d1, and 518d3-7 where Socrates suggests that education is the turning around of one’s intelligence so that it can see more of the good itself. Part of this turning around has to do with the direction and moderation of desires so that one’s intelligence is not placed in the service of unnecessary, or worse, lawless desires.

Socrates proceeds to tell Adeimantus in more detail which desires are lawless when he says that such desires are aroused in dreams,

whenever the other element of the soul slumbers, the calculative, tame, and ruling element (λογιστικὸν καὶ ἡμέρον καὶ ἄρχον). Then the bestial and savage (θηριῶδες τε καὶ ἄγριον) full of food or drink, comes alive, casts off sleep and tries to go out and satisfy its own habits (ἥθη). You know it will dare do anything in such a state released and rid of from all shame and wisdom (αἰσχύνης καὶ φρονήσεως). In fantasy [as it imagines], it does not shrink from trying to have sex with a mother or with anyone else, man, god, or beast. It will commit any foul murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat. In a word, it will go to any length of folly and shamelessness (571c3-d3).

Here we notice that lawless desires are present and more active when reason does not exercise control over the soul and our dreams are supposed to be evidence for this. Often in dreams or in our imagination we imagine ourselves doing things we would never do when awake.<sup>256</sup> Plato explains this due to the relaxing of calculation or reason and the absence of shame. We are less ashamed when asleep and our practical wisdom (*phronesis*) is less active. Shame and wisdom seem to be the two principles by which we may place limitations on our desires and actions, assuming that shame follows wisdom instead of lawless desires. Shame is characteristic of the spirited part and wisdom is characteristic of the rational part and in the absence of their union with the rational part's lead, the appetitive part may come to rule the soul. Shame, wisdom, and opinion regarding our desires, seem to cover the range of reasons by which we may act one way or another, i.e., because we think it is shameful to do x or not to do x, and/or because we think we know that doing x or not doing x is good. Furthermore adding shame as a possible limit on desires appreciates the fact that in desiring, it is not only thoughts or opinions that may play a role but emotions also. Of course shame, as a motivating

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<sup>256</sup> Including dreams in the discussion of desires points out that Plato is aware of the complexity of the issue of desire. Moreover, talking about desires we do not follow in waking life but only in dreams shows Plato's awareness of repressed desires. This is also evident in the rest of the sketches of individuals. See also Lear (1992), and Roochnik (2003, 103).

emotion, may work in line with lawless desires and lead to bad, as when a thief may be ashamed of not carrying out a theft very well.<sup>257</sup> Plato points out that when we act on lawless desires we seem to lack both shame and wisdom about what it is appropriate to desire and do.

Socrates points out that when there are no rational limitations on our desires we may go to extremes and desire such things as to sleep with parents, other animals, or gods, or to commit any murder and to eat anything. These, Socrates claims, are examples of unnecessary and lawless desires which show how far in shamelessness and folly the appetitive part of the soul may take us. The examples show once again that Socrates has in mind all sorts of desires (or pleasures) and not just the lower desires for food, sex, and drink since he includes committing any murder which does not seem to fit the above three types of desire. He suggests that people may murder merely because they find it pleasurable. These are also examples meant to show how having such desires is morally problematic since most people (and cultures) would find them to be such.<sup>258</sup> Having clarified necessary and unnecessary desires to some extent we are ready to discuss the tyrannical man's soul in more detail.

### 6.3 The Origin of the Tyrannical Man and the Compulsory Grip of *Eros*.

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<sup>257</sup> Consider Callicles' comments in the *Gorgias* where he claims that moderation and justice are shameful (491e-492a).

<sup>258</sup> Including indiscriminate murder for pleasure as one of the examples here suggests quite a bit about where Socrates wants to take the discussion and his rejection of extreme hedonism. Someone may hold for the sake of argument, that if pleasure is the good and committing murder provides one with maximum pleasure then it is morally acceptable to do such a thing as much as someone can. But most people would deny this is the case, especially if we suggest that it is possible for them to be the victims, thus agreeing with Socrates' ultimate point that desires and pleasure are better when limited by other principles.

Socrates describes the soul of the tyrannical man in such a way so as to highlight its lack of limitations on desires and to draw the implications of this lack. We remember that the democratic man had a thrifty oligarchic father who valued and followed the desires for making money and did not like unnecessary desires whose aim is “entertainment and display” (572c3). The democratic man was also influenced or educated by people who urged him to follow unnecessary desires and ended up with a soul which pursued unnecessary desires of the intermediate kind, i.e., desires which are not unlawful, but neither beneficial nor harmful. The tyrannical man, like the democratic man, comes about by being influenced or educated from two directions, but unlike him, he lacks any limitations on his desires and comes to pursue unnecessary and lawless desires. Socrates explains,

Now imagine further that the same happens to him (the democratic man’s son) as happened to his father before him. He is led into all kinds of lawlessness (παρανομίαν)—or ‘liberty,’ (ἐλευθερίαν) as those who are leading him call it. His father and the rest of his household come to the support of the intermediate desires (ἐν μέσῳ ταύταις ἐπιθυμίαις), while his seducers support his other desires. When these cunning magicians (δεινοὶ μάγοι) and tyrant-makers (τυραννοποιοὶ) have no hope (ἐλπίσωσιν) of keeping control of him any other way, they contrive to implant (μηχανωμένους ἐμποιῆσαι) in him a kind of lust (ἔρωτα τινα), a champion (προστάτην) of those desires which are idle and which go through whatever is available, a kind of giant winged drone (ὑπόπτερον καὶ μέγαν κηφῆνά τινα). Isn’t that the only description for the lust (ἔρωτα) found in such people of this kind? (572d8-573a2).<sup>259</sup>

The democratic man’s son is influenced by others while his father has less of a positive influence on him than his own father did, and thus the son turns tyrannical. Plato reminds us that what some people call “liberty,” where they mean “license,” amounts to “lawlessness.” The people who influence the son’s desires are like magicians who instill in him the drone *eros*, which plays the role of the champion or protector of lawless desires. Like the potential tyrant that rules and appears to be the protector of the city (he

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<sup>259</sup> Translation mine.



appears to be interested in pursuing its interests), so does *eros* rule and appear to be the protector of the soul or the person. From the perspective of the tyrannical man driven by *eros* it seems that he pursues desires which are beneficial to him but which in fact are not.

We should also notice that Socrates connects the tyrant with the giant winged drone which is stingless. Earlier he had told us that there were two kinds of drones: winged and wingless, and some of the drones without wings had stings (552c-d). The drones with stings were the ones who became criminals in oligarchies. Portraying the tyrant as a drone without a sting suggests that tyrants are not strong, but quite weak in some sense. This reverses the common understanding of the tyrant as a “strongman” whose intelligence as well as his strength help him take over. Socrates rejects Thrasymachus’ claim that the tyrant is the strongest or most powerful person. Let us see how we may understand this rejection more clearly.

Socrates goes on to say that when the lawless unnecessary desires surround the winged and stingless drone *eros* they make it grow larger and “plant the sting of yearning in it” (πόθου κέντρον ἐμποιήσωσι, 573a7-8). The *eros* or lust in the tyrant’s soul comes to have the sting of yearning in it with the support of lawless unnecessary desires. This suggests that the tyrannical man (and the tyrant) is weak in the sense that he has a sting in his soul which stings him. In other words, it is due to the stinging the tyrannical man suffers in his soul, not due to strength, that such a person seeks to be tyrant. The tyrannical man’s lack of control over his lawless desires pushes him to desire tyranny; tyrants are forced to be tyrants and this makes them inferior to common criminals who are at least strong in some sense. Socrates pushes for a different understanding of strength that does not entail taking into account a person’s external actions, like the

tyrant's ability to use force, but which takes into account the condition and structure of the person's soul. He implies that true strength or power comes from the structure of one's soul, when this is ordered well. This strength amounts to the ability to resist lawless desires and act in accordance with the rational part of the soul. The tyrannical person is unable to do this. The idea that true strength springs from one's ordered soul, i.e. from justice, connects to one of Socrates' aims in the main argument of the dialogue, namely, to show that justice is good in itself. Since weakness is bad, and since the tyrant is weak and also the unjust person *par excellence*, this begins to show that injustice is bad in itself.

Socrates continues,

then, this (*eros*) champion of the soul (προστάτης τῆς ψυχῆς) takes madness for its bodyguard (δορυφορεῖται τε ὑπὸ μανίας), and goes berserk. If it detects in the man any opinions or desires which can be regarded as decent and which still feel some sense of shame, it kills them off (ἀποκτείνει) or banishes them from its presence, until it has purged the soul of moderation and filled it with foreign madness (573a8-b4).<sup>260</sup>

Socrates pushes the analogy of the city and the soul in that *eros* in the soul is similar to the tyrant in the city in banishing what it finds disagreeable. *Eros* appears to be the protector of the soul but it ends up stinging or harming the soul like the tyrant does to the city. *Eros* also opposes and rids the soul of any opinions that suggest limits on desires like the tyrant banishes or kills decent people in the city. Moreover, the soul is manic or uncontrollable by rational limitation and under the absolute influence of *eros*. Socrates suggests that people traditionally call *eros* “a tyrant” since it takes over one's soul in an absolute way while neglecting concerns other than fulfilling unlawful desires (573b6-7).

Now let us consider how exactly we are to understand *eros*?

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<sup>260</sup> Translation mine. The madness that guards the tyrant's soul seems to be tough, as the tyrant's bodyguards may be, and the softness and weakness seems to be only at the center, as the tyrant may be a soft rather than a strong person.

The way Socrates talks about *eros* here (ἔρωτα τινα) suggests that there are several kinds of it.<sup>261</sup> Thucydides in the funeral oration (2.43.1) has Pericles suggest that the freedom characteristic of the greatness of, and happiness in, Athens will make the citizens lovers (*erastai*) of it. Pericles uses the Athenian ideal of freedom to suggest that because of it the citizens should be like caring lovers to the city. Plato seems to deny the connection of the pursuit of extreme freedom to *eros* as caring for the city, and to rather link the unlimited pursuit of freedom to tyranny which serves only the interest of the ruler. Socrates portrays *eros* here as an overarching lust controlling the soul and compelling the person to act in several ways. He also presents a low kind of *eros* as characteristic of the tyrant and tyranny. If the tyrant loves the city he does so selfishly, i.e., only insofar as he can exploit it to get what he wants. This lust pushes the soul to pursue desires for consumption and for taking advantage of what is available. By suggesting that *eros* leads the tyrannical man's soul toward unlimited acquisition, consumption, and spending, Socrates highlights the tyrannical man's tendency to take advantage of others to get what he wants; he emphasizes his *pleonexia*.

A further interesting aspect of the discussion of *eros* is its association with madness (μανία) or, more accurately mania. This highlights further how *eros* exploits and compels the soul, and it explicates what the tyrannical person comes to be like. Whereas *eros* rules the soul as its seeming champion or protector (572e4-573a2), like the tyrant rules the city, mania guards *eros* (δορυφορεῖται τε ὑπὸ μανίας, 573a8), like the guards do the tyrant. Mania seems another way to speak of the sting of yearning which drives the tyrannical man's life. The tyrannical person is portrayed as manic in the sense

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<sup>261</sup> See *Symposium* 211c-e for example where Socrates points out that there are different kinds of *eros* in a hierarchy from that for bodies to that for the Forms.

that he has a variety of lawless and insatiable desires, which control his soul in a rather violent way, instead of being able to limit them. The reference to mania in relation to *eros* or lust intends to suggest that the tyrannical person has such a disordered soul that it causes the person to be “thrown” around or compelled by desire.

We should remember that Socrates portrayed the philosopher earlier as one who desires to know things in themselves and who has a sort of contempt for particulars (476a ff.). The philosopher’s *eros* is for the Forms (or for being), which exemplify metaphysical limit, as opposed to particulars which exemplify becoming, haphazardness, and unlimitedness.<sup>262</sup> The philosopher’s *eros* is thus linked to limit and his soul is like the objects he desires, i.e. ordered and limited, rather than disordered.<sup>263</sup> The tyrannical person’s disordered, manic, and haphazard soul would imply that the kinds of objects it desires are themselves limitless, ever changing and haphazard.

Socrates goes on to suggest that drunks are people with tyrannical characters (τυραννικόν τι φρόνημα, 573b9-c1). While we are prompted to understand and explain alcoholics as people with tyrannical souls who cannot restrain themselves, the image of the drunken person serves more as an explanation for the condition of the tyrannical man’s *eros* and mania. As drunks cannot restrain themselves from drinking excessively, the tyrannical man will go to excess on many levels, but not necessarily in drinking. We recall Socrates points out that in extreme democracy freedom is provided

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<sup>262</sup> Roochnik (2003) points out correctly that *Eros* is a concern of Plato’s throughout the dialogue, from Cephalus’ praise for the lack of his desire for sex in Book I, to Glaucon’s interruption of Socrates in Book II, and Polemarchus’ in Book V (prompting him to talk about women and children), to his final explicit discussion of it in the tyrant (88). I would add to this list Plato’s discussion of the philosopher in the central books. In effect I agree with Roochnik that Plato emphasizes the importance of *Eros* in the *Republic* whenever I emphasize the important role of desire in the dialogue.

<sup>263</sup> Of course this is not to say that the philosopher is merely the person who simply contemplates the Forms. He is the sort of person who, like Plato and Socrates, tries to deal with the tension of limit and unlimitedness (Forms and particulars, intelligible and unintelligible, stable and unstable and so on) on various levels: metaphysical, psychological, ethical, and political.

to people like undiluted wine at drinking parties (562c7-d4). This highlighted the problems of unlimited or extreme freedom. As undiluted wine may make someone drunk and out of control extreme freedom may also lead them to a life with no limitations on desires.

The tyrannical person as “a mad and deranged person attempts and thinks himself capable of ruling not only over humans but also over gods (μαινόμενος καὶ ὑποκεκινηκῶς οὐ μόνον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ καὶ θεῶν ἐπιχειρεῖ τε καὶ ἐλπίζει δυνατὸς εἶναι ἄρχειν)” (573c3-5). Socrates draws the implications of having lawless and unlimited desires which one attempts to satisfy. Lack of restraint and extravagant desires, may possibly lead to wish and efforts to rule not only over humans but also over gods. One implication of supposing that one can even rule over gods is *hubris* or impiety.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, unlimited desire links the tyrannical man’s psychology to politics, that is, to tyranny and the tyrant as a political figure. The pursuit of unlimited and lawless desires may lead one to pursue political power since this may allow him to secure more means by which to satisfy more desires. Being a private tyrannical person is not as likely to provide many of the means by which to satisfy many desires. But, more importantly, the idea that the tyrant even wishes to rule over gods highlights the fact that tyrants are very likely to seek political power beyond a single city. The point is that tyrants will engage in as much conquest as they think themselves capable of to acquire increasingly more means by which to satisfy extravagant desire.

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<sup>264</sup> This imagery is connected to Plato’s tradition where seeking absolute power as a monarch or tyrant was seen as appropriate only for gods and as hubristic for humans. See for example the fragments by Archilochus in chapter 1.

We realize that Plato seems aware of the possibility and likelihood of tyrannical conquest and expansion insofar as the tyrant supposes he is able to accomplish this. Of course, the extent to which the tyrant supposes he is able to conquer and desires to do so depends on resources and military capacity (including technological means). Thus, given Plato's analysis here, with increased military capacity it is more likely that tyrannies will engage in conquest. Older tyrannies, including the ones in Plato's time, while not refraining from conquest, were not as expansive as later or modern tyrannies due to lack of ability, i.e., inferior military power and technological limitations.<sup>265</sup>

Then Socrates tells us that: "A man comes to be tyrannical, strictly speaking, when either by nature or by practice or by both (ἢ φύσει ἢ ἐπιτηδεύμασιν ἢ ἀμφοτέροις) he comes to be drunken, erotic, and mad (μεθυστικός τε καὶ ἐρωτικός καὶ μελαγχολικός γένηται)" (573c7-9). This indicates further that tyrannical *eros* is equivalent to having intense, unlimited, and lawless desires. Suggesting that a tyrannical person comes to be either by nature or by practice or by both points to the idea that different people may come to be tyrannical in different ways.<sup>266</sup> Having provided a plausible account the origin of the tyrannical man Socrates goes on to consider how the tyrannical man lives and to clarify further the tyrannical soul and the role of *eros* in it.

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<sup>265</sup> The Persian Empire and Alexander the Great seem exceptions to this.

<sup>266</sup> The issue of how different people may come to be tyrannical, by nature, by practice, or by both, merits more attention. Some issues that may come into consideration may be that Plato thinks that different people have different natural abilities, that we were told that some people are taught by others to be tyrannical (572d8), that some talented, smart, and promising people, like Alcibideas seem to become tyrannical too easily, that Plato places much emphasis on the education and values promoted by different regimes.

#### 6.4 The Tyrannical Person's Life: Desires and Deeds.

Socrates moves from the consideration of the tyrannical man's origins (he comes to have and follow lawless desires) to a more thorough consideration of how he lives. Socrates asks Adeimantus to tell him how the tyrannical man lives (ζῆν δὲ δὴ πῶς, 573c11-12).<sup>267</sup> Asking how one lives is as ambiguous in Greek as it is in English, and it may have two meanings: what one does in one's life or whether one lives happily or not. Of course the two meanings are not so different insofar as what one does in life either amounts to, or contributes to, a happy life or not. Socrates and Adeimantus go on to consider both of these senses and the implications of lawless desires in terms of action or behavior. They begin with a list of the sorts of extreme actions the tyrant will engage in, which highlights the problematic nature of lawless and unlimited desire. Moreover, going through such actions reveals a further level of necessity inherent in the tyrannical life. This is a practical end existential necessity, which begins at the level of *Eros*. In other words, the tyrannical soul's disorder and lawless desires will force the tyrannical man to carry out certain actions and thus to necessarily be a certain way, i.e. unsatisfied and unhappy.

Socrates says that for the tyrannical man in “whom *eros* dwells as an internal tyrant, directing all things that pertain to the soul, there will be feasts, celebrations, luxuries, and call-girls, and all things of this sort” (τὸ μετὰ τοῦτο ἑορταὶ γίγνονται

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<sup>267</sup> We should note Adeimantus' response to this question. He refers to their conversation as playing a game when he says “Tell me this [how the tyrannical man lives] also, he said, as if we are playing a game” (Τὸ τῶν παιζόντων, ἔφη, τοῦτο, σὺ καὶ ἐμοὶ ἐρεῖς, 573d1). This response suggests that Adeimantus thinks of the conversation as a game since they have gone through the types of lives of several individuals parallel to different regimes so far, and thus he is quite familiar with the method of discussion. He also seems to think that how the tyrannical man lives is evident (or should be) and he is willing to play along so that Socrates can finish the argument. Adeimantus' remark here also prepares us to be like him in that we largely anticipate what Socrates goes on to say both about the tyrannical person's way of life and his lack of happiness.

παρ αὐτοῖς καὶ κῶμοι καὶ θαλῖαι καὶ ἐταῖραι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα, ὧν ἂν Ἔρως τύραννος ἔνδον οἰκῶν διακυβερνᾷ τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἅπαντα), to which Adeimantus responds: “Necessarily” (Ἀναγκη) (573d2-6).<sup>268</sup> They continue the parallel between the city and the soul and portray *eros* as the tyrant of the soul. Socrates suggests that the tyrannical man will necessarily require extravagant things in his life due to his desires. The feasts and celebrations mentioned above highlight both the tyrant’s efforts to satisfy lower desires such as those for food, drink and sex, as well as the desire to be honored and admired. We are aware of several ancient tyrants who sought to exhibit their wealth and power to win admiration, such as Dionysius I who had two grandiose weddings in the same day.<sup>269</sup>

They continue with how the tyrannical man will have his lawless and excessive desires intensify and how his attempts to satisfy them lead to extravagant spending,

Socrates: And don’t therefore many terrible desires sprout up each day and night, creating needs for all sorts of things (Ἐρῶν οὐκ οὐ πολλὰ καὶ δεινὰ παραβλαστάνουσιν ἐπιθυμίας ἡμέρας τε καὶ νυκτὸς ἐκάστης, πολλῶν δεόμεναι;)?

Adeimantus: Many do indeed.

Socrates: So, any income someone like that has is spent quickly (Ταχὺ ἄρα ἀναλίσκονται ἐάν τινες ὧσι πρόσοδοι).

Adeimantus: How could it not?

Socrates: And the next things, surely, is borrowing and expenditure of capital.

Adeimantus: What else?

Socrates: And when everything is gone, won’t it be necessary that the violent crowd of desires that have nested within him suddenly shout in protest (“Ὅταν δὲ δὴ πάντ’ ἐπιλίπη, ἄρα οὐκ ἀνάγκη μὲν τὰς ἐπιθυμίας βοᾶν πυκνάς τε καὶ σφοδράς ἐννεοστειμένους)? And when people of this sort are driven by the stings of these other appetites, but particularly of *Eros* itself, which leads all the others as if they were its bodyguard, stung to frenzy, don’t they look to see who possesses anything that can be taken from him by deceit or force (ἀπατήσαντα ἢ βιασάμενον)?

Adeimantus: Certainly indeed.

Socrates: It is necessary then that either he takes from every source, or to live in great suffering and pain (Ἀναγκαῖον δὴ πανταχόθεν φέρειν, ἢ μεγάλας ὠδῖσι τε καὶ ὀδύναις συνέχεσθαι).

<sup>268</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>269</sup> See my earlier discussion of poetry as celebrating tyrants during feasts.



Adeimantus: It is necessary (Ἀναγκαῖον) (573d7-574a5).<sup>270</sup>

Socrates presents the idea that the tyrannical person's lawless desires will intensify, as a result of his attendance of feasts and celebrations, which Adeimantus agrees are necessary for him.<sup>271</sup> Thus, the problem for the tyrannical person is not only that lawless and extravagant desires will be difficult to satisfy, but also, that having such desires leads to their intensification which creates increasingly more needs (πολλῶν δεόμεναι). The intensification of these desires takes place when one is given the ability to satisfy them. Attending feasts and parties provides the tyrannical man with such an opportunity and thus his desires multiply and intensify. Thus, insofar as the tyrant perceives that he has more power and thus the ability and means to satisfy more desires than anyone else, he is likely to have the most extravagant and insatiable desires and the most needs. The tyrannical person will be increasingly after more, and more kinds of, food, drink, sex, honor and so on. This multiplication of desires and the creation of more needs, will in turn require the tyrannical person to be after more resources to satisfy them. The tyrannical man eventually wants to be a tyrant. When the resources available are not enough to satisfy these desires they will necessarily lead him (ἀνάγκη) to try to acquire more resources at any cost, either by fraud or force (ἀπατήσαντα ἢ βιασάμενον). Thus, it will become necessary (Ἀναγκαῖον) for the tyrannical person that either he tries to acquire resources from any source and in any way to try to satisfy his desires, or to suffer.

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<sup>270</sup> Translation mine.

<sup>271</sup> For textual evidence that Socrates presents the intensification of desires as a result from going to feasts notice the ἄρ' οὖν at 573d7 which indicates that he is drawing a conclusion.

The fact that the tyrannical person seeks to acquire resources to satisfy desires by any means implies that he will even turn against his own parents. Socrates seems to draw this conclusion when he says that once he has spent what is his own, he will plan to take over what belongs to his father and mother, as the newer desires in the soul of the tyrannical man come to take over the older ones (574a6-10).<sup>272</sup> If his parents refuse to give him what is theirs he will resort to theft and fraud (κλέπτειν καὶ ἀπατᾶν) and his next step will be force (βιάζοιτο) (574b1-5). Moreover, he will even strike his mother, who is his old and necessary friend, due to his latest unnecessary mistress and will enslave his parents to people who come to live with him under the same roof (574b12-c5). He will also become a thief and break into someone's house and steal from temples driven by the intensity of his desires (574d1-6).

Socrates proceeds to explain further how the tyrannical man's behavior is causally related to his desires and opinions and to finish the description of the tyrannical man's way of life:

In all these exploits, his original childhood opinions about good and shameful, opinions which are generally regarded as just, will be overwhelmed by those new opinions just released from slavery, which are the bodyguard of Eros (δορυφοροῦσαι τὸν Ἔρωτα), and act in company with it. Previously, while he was still under the control of laws and of his father, and his mind was a democracy (δημοκρατούμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ), they were set free only in sleep, as dreams, but once he is tyrannized by Eros (τυραννευθεὶς δὲ ὑπὸ Ἔρωτος), and has become permanently, in his waking life, that which he used to be only occasionally, in his dreams, there will be no foul murder, no food, no deed, from which he will abstain (οὔτε τινὸς δεινοῦ ἀφέξεται οὔτε βρώματος οὔτ' ἔργου). Eros will dwell within him as a tyrant, in total anarchy, and lawlessness (τυραννικῶς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἔρως ἐν πάσῃ ἀναρχίᾳ καὶ ἀνομίᾳ ζῶν). As you'd expect of a sole ruler, it will lead its possessor, like a tyrant leading a city, into every kind of outrage (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τόλμαν), as it attempts to provide upkeep for itself and the mob (θόρυβον) surrounding it—some of them brought in from outside, the result of the bad company the man keeps, others native to him, released and liberated by the same bad habits in himself. Isn't that an accurate picture of the life (βίος) of the tyrannical man? (574d5-575a7).

<sup>272</sup> He begins saying this with another ἄρ' οὖν at 574a6 thus indicating that he is drawing another conclusion following what he has just said, i.e. that the tyrannical person will try to acquire resources to satisfy his desires by any means.

Socrates indicates that the tyrannical person's opinions regarding what is good and shameful were rather just in childhood (he was still quite democratic), but these become consumed by the opinions, which accompany and guard *Eros*. This suggests that erotic, lawless, and insatiable desires are supported by opinions which serve as rational justifications for them. The tyrannical person comes to do what he does due to his extravagant desires, while thinking that what he does is good and without shame. This is not to say that the tyrannical person provides detailed arguments about why he thinks his desires, and satisfying them the way he does, are good and not shameful. Nevertheless, he supposes that such opinions are true and these are in line with his desires, something which allows him to act without experiencing much conflict within his soul.

Finally, in the above passage, Socrates suggests that the tyrant, being freed from all sorts of limitations on his desires, lives in total anarchy and lawlessness, and there is no outrage his lawless desires will prevent him from committing in order to satisfy them. Having explained how the tyrannical man's behavior follows causally from his intense and unlimited desires Socrates goes on to link the psychology of the tyrannical person to politics and tyranny more explicitly.

#### 6.5 How the Tyrannical Man May Become a Tyrant.

Several concrete political conditions influence whether a tyrannical man may get the chance to be a tyrant, and we should expect that Socrates' discussion of these will be closely related to the account of the birth of tyranny from Book VIII. When a city does not have many tyrannical people in it and most people in the city are rather prudent (τὸ

ἄλλο πλῆθος σωφρονῆ) tyrannical people may emigrate. They may go on to become “bodyguards of another tyrant” (ἄλλον τινὰ δορυφοροῦσι τύραννον) or mercenaries in existing wars (575b1-3). This confirms that a single person cannot set up a tyranny, but a critical mass of tyrannical types is required even if these are foreigners or freed slaves as Socrates indicated before. If tyrannical people live in peaceful times they commit many small evils or crimes on a small scale (575b-c).

This is supposed to remind us of Thrasymachus who claimed that the happy and unjust person he had in mind as was not one who performed petty crimes, but a full-fledged tyrant. Socrates’ point is that tyrannical people cannot always become tyrants. Doing so depends on concrete political conditions, such as the presence of other tyrannical types and the prudence of citizens. Thrasymachus promises to provide the rhetorical skills by which one can manipulate crowds and become a tyrant, but Socrates denies that coming to be tyrant requires only such skills.<sup>273</sup> Thus, happiness in Thrasymachus’ terms would seem far away from most tyrannical person’s reach since one finds himself in existing political conditions which are largely out of his control. This is another one of Socrates’ attempts to undermine the tyrant’s perception of his strength and ability to do what he wants. But what if there are plenty of tyrannical types and the rest of the citizens are not very prudent?

Socrates goes on to explain further what political conditions allow for a tyrannical man to become tyrant:

Minor crimes are defined in reference to major crimes and when it comes to the wretchedness and misery of the city (πονηρία τε καὶ ἀθλιότητι πόλεως), none of

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<sup>273</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics* X 9 1180b30-1181a17 where Aristotle indicates that the sophists profess to teach politics, but none of them practice it or taught their sons to be politicians, that they miss the fact that knowing and doing politics requires a lot of experience, and that they equate politics to rhetoric or even treat it as inferior to rhetoric (on this see Isocrates’ *Antidosis* 80).

these can hold a candle, as the saying goes to the tyrant. When you get a large number of these people in a city, and others following them, when they become aware of their own numbers, then it is they, aided and abetted by the folly of the common people who give birth to the tyrant (οἱ τὸν τύραννον γεννώντες μετὰ δήμου ἀνοίας ἐκείνου)—that one who stands out among them as possessing the greatest and most bloated tyrant in the soul within him (575c2-9).

The tyrannical person, once he is able to become tyrant, commits the most terrible crimes, which cause the city's wretchedness. The tyrannical person becomes a tyrant when the city includes many tyrannical people in it who support the person with the greatest amount of *eros* in his soul. The tyrant is not the worst sort of person, this is the tyrannical man, but the tyrant is the worst single person from the worst kind of people. The idea that the wicked people in the city support the most wicked person among them suggests that people tend to like and approve of others who are like them. Socrates indicates that tyrannical types tend to like other tyrannical types since they have similar souls with similar lawless desires, goals, and conceptions of the happy life. Thus, if there are plenty of tyrannical types around, the potential tyrant attracts willing support from them without considerable difficulty, since they admire and approve of him. Moreover, the presence of many tyrannical types in a city enable the potential tyrant to win their support by persuasion since he knows what to say to exploit their desires and opinions.<sup>274</sup>

Furthermore, the tyrannical types take advantage of the folly of the other people in the city. The “folly” Socrates has in mind has to do with allowing too many tyrannical types to arise in the city, which eventually turns the city into a tyranny. Thus many cities, which are tolerant of tyrannical types, or which do not have adequate measures to prevent

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<sup>274</sup> In Book VIII we saw that one of the prevalent ways the potential tyrant comes to be a tyrant is by fueling feuds and by aligning himself with one group against another. Thus, the tyrant would have to get tyrannical types to oppose the other types on the city and pretend to align his interests with their own. Another way by which he may win willing support is by promises of furnishing people with the means to satisfy their desires (see Chapter 4).

the rise of tyrannical types, may fall prey to tyranny. Earlier, in Book VIII, we saw that extreme democracy allowed for all sorts of types of people to live in it due to its excessive freedom and equality and that it was possible for tyranny to arise from democracy. Thus, the discussion of tyrannical types taking advantage of the folly of other people is related to the idea that tyranny may arise from democracy. It seems true however, that tyrannical types may arise in other regimes also insofar as these do not have adequate preventative measures.

Thrasymachus and the others like him who praise tyranny and who claim to teach rhetoric by which one can reach it, would have to hope that all these conditions (“folly,” numerous tyrannical people and so on) have to be present for rhetoric to be persuasive and be able to lead to tyranny. Perhaps they are able to claim and advertise that the rhetoric they teach can lead to tyrannical power only when such conditions are present.

The city may not submit to the tyrant so willingly, thus Socrates continues,

That is assuming they obey him willingly (ἐκόντες ὑπείκωσιν). If the city does not prove compliant (ἐπιτρέπη), then he will punish his country (πατρίδα) in its turn, if he can (ἐὰν οἷός τ' ᾷ), in the same way as he punished his mother and father earlier. He will bring in new, foreign colleagues (νέους ἐτάιρους), and he will keep in slavery to them the fatherland—or motherland, as the Cretans call it—he once loved. That is how he will hold and provide for his country. And this would be the ultimate goal at which such a sort of man’s desire is directed (575d3-9).

If the city does not submit to the tyrant willingly then, if he can, he will use force and punish the citizens to maintain power. The city may not support the tyrant for too long since the people’s folly of tolerating and allowing tyrannical types to arise may not last too long. Once the tyrant comes to power and begins to be unjust then the people’s tolerance of him is likely to dissipate. The last line of the passage also repeats Thrasymachus claim that the tyrant intends to enslave all the citizens, while Socrates explains that this intention follows from the tyrant’s desires.

Socrates goes on to sum up what the tyrannical man and the tyrant are like. After telling us that such a person associates with flatterers, that he does not have any friends, that he cannot be trusted, and that he is most unjust he says

Let us sum up this worst of all people (τὸν κάκιστον). He is I take it, the waking embodiment of the kind of man we described as existing in dreams... Anyone with a most tyrannical nature who becomes sole ruler ends up like this. And the longer he spends in his tyranny, the more like this he becomes (576b3-8).<sup>275</sup>

The tyrant is like a nightmare come true, he is the worst tyrannical man, and the longer one is a tyrant the worse he becomes. The point is that the longer one is a tyrant the more he is likely to be as the tyrannical man was described above, i.e. resort to violence, lack friends, be distrustful of others and so on, all of which begin to show that he will not be a happy man. Before we move on to the next chapter and Plato's arguments against tyranny, let me indicate how the discussion of the tyrannical man's soul refers to and illuminates the necessity inherent in tyranny.

### 6.6 The Tyrant's Psychology and Necessity

We recall that Socrates in Book VIII indicates that there is an inherent destructive necessity to tyranny. This is a practical necessity in which effects y necessarily follow necessary actions x. We also saw that the effects that follow from these necessary actions (the tyrant has to take the city to war and to purge it from enemies which causes the citizens to hate him, and due to his being increasingly more hated he becomes more suspicious and fearful and he is forced to have dronish untrustworthy types as guards) required more justifications which we seem to get in the discussion of the tyrannical soul and its desires. In other words, up to that point Socrates claimed that in tyranny certain

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<sup>275</sup> Translation mine.

necessary actions x caused effects y necessarily but he had not explained why actions x were necessary in the first place. He provides such an explanation in his analysis of the tyrannical soul by revealing an additional level of necessity due to *Eros*.

Socrates holds that it is the tyrannical soul which causes the tyrannical person to perform actions x necessarily, and these actions, in turn, cause effects y necessarily. Thus, there is something about the soul that ultimately explains this practical necessity. Socrates explains that the tyrannical soul entails an internal compulsion or necessity in itself which explains the resulting practical necessity. This is evident from his discussion of the compelling grip of *Eros*, the sting of yearning implanted in the soul, and the mania inherent in it, which allow him to describe how lawless and pleonexic desires enslave the tyrannical person and compel him to action. His discussion of the tyrannical soul makes it clear that several of the things the tyrannical person does follow from the disordered and unjust state of his soul and the lawless, *pleonexic* desires which rule it. An unjust soul will cause a person to do unjust actions, and the most unjust soul will cause a person to do the most unjust actions.

Socrates told us that the tyrannical man's erotic soul with its lawless and pleonexic desires will force him to engage in several sorts of activities to satisfy these desires. The tyrannical man has to attend feasts and celebrations (573d26), which in turn intensify the soul's desires and multiply its needs. This leads him to spend what resources he has to satisfy his new needs and then he is forced to either suffer or do anything to acquire the means to satisfy his desires (573d7-574a5).<sup>276</sup> Thus, the

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<sup>276</sup> This is reminiscent of the situation the tyrant finds himself from purging the city of good people. He necessarily has to either live with bad people who will come to hate him, or not live at all (567d1-3). In both cases the tyrannical life is accompanied by compulsion. In the case of purging the city of good people we saw that the tyrant's efforts to secure power and his suspicion of possible enemies necessitates



tyrannical man turns violent and turns on his parents, a tendency which highlights his violent attitude towards anyone who comes in his way (574a ff.). Since the tyrannical person requires more and more means by which to satisfy his lawless desires, he soon comes to wish to be tyrant.

Since the tyrant is the worst tyrannical man the practical necessity caused by the state of the tyrannical soul follows the tyrant into the tyrannical regime and it even intensifies. The compulsion in the tyrant's life extends to the existential quandary in which, once one becomes tyrant it is impossible to escape such a life and in order to survive one has to act more and more like a tyrant.<sup>277</sup> Socrates explains the practical necessity which serves as a principle of internal destruction in tyranny as a result of tyrannical psychology. In effect, Plato seems to suggest that the tyrant is necessarily driven by unnecessary (and lawless) desires. This may sound paradoxical but it is part of Plato's point, i.e., that tyrannical life is paradoxical or contradictory. The tyrant's desires are unnecessary, namely, resistible with practice and harmful from an ideal perspective, from the perspective of humans as such. But, at the same time, once a person becomes tyrannical he cannot resist such desires and they necessarily drive his life. In other words the desires unnecessary for humans as such become most necessary for the tyrannical personality. Moreover, as I argue in the next chapter the eventual necessary effects that follow from the tyrant's state of soul, will necessitate the tyrant's lack of happiness.

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that he purge the city of good people (567c1-3). This, in turn, necessitates the bind of either living with wicked people who will hate him, or death. In the case of either suffering or trying to acquire more resources to satisfy desires by any means, the necessity seems to follow both from the tyrannical person's state of soul and extravagant desire, as well as from some of his actions which are first necessitated by his desires.

<sup>277</sup> Socrates indicates that this happens to tyrants at 567d1-3: the tyrant either has to purge the city of good people and live with bad people who hate him or die. For a similar point see Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* 2.63.2 where Pericles suggests that Athens' empire is like a tyranny which was perhaps unjust to take but dangerous and foolish to give up.

Thus Socrates explains tyrannical life as a causal chain bound by several levels of necessity which begin with the most unjust soul and end with lack of happiness.<sup>278</sup>

In this chapter I analyzed Plato's conception of the tyrannical soul, its lawless desires, and the sorts of actions to which such desires lead. This is part of Plato's account for how the appetitive part of the soul comes to rule the other parts and to lead the person to *pleonexia*. This emphasis on desire suggests that Plato thinks that much of politics has to do with desire and the direction it may take. As Roochnik puts it so well, "Eros is intrinsic to political activity itself, for as Glaucon's second city of relishes demonstrates, politics is born from the expansive nature of desire" (2003, 88). I also showed that Plato's view of tyranny entails a necessity that is ultimately explainable in terms of the tyrannical soul and its lawless and pleonexic desires. Having explained the psychological aspects of the tyrannical man and the connection of the tyrannical man to the tyrant we are now ready to consider Plato's arguments against tyranny, both as a regime, and as a type of life.

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<sup>278</sup> We could represent this chain of necessity briefly in the following way: Tyrannical soul with inherent psychological necessity due to *Eros* and lawless desires □ practical necessity, i.e. kinds of actions which follow necessarily from the tyrannical soul □ necessary effects that follow from the actions, such as being hated by the citizens, being suspicious, having many enemies etc. □ ultimate necessary effect of tyrant's wretchedness.

## Chapter 7. Plato's Arguments Against Tyranny.

Plato's account of tyranny is comprehensive and this extends to his arguments against it. He argues both against tyranny as a regime and against the tyrannical life. Even though we touched upon some of these arguments in previous chapters it is my task here to consider them in more detail. I begin the chapter by reminding us of Thrasymachus' position on tyranny in the shepherd speech, and by considering a passage (576d3-577b9, following the discussion of the tyrannical man's life and deeds in Book IX), which reveals Plato's comprehensive perspective on tyranny. I consider these two passages since they reveal the several considerations that enter into Plato's arguments against tyranny and the tyrannical life and which make his attack on them comprehensive. Finally, I consider the several arguments against tyranny and the tyrant's life.

### 7.1 Thrasymachus' Challenge.

In Book I Thrasymachus claims that injustice is superior to justice. He argues for this claim in the shepherd speech (343b1-344c8) where he presents several of the benefits of tyranny as complete injustice. He says,

The opposite is the case for an unjust man in every respect. I mean, indeed, the person described before, namely, the man who outdoes anyone else due to having power (τὸν μέγιστα δυνάμενον πλεονεκτεῖν). He is the one you should consider if you want to figure out how much more advantageous it is for the individual to be unjust than just. You will understand this most easily if you turn your thoughts to injustice of the most complete sort (ἐπὶ τὴν τελεωτάτην ἀδικίαν ἔλθης), the sort that makes the one who does injustice happiest (ἢ τὸν μὲν ἀδικήσαντα εὐδαιμονέστατον ποιεῖ), and the ones who suffer it—those who are unwilling to do injustice—most wretched (ἀθλιωτάτους). This is tyranny (τυραννίς), because it uses both covert means (καὶ λάθρα) and force (καὶ βίαν) to appropriate the property of others—whether it is sacred or indeed hallowed, public or private—not to a small scale, but all at once. If someone commits a part of this sort of injustice and gets caught, he is punished and greatly reproached—temple robbers, kidnappers, housebreakers, robbers and thieves are what

these partly unjust people are called when they commit those crimes. When someone appropriates the possessions of the citizens, on the other hand, and then kidnaps and enslaves the possessors as well, instead of these shameful names he is called happy and blessed; not only by the citizens themselves, but even by all who learn that he has committed the whole of injustice (τὴν ὅλην ἀδικίαν). For it is not the fear of doing injustice, but of suffering it, that elicits the reproaches of those who revile injustice (ὄνειδίζουσιν οἱ ὄνειδίζοντες τὴν ἀδικίαν). In this way, Socrates, injustice is stronger (ἰσχυρότερον), freer (ἐλευθεριώτερον), and more masterful (δεσποτικώτερον) than justice if it is committed on a large scale (ἰκανῶς γιγνομένη). And, as I was saying from the beginning, justice is what is advantageous for the stronger, while injustice is profitable and advantageous for oneself (343d7-344c8).

For Thrasymachus, injustice is more powerful than justice, and thus, the unjust man is happier than the just man. Moreover his argument entails the commonplace view that the tyrant, the most powerful and unjust person, is happiest, since he has enough power to satisfy his desires and to do whatever he wants without getting punished for his injustice. By the end of the speech Thrasymachus sums up the related reasons that tyranny and the tyrant—i.e. injustice done on a large enough scale or sufficiently (ἰκανῶς γιγνομένη)—are happier, namely, that these are more powerful (ἰσχυρότερον), freer (ἐλευθεριώτερον), and more masterful (δεσποτικώτερον) than justice and the just man. Power and freedom refer to the tyrant's ability to do what he wants to serve his perceived interests. Mastery, more specifically, refers to his ability to have people under his control so that they serve his interests. While Plato agrees with Thrasymachus that tyranny and the tyrant are most unjust, he launches several arguments to show that tyranny and the tyrant are enslaved, impotent, and wretched.

## 7.2 Socrates' Emphasis on a Comprehensive Perspective and The Different

### Levels of Argument.

Upon completing the description of the tyrannical man's origin, desires, and evil deeds Socrates and Glaucon go on to consider the tyrannical city and the tyrant in terms of virtue and happiness:

Socrates: As regards virtue, then, how does a city ruled by a tyrant (τυραννουμένη) compare to a city of the sort we described is ruled by a king (βασιλευμένη)?

Glaucon: They are absolute opposites: one is the best, and the other is the worst (ή μὲν γὰρ ἀρίστη, ή δὲ κακίστη).

Socrates: I won't ask you which is which, since it is obvious. But as regards happiness and wretchedness (εὐδαιμονίας τε αὖ καὶ ἀθλιότητος) is your judgment (κρίνεις) the same or different? And let's not become dazzled (μὴ ἐκπληττώμεθα) by looking at the tyrant—since he is just one man—or at the few who surround him. Instead, as is necessary, let's go in and study the city as a whole and when we have gone down and looked into every corner, only then present what we believe.

Glaucon: That's a good suggestion. And it is clear to everyone that there is no city more wretched (ἀθλιοτέρα) than a tyrannized (τυραννουμένης) one and none happier (εὐδαιμονεστέρα) than one ruled by a king.

Socrates: Would it also be right, then, to suggest the same thing about the men—that the only fit judge of them is someone who can, in thought, go down to a man's character and discern it—not someone who sees it from the outside, the way a child does, and is dazzled by the façade that tyrants adopt (ὅς δύναται τῇ διανοίᾳ εἰς ἀνδρὸς ἦθος διιδεῖν καὶ μὴ καταπερ παῖς ἔξωθεν ὁρῶν ἐκπλήττεται ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν τυραννικῶν προστάσεως) for the outside world, but someone who discerns it adequately? And what if I were to assume that the person we must listen to is the one who has this capacity to judge (τοῦ δυνατοῦ μὲν κρίναι); one who has lived in the same house as a tyrant and witnessed his behavior at home; who has seen how he deals with each member of his household when he can best be observed stripped of his tragic costume; and who has also seen how he deals with public dangers (δημοσίοις κινδύνοις)? Shouldn't we ask the one who has seen all that to tell us how the tyrant compares to the others with respect to happiness and wretchedness?

Glaucon: That's also a very good suggestion.

Socrates: Then in order to have someone to answer our questions, do you want us to pretend that we are among the ones who can make such a judgment, and that we have met tyrannical people already?<sup>279</sup>

Glaucon: I certainly do. (576d3-577b9).

Socrates and Glaucon conclude that the tyrannical city is the worst and the most wretched or unhappy, and we should expect the same judgment for the tyrant's type of life. In this passage Socrates exhibits special concern about how we will be able to judge both tyranny as a regime and the tyrant's life. He is concerned with the possibility of having anything less than a comprehensive perspective, which may prevent us from judging lives correctly.<sup>280</sup> He points out the possibility of being dazzled by the tyrant's life when we attempt to judge the tyrannical city in terms of happiness, and the possibility of being

<sup>279</sup> Some construe this as a possible reference to Plato's familiarity with Dionysius II. See Reeve (2004, 277).

<sup>280</sup> On the emphasis on the appropriate judging of the types of lives see also the myth of Er in book X where different souls are able or unable to judge different lives as best and happy and to choose these.

dazzled when we attempt to judge the tyrant's sort of life. What may dazzle our judgment of the tyrannical city and of the tyrannical life, as Socrates implies happens to many others, is that the tyrant seems happy. What makes the tyrant appear happy is that he seems powerful and able to do what he wants. This may lead us to conclude that the tyrannical city is a good place for the tyrant and that the tyrant is happy as Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus claim in the beginning of the dialogue.<sup>281</sup>

In order to judge correctly whether the tyrannized city is happy or unhappy we need to look at what happens to all the people in it, to the citizens as well as to the tyrant. If both of these turn out to be wretched, then we can conclude that such a city is also wretched. To judge correctly whether the tyrant's life is happy or unhappy we need to have access to his life in private as well as into his soul. It is not enough to consider the tyrant's possessions as enticing as these may appear to the external observer. Thus, Socrates' concerns with having a comprehensive perspective demand that we look both at tyranny and the tyrannical life; we must get inside both.

Since we have to look both inside and outside tyranny and the tyrannical life to judge correctly whether these are happy or wretched, and since Socrates has to respond to Thrasymachus' claims that tyranny and the tyrannical life are happier, freer, stronger and more masterful than justice, we should expect that several related considerations go into different levels of argument against tyranny and the tyrannical life. On the one hand, Plato considers both internal and external features of tyranny and the tyrannical life to argue against them. On the other hand, Plato includes several of these considerations in

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<sup>281</sup> In telling us that we need to look "in every corner" of the city to judge its happiness Socrates implies the claim made earlier that their aim in the *kallipolis* is to make the whole city, all its classes, as happy as possible, not any one class happier than another (420b). This suggests that for Socrates the happy city is only the one which makes all or most of its citizens as happy as they can be. Moreover, Polus and Callicles in the *Gorgias* also support the claim that the tyrant is happy.

his arguments to show that tyranny and the tyrannical life are powerless (neither strong, nor free, nor masterful), and to show that these are wretched. These levels of argument are related insofar as showing that tyranny and the tyrannical life are powerless allows us to argue that they are wretched. Let us begin with two arguments against tyranny as a regime and then move on to arguments against the tyrannical life.

### 7.3 Two Arguments Against Tyranny: Tyranny as a Self-Defeating Regime and Tyranny as a Bad Regime for Citizens.

In Book VIII Socrates shows that tyranny is a self-defeating regime bound to be rather short-lived. This amounts to an argument that shows tyranny's inherent impotence even though it may seem to be powerful externally. He shows explicitly that the tyrant is compelled to act in several ways necessarily, and even though these are intended to preserve tyranny and to serve the tyrant's interests, at the same time they are detrimental to the survival of tyranny:

(1) The tyrant goes to war to persuade the citizens that they need a leader, to keep them poor and concentrated on their private affairs rather than on politics, and to eliminate people he perceived as enemies (πολέμους τινὰς ἀεὶ κινεῖ 566e8, and, ἀεὶ ἀνάγκη πόλεμον ταραττεῖν, 567a8). Keeping the city on a war footing, impoverishing and purging the city of enemies, also necessarily entails the eventual birth of much hatred and opposition for the tyrant.

(2) The tyrant purges the city of its good citizens because he suspects them as his enemies. This necessitates that he either has to live with base citizens, many of whom will hate him and harm him, or not live at all (567c1-d3).

(3) The tyrant becomes progressively more hated in the city, due to his actions and measures directed at preserving his power and serving his interests, and this necessitates the creation of a larger guard for him (567d5-568a6). Since these guards are dronish the tyrant will not be able to trust them either, especially when their benefits and his are not aligned. Moreover, the tyrant's necessary suspicion and fear of the people around him and the harm that may come from them make it doubtful whether he can ultimately benefit from those around him; he remains anxious, he gets no recognition or satisfying friendship, and these are people that may attack him.

Tyranny entails essentially an inherent principle of practical necessity, which is at the same time the principle of its destruction. Tyranny is a contradictory regime, since the tyrant's compelled actions entail effects which work against tyranny and its aims and which eventually destroy it. Now let us proceed to the second argument against tyranny, which shows that tyranny is a terrible regime for citizens since it makes them unhappy.

In the shepherd speech (343b1-344c8), Thrasymachus argues that tyranny is beneficial for the tyrant since it allows him to pursue his interests. He also implies that it is terrible for the other citizens insofar as their behaving "justly" (in accordance with the tyrant's wishes) serves the tyrant's interests and not their own. Moreover, Thrasymachus suggests that the tyrant treats the citizens as means or as slaves to serve his interests. Plato pushes part of this argument in his description of the tyrannical regime in Book VIII. He argues that tyranny is a bad regime since it attempts to serve only the interests of the ruler in several ways, which are detrimental to the citizens' lives and prospects for happiness. Let us remember some of the discussion from Book VIII where Plato explained tyranny and argued that it is a terrible regime for citizens.



We saw that at 544c1-d4 Socrates calls tyranny the most extreme disease for a city (ἔσχατον πόλεως νόσημα). The application of the parallel between health and justice to tyranny places it at the bottom of the pathological scale of regimes. It is the worst regime, the most unjust, and insofar as just cities contribute to the happiness of their citizens it is the one least likely to achieve this. Moreover Socrates calls tyranny the most severe and cruel slavery several times (564a6-c4, 569b9-c4, 577c4-9). This suggests, in agreement with Thrasymachus, that citizens in tyranny are treated as means to the interests of the tyrant and that this is terrible for them.

A further consideration of the several negative features of tyranny reveals that Plato has a rather detailed and strong argument against tyranny as a regime which makes its citizens unhappy.<sup>282</sup>

(1) The potential tyrant only appears to be beneficent, just, and friendly to the citizens, and Socrates likens him to a wolf (565e3-566d2). This highlights the injustice and violence that comes upon the city with the tyrant's rule. The tyrant pretends to be beneficent and just to win popular support and to be thus able to serve his interests.

(2) The tyrant has to lead the city to war constantly not directed at the city's interests but his own. He does so to win or maintain popular support and to get rid of enemies whom he perceives being in the way of the pursuit of his interests.

(3) Since the tyrant is full of suspicion and fear for his life, he treats the citizens with undeserved violence. He spies on, murders, exiles, jails, tortures anyone he perceives as a potential threat. Moreover, anyone is a potential threat in the tyrant's mind and this suggests that anyone is a potential target of the tyrant's suspicion. This causes

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<sup>282</sup> Socrates points these out at 566d8-568a6 in Book VIII. See also his discussion from 577b10-578a8 in Book IX.

the citizens to live in constant fear of the tyrant. The tyrant may even kill his own family if they get in his way.

(4) He impoverishes the city and keeps people poor even though he may promise or seem to care for their economic interests. Spending extravagantly also forces him to be more and more unjust (appropriate any property or money) and more violent in his efforts to acquire more resources. He turns most of the people he rules into slaves.

(5) Finally, he surrounds himself with people of no worth since he does away with people of any worth. He can trust more those whose fortune is dependent exclusively on him. This purge deprives the city of people who could contribute to its well being in any way. Another implication of getting rid of people of real worth may be that in the event of tyranny's overthrow the city will have tremendous problems since it will not have people of true worth contributing to its welfare.<sup>283</sup>

Plato's argument against tyranny as a bad regime for citizens revolves around listing several of its essential negative features to show how the tyrant's attempts to serve his own interests eventually turn into treating citizens in dreadful and unacceptable ways. This is of course the easier part of Plato's argument against tyranny since, construed in this way, we are, and many of his contemporaries were, easily persuaded that tyranny is a bad regime for citizens. Citizens may be satisfied with the tyrant at times if he benefits them but as Plato argues, his "beneficence" will not last too long. Thus all citizens, regardless of their support for the tyrant, are likely to be harmed by him eventually. The harder case Plato has to make is that tyranny is also terrible for the tyrant and that the tyrannical life he leads cannot make him happy.

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<sup>283</sup> Socrates repeats these features of tyranny at 577b10-578b2.

#### 7.4. The Impotence and Wretchedness of Tyrannical Life.

We recall that at 573c11-12 Socrates asks Adeimantus to tell him how the tyrannical man lives (ζῆ δὲ δὴ πῶς;), and that they go on to consider his deeds and behavior. Following this discussion and the demands for a comprehensive perspective (576d3-577b9), Socrates and Glaucon go on to judge whether the tyrant's life amounts to happiness or not, and if his life is happier than a just king's. The judgment is based on an argument showing that the tyrant's life is most wretched and that the just person's life is happiest (577b10-580c10).<sup>284</sup>

Socrates, however, has been arguing all along that the just person is better as well as happier than the unjust, and that the philosopher king is best and happiest while the tyrant is worst and most wretched.<sup>285</sup> Thus, Socrates has been attacking tyrannical life from as far back as Book VIII. Moreover, as we will see, the argument, from 577b10-580c10, presupposes the earlier discussion of tyranny and the tyrannical soul and it incorporates much of it. Before we proceed to consider this argument, let us remember the discussion of tyranny and the tyrannical soul from Books VIII and IX so far to locate the arguments it entails against the tyrannical life.

In Book VIII Plato explains tyranny in power in a long passage from 566d8-568a6, which we analyzed in chapter 5. There we saw him discuss a number of negative features in the tyrant's life. These were: being constantly suspicious and fearful of enemies, being surrounded with people of no worth who either harm him (physically or

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<sup>284</sup> This is also part of the larger argument in the dialogue intended to show that the just life is better than the unjust.

<sup>285</sup> See White (1979, 222-223) who argues that the argument begins as far back as 368c where Socrates' takes up Glaucon and Adeimantus' challenge. I disagree with Pappas who points out that what follows "is not really an argument, only a summation of the catalogue of injustice" (2003, 172). I think what we get between 577b10-580c10 is an argument, but it is one which presupposes and incorporates much of the previous discussion and it is not meant to stand on its own.

otherwise), or who merely flatter him and do not give him the recognition he seeks (the tyrant has no friends). By pointing out these features Plato suggests strongly that the tyrant's life cannot be happy. Moreover, the presence of these features of tyranny that prevent the tyrant from being happy, are explainable by tyranny's inherent necessity. Plato highlights the practical necessity inherent in tyranny which forces the tyrant to perform a number of actions and to take a number of measures, such as go to war and purge the city of enemies. These actions necessitate a number of effects like the ones above which prevent the tyrant from being happy.

In Book IX and the discussion of the tyrannical person's psychology, Plato portrays the tyrant as subject to a psychological necessity due to the soul's lawless desires, due to its *Eros*. This necessity explains the practical necessity in the city, i.e., that the tyrant has to do what he does in order to satisfy his desires and to secure the means by which to do so. Moreover, Plato explains this psychological necessity in terms of the soul. The tyrant has a manic soul ruled by *Eros*, with the sting of yearning enslaving and compelling the soul to action and suffering, aspects which are meant to highlight the tyrant's misery. Socrates goes on to say more about, and to incorporate both of these arguments from Book VIII and IX in what follows, in his judgment of the tyrannical life as wretched at 577b10-580c10.

After Socrates stresses the demand for a comprehensive perspective, he reminds the interlocutors that the city and the soul are analogous (576c10, 577b10-c2), and, along with Glaucon, they proceed to pull their previous discussion together and to offer an argument for the tyrannical life's wretchedness (577b10-580c10). If the city and the soul are parallel, then a comparison of tyranny and the tyrant with kingship and the king will

reveal which is happiest. This seems a defense of eudaimonism as well as justice since we may realize that orderly, just life, must be happier than disorderly, non-eudaimonistic existence. The argument begins in the following way:

Socrates: Come on, then, and examine the matter like this for me. Bearing in mind the resemblance between the city and the man, examine each in turn, and tell me the calamities of each of them (τὰ παθήματα ἐκατέρου λέγε).

Glaucon: What kinds of things do you want me to describe?

Socrates: Describe the city first. Would you say that a tyrannized city is free or enslaved (ἐλευθέραν ἢ δούλην τὴν τυραννουμένην ἔρεις;)?

Glaucon: As enslaved as it is possible to be (μάλιστα δούλην).

Socrates: Yet you can surely see masters and free people in it (δεσπότης καὶ ἐλευθέρους).

Glaucon: I can certainly see a small group of people like that (σικρὸν γέ τι τοῦτο). But pretty much the whole population, and the best part of it, is shamefully and wretchedly enslaved (ἀτίμως τε καὶ ἀθλίως δούλον).

Socrates: If a man and his city are similar, then, mustn't the same order exist in him too (καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῳ ἀνάγκη τὴν αὐτὴν τάξιν ἐνεῖναι)? Mustn't his soul be full of slavery and illiberality, with those same parts of it enslaved, while a small part, the most wicked, and most insane, is master (καὶ πολλῆς μὲν δουλείας τε καὶ ἀνελευθερίας γέμειν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ταῦτα αὐτῆς τὰ μέρη δουλεύειν, ἅπερ ἦν ἐπικεικίστατα, μικρὸν δὲ καὶ τὸ μοχθηρότατον καὶ μανικώτατον δεσπότης;)?

Glaucon: It must ('Ανάγκη).

Socrates: What then, will you describe such a soul as enslaved or as free?

Glaucon: Enslaved, of course.

Socrates: And again, isn't the enslaved tyrannized city least able to do what it wishes (Οὐκοῦν ἢ γε αὖ δούλη καὶ τυραννουμένη πόλις ἥκιστα ποιεῖ ἃ βούλεται;)?

Glaucon: By far the least.

Socrates: So, a tyrannized soul will also least do what it wishes—I am talking about the soul as a whole—and will be full of confusion and regret, since it is always forcibly driven by a gadfly (Καὶ ἡ τυραννουμένη ἄρα ψυχὴ ἥκιστα ποιήσει ἃ ἂν βουληθῆ, ὡς περὶ ὄλης εἰπεῖν ψυχῆς· ὑπὸ δὲ οἴστρου αἰεὶ ἐλκομένη βίᾳ ταραχῆς καὶ μεταμελείας ἔσται).

Glaucon: Of course (577b10-577c10).<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Translation mine. Several translators translate παθήματα neutrally, i.e., without negative connotations. Griffith translates it as “things” (2003, 293) and Reeve (2004, 277) translates it as “condition.” But I think it is part of Plato’s argument here to show that cities and souls undergo things, which make them passive and weak rather than active and powerful, and which contribute to their wretchedness. Thus, it seems more appropriate to translate παθήματα as “calamities” or “misfortunes.” We should also note that most translators of these passages (Griffith, Reeve, and others) miss the important difference between τυραννικός/η/ον (tyrannical) and τυραννούμενος/η/ον (tyrannized). Plato uses both of these to talk about cities and souls, but the important difference is that usage of the latter emphasizes, once again, what the city and the soul undergo (παθήματα) rather than what they do, i.e. slavery, suffering, cruel rule, which is part of Plato’s point. Saying that the city is *tyrannized* by the tyrant and the soul is *tyrannized* by *Eros* are once again very suggestive of their weakness and wretchedness.

Following the previous discussion of tyranny Socrates and Glaucon go on to present a number of negative features or calamities that befall the tyrannical man, so that they can conclude that tyrannical life is wretched. In this passage they emphasize slavery in the tyrannized city and the tyrannized soul and the resulting impotence to do what these wish. Socrates' argument begins by rejecting the features which Thrasymachus claimed make tyrannical life the happiest and thus admirable, namely freedom, power, and mastery (ἐλευθεριώτερον, ισχυρότερον, δεσποτικώτερον).<sup>287</sup>

The beginning of the passage, which emphasizes the parallel of the city and the soul, suggests that since these have similar parts and orders they must have similar characteristics or features. But, as we will notice Socrates does not merely assume the city and soul analogy in the argument. He provides additional considerations which refer to the previous discussion in the dialogue, namely, aspects specific to the tyrant's soul and the treatment of the tyrant in the tyrannical regime. Thus, this argument does not stand on its own here, and it does not simply rely on the parallel of the city and the soul, but it requires that we bring in considerations from the previous discussion on tyranny and the tyrannical soul.

The tyrannized city is enslaved since one man, the tyrant, rules most of the other citizens—they point out that even in tyrannies there are some free people and masters—like slaves. Since the soul is parallel to the city, the tyrannized soul is also enslaved by a tyrant, i.e. *Eros*. Moreover, since slavery leads the tyrannized city to impotence or inability to do what it wishes, the tyrannized soul must also be impotent or unable to do what it wishes. We should notice however that Socrates has to explain the

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<sup>287</sup> He does not reject the tyrant's mastery over others explicitly here but only insofar as this is entailed by his lack of power.

soul's impotence to do what it wishes by going beyond the assumed parallel of the city and the soul, whereby we understand what happens in the soul by looking at what happens in the city. He emphasizes that the tyrannized soul is unable to act as a whole soul, since it is always dragged around by a gadfly (*Eros*) and it is full of confusion and regret (ὑπὸ δὲ οἴστρου ἀεὶ ἐλκομένη βία παραχῆς καὶ μεταμελείας). While it is true that the tyrannized city is dragged around by the tyrant and that it is internally violent, it is unclear that it is full of confusion and regret. By telling us that the soul is full of confusion and regret Socrates seems to point beyond the parallel of the city and the soul and to explain the soul's impotence to do what it wishes through additional characteristics specific to the soul.<sup>288</sup>

There are several questions we may ask about the impotence to do what one wishes discussed in this passage. What kinds of things do the tyrannized city and the tyrannized soul wish to do? How do being ruled or enslaved by a tyrant or *Eros* in the city and the soul respectively, lead to impotence to do what these wish? Moreover, how are we to understand the confusion and regret in the soul and how these contribute to the soul's impotence to do what it wishes?

In the context of the argument, which is measuring the tyrannical life in terms of happiness, it makes sense to suppose that what the tyrannized city and soul wish to do are things that contribute to their happiness. Moreover, Socrates seeks to argue against Thrasymachus who claims that freedom and power to do what he wants are the reasons the tyrant's life is so happy. Thus, if Socrates is able to show that the tyrant is really

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<sup>288</sup> Remember the demand for a comprehensive perspective earlier, i.e. the demand that we look at the tyrant stripped of his costume and inside his soul.

impotent rather than powerful, he would prove the tyrant's wretchedness and refute Thrasymachus' position.

In terms of what the tyrannized city wishes for and is unable to do due to being enslaved by the tyrant, we may suppose that it is the citizens who are impotent to pursue what they think will make them happy. The citizens ruled by the tyrant are not able to do what they wish, since he prevents them from doing so and forces them to do what is in his interest. Moreover, we may gather that the tyrant is also impotent to do the things which he supposes will make him happy since, as Socrates has argued so far, he is bound by a necessity which forces him to meet too much opposition in the city. Thus, it seems that the tyrannized city is impotent throughout and as a whole due to conflict.

The tyrannized soul is least able to do what it wishes, since it is enslaved by *Eros* and lawless desires which sting the soul and make it suffer. Socrates' emphasis that it is the whole soul which should be able to act and do what it wishes, suggests that one can do what he wishes when all the parts of the soul act together, i.e., without conflict and compulsion. Being powerful or able implies the absence of internal conflict or compulsion. Moreover, if wish (*βούλησις*) implies that one chooses the actions to carry out and the desires to follow, the person with the tyrannized soul is not able to do what he wishes since he has a soul compelled to action by *Eros*. The tyrannized person does not choose which actions to do, in the same way the tyrannized citizen does not.

Furthermore, the soul's confusion and regret, mentioned in the passage, are an alternative reference to the mania, obsession, and dissatisfaction of desire, which plague the tyrannical soul. The tyrannical soul is full of confusion and regret, which points out that the person with such a soul, driven by *Eros* and lawless desires, remains deeply



dissatisfied, and thus, unhappy. The sorts of desires the tyrannized soul seeks to satisfy are essentially insatiable and the urgency to satisfy such desires leads to confusion and suffering. We recall that the tyrant's perceived ability to be able to satisfy more desires than others can, leads to the multiplication and intensification of his desires and needs (573d2-574a5). Thus, the tyrant is the person with the most confusion and regret in his soul due to the inability to satisfy such desires.

Socrates and Glaucon continue the argument, and they point out that as a tyrannized city must be poor (πενομένην ἀνάγκη τὴν τυραννουμένη πόλιν εἶναι) so must the tyrannical soul be poor and insatiable (Καὶ ψυχὴν ἄρα τυραννικὴν πενιχρὰν καὶ ἄπληστον ἀνάγκη ἀεὶ εἶναι) (577e4-578a2). The soul remains poor and insatiable since it always has desires which are unfulfillable and, which thus always remain unfulfilled. The soul's poverty reinforces the point that the tyrannized soul is unable to do what it wishes, i.e. satisfy desires which the person thinks will make him happy.

Moreover, since the city is full of fear, alarms, groans, and lamentations due to the tyrant so is the individual soul:

Socrates: What about fear? Mustn't a city of this sort and a man of this sort be filled with it (Τί δέ; φόβου γέμειν ἄρ' οὐκ ἀνάγκη τὴν γε τοιαύτην πόλιν τὸν τε τοιοῦτον ἄνδρα;)?

Glaucon: They certainly must.

Socrates: And do you think you will find more wailing, groaning, lamenting, or painful suffering in any other city (Ὀδυρμούς δὲ καὶ στεναγμούς καὶ θρήνους καὶ ἀλγηδόνας οἶε τινὶ ἄλλῃ πλείους εὐρήσειν;)?

Glaucon: No.

Socrates: What about in a man? Do you think that such things are more common in anyone than in this tyrannical man, maddened by his appetites and passions (ἐν τῷ μαινομένῳ ὑπὸ ἐπιθυμιῶν τε καὶ ἔρωτων τούτῳ τῷ τυραννικῷ;)?

Glaucon: How could I? (578a4-13).

The city is full of fear and suffering since the tyrant rules violently and unjustly. The soul must be full of these due to the urgency of unfulfilled desires, the anxiety that accompanies efforts in vain to satisfy such desires, and the risks tyrannical people end up facing in their efforts to do so.

Glaucon wants to conclude that due to the calamities that befall the tyrannical man's soul he is the most wretched but Socrates is not so sure,

Socrates: This man, I think, is not yet the most wretched (Οὐπω οἶμαι οὗτος ἐστὶν ὁ τοιοῦτος μάλιστα).

Glaucon: Then who is?

Socrates: Presumably, you will regard this next one as even more wretched.

Glaucon: What one?

Socrates: The tyrannical man who does not live out his life as a private individual, but is unfortunate, in that some misfortune gives him the opportunity of becoming an actual tyrant ("Ὁς ἂν τυραννικὸς ὢν μὴ ἰδιώτην βίον καταβιῶ, ἀλλὰ δυστυχῆς ἢ καὶ αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τινος συμφορᾶς ἐκπορισθῆ ὥστε τυράννῳ γενέσθαι) (578b9-c3).

Up to this point the argument has dealt with strictly internal matters, i.e. with the internal aspects of soul. In this the tyrannical man and the tyrant are the same, and up to this point the attack on tyrannical life is also a defense of eudaimonistic life. The tyrannized soul is deeply dissatisfied and unhappy since it tries to satisfy lawless desires with no limitations. This deep dissatisfaction and wretchedness of the tyrannical life, may make us realize that a eudaimonistic existence with a just and ordered soul with satisfiable and necessary desires is better.

The tyrant, as opposed to the tyrannical man who lives in private, lives a life which entails more calamities that prove that his life is the most wretched. Socrates refers to these as "public dangers" (δημοσίῳις κινδύνοις, 577b2) and he insists that we look at these to be able to judge whether the tyrant's life is happy or wretched. Socrates argues that the most wretched is the person who actually becomes a tyrant rather than the

one who merely has a tyrannical soul. But, if the order of the soul is what is most important why should it matter if the tyrannical person is actually tyrant? Is not the tyrannical person like Glaucon supposed wretched enough and does he really become more wretched by being a tyrant?

While Socrates does emphasize that the tyrannical soul entails several calamities that make it suffer, he does not think that this is enough to show that tyrant's life is wretched. We may object that the tyrant does not really feel remorse about what he does, or that he is not much aware of the internal suffering that Socrates refers to in the argument so far. Socrates seems aware of the fact that the tyrant may not be in what we call bad conscience, or at least, not always. Thus, he goes on to extend the argument from internal considerations which show the tyrant's wretchedness to external ones. He elaborates on several external features of the tyrant's life which will show that his life is really wretched regardless of how he feels in his soul. Notice that once we move to the consideration of these features we no longer talk about the soul, thus the argument moves beyond the analogy of the city and the soul.

The tyrannical man has considerable and sufficient opposition within him to be wretched, i.e. from his unfulfilled desires and the other parts of the soul feeling compulsion from this. But, the actual tyrant has added to this the dangers and fears coming from external enemies, which as Socrates argues extensively is a necessary feature of tyranny and the tyrannical life. To make this clearer Socrates employs a thought experiment which entails comparing the tyrant to private, wealthy slave holders:

Socrates: On the basis of each and every one of the wealthy private citizens in our own cities who own many slaves. For they resemble the tyrant in ruling over many, although the number ruled by the tyrant is different (οὔτοι γὰρ τοῦτο γε προσόμοιον ἔχουσιν τοῖς τυράννοις, τὸ πολλῶν ἄρχειν· διαφέρει δὲ τὸ ἐκείνου πλῆθος).

Glaucon: It is different.  
 Socrates: You know, then, that these people feel secure and do not fear their slaves.  
 Glaucon: Of what have they to be afraid after all?  
 Socrates: Nothing. But do you know why?  
 Glaucon: Yes. Because the whole city is ready to defend each of its private citizens.  
 Socrates: That's right. But now, suppose some god were to lift one of these men, who has fifty or more slaves, out of the city, and put him down, with his wife, his children, his slaves, and his other property—in a deserted place (ἐρημίαν), where no free men could come to his assistance? Can you imagine the sort of and amount of fear he would feel that he and his wife and children would be killed by his slaves?  
 Glaucon: It would be huge, if you ask me.  
 Socrates: Wouldn't he at that point be compelled (ἀναγκάζοιτο) to start fawning on some of his slaves, promising them all sorts of things and setting them free—even though there was nothing he wanted to do less—and wouldn't he turn out to be a flatterer (κόλαξ) of slaves?  
 Glaucon: He would have to be. Otherwise, he would be killed (Πολλὴ ἀνάγκη αὐτῷ, ἢ ἀπολωλέναι) (578d4-579a4)

Slave holders usually feel safe in the cities they live since they have the protection of the city, they have friends. But if some god plucked a slaveholder with fifty slaves and placed him in a deserted place away from his friends, then he would be afraid for his life and would have to free and flatter his slaves to survive. The tyrant lives in relation to the citizens as a master does to slaves, where all the citizens are actual or potential enemies he constantly has to fear. Moreover this forces him to the misery of having to do things he does not want to do, such as employ, support, and flatter people he considers his inferiors. This thought experiment addresses the tyrant's inability or impotence to do what he wishes once more, and it emphasizes the tyrant's lack of mastery over others. The tyrant is unable to control others in such a way so that they do what is to his advantage; he cannot get others to respect him for destroying them.

Socrates continues the thought experiment by adding,

Socrates: Now, suppose that the god were to settle many other neighbors around him who would not tolerate anyone claiming to be master of another (μὴ ἀνέχονται εἰ τις ἄλλος ἄλλου δεσπόζειν ἀξιῶ), but if they caught such a person, would inflict the most extreme punishments on him?  
 Glaucon: I suppose he would be in even worse trouble, since he would be surrounded by nothing but enemies.

Socrates: So, isn't this, then, the kind of prison in which the tyrant is held—the one whose nature we have described, filled with multifarious fears and passions? Though his soul is really greedy, he is the only one in the city who cannot go abroad or look at the sights at which other free people yearn to look. Instead he is mostly stuck in house, living like a woman, envying any other citizen who goes abroad and sees some good thing.

Glaucon: Absolutely. (579a5-c3).

Socrates suggests that if the god, in addition to lifting the private slave holder from the city and placing him in a deserted place, added several neighbors intolerant of people who think that they should be masters of others, then such a person would be completely surrounded by enemies. This is a reference to other citizens in tyranny, whom the tyrant does not treat like slaves, who think that the tyrant should not rule over others and who oppose him. It seems that we can also read this point as the suggestion that the tyrant has to be afraid of enemies external to his city, i.e. other cities. In the thought experiment the slave owner stands for the tyrant, the slaves stand for his subjects, and the neighbors stand, either for people within the city or for other cities which disapprove of and oppose tyranny. The desert imagery suggests that the tyrant lives in a political wilderness where he has no friends whatsoever and where he has to fight everyone else. The tyrant's abundance of enemies and his fear of them do not even permit him to travel anywhere. He is forced to remain indoors and out of sight to avoid his enemies.

After paying attention to the tyrant's lack of friends and constant fear of enemies and concluding that the tyrant lives a life more wretched than a private tyrannical man, Socrates and Glaucon conclude the argument by pulling together all of their considerations

Socrates: So, in truth, then, and whatever some people may think, a real tyrant is really a slave to the worst sorts of fawning and slavery, and a flatterer of the worst kind of people. He is so far from satisfying his desires in any way that he is in the greatest need of most things and truly poor—as is apparent if one knows how to look at a whole soul. He is full of fear throughout his life and overflowing with convulsions and pains, if in fact his condition is like that of the city he rules ("Εστιν ἄρα τῆ ἀληθείᾳ, κἂν εἰ μὴ τῷ δοκεῖ, ὁ τῷ ὄντι τύραννος τῷ ὄντι δοῦλος τὰς μεγίστας θωπείας καὶ δουλείας καὶ κόλαξ τῶν πονηροτάτων, καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας οὐδ' ὀπωστοῦν

ἀποπιμπλάς, ἀλλὰ πλείστων ἐπιδεέστατος καὶ πένης τῇ ἀληθείᾳ φαίνεται, ἐάν τις ὅλην ψυχὴν ἐπίσται θεάσασθαι, καὶ φόβου γέμων διὰ παντὸς τοῦ βίου, σφαδασμῶν τε καὶ ὀδυνῶν πλήρης, εἴπερ τῇ τῆς πόλεως διαθέσει ἧς ἄρχει ἔοικεν). And it is like it, isn't it?

Glaucon: Yeas, of course.

Socrates: And, in addition, shouldn't we also attribute to the man the qualities mentioned earlier? We said that he is inevitably envious, untrustworthy, unjust, friendless, impious, and a host and nurse to every kind of vice; that ruling makes him even more so than before; and that, as a consequence, he is extremely unfortunate and goes on to make those near him so (ὅτι ἀνάγκη καὶ εἶναι καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον γίγνεσθαι αὐτῷ ἢ πρότερον διὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν φθονερῶ, ἀπίστῳ, ἀδίκῳ, ἀφίλῳ, ἀνοσίῳ καὶ πάσης κακίας πανδοκεῖ τε καὶ τροφεῖ, καὶ ἐξ ἀπάντων τούτων μάλιστα μὲν αὐτῷ δυστυχεῖ εἶναι, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τοὺς πλησίον αὐτῷ τοιούτους ἀπεργάζεσθαι;).

Glaucon: No one who has any sense (νοῦν) could possibly contradict that.

Socrates: Come on, then, and tell me now at last, like the judge who makes the final decision, who you believe is first in happiness and who second, and judge the others similarly, making five altogether—kingly, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, tyrannical.

Glaucon: That's an easy judgment. You see, I rank them in the order of their appearance, just as if they were choruses, both in virtue and in vice and in happiness and its opposite.

Socrates: Shall we, then, hire a herald (κήρυκα), or shall I myself announce that the son of Ariston has given his verdict that the best and most just is the most happy, and that he is the one who is most kingly and rules like a king over himself; whereas the worst and most unjust is the most wretched, and he, again, is the one who, because he is most tyrannical, is the greatest tyrant over himself and his city?

Glaucon: You have announced it!

Socrates: And shall I add that it holds whether or not their characters remain hidden from all human beings and gods? (see 367e1-5, 612a8-b5)

Glaucon: Do add it.

Socrates: Well then, that is one of our demonstrations... (577b10-580c10).

Socrates begins and ends this passage by implying that their comprehensive perspective led them to the truth about the tyrannical life, despite what some people, or even the gods, may think. This implies that those who think that the tyrannical life is happy and they admire or aspire to it must have a skewed and incomplete perspective. The tyrant is the most wretched both due to the calamities internal to the soul which reveal his inability to satisfy infinite desire, and to external misfortunes, which reveal his inability to retain as much political power and as many means as he wishes to satisfy his desires. He is a slave to the worst sorts of desires and people, he is unable to satisfy his desires and he is thus poor, full of fear and convulsions due to his desires. Socrates adds that the tyrant is envious, untrusting, unjust, friendless, impious, and he possesses and nurtures every kind

of vice. Moreover, due to all these things the tyrant becomes more unfortunate than before he becomes a tyrant. Finally, Socrates announces that the son of Ariston (this is possibly Plato) has judged the most just and best person to be happiest and the most unjust person, the actual tyrant, to be the most wretched of men. Socrates refutes Thrasymachus' claim that the tyrant is happy since he is free, powerful, and masterful, which reveal his ability to do what he wants, by highlighting the tyrant's slavery and impotence which results both from his soul and the necessary presence of enemies.

#### 7.5 Necessity and Wretchedness in Tyrannical Life.

In conclusion, as with the last two chapters, I end this chapter with a consideration of the role of necessity which permeates tyranny, the tyrannical soul, and the life of the tyrant. I will do so by pulling Socrates' discussion together and by considering how Plato has gradually presented and argued for a necessity which allows us to conclude that the tyrant's life is wretched indeed.

Once again, we recall Thrasymachus' position and the challenge against which Socrates argues. The tyrant, the most powerful and most unjust person has to be the happiest. This is so since he has enough power to do what he wants, such as take advantage of others, satisfy his desires, and escape punishment for his injustice. Injustice is freer, stronger, and more masterful than justice. Thrasymachus' position reveals the tyrant's perspective, his conception of happiness, and what exactly he wants to do: the tyrant wants to be happy, he thinks that to accomplish this he has to satisfy his desires, and that in order to satisfy his desires he needs to be a tyrant with absolute control over resources and people.

Let us measure the distance between what the tyrant wants to do, namely possess a tyranny with full or adequate control resources and people, satisfy his desires, and be happy, and what he is able to do, which will reveal the tyrant's wretchedness. Socrates shows that the tyrant is not able to do anything he wants or wishes to do. Let us consider the tyrant's internal incapacity first. The tyrant has a disordered soul with lawless and insatiable desires which necessitate that it is full of stinging, longing, mania and dissatisfaction. Thus, the tyrant is unable to satisfy his desires due to a necessity internal to his soul.

We also saw that Socrates argues that the tyrant's soul is compelled to action by *Eros*. The tyrant's state of soul compels him to perform a number of actions directed at acquiring the means or resources by which to satisfy his desires. Thus the psychological necessity of the tyrant is twofold: (a) such that he is forced not to be able to satisfy his desires due to the kinds of desires he has, and (b) such that he is forced to action by the state of his soul and his lawless desires. Now let us move to his externally caused incapacity.

Once he becomes a tyrant he is forced to take the city to wars, impoverish the citizens, keep killing of his enemies, attend parties and feasts, and steal to attain the resources by which he thinks he will be able to satisfy his desires. These necessary actions that follow from the tyrant's state of soul are necessarily followed by a number of effects. The tyrant's life is full of suspicion and fear, he has no friends but only enemies, he is surrounded by bad people, he cannot control others as much as he wants, and he only gets flattery when he wants recognition. He is unable to garner and control the resources he thinks will contribute to his happiness, since his necessary actions lead to



effects which make this impossible. Moreover the nature of his desires, i.e., the fact that these are extravagant, lawless, and more importantly, insatiable, render him unable to satisfy them no matter what means he is able to garner. Thus, the tyrant turns out powerless, unhappy, and a misguided eudaimonist. He is unable to do the things which he thought would make him happy. He is a misguided eudaimonist since he thinks it is possible that he could satisfy his desires and be happy. But, due to both external and internal reasons of which he is not aware, he cannot. The tyrant as thinks he can be happy when in fact he cannot.

Plato responds to Thrasymachus' position by showing that the tyrant is not only unable to do what he wants to be happy, but by also showing that the tyrant lives the wretched life he does because he is unphilosophical. He presents the tyrant and the admirers of tyranny as unaware of the necessities that follow tyranny both in terms of the soul and externally. Thus, those who admire and desire tyranny as the happy life are unable to look at such a life comprehensively. They are unaware of its psychological and ethical implications. Moreover, as some of Plato' predecessors showed admiring and aspiring to tyranny due to its supposed power makes the mistake of confusing humans for gods for whom absolute power may be possible. Finally, revealing the political, psychological, and ethical implications of tyranny may persuade some of those who admire tyranny for its power and happiness, such as those who listen to Thrasymachus, not to pursue it.

### **Conclusion: The Possible Relevance of Plato's View of Tyranny.**

In this dissertation, I have highlighted the timeless insights in Plato's complex, comprehensive, and unified view of tyranny. I did so by following Plato's discussion of tyranny in the *Republic* and by examining both its political aspects as well as its ethical and psychological ones. I conclude the dissertation by remembering the territory we passed through, and with a brief consideration of the enduring relevance of Plato's view of tyranny.

My discussion began with a consideration of the usage of the terms for *tyranny* in ancient Greek authors before and during Plato's time to emphasize the ambiguity of the notion of *tyranny* and to provide the intellectual background against which Plato formed his own critical view of it. Throughout the dissertation we saw Plato respond critically to, as well as adopt partially, some of his predecessors' and contemporaries' ideas concerning tyranny and the tyrant.

In the second chapter I examined the first two Books of the *Republic*, and argued that Plato provides a helpful preliminary account of tyranny in relation to the question of whether justice is superior to justice. Plato supplies a general definition of tyranny in the early books of the dialogue through characters other than Socrates, i.e., that tyranny is the unlimited and unjust rule exercised by a single person in service of his own perceived benefits or interests. By analyzing Plato's preliminary account of tyranny and Socrates' exchanges with Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus I also showed how Plato sets up the problem of tyranny to be addressed in the latter parts of the dialogue. More specifically, we saw that Thrasymachus in particular presents the tyrant's life as the happiest life since his power to do injustice presumably allows for happiness.

My consideration of the general argument and structure of Book VIII and the beginning of Book IX addressed the concerns and critiques of several commentators. By responding to such critiques in chapter three, I situated Plato's account of tyranny within the larger context of the general argument in the dialogue. This is the argument that justice is better than injustice to which the discussion of tyranny is instrumental. Moreover, I argued against several criticisms which present Plato's account of tyranny as inaccurate. This permitted me to revive interest in Books VIII and IX, and to examine his account of tyranny with a refreshed perspective free from the complaints of the secondary literature.

We saw that Plato discusses regimes and individuals in a pattern which addresses the following: (1) how a regime or individual may come about from a previous regime or individual, (2) once established or formed, what each regime or individual is like, and (3) how each regime or individual fare in terms of justice and, eventually, happiness, in contrast to the *kallipolis* and the just man respectively. In the final four chapters of the dissertation I took up Plato's account of tyranny and the tyrant's life in Books VIII and IX. There he proceeds to explain tyranny and the tyrannical person in the above terms and to draw out their implications. In the fourth chapter I analyzed tyranny's possible origin from extreme democracy due to excessive freedom. We saw Plato argue quite plausibly, and in detail, that the desire and pursuit of excessive freedom and the presence of political turmoil are conditions which permit the potential tyrant to take over.

Then, I proceeded to examine Plato's account of tyranny in power, which reveals several of its essential features such as its tendency to go to war, its suspicion and violent purging of enemies, and the tyrant's lack of friends. Furthermore, with chapter five, I

began tracing the binding necessity inherent in tyranny. This necessity entails that tyranny is a self-defeating regime insofar as it performs a number of actions which, while intended to preserve and empower it, end up detrimental to it.

In chapter six we moved from tyranny to its psychological aspects and the state of the tyrannical man's soul. Following a discussion of Plato's classification of desire we discussed the origin of the tyrannical man, the compulsory grip of *Eros* and lawless desires in his soul, and the deeds which result from such a soul to satisfy desires. The consideration of tyrannical psychology explained the necessity inherent in tyranny since the tyrant's state of soul pushes him to perform the actions he does in tyranny to satisfy his desires.

Finally, in chapter seven I examined Plato's arguments against tyranny both as a regime and as a type of life. In this chapter we saw Plato's emphasis on having a comprehensive perspective, which was both a reflection on the discussion in the dialogue, as well as a condition for the adequate judgment of tyranny and the tyrannical life. Plato indicates strongly that to be able to measure lives or regimes, i.e. to be able to judge whether they are good and whether they amount to, or contribute to happiness, one needs a perspective by which he is able to look at a whole life or regime. We need to be able to think of lives or regimes from beginning to end and to draw out the implications of their goals, desires, and actions. Plato argues powerfully that, as a regime, tyranny is self-defeating, and bad for citizens since it makes them wretched. Moreover, he argues intriguingly that the tyrant is unhappy due to the lawless and unfulfillable desires he has in his soul, and due to his impotence to secure the external means by which to satisfy such desires. The tyrant is forced to perform such actions and take such measures to

satisfy his desires, that these give rise to such opposition which render the tyrant fearful, in danger, and thus unhappy.

Throughout the dissertation I emphasized that Plato's account of tyranny in the *Republic* is comprehensive since he points out the essential features of tyranny as a regime as well as those of the tyrannical ruler as a type of person. I think that the thoroughness of Plato's view makes it illuminating, relevant, and applicable to our attempts to understand actual tyrannical regimes both ancient and modern. In order to provide some further justification for this, let us reflect on the several aspects of his description of the tyrannical regime and of the tyrant, and consider very briefly how these fit modern regimes.

In the beginning of the dissertation I suggested that several authors doubt whether a view like Plato's is relevant to our analysis of modern regimes. On the one hand we may doubt whether we can understand regimes as recent as those of Saddam Hussein, Pinochet and others, in Plato's terms. On the other hand, several thinkers, such as Hannah Arendt, seek to distinguish so called "totalitarian" regimes from tyrannies, both ancient and modern, and doubt whether an account like Plato's allows us to understand "totalitarian" regimes such as Hitler's and Stalin's. Thus, in our efforts to establish whether Plato's account of tyranny is relevant we have to consider both how his account may fit modern tyrannical regimes (here I consider Saddam Hussein as an example but I mean to suggest that the account fits other regimes and tyrannical persons as well) and how it may fit totalitarian regimes.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Of course a more detailed consideration of how Plato's account of tyranny fits both modern regimes and totalitarian regimes is desirable and can be done elsewhere.

For Plato, the tyrannical regime is unjust, in the service of the perceived interest of the ruler, and it is essentially violent. As we have seen however, its characteristic violence admits of considerable difference in degrees at different times, thus tyrannies are sometimes extremely violent and sometimes less so. These features seem to fit regimes such as Saddam Hussein's. We know that his rule was unjust, quite short of beneficent, that he exploited his citizens to serve his own interests, and that he was very violent. Plato also tells us that tyranny by its nature also entails a necessity which forces the tyrant to be increasingly violent, go to wars, be extremely suspicious and fearful of enemies, and ultimately, be unhappy. These are also features which we can use to understand Saddam Hussein's regime since we know he was extremely suspicious and fearful of enemies, that he eliminated suspected enemies very violently (we know he even eliminated some of his close relatives) and that he went to wars to serve his own interests. Moreover, we saw that Plato includes in his account the complex methods and strategies tyranny employs to accomplish the goals of keeping the tyrant in power and to serve his perceived interests. It employs a rather intricate rhetoric or propaganda and an ideology, which include poetry and the employment of poets, going to war, economic measures (promises often secures some temporary economic benefits), and class conflict (setting different classes of people into conflict and exploiting it). Furthermore, Plato points out that tyrants require a strong personal guard and that tyrannies typically have a pervasive military component to them. These are all features we find in Hussein's tyranny to some degree: he set different classes of people in opposition to acquire and preserve power (the Shiites and the Sunnis), he portrayed himself as a savior of Iraq, he made economic promises to and partially lifted economically some of his supporters, and he employed

both propaganda and an ideology aimed at serving his interests. Finally, Plato portrays the tyrant as a fully unjust person, as after his own interests, and as psychologically forced to wretchedness, both through the state of his soul, and due to the effects of actions necessitated by the state of his soul. These also seems to characterize rulers such as Hussein and to be pertinent to our understanding of tyrants like him.

In addition to Plato's relevant description of tyranny as a regime, his discussion of the psychology of the tyrant is also illuminating and pertinent to our understanding of political matters. But, political philosophy as we find it today tends to focus more on how different regimes work, on their features as systems, rather than the psychological aspects relevant to such a discussion. If it does consider psychological aspects this tends to focus on the citizens under regimes and the effects such regimes have on them. Plato insists that, in addition to the discussion of systemic aspects and the psychological aspects of political subjects, our attempts to understand tyranny must include an account of the tyrant's personality or character. Plato provides the classic description of the tyrant as an inherently flawed personality whose attempts to serve his interests give birth to his inability and wretchedness. While more analysis of the relevance of this to actual tyrants is necessary and desirable we may realize that Plato's account of the tyrannical personality is relevant to our understanding of someone like Saddam Hussein. We know he had extravagant and lawless desires (his lavish lifestyle is an indication of this), that he was very suspicious and fearful of potential enemies, and thus we suspect that he is not a happy person. Plato's classic description of the tyrant seems not only intriguing but, quite pertinent to our understanding of tyrants since it can explain many of the historical

tyrants we know. Now let us move on to consider so called “totalitarian” regimes and consider Arendt’s attempt to distinguish totalitarian regimes from tyrannies structurally.

Arendt points out that, “totalitarianism differs essentially from other forms of political oppression known to us as despotism, tyranny and dictatorship” (460). She suggests that are two central, essential and interrelated characteristics of a totalitarian regime, such as that of Hitler or Stalin, which render such a regime different in kind than a tyranny; these are: ideology and terror.<sup>290</sup> While Arendt and others may be correct to point out that regimes such as Hitler’s or Stalin’s seem different than more traditional forms of tyranny, I think that we can claim that such regimes are not different than tyranny (as Plato describes it), in kind but only in degree.<sup>291</sup> We may do this if we can show, even if only preliminarily here, that the features she considers to be essential to totalitarianism are, in fact, tyrannical features carried to an extreme. Thus, we may be able to hold that Plato’s account is relevant to our understanding of so called “totalitarian” regimes.

Arendt argues that totalitarian ideologies “pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process—the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, and uncertainties of the future—because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas.” (461). Such ideologies are powerful since they present a comprehensive view of history in which people can belong to a meaningful world progressing towards a seemingly clear goal. Moreover, unlike tyrants who dominate their subjects but who leave their thoughts intact totalitarian “ideological thinking ruins all relationships with reality...Men loose the

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<sup>290</sup> Her discussion of these can be found in the conclusion of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973).

<sup>291</sup> For Arendt’s account consider *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1973). Consider also Franz Neumann’s *Behemoth* (1983), and Friedrich and Brzezinski’s *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1956).



capacity of both experience and thought” (478). Thus totalitarian ideology is so pervasive so as to dominate people’s thought. Finally, totalitarian ideology is free from utilitarian motives like those of traditional tyrants who seek to serve their interests and it seeks to conquer and rule the whole world.

Terror, the second characteristic of totalitarian regimes, is really the essence of totalitarianism for Arendt. “Dictatorial terror [is] distinguished from totalitarian terror insofar as it threatens only authentic opponents but not harmless citizens without political opinions” and “Total terror, the essence of totalitarian government, exists neither for nor against men. It is supposed to provide the forces of nature or history with an incomparable instrument to accelerate their movement” (322, 466). For Arendt, totalitarian terror is not directed against “authentic opponents” since it is exercised over even after such opponents have been eliminated to propel the historical goal of totalitarian ideology. Finally, for Arendt, the two essential features of totalitarianism present us with a regime in which there is no private space at all but only totalitarian parts (citizens and institutions) which are all subject to terror and which embody and propel totalitarian ideology.<sup>292</sup>

Given our discussion of Plato’s view of tyranny however, I think that it is possible to explain what Arendt finds essential to totalitarianism as features of tyranny carried to extremes. Doing so will make totalitarianism an extreme form of tyranny and different from more ordinary or common types of tyranny only in degree not in kind. We saw that for Plato, tyrannies do employ ideologies, i.e., a pervasive set of values promoted by institutional means and aimed at the direction of private and public life. Plato suggests

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<sup>292</sup> Some have presented the structure of totalitarianism as similar to an onion’s where there is no differentiation between the center and the several layers.

that tyrants employ several measures by which they instill values conducive to their interests. Such measures include, among others: going to war to persuade citizens that they need the tyrant as a leader; supporting one group in the city against another thus presenting the citizens with enemies whom they hate; employing poets who present the tyrant and the city having the same goals and interests. Moreover we saw Socrates point out that it is possible for the tyrant to even wish to rule over gods, i.e., to wish to possess complete and absolute power and control (573c3-5), and that tyrants are after recognition. This suggests that the tyrant may have aims beyond strictly utilitarian ones and that he may seek to rule the world if he thinks that he is able to do so. We may conclude that, in terms of ideology, so called “totalitarian regimes” are different from traditional tyrannies only to the degree which the ideology of the former is more pervasive in society than that of the latter and tied to an overarching view and goal in history. Thus, in terms of ideology, totalitarianism seems an extreme form of tyranny.

The terror that Arendt suggests is the essence of totalitarianism seems like an extreme form of tyrannical violence. Arendt suggests that tyrannical violence is only directed against people who are “authentic opponents” or people thought to be enemies, and that totalitarian terror is also directed against the harmless in order to propel the historical goal of totalitarian ideology. But, we have seen that Plato presents the employment of tyrannical violence not only as serving the function of eliminating enemies, but also the function of using considerable force to get people to do what is in the tyrant’s interests, i.e., carrying forth the tyrant’s goal. Such people of course need not be thought opponents to the tyrant; thus totalitarianism seems to be an extreme form of tyranny even in terms of violence or terror since its violence is not different in kind but

only in degree. Our brief consideration of the relevance of Plato's view of tyranny and the tyrannical soul and personality opens up room for the more detailed discussion of specific tyrannical regimes and tyrants, both ancient and modern.

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