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Philosophy, Tyranny and the Idea of a Rational State

by

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A thesis submitted to
The faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In partial fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

Department of Political Science

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
April 10, 2001

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between philosophy and tyranny within Platonic and Hegelian philosophy as it relates to the idea of a rational, universal State. Through a close exegetical reading of *Alcibiades I*, the *Gorgias*, the *Symposium* and the *Republic* this paper examines the relationship between the philosopher and the tyrant within classical philosophy. This classical view is then contrasted by Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* found in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. While Kojève's interpretation represents a distortion of Hegel's intent, its radical formulation presents most clearly the distinctly modern attitude towards philosophy and tyranny. By exploring Plato's and Kojève-Hegel's examination of freedom and justice, philosophy and tyranny, in the body politic this paper develops and understanding of globalization from the standpoint of ideology and technology in an attempt to answer the foremost of political and philosophical questions: what is to be done?

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Chapter 1: Plato, Hegel and the New Global Politics

It has now been over ten years since we first heard the word globalization. In that time the process of modernity has reached new levels of spatial extension and conscious awareness. As the world changes so do the explanations we use to make sense of it. In this regard, political science has been mired in a rather unsuccessful effort to catch up to these changes and provide a meaningful theoretical framework from which this new world may be understood.

One of the more promising veins of theory to try to make sense of this new world began with Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" argument. While the triumphalism of his approach ultimately confuses and conceals the potential insights of his inquiry, Fukuyama was one of the first to argue that globalization is something that cannot be explained by conventional economics or political science. Perhaps globalization is more than the liberalization of trade and the opening of international borders.

Publication of *The End of History* was followed closely by the publication of two closely related yet radically different books that continued this inquiry into the essence of globalization: Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* and Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld*. While Huntington and Barber come from different sides of the American political spectrum and disagree greatly on the form and content of emerging global politics, they share an underlying understanding. They both understand the new global politics as a contest between Civilization and Culture, between the universal and the particular. Unfortunately, the treatment given by these two men is not sufficiently grounded in political theory. The consequence is a generally shallow analysis.

Huntington concludes that emerging conflicts will be contested between the west and the rest, forgetting that the tension between civilization and culture exists both within and among States and Civilizations. While Barber's characterization draws the distinction between Civilization and Culture in significantly clearer terms, he makes essentially the same mistake. Because their analysis is not grounded in a philosophical understanding of the issues, they are not able to fully appreciate the situations and fundamental alternatives.

This paper will seek to provide such an analysis by turning to the history of political philosophy for answers. While technology radically transforms its parameters, globalization is not an essentially new phenomenon. The confrontation between the cosmopolitan, universal drive of civilization and the provincial, particularized drive of culture is as old as philosophy itself. In fact, fifth century Athens, in which western political philosophy originated, embodied precisely such a situation. Philosophy has always existed in the metaxy between civilization and culture. This paper will begin with Plato and the classical understanding of this political problem.

Plato wrote the Socratic dialogues during the fourth century BC after the death of Socrates and the end of the Peloponnesian War. The action of the dialogues, however, always occurs at some time during the Peloponnesian War, a war that signified the end of the golden age of Athens and the expansion of the Athenian Empire. The transition from city-state to empire began for Athens following the defeat of the Persians by a united force of Greek city-states. Following the Persian War, Athens began a policy of expanded trade, protected by a powerful navy, which resulted in unprecedented wealth and diversity. Athens expanded from an essentially land locked city built upon the

Acropolis, to a sea faring empire with two ports on the Mediterranean as well as numerous colonies and satellite states. Under the leadership of distinguished statesmen such as Pericles, Athens became the leading power of the Ancient world. They were eventually opposed by a coalition of Greek city-states led by Sparta, a powerful, traditional, military based Greek city, resulting in the thirty years of hot and cold warfare known as the Peloponnesian War. It is within this milieu of war between Athens and Sparta, with the constant backdrop of Persia, that the dialogues are set. Internally the growth and expansion of Athens has resulted in a conflict between the old traditional, primarily agrarian, way of life and the new trade based, commercialism and cosmopolitanism of the empire.

Within this setting of constant change developed the understanding of the natural philosophers of *physis* (nature). The word *physis* is a cognate of the Greek word meaning to grow. For the natural philosophers what exists by nature is that which comes into being on its own. It is self-evolving and universal. This search for an ordered pattern of nature marks the beginning of western rationalism. Politically this insight is taken up by the Sophists who, in the emerging vacuum left by the failure of the Homeric tradition, take this insight into the meaning of nature and apply it to politics and morality. If it is the case that the only valid knowledge is the study of nature, then the prohibitions of *nomos* (law & convention, the whole conglomerate of Greek tradition) are not binding on the educated and sophisticated. The best way of life, therefore, is to get away with as much as possible. The only reason to obey the laws is the fear of being caught. Rhetoric developed as the power of camouflage. As the myth of the ring of Gyges demonstrates in the second book of the *Republic*, rhetoric can make you invisible. It can make you

appear more pious than all others, while secretly you are doing whatever you please. The intermixing of cultures that flows from “international trade” results in a situation in which, to the sophisticated at least, all cultures are equal. It is in this moment of crisis in Greece that philosophy emerges, as Socrates tries to overcome the nascent nihilism, and resulting tyranny, of the emerging universalism represented by the Sophists by grounding a more profound universalism in the particular experience of human beings. The loss of the old ways has made it appear that all laws are merely convention (*nomos*) and are not based in nature (*physis*). Such a belief undermines faith in community and the city. Socrates tries to mediate the ancient understanding of nature with a human understanding of politics that allows for the practice of civic virtue and the pursuit of truth and human knowledge.

So begins western thought, which proceeds through the Christianity of Augustine and Aquinas, the modern secularization of Machiavelli and Hobbes, to finally culminate in Hegel, who lived in a surprisingly similar moment of crisis: the French Revolution and the end of the Ancien Regime. The French Revolution is the symbolic climax of the west and the western idea of history. Hegel witnessed the overthrowing of the traditional feudal structure in favour of a regime in which, in principle, all men are equal. While Plato tried to explain the realization that all cultures (publics) are equal by grounding the human experience of public interaction within a philosophic understanding of nature, Hegel tries to explain the emancipation of slaves and the realization that all men (privates) are equal through a phenomenological explanation of history. Thus the difference between Plato and Hegel can be seen as the difference between a philosophy of nature and a phenomenology of history.

It is through these two thinkers and the development of certain common tensions that I believe globalization and the formation of our new global politics can be best understood. The beginning of any form of transcendent politics must always deal with the tension between the universal and the particular. Emerging political units almost always begin with an us/them mentality. There are the members of the family or tribe who are essentially alike and then there is everyone else who are essentially different. This particularized understanding of politics is by far the most common. However when particularized tribes are forced by circumstance to interact with each other, the idea of universal politics sometimes emerges. Universal politics essentially states that all people are the same and that what is true in one place is true in all places and that what is true at one time is true at all times. The danger of universal politics, or universalism of any kind, is the belief that what is true here is true everywhere can quickly become the belief that nothing is true. Within this spirit of nihilism the politics of tyranny quickly emerges.

This paper will examine the relationship between philosophy and tyranny within Platonic and Hegelian philosophy as it relates to the idea of a rational, universal State. Through a close exegetical reading of *Alcibiades I*, the *Gorgias*, the *Symposium* and the *Republic* I will examine the relationship of the philosopher and the tyrant within classical philosophy. This classical view will then be contrasted with Alexandre Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* found in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. While Kojève's interpretation represents a distortion of Hegel's intent, its radical formulation presents most clearly the distinctly modern attitude towards philosophy and tyranny.

By exploring Plato's and Kojève-Hegel's examination of freedom and justice, philosophy and tyranny, in the body politic I hope to develop an understanding of globalization from the standpoint of ideology and technology. I propose that globalization represents the progressive implementation of the Hegelian and the Platonic States on a global scale. As such it carries the problems raised by the relationship between philosophy and tyranny while at the same time representing the global realization of the ideals of freedom and justice. In this context, the best political position for the twenty-first century is not an open question. While Plato's development of the ideal State is certainly meant as a satirical warning, his implied criticism is rooted within the confines of classical metaphysics: a metaphysics that cannot be maintained or justified in the face of history and modernity. The synthesis of power and wisdom found in Kojève's philosophy coupled with the transformative power of technology is the natural synthesis of both the classical philosophical and tyrannical positions. We are left with only one philosophical and political choice: to embrace the Hegelian project and work towards the development of a global state founded upon the principles of technology and efficiency.

Chapter 2: The Philosopher and the Tyrant in the Platonic Dialogues

This chapter will examine the relationship between philosophy and tyranny within the Platonic dialogues. Through an examination of the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades in the dialogues *Alcibiades I* and the *Symposium*, I will elaborate upon the classical position on the education of the potential tyrant. This will be followed by a discussion of the divergent political positions of tyranny and philosophy as put forth by Callicles and Socrates in the *Gorgias*, culminating in a short examination of Socrates defense of philosophy found in the *Apology*.

Alcibiades I

In *Alcibiades I* we are introduced for the first time to the character of Alcibiades. Leading son of a wealthy and powerful Athenian family, raised by his uncle Pericles, the great Athenian Statesman, Alcibiades is young, bold and beautiful; an ideal candidate for political life. Because of this unique combination of ambition and potential power, Alcibiades is also a potential tyrant. Young enough to be educated yet old enough to be spirited, the potential tyrant Alcibiades encounters the reputed wise man Socrates. In this encounter we are introduced to the classic Socratic themes of the tyrant and the philosopher, the body and soul. Socrates tries to tame the potential tyrant Alcibiades, first by inflaming his passions towards higher ends, and then asserting control over him by demonstrating that he cannot attain those ends without the aid of Socrates, the philosopher, and Socratic virtue, the rule of the soul over the body.

The beginning pages of *Alcibiades I* set up these two relations that are to become the focus of the dialogue. Socrates begins by suggesting that surely Alcibiades has been wondering why, when all his other lovers have left him, Socrates continues to follow him. This question, which Socrates purports to answer by way of the dialogue, introduces the relationship between body and soul. The reason that Socrates remains while all the others have left is that the others loved Alcibiades' youthful body which, now that he has become a man, is beyond them, while Socrates is the lover of Alcibiades' soul, the true Alcibiades.

This theme is continued, and the political element introduced, when Socrates says he wants Alcibiades to understand why he has been too much for his other lovers.¹ Socrates describes Alcibiades as thinking "that you have no need of them or of any other man, for you have great possessions and lack nothing, beginning with the body, and ending with the soul." Socrates goes on to list Alcibiades possessions, "You are the fairest and tallest of the citizens, . . . you are among the noblest of them . . . you are rich; but I must say that you value yourself least of all upon your possessions."² The drama of the dialogue is Socrates' attempt to tame Alcibiades by demonstrating that he lacks knowledge of his own soul and therefore knowledge of himself, the most important possession of all.

¹ Generally speaking ancient Greek homosexual relationships were between a lover (man) and a loved (boy). In these relationships, which were restricted primarily to the upper classes, the boy gave his body to the man (usually after a long courtship) in exchange for the man's knowledge and experience of politics. Thus their relationship was also one of teacher and student. The allusion here is that Alcibiades has refused all his previous suitors because he believed that they could not provide him with anything he required.

² Plato, *Collected Works*, tr. Jowett. st. 104.

Socrates begins his task by inflaming Alcibiades' tyrannical passions and then claiming that his ambitions can only be attained through the aid of Socrates.³ Socrates attempts to control Alcibiades by appealing to his erotic nature and teaching that wisdom is superior to power because it gives greater pleasure. Socrates teaches prudence and moderation because they are requisite for man to know himself and be virtuous in private. Socrates begins this process by revealing Alcibiades' thoughts to him.

Before many days have elapsed, you think that you will come before the Athenian assembly, and will prove to them that you are more worthy of honour than Pericles, or any other man that ever lived, and having proved this, you will have the greatest power in the state. When you have gained the greatest power among us, you will go on to other Hellenic states, and not only to Hellenes, but to all the barbarians who inhabit the same continent with us. And if the Gods were then to say to you again: Here in Europe is to be your seat of Empire, and you must not cross over into Asia or meddle with Asiatic affairs, I do not believe that you would choose to live upon these terms; but the world, as I may say, must be filled with your power and name—no man less than Cyrus and Xerxes is of any account with you.⁴

What is interesting about this speech is that while it is clear that Alcibiades was heading towards a career in Athenian politics, there is no reason to believe that the endless desire for domination attributed to Alcibiades by Socrates existed prior to their conversation.

This is demonstrated when, later in the dialogue, Socrates convinces Alcibiades that not only is Alcibiades without understanding of virtue, but so are all Athenian statesmen.

Alcibiades replies that if his competitors are uneducated then he can defeat them without

³This is precisely the claim made by Machiavelli in the epistle dedicatory to Lorenzo de Medici in *The Prince*. The relationship between the tyrant and the philosopher, between power and wisdom, is perhaps the foremost theme of all philosophy. Machiavelli, like Socrates, teaches the Prince prudence and moderation. The difference is that for Machiavelli prudence and moderation allow the Prince to retain political (public) power. The change that occurs with modern thought can be seen in the difference between Socrates and Machiavelli. Socrates attempted to control Alcibiades by appealing to his erotic nature, and teaching that wisdom is superior to power because it gives greater pleasure. Machiavelli de-eroticizes politics by teaching the prince that it is better to be feared rather than loved. In so doing he teaches wisdom to be powerful and gives rise to the modern idea that knowledge should participate in transforming the world.

Socrates' help, to which Socrates is forced to remind him that his true competitors are the Spartans and the Persians. The fact that Socrates is forced to remind him of this indicates that without Socrates, Alcibiades' ambitions would, at this point anyway, have remained far more modest.

Why does Socrates inflame Alcibiades' passions? Socrates seeks to tame Alcibiades by getting him to moderate his passions through the soul's command of the body. Socrates can only gain control over Alcibiades by providing him with a goal that he cannot attain without help. For the philosopher to be of any value to the tyrant, the tyrant must desire something beyond his immediate means to acquire and the philosopher must demonstrate his ability to attain it. Socrates begins by exciting that desire.⁵

Socrates then begins his attempt to tame Alcibiades by engaging him in dialectic, designed to demonstrate to Alcibiades that his lack of knowledge will impede him from acquiring his goals. Generally speaking, the purpose of Socratic dialectic is not to provide philosophical answers to the questions being addressed but rather to proceed in a negating fashion in order to demonstrate the ignorance of the one being questioned. Socrates fills the resulting ignorance at the end of the dialogue, usually in the form of mythic images. The philosophical meaning of Plato, therefore, cannot be found solely within either the dialectic or the mythic imagery but rather in the symbolic representation of the whole. This is consistent with his philosophy, which is based upon an idea of virtue and of the good understood in terms of nature and the whole.

The dialectic begins with Socrates asking Alcibiades what he will advise the Athenians on that he knows better than they, suggesting that whatever Alcibiades knows

⁵ Ibid., 105.

must have been learned or discovered. Alcibiades responds that he will advise them on matters of war and peace, with whom, in what manner and for how long, etc. Socrates asks, “what is the meaning of ‘better,’ in the matter of making peace and going to war with those against whom you ought to go to war? To what does the word refer?” To which Alcibiades responds: “I am thinking, and I cannot tell.” The process of dialectic has barely begun and already Alcibiades is confused and without answers. Socrates fills his confusion by suggesting, and getting Alcibiades to agree, that justice is “that better, of which I spoke, in going to war or not going to war with those against whom we ought or ought not, and when we ought or ought not to go to war?”⁶

Socrates then demonstrates that Alcibiades does not know what justice is because it has never been taught to him nor has he discovered it. He could have discovered it if he had recognized he did not know it, but since there never was a time in which Alcibiades thought that he did not know what justice is, and thus never perceived the lack, Alcibiades could not have discovered it and therefore he does not know what justice is. “If you,” Socrates asks Alcibiades, “have neither discovered nor learned them, how and whence do you come to know them?”⁷ Alcibiades responds that he learned of justice in the same way he learned Greek, from the many.

Socrates does not think much of his teachers. He points out that the necessary condition for teaching is knowledge of the subject and a necessary condition of knowledge is agreement with oneself. While the many may agree on language, insofar as some do not use one word while others use another to describe the same thing, they do

⁵ This is very similar to what occurs in Book II of the *Republic*. In the transition to the feverish city *eros* is stimulated and then suppressed.

⁶ Ibid., st. 109.

⁷ Ibid., st. 110.

not agree on the nature of justice and therefore the many have no knowledge of justice and could not have taught Alcibiades. This points to the general problem of justice that will be elaborated upon in the *Republic*. While everyone has an opinion of justice, these opinions are particular and dependent upon experience and do not constitute knowledge concerning justice. Thus the men of Athens each have their own opinions on the just, but no one has any knowledge of it. As Socrates states: "how are you ever likely to know the nature of justice and injustice, about which you are so perplexed, if you have neither learned them of others nor discovered them yourself?"⁸

At this point Alcibiades resorts to a familiar stance of Socratic interlocutors when he answers: "From what you say, I suppose not." Time and again in the Socratic dialogues Socrates' opponents, forced to conclude the opposite of what they had intended, disavow responsibility for the conclusions, suggesting that Socrates has tricked or otherwise defrauded them. In this case Alcibiades is asserting that the conclusions of the discussion are those of Socrates and not of himself. Socrates refutes this by asking, "who is speaking? I who put the question, or you who answer me?"⁹ Since Alcibiades has been answering throughout, it is clear, by Socrates' logic, that Alcibiades has been doing the speaking. However, what Alcibiades does not realize is that he is only complicit through his involvement in the process of dialectic which, at best, serves only to construct a logical chain of if-then syllogistic arguments. The conclusion of a syllogistic argument is only true insofar as every previous assertion upon which the conclusion is built can also be demonstrated to be true; a demonstration which cannot occur on the basis of dialectic alone, since the truth of the preceding dialectic can only be

⁸ Ibid., st. 112.

⁹ Ibid., st. 112.

demonstrated in a similar manner. This is the weakness of Socratic dialectic and why, in relation to Truth, it can only be used in a negative sense. The dialectic provides a mathematical deconstruction of previous arguments and thus are representative of thought and not intellection. It is also why, as we shall see in the *Republic*, the forms occupy a higher place than math objects along the divided line. Neither math objects nor the dialectic can account for their own existence.

Alcibiades then tries to shift the discussion away from justice towards expediency. This leads into another long logical chain in which Socrates demonstrates that, for Alcibiades, justice and expediency are the same. The point here, as with the above example, is not what justice is or whether justice and expediency are always the same but rather that Alcibiades gets confused because he doesn't know what he's talking about. As he himself says: "I solemnly declare, Socrates, that I do not know what I am saying. Verily, I am in a strange state, for when you put questions to me I am of different minds in successive instants."¹⁰ Here we are presented with a rare case in the Socratic dialogues: a protagonist who is either too honest, too confused or too inexperienced to conceal his own ignorance. Conventionally at this point the interlocutor would lash out at Socrates and call him weak and womanly or some other insult; but in this case, to our great benefit, Alcibiades simply says truthfully that he doesn't know what he's saying. While in other cases the reader may be inclined to analyze the argument to determine the truth of the issue, here we see that all that is beside the point. The point has been to prove the interlocutor's incompetence in these matters.

Alcibiades doesn't even know why he is perplexed. Socrates points out that if he were asked "whether you have two eyes or three, or two hands or four, or anything of that

sort,” he would not be of different minds in successive instants but rather would be without doubt because he would know how many hands or eyes he had. Therefore “if you are perplexed in answering about just and unjust, honourable and dishonorable, good and evil, expedient and inexpedient, the reason is that you are ignorant of them, and therefore in perplexity.”¹¹ Again the point is driven home. The purpose of dialectic is not the answers to the questions, but rather the state of mind of the respondent. Socrates seeks to demonstrate Alcibiades’ ignorance so that he may prove his value as a philosopher to this potential tyrant by providing him with the knowledge that he lacks.

Alcibiades’ perplexity, however, does not come simply from his ignorance. Socrates points out that in those matters that Alcibiades knows that he does not know, such as how one ascends to heaven, he is not perplexed. Confusion and mistakes occur from “ignorance that has the conceit of knowledge.” Moreover Alcibiades represents the greatest danger because he has combined ignorance and conceit in that most important of arenas, politics:

I hardly like to speak of your evil case, but as we are alone I will: My good friend, you are wedded to ignorance of the most disgraceful kind, and of this you’re convicted, not by me, but out of your own mouth and by your own argument; wherefore also you rush into politics before you are educated. Neither is your case to be deemed singular. For I might say the same of almost all our statesmen, with the exception, perhaps, of your guardian, Pericles.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., st. 116.

¹¹ Ibid., st. 117.

¹² Ibid., st. 117-118. Socrates claims in the *Apology* that he possesses only limited wisdom insofar as he knows that he knows nothing while the reputed wise men do not know even that. The power of the dialectic to demonstrate man’s ignorance is the danger the philosopher represents to the authority of the city and, because of this, the position of the philosopher is always in doubt. A further dramatic irony is added by the fact that Socrates was convicted, at least partly, for his association with Alcibiades, who he taught, it can be argued, to question without providing a sufficient limiting horizon. This danger is evoked by Socrates when he says in the *Apology*: “There is no prospect I’ll be the last victim.”

This fascinating passage represents far more than simply a summary of the preceding arguments. Socrates begins by alluding to the classical distinction between the public and private realms. Because this conversation is occurring in private, Socrates is willing to say things he might not otherwise say. Moreover, the *Apology* comes to mind, where Socrates tells us that philosophy must take place behind closed doors, for the philosopher cannot survive the dangers of public life. Considering the dramatic context of the *Apology* and the thematic backdrop of the relationship between the city and the philosopher (or power and wisdom) we realize that Socrates (wisdom) and Alcibiades (power) mirror that relationship, and recognize that the philosopher is only willing to confront the tyrant in private. Furthermore, and if nothing else, we must concede the fact that Socrates is always aware of his audience (in this case an audience of one) and often is speaking to the audience as much as his interlocutors.

Secondly, Socrates reminds Alcibiades that he is convicted out of his own mouth by his own words. This reminder serves to deepen Socrates' control over Alcibiades by disorienting Alcibiades from the fact that this conversation began, and has continued, entirely by Socrates wishes.

Finally, Socrates, using characteristic irony, leads into his primary attack when he suggests that all of the Athenian statesmen, and Pericles in particular, have been as guilty as Alcibiades. This is the attack Socrates has been leading up to all along, for ignorance and conceit in thought, are only truly dangerous if they are combined in the action of politics. The greatest danger is to be ruled by an ignorant statesman. Here Socrates, as in the *Apology*, is indicting not only Pericles but also the whole Athenian political democracy that allows people such as Pericles to rule. Socrates views Alcibiades as

another Pericles, certainly no better and probably much worse who, if not tamed by philosophy, will continue Athens' path of moral corruption.

Socrates demonstrates Pericles' ignorance with the statement that if Pericles were wise he should be able to teach others his wisdom. Since Pericles could not teach wisdom to his sons, or to Cleinias (Alcibiades brother) and Alcibiades, can it be said that Pericles was wise?¹³ Alcibiades is forced to agree that he has never heard of any "Athenian or foreigner, bond or free, who was deemed to have grown wiser in the society of Pericles," and that "the Athenian statesmen have, in general, been quite uneducated."¹⁴ This realization by Alcibiades presents a serious problem for Socrates, a problem that he has been attempting to thwart from the beginning. Alcibiades realizes that if his competitors are uneducated and corrupt, then he can defeat them without the aid of Socrates by light of his natural abilities. He can successfully control the city by filling the moral vacuum of Athens with his personality. It is precisely this ambition that Socrates seeks to tame, curtail and control by aligning Alcibiades' virtue of success, with Socrates' philosophical virtue.

Socrates tames Alcibiades by reminding him of his ambitions (which Socrates inflamed at the beginning of the dialogue). He is not competing with his fellow,

¹³ Socrates assertions in this case are based upon the *technē* allegory. While translated as "art" in the Bloom translation of the *Republic*, the Greek word *technē*, from which the English words "technical" and "technique" are derived, does not mean art as in artist (the word *poesis* would apply in this case) but rather in the sense implied by the word artisan. As Bloom states: "It means a discipline operating on the basis of principles that can be taught. It is, hence, not opposed to science but allied with it, and in Plato the terms 'art' and 'science' are often indistinguishable; an art is always a model of what is rational and intelligible." The basis of the *technē* allegory is that knowledge (wisdom) is an art and therefore it should be able to be taught. If Pericles is unable to teach others his wisdom then clearly he does not possess the art of wisdom. Similarly those who say they are just, but are unable to teach others justice, do not possess justice on the basis of the *technē* allegory. The core of Platonic philosophy is based upon the assumption that *physis* and *technē* come into being together and that therefore knowledge acquired along the lines of *technē* is indicative of *physis* (nature). It is upon this claim that Socrates can assert that it is possible to possess *epistēmē politikē* (rigorous knowledge concerning politics).

¹⁴ Ibid., st. 119.

uneducated Athenians, but rather with the Spartans and the Persians. By raising the Spartans and the Persian Empire to the level of an ideal, Socrates tempers Alcibiades' belief that he can rule without Socrates' help. This is the initial reason for Socrates' praise for the Persian Empire. It provides the idea of a higher goal (in a political form) which can restrain Alcibiades' desires and allow Socrates the time to impart other ideals which may provide more lasting restraint. Before introducing the idea of a higher meaning in private life through the superiority of the soul over the body, Socrates must introduce a higher meaning in public, political life. This is similar to Socrates' treatment of Glaucon in the *Republic*. However, with Glaucon the higher meaning of politics in the form of the city in speech is entirely hypothetical.

The second important point from the long speech on the glories of Persia is the section on the education of the Persian princes. Here we are provided with a model for what Socrates perceives to be the proper ordering of a ruler. The royal prince is educated by four schoolmasters, each master of their chosen areas. They are the wisest, the most just, the most temperate and the most valiant. These correspond closely, though not exactly, with the tripartite (*logismos, thymos, epithomia*) division of the soul found in the *Republic*. Socrates' description of what each schoolmaster is to teach the prince demonstrates Socrates' view of the proper ordering of the ruler's soul. The most temperate, "forbids him to allow any pleasure to be lord over him", so that the *epithomotic*, desiring part of the soul shall not rule. The most valiant, "trains him to be bold and fearless", so that the *thymotic*, spirited part of the soul may be strong and the leader courageous. The wisest, "instructs him in the magianism of Zoroaster, the son of Oromasus, which is the worship of the Gods, and teaches him also the duties of his royal

office,” so that the *logismotic*, calculating part of the soul may conform to the boundaries of the empire.

The Persian prince is taught correct opinion leading to *phrenesis* (practical wisdom), not philosophy, and the pursuit of *sophia* (wisdom). Here we have a parallel ordering of the ruler’s soul to that found in the *Republic*. Socrates is treating Alcibiades in much the same way that he treats Glaucon. As we shall see in the *Republic*, Socrates’ description of the proper ordering of the guardian’s soul does not conform to the ordering of the philosopher’s soul. The reason of the ruler is one of calculation, while the wisdom of the philosopher goes beyond mere mathematics towards intellection and contemplation of the good. For the philosopher, the reasoning part of the soul should command the spirited to control the desiring so that the philosopher may know himself and thus order his soul in tune with the true order of nature. The reason of the philosopher must be unafraid to cross all boundaries in thought in his quest to understand the order of nature. This is contrary to the calculative reason of the ruler, who is instructed in the worship of the gods and royal duties. The just ruler should be confined by the boundaries of his position and the traditions of his society. An unfettered tyrant is unafraid to cross boundaries in action. It is Socrates’ goal to provide Alcibiades with a wisdom that will prevent him from crossing boundaries in action and thus becoming a tyrant. Philosophy is necessary as a guide for potential rulers because the Athenian heroic tradition can no longer explain the experience of the Greeks and thus act as a horizon for action and a boundary to power. It is this spiritual vacuum which Socrates is trying to fill by taming Alcibiades through philosophy.

Finally, in the education of the Persian prince, the most just of the magi, “teaches him always to speak the truth.” Justice does not correspond with a particular aspect of the soul but rather is the boundary, or threshold, which orders the relationship with himself, with others and with nature.

A possible third reason for Socrates praising of the Persian Empire is that he is suggesting that the empire is the political unit of philosophy. The universalizing tendency of philosophy corresponds best with the universalization of empire and civilization. This notion, which corresponds nicely with the historical facts of Alexander the Great (who was taught by Aristotle, who was taught by Plato) as well as with the modern interpretation of philosophy culminating in Hegel, does not necessarily function with Plato. It would be my argument that the universalizing tendency of empires, far from being Plato’s ideal, is the precise danger that Plato is warning against in Book V of the *Republic*. The universalization of the city requires the transformation of diverse elements and natures along the lines of the universalizing principle. For Plato, the Forms—the highest expression of the good—are ultimately only knowable through visual experience. If you limit experience, you limit knowledge of the Forms and thus experience of the Good. While the empires and tyrannies of the ancient world lacked the means (technology) to actualize and complete this transformation, the very attempt was against the order of nature because a transformation can only be justified after its completion, that is, historically. This understanding of virtue is anathema to the Platonic conception, in which virtue is the excellence of a thing as it flourishes in harmony with its pre-existing nature.

Having inflamed Alcibiades passions, demonstrated his ignorance and provoked his confusion, Socrates begins his attempt at transposing Alcibiades ambitions of public life onto the practice and understanding of his private life.

Socrates does this by suggesting that the art that takes care of a thing is different from that which takes care of those belonging to the thing. What is the art of taking care of ourselves? Socrates tells us that we cannot know what art makes a man better if we do not know ourselves. Self-knowledge is the prerequisite type of knowledge for the virtuous man. There is "no other way; knowing what we are, we shall know how to take care of ourselves, and if we are ignorant we shall not know." This is the Socratic account of virtue in which man learns, through knowledge of self, his true nature (which is pre-existing) and thus is able to order his soul in accordance with nature. But first Socrates must demonstrate the proper relationship between body and soul.

Socrates begins by using another long dialectical chain to introduce a dichotomy between the user and the used. Again we are confronted with the problem of dialectical reasoning. The conclusions arrived at, while proceeding logically from the suppositions are not necessarily true since any of the suppositions could, themselves, be wrong. The dialectic serves as a clearing from which the Forms may appear. The following dialectic provides a good example of Socratic dialectic at its most positive. Socrates has moved beyond rhetoric towards giving a reasoned account of man and the relationship between body and soul.

Socrates begins by asserting that the user and the used are not the same, giving the example of the shoemaker who uses tools for cutting in the making of shoes. The cutter and the shoemaker are not the same. Furthermore the shoemaker doesn't only cut with a

cutter but uses his hands and eyes as well. Since it has been established that the user is not the same as the things he uses, then the shoemaker must be distinguished from his hands and his eyes. Speaking generally, man uses not only his hands and his eyes but his whole body. Therefore, man is not the same as his body; he is the user of the body. In quick succession, Socrates completes the dialectic by proclaiming that the user of the body is the soul and that the soul rules. Therefore the soul is man.

This, apparently, is not completely satisfactory to Socrates for he goes on to prove that the soul is man in another fashion. Beginning with a universally admitted (according to Socrates) assertion that man is either body, soul or a combination of the two, Socrates demonstrates that the soul is man by negating the other two possibilities. The body is not man because the ruling principle of the body is man and the body cannot rule over itself. Therefore the body cannot be the ruling principle. Socrates turns to the second possibility by asking Alcibiades; "may we say that the union of the two rules over the body, and consequently that this is man." Alcibiades replies, "very likely." Socrates continues, nonplussed, that this is, "the most unlikely of all things; for if one of the members is subject, the two united cannot possibly rule." At this point in the drama Alcibiades' responses have become meaningless as he has been entirely overcome by Socrates questioning. He accepts whatever Socrates proposes without thought or shame. In this respect, Socrates has been completely successful. By questioning Alcibiades, Socrates has tamed Alcibiades to the point where he no longer questions what Socrates says and merely accepts it, eagerly awaiting the next morsel.¹⁵ Socrates then concludes:

¹⁵ Alcibiades' attitude does not continue in this respect forever. In the *Symposium* the tamed puppy emerges as a jilted, virile beast who has had his passions inflamed by Socrates, but not satisfied by him. The relationship between the philosopher and the tyrant in ancient Athens can be told as a trilogy. *Alcibiades I* is the first installment, where the two meet and the philosopher seduces the tyrant. The

“But since neither the body, nor the union of the two, is man, either man has no real existence, or the soul is man.”¹⁶ He who knows only the body knows the things of man, not man himself; therefore he who desires self-knowledge must inquire into the nature of his own soul. This, to return to the beginning of the dialogue, is why Socrates has remained with Alcibiades while all his other lovers have left him. The lover of the soul is the true lover. Socrates was the only one who loved Alcibiades soul, while all the others loved only his body.

Having raised Alcibiades’ ambitions politically in order to control him, Socrates attempts to temper Alcibiades by convincing him that he can only accomplish his goals through education in virtue. He leads Alcibiades into concluding that the only type of knowledge that leads to virtue is self-knowledge, and that self-knowledge is knowledge of one’s soul because the soul is man. Socrates seeks to temper Alcibiades by providing limitations that Alcibiades acknowledges. In this way does the classical philosopher attempt to mediate the tyrant. By inflaming his political passions and then demonstrating his ignorance, the philosopher seduces him into believing that without the philosopher’s wisdom he will surely fail. Convinced that failure will result in wretchedness and unhappiness, the tyrant follows the philosopher’s argument along lines that are not his own. By tricking the tyrant into believing that virtue—as defined by the philosopher—is necessary for his own success (the real virtue of the tyrant), the tyrant is forced to accept the philosopher’s conception of virtue.

Symposium is the second chapter, in which the tyrant rebels against his cage, unable or unwilling to accept the philosophers’ teachings. The third chapter is the tragic reality of Alcibiades’ tyranny and demise and Socrates trial, sentence and execution. In practicing philosophy we tend to take philosophy for granted. The historical Socrates serves as a reminder that the philosopher is always in danger from the city.

¹⁶ Ibid., st. 130.

Socrates has introduced the idea of a higher meaning in public life and then transposed that meaning into his own conception of private virtue. He tries to control power with wisdom by integrating the tyrant's conception of virtue with his own. He teaches the tyrant prudence by convincing the tyrant that allowing the soul to rule over the body will make him the happiest of men. This is precisely the situation that has occurred with Alcibiades. By the end of the dialogue he is agreeing to assertions concerning the necessity of virtue, justice and wisdom and the evils of tyrannical power that he would never have acknowledge at the beginning. He accedes that "not tyrannical power should be the aim either of individuals or states, if they would be happy, but virtue."¹⁷

The question remains, however, of how long will Socrates' success last. Socrates himself knows that there is little reason to believe that this private conversation will have lasting effect once Alcibiades enters the public arena. He sees a great danger that he believes may prove the ruin of his attempt to control the tyrant. He tells Alcibiades he will never desert him if he is "not spoiled and deformed by the Athenian people; for the danger which I most fear is that you will become a lover of the people and will be spoiled by them. Many a noble Athenian has been ruined in this way." The people corrupt the good because they are ruled by opinion instead of knowledge and thus have no conception of virtue. This is the paradox that Socrates cannot solve. He gained control over Alcibiades by promising to help him attain his political desires. While Socrates did this in order to better Alcibiades' soul, in the end, unless Alcibiades becomes a true philosopher, he will desire to enter public affairs. He will be forced to corrupt his soul and flatter the public in order to gain power. Over the corrupting power of the public

¹⁷ Ibid., st. 131.

Socrates has little control and no recourse. We must conclude along with Socrates that there is, in classical terms, little reason for optimism. As Socrates concludes the dialogue: "And I hope that you will persist; although I have fears, not because I doubt you; but I see the power of the state, which may be too much for both of us."¹⁸

The Symposium

The *Symposium* occupies a special place within the Platonic dialogues.¹⁹ It takes place under a veil of secrecy. Reported many years after the discussion by someone a couple of times removed from the events. This is in sharp contrast to the *Republic*, which is narrated by Socrates himself based on events of the previous day. Furthermore the dialogue occurs at the private residence of Agathon at a party for close friends. The exact reason for the hidden nature of the dialogue cannot be said. However, at the very least, it could be argued that the private nature of the setting corresponds with the nature of the discussion. The participants gather together to discuss the nature of *eros*; a subject full of private implications and potentially scandalous opinions. The intimate nature of the setting conveys the necessary feeling required for a personal discussion that is both open and honest. For the immediate time being, the participants are sheltered from reality of public, political life.

The participants are gathered together to celebrate Agathon's triumph in the dramatic contest held in conjunction with the Lenaian festival in Athens in 416 BC. Conventionally such an occasion would have been characterized by large amounts of drinking and general drunkenness and disorder. On this occasion, however, the

¹⁸ Ibid., st. 132.

¹⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, tr. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff, Cambridge: Hackett Books, 1989.

participants of the party are all hung over from the night before and decide that instead of engaging in drinking competitions they will instead spend the evening in conversation. Eryximachus and Phaedrus propose that they engage in speeches in praise of *eros*. Beginning with Phaedrus and going around the circle they each give a speech in praise of *eros*. The ritual of passing the wine around the circle and drinking has been replaced with conversation and speeches. It is ironic that they choose to engage in theoretical speculation about *eros* rather than actual erotic revelry.

Generally speaking the question the *Symposium* explores is whether *eros* is the surest motive for civic virtue? All the speakers take it for granted that *eros* is not solely a personal experience and that it could act as a bond among citizens. The ultimate purpose of the discussion is to find a natural basis for virtue that does not require the sacrifice of happiness. The possibility that two or more lovers could find the common pursuit of virtue as the motive for friendship. The succession of speeches thus provides a philosophical treatment of *eros* in which Socrates gathers together and sums up the content of the previous speeches by preserving some things and discarding others. The result is a fairly complete and plausible phenomenology of *Eros*. The dialogue, however, immediately calls this account into question with the entrance of Alcibiades. Drunk, arrogant and obnoxious, Alcibiades disturbs the proceedings and imposes a Dionysian element to the proceedings. The political actor disrupts the private nature of the setting and re-introduces politics into the dialogue. This suggests that the private treatment of *eros* is unsatisfactory and/or incomplete. He serves as a reminder that philosophy is always grounded in politics and cannot exist outside or without it. Any account of virtue, *eros*, and the city that does not take into account men like Alcibiades is necessarily in

error. The question remains concerning the cause of Alcibiades' dissatisfaction and how philosophy has contributed to or lessened his malaise.

Phaedrus begins the discussion by praising *eros* as the oldest of the gods. He introduces the possibility that *eros* serves as a motive for civic virtue. He associates the good with shame and honour, and suggests love as the basis for such a culture. He is a clear representative of the old ways of timocratic Athens in which the veneration of ancestors and the belief in immortality through honourable actions served as the basis of civic life. He argues that love is the surest way to defend such a way of life since the motivation for acting honourably is increased if one loves one's fellow citizens.

Pausanias retains this notion of civic virtue, based upon ancestry and honour, introduced by Phaedrus. He is, however, troubled by the lack of distinction between noble love of the soul and vulgar love of the body. He maintains that *eros* is the oldest god but limits this ancient god to love of the soul (uranian love) and distinguishes it from the newer, baser form of love that merely inspires physical lust. Pausanias has maintained the ancestral understanding of civic virtue introduced by Phaedrus while introducing the classic Socratic dichotomy of the soul and the body.

Eryximachus provides the third speech while Aristophanes recovers from a case of the hiccups. He is a physician and a pseudo-intellectual devotee of Heraclitus (a pre-socratic philosopher who believed that nature is purely indeterminate). Eryximachus thus introduces the metaphysical basis for the Sophists political claims. However he is portrayed as a buffoon, the butt of Aristophanes jokes, who quotes Heraclitus and then provides a complete misinterpretation of Heraclitus' point.²⁰ The fact that this supposed

²⁰ In the midst of arguing that medicine produces concord and harmony, and thus love, between opposites Eryximachus uses Heraclitus as support. "Indeed, this may have been just what Heraclitus had in mind,

follower of Heraclitus is portrayed in such a comical manner is indicative of the Platonic contempt for pseudo-academics who are capable of neither thought nor action.

Nevertheless he contributes to the discussion by taking *eros* and lifting it out of the human world and into the *cosmos*. He retains the notion of good and bad *eros*. The good having to do with harmony, the healing of contraries, and the bad with disorder. He argues that there is a specific kind *episteme* (rigorous knowledge) necessary for the right kind of *eros* and this knowledge is the art of medicine.

Aristophanes, the great comic poet who ridiculed Socrates in his play the *Clouds* as well as Agathon in *Thesmophoriazousai*, brings the discussion back down to earth with his speech. He argues that human *eros* is not the good, but rather the longing for the good. It is the longing for completeness and reunification with our missing half that was given in a long forgotten golden age of the past. Through his allegory of the circle people we find the articulate expression of a specific kind of tragic thought. The striving of *eros* only comes into existence after Zeus has already punished the circle people for their excessive pride and ambitions. The satisfaction of *eros* is only possible in the past. Aristophanes' speech gives the expression of the cosmic absurdity of human strivings because, according to him, we only experience the pang of *eros* after it is existentially impossible to be satisfied. Furthermore Aristophanes speech comes as the culmination of

though his mode of expression certainly leaves much to be desired. The one, he says, 'being at variance with itself is in agreement with itself' 'like the attunement of a bow or a lyre.' Naturally, it is patently absurd to claim that an attunement or a harmony is in itself discordant or that its elements are still in discord with one another. Heraclitus probably meant that an expert musician creates a harmony by resolving the prior discord between high and low notes. For surely there can be no harmony so long as high and low are still discordant; harmony, after all, is consonance, and consonance is a species of agreement. Discordant elements, as long as they are still in discord, cannot come to an agreement, and they therefore cannot produce a harmony." This argument is in precise contradiction to the Heraclitean formulation that all is in flux, as indicated by his classic statement that it is not possible to step into the same river twice. Given this ontology, Heraclitus probably meant that the attunement of the lyre is achieved by the opposing tensions of string and instrument, in which case Heraclitus meant precisely what Eryximachus himself described as "patently absurd." Ibid., 187bc.

the previous set of speeches, each of which could be said to be indicative of the current state of the ancestral regime of Athens. It is this ancestral regime that is currently in crisis in the Athens of the Peloponnesian War. His speech closes with an attempt to reconstitute piety and civic virtue based upon tradition.

Long ago we were united, as I said; but now the god has divided us as punishment for the wrong we did him, just as the Spartans divided the Arcadians. So there's a danger that if we don't keep order before the gods, we'll be split in two again, and then we'll be walking around in the condition of people carved on gravestones in bas-relief, sawn apart between the nostrils, like half dice. We should encourage all men, therefore, to treat the gods with all due reverence, so that we may escape this fate and find wholeness instead. And we will, if Love is our guide and our commander. Let no one work against him. Whoever opposes Love is hateful to the gods, but if we become friends of the god and cease to quarrel with him, then we shall find the young men that are meant for us and win their love, as very few men do nowadays.²¹

His speech is a plea to fear and revere the gods, lest human beings be split once again and become even less than they are now. Furthermore it is an appeal to the erotic longings of the participants suggesting that the veneration of tradition proposed by Aristophanes will result in their satisfaction and happiness. By proposing tradition and piety as the solution to erotic longings, Aristophanes clears the space for Socrates' eventual proposal that philosophy is the true path to happiness. Aristophanes and Socrates, in this respect, are kindred spirits in their thoughtful attempts to deal with the spiritual crisis of Athens. In this way Aristophanes' conservatism is presented as a serious intellectual alternative to Socratic philosophy.

The comic poet Aristophanes' eloquent speech in favored of a reconstituted tragic order is followed by Agathon's, a young tragic poet, speech in praise of the modern age. He argues that *eros* is the newest god and is always young and never old. He is the

²¹ Ibid., 193ab.

unknown god of the modern age just as Agathon is the poet of the modern age. Attacking Homer and Hesiod, poets of strife, necessity and heroic tragedy, Agathon argues that we live in an age of enlightenment and progress and a better poetic spirit is required. He adds to the previous speeches the notion of hierarchy, that it is wrong to believe that *eros* applies to everybody in the same way. However he does agree that properly understood it could be the source of other virtues.

Agathon's speech seriously calls into question Aristophanes' solution. As the poet of the hour, who has just won a dramatic competition with his first play, he opts for the exact opposite of Aristophanes' solution. For Agathon there is no problem or spiritual crisis. Furthermore, his speech, while artistic and beautiful, is essentially empty of content. Aristophanes speech occurs at the edge of the old and the new. The old ways are falling apart as Athens moves towards the sophistication of a cosmopolitan empire. The notions of virtue espoused by Phaedrus and Pausanias are outdated and incomplete, while Eryximachus' cosmological speech is entirely disconnected from the world. The new way, as represented by Agathon, is essentially empty. He is characteristic of the young men of Athens (like Alcibiades and Glaucon) who can find no satisfactory object for their longings. It is into this context that Socrates enters as the potential savior of Athenian virtue.

Socrates speech draws together elements of all the previous speeches. From Phaedrus & Pausanias he maintains *eros* as an inducement to virtue. From Pausanias he keeps the distinction between good and bad *eros*, which in turn serves as the distinction between body and soul. From Eryximachus he keeps the idea of cosmopolitan speculations. From Aristophanes he brings the discussion back to earth and considers the

need for piety. Finally from Agathon he keeps the need for hierarchy. Socrates does more, however, than simply sum up the relevant matters from the previous speeches.

The ground rule for the party was that all agreed to praise eros. Socrates introduces the need to ask the question, what is eros? Is it good? This allows Socrates to use the previous speculations as the ground for his own metaphysical speculations. He takes the speeches on *eros* given by the interlocutors, which are presumably based upon their own experiences, and transcends them through metaphysical philosophy. This corresponds with the general thrust of Platonic metaphysics in which the soul ascends from that which is changeable (experience) to that which is unchanging (the good, wisdom etc.). In this instance of Platonic metaphysics, Socrates describes the object of erotic longing as the good itself as mediated by the beautiful. *Eros* is the driving force of the ascent of the soul from the particular nature of a single beautiful person to the universal knowledge of the good and eternal. *Eros* serves as the driving impulse that moves the individual from sexual desire (*tau aphrodite*) of individual bodies to the *thymotic* desire for recognition, glory and honour, finally culminating in the desire for wisdom (philosophy) and contemplation of the *nous*. Diotima's ladder serves as a classic formation of Platonic metaphysics in which the soul ascends from the particular beautiful object to the universal of the good. The good is eternal, unchanging and beyond perishing and, thus, far more desirable than the merely beautiful that is subject to decay and death. This account of *eros* preserves the initial praise that *eros* is best-used in order to preserve civic virtue. Here honour and ambition are grounded in something higher than themselves. The political actor can achieve honour and ambition not at the expense of the general good but rather as part of it. Statesmen can be enlisted as friends of

philosophy through a balance of the active and contemplative life. Political actors who might otherwise be drawn to tyranny could be mediated by philosophy as philosophical *eros* absorbs the energy that might otherwise be devoted towards tyrannical ambitions.

Up to this point in the *Symposium*, the philosophical account of *eros* has resulted in a classic account of Platonic metaphysics as mediated through *eros*. The entrance of Alcibiades, however, calls the entire project into question. Alcibiades represents all that has been left out. He arrives drunk, surrounded by companions who have spent the night in revelry (concrete *eros* and passion). He is real *eros*, inflamed but never satisfied. He is also a political actor at the height of his power with more than a few tyrannical ambitions. While a friend of Socrates and philosophy, he is not reconciled to his subordination and immediately competes with Socrates for Agathon's affections.

The subtext here is clear. Socrates and Alcibiades are competing for Agathon (the Greek word *agathon* literally means the good). While Socrates was seemingly successful in *Alcibiades I* in seducing Alcibiades to philosophy, we see here that this success is, at best, marginal. While Alcibiades was willing to admit that he does not know what he's talking about, he is not willing to give up politics for philosophy. Socrates has been unsuccessful at directing Alcibiades' *eros* away from honour and ambition towards philosophical contemplation of the good. In fact, the Alcibiades we are presented with here is profoundly dissatisfied. He is in the same wretched state that we witnessed in *Alcibiades I* many years ago.

They [the great orators of Athens] never upset me so deeply that my very own soul started protesting that my life—*my* life!—was no better than the most miserable slave's. And yet that is exactly how this Marsyas here at my side makes me feel all the time: he makes it seem that my life isn't worth living! . . . He always traps me, you see, and he makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time, while all that matters is just

what I most neglect: my personal shortcomings, which cry out for the closest attention. So I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him, for, like the Sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die. . . . I know perfectly well that I can't prove he's wrong when he tells me what I should do; yet, the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways: I cave in to my desire to please the crowd.²²

Alcibiades remains dissatisfied by Socrates and Socrates' teaching because he remains focused upon the public satisfaction of his desires; a satisfaction that Socrates, and philosophy, is unable to fulfill.

Alcibiades is, as is Callicles in the *Gorgias*, trapped in an existential abyss unable to find satisfaction in either the public or private realms. The relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates reveals the limits of Platonic philosophy. Socrates is unable to teach the tyrant happiness on his own terms. As long as the tyrant remains focused upon public ambitions he and the philosopher remain fatally divorced. The happiness and satisfaction taught by Socrates remains a private function of the soul, divorced from public honours. At best Socrates can mediate the behaviour of tyrants by placing them within the hierarchy of an ascent of the soul such as Diotima's ladder. However this mediation is extremely circumspect dependent, to a large part, on the tyrant's willingness to listen and obey Socrates.

How can Alcibiades accept this subordination without concrete knowledge and experience of the Good? How can he have this while staying in politics? Ultimately, so long as the tyrant remains fuelled by political ambitions there is no reason for him to obey Socrates, since Socrates' teachings are based upon a metaphysical understanding of which he has no, and cannot have any, experience. What is required is for Alcibiades to be educated in correct opinion and *phrenesis*. However it is precisely because there is no

²² Ibid., 216ab.

“correct” opinion or stable order in Athens that the problem of tyranny exists. In fact it could even be said that Alcibiades has been made unhappy through his experience with Socrates. When they first meet he is young, confident and full of himself. In the *Symposium* he remains confident and full of himself and is present at the height of his powers. However, there is more than a tinge of desperation and dissatisfaction. In Socrates he has found someone whom he respects and loves who may not return his love and respect. For a man who’s greatest desire is to be loved and honoured to be rejected by he who he most loves and honours undermines whatever possibility he previously had of satisfaction and happiness through public prestige.

Alcibiades thus presents a tragic figure amidst the comic aspects of his revelry. We see within him both the aspects of comic reconciliation and tragic futility. This, in the end, is perhaps the point of the *Symposium*. While Plato certainly believed in the general principle of the ascent of the soul from the temporal and changeable to the eternal and unchanging he equally clearly knew that such speculation does not occur in a vacuum and must always be grounded in personal experience mediated by political reality. The philosopher is he who desires wisdom: knowledge of the whole, complete nature of what is. Partial representations of the whole, whether in terms of metaphysics or politics, comedy or tragedy, are thus necessarily in error.

This is the meaning of the final dialogue when, after all the others have long since passed out from excessive drink, Socrates, Agathon (the tragic poet) and Aristophanes (the comic poet) are engaged in a discussion in which Socrates is trying to convince the others that the true artist should be able to write both comedy and tragedy because comedy is false completeness and tragedy is empty skepticism. This is, of course,

precisely what has occurred in the *Symposium*. Plato has written a work that is both comic and tragic, that contains both the highest account of metaphysical optimism and the most tragically doomed character found in the dialogues. The reality of the relationship between Alcibiades and Socrates is that it was ultimately a failure. Socrates was never able to tame his ambitions nor was able to provide him with the practical advice necessary for his success. For Socrates thought and action are separate and can be brought together only through reflection, reflection that cannot occur in the midst of political action.

Callicles and Thrasymachus

In the character of Alcibiades, as represented in *Alcibiades I*, we are confronted with a young man who, while drawn towards tyranny, is not yet fully committed to the life. In the *Symposium* he is an engaged political actor yet remains drawn towards philosophy through his love for Socrates. Because of Alcibiades' love, Socrates is able to attempt to mediate and tame his ambitions. The openness of Alcibiades allows us to witness the potential of philosophy to tame the tyrannical impulse in the young. However, because he is not yet fully formed the Alcibiades of *Alcibiades I* demonstrates more impulse than thought and is both unwilling and unable to give a thorough defense of tyranny. The older Alcibiades of the *Symposium* is interested more in satisfying his erotic longings than he is in defending them. The Socratic question concerning how one ought to live cannot be truly answered if all alternatives have not been explored. In Socrates' quest to discover the best life, certain thematic questions continue to arise: 1) what is the relationship between the public and the private that results in the happiest of

men? and 2) what is the proper relationship between theory and action (or between the philosopher and the city, wisdom and power)? From the question, how one ought to live, emerges a choice between the tyrant and the philosopher, between the powerful actor and the contemplative thinker.

This section examines the differences between the tyrant and the philosopher, as portrayed by the Platonic dialogues, in four key areas: the difference in their conclusions about the best way of life; their different conceptions of nature upon which their conclusions are based; and the effect these have upon their understanding of the private and public, and theory and action.

The best expressions given by Plato of the tyrannical life are Socrates' encounters with Callicles, in the *Gorgias*, and with Thrasymachus in the *Republic*. In these two characters Plato has provided us with those who are not ashamed to express the views of the tyrant, which often are kept private. In his discussion with Socrates on the nature of justice, Thrasymachus tells us that: "... in every city the same thing is just, the advantage of the established ruling body. It surely is master; so the man who reasons rightly concludes that everywhere justice is the same thing, the advantage of the stronger."²³

Here we see the expression of the tyrannical view of justice. For the tyrant there is no such thing as true or absolute justice that can guide action or provide morality. Justice is always conventional and is always established by whoever rules. Justice, therefore, is whatever those who are sufficiently powerful dictate, and nothing more. The tyrant reasons that he should scheme and manipulate in order to gain power. What he does will be just if he is successful in obtaining rulership. The problem with

Thrasymachus' view is that "sometimes the stronger order those who are weaker and are ruled to do what is to the disadvantage of the stronger. On the basis of these agreements, the advantage of the stronger would be no more just than the disadvantage." While Thrasymachus is provided a way out through Cleitophon's legal positivist argument that what Thrasymachus truly meant was that "the advantage of the stronger is what the stronger believes to be his advantage,"²⁴ Thrasymachus rejects this option because it entails no distinction between seeming and being. Thrasymachus the tyrant believes the stronger is stronger by nature and not merely on the basis of appearances.

Callicles builds upon this theme in the *Gorgias*. Reflecting upon the preceding discussions between Socrates, Polus and Gorgias, Callicles states that all Socrates does is question *nomos* (law or convention) by *physis* (nature) and nature by law. He argues that justice is a convention to subdue the stronger by suggesting that trying to gain a greater share is unjust and shameful. This, however, is only according to *nomos*. The law of nature, according to Callicles, is that the superior should rule the inferior.²⁵ Finally Callicles concludes that the purpose of power, the best way of life, is the endless pursuit of desire and pleasure. He states that "... the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought ... to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time."²⁶ This then is the best way of life according to the tyrant. An active life in pursuit of power, unfettered by convention, for the purpose of being master over others in the fulfillment of desire.

²³ Plato, *The Republic*, tr. Allan Bloom. Basic Books, 1968, 339a.

²⁴ Ibid., 340b

²⁵ Plato, *Gorgias*, tr. Zeyl. Hackett Books, 483ae

²⁶ Ibid., 492a.

Socrates' conception of the best way of life is very different. As mentioned above, Socrates questions the knowledge of the tyrant and his ability to know which laws will be to his advantage.²⁷ He argues that rulers without knowledge act randomly and arbitrarily and thus are unable to achieve their own good.²⁸ For Socrates, knowledge of the good is far more important than action in the pursuit of power because power is only useful in the pursuit of either more power or endless desire. Both power and desire, as a matter of practical necessity, preclude the ability to pursue philosophy and knowledge of the good. For Socrates, the tyrannical pursuit of power and desire are not bad in and of themselves but rather are bad in their distraction and fostered ignorance.

The best way of life is the life that is informed by the good. Knowledge of the good cannot be acquired actively, thus does Socrates proclaim that it is more important to rule oneself than it is to rule others.²⁹ The happiest of men is he with an ordered soul who is able to master his desires and appetites because then his soul will be ordered and in tune with the world. As he states: "... wise men claim that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control, and justice hold together heaven and earth, and gods and men, and that is why they call this universe a world order, my friend, my friend, and not an undisciplined world-disorder."³⁰ This, then, is the life of the philosopher. Self-disciplined and thoughtful he seeks to understand nature so that he may order his own soul in accordance with it.

²⁷Socrates makes the exact same objection to Polus in the discussion preceding the one with Callicles in the *Gorgias*. In this case Polus and Socrates agree that all men want what is good. Polus argues that power is good because it enables men to do as they see fit. Socrates responds that as long as men have no knowledge of the good they will only act as they see fit and not as they want. In this way is knowledge superior to power.

²⁸*Republic*, 339b-e.

²⁹*Gorgias*, 491e.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 508a.

We can see now that the crux of the disagreement between Callicles and Socrates, between the tyrannical sophists and the philosopher, rests upon the question of nature. While both agree that knowledge is based upon nature, the sophist believes that *nomos* is always separate from *physis*. Dissatisfied with the mythological structure of the poets and their virtues of heroic endurance and acceptance, the sophists use reason to oppose the traditional poetic morality. Callicles suggests that all such horizons (which had been considered natural) are creations of convention designed to maintain a certain power structure, in this case the dominion of the many over the few. He suggests that the strong and superior—those who are able to see the truth about convention—should follow a higher law (the law of nature), in which the strong do as they please. He argues that this is how nature, outside of human convention, truly operates and that the happiest of men is he who realizes this and does not allow convention to inhibit his actions.

The major problem with this view, as Socrates points out, is how the stronger and the superior are defined. Callicles wishes to believe that those who are superior are superior by nature and that, unrestrained by convention, the same type of people will always rise and rule. He believes what is just by nature is that: “. . . the superior should take by force what belongs to the inferior, that the better should rule the worse and the more worthy have a greater share than the less worthy.”³¹ Questioned regarding the nature of the superior, the stronger and the better, Callicles responds that they are all the same, those that are intelligent and have the capacity to rule politically in the city. Socrates points out that in those cities where the many rule, it is in fact they who are stronger and more intelligent. He observes that the rule of the many is not that each

³¹Ibid., 488b.

should try to achieve a greater share than others, but rather that “it’s just to have an equal share and that doing what’s unjust is more shameful than suffering it.”³²

It is this point which Callicles refuses to accept. His mistake is that he attempts to do away with a morality that exists outside of the tyrant while at the same time prioritizing the tyrant as superior by nature—which, of course, exists outside of the tyrant. In the end, the tyrant’s understanding of nature is defined by the doctrine of success, a fact that Thrasymachus makes much clearer than Callicles. It continues to be based upon nature, but it is an understanding of nature that cannot justify action until the action itself is completed. Such a justification requires an external (historical) time consciousness in which events are understood in terms of causation. This is opposed to the ancient cyclical understanding of time in which boundaries are always fixed and there is no sense of linear progression. For this reason, in the ancient world, tyranny is always bad because its transformative power cannot be justified within the constraints of a cyclical understanding of nature.

Socrates understanding of the best way of life, on the other hand, is based upon the classical understanding of nature. The Greek word for nature, *physis*, is a cognate of the word *phyein*, meaning to grow. What exists by nature is that which comes into being on its own. Nature is viewed in terms of the cyclical process of birth, maturation and death. Nature is about boundaries, boundaries that are fixed and immovable. The Greek word for virtue, *arete*, means literally, the specific excellence of a thing. What is good, or what is virtuous, is therefore that which allows a thing to flourish within the limits of its nature. The philosopher is the happiest of men because he is the most excellent of

³²Ibid., 489a.

men. His pursuit of knowledge allows him to know what his limits are, to know what he is fit for. He is happier than all other men because other men act randomly, ignorant of what is fitting. The philosopher, on the other hand, follows Socrates' famous credo to 'know thyself'. It is this knowledge which allows him to do what is fitting and good. Socrates preaches moderation and self-discipline not out of an aesthetic appeal for an ascetic lifestyle, but rather because these are the conditions which must pertain in order for man to know his limits and live in accordance with nature. The rules are set by nature. Man simply tries to follow them.

Such is the difference in conceptions of nature between the philosopher and the tyrant. The philosopher embodies the classical internal time consciousness in which time is understood cyclically. The tyrant, while living in the ancient world and accepting its understanding, can only be justified through history. That is, after the moderns transform nature into history.

We can see that Callicles position is primarily materialistic. His advocacy of hedonism is not based upon higher principles of good, but rather upon the simple material experience of pleasure. However, his pursuit of pleasure is not simply base. While he claims that the best life would be the life of constant desire and pleasure, his actions indicate a more measured approach. When Socrates insults him by arguing that if the unbridled pursuit of pleasure is the best life then, perhaps, the best life is that of a catamite (a male prostitute), Callicles objects and asks whether Socrates is not ashamed to push the conversation in this direction. Unable, for want of consistency in argument, to contradict Socrates at this point, Callicles relents, yet his anger demonstrates he is not in agreement. Callicles, Thrasymachus and Alcibiades all demonstrate that they desire

more than private erotic satisfaction. They are interested not only in pleasure but rather, pleasure mediated by honour and recognition. Callicles advocates the pursuit of oratory and a political (public) lifestyle because it is through action in politics that a man is able to realize these desires. It is in the public arena that he may acquire the power necessary for his ambitions. It would appear therefore that the tyrant is essentially a public figure who prioritizes the public over the private. Further evidence of this is given when Callicles accuses philosophy of being useless, or even dangerous (to oneself), because of the fact that the philosopher (Socrates) would be unable to defend himself in public against his accusers.

As it is, if someone got hold of you or of anyone else like you and took you off to prison on the charge that you're doing something unjust when in fact you aren't, you, you can know that you wouldn't have any use for yourself. You'd get dizzy, your mouth would hang open and you wouldn't know what to say. You'd come up for trial and face some no good wretch of an accuser and be put to death, if death is what he'd want to condemn you to."³³

This is an example of why Callicles approves of oratory over philosophy. The philosopher is defenseless in public, to the political power of the city (a fact which Socrates acknowledges).

It appears as if the tyrant raises the public (external or material good) at the expense of the private (internal or spiritual good). However, it is more accurate to conclude that the tyrant is trying to privatize the public arena: to transform the city into his own private household. Thus for the tyrant, politics is not about the good (as it is for Plato and Aristotle) but rather about power. He is not simply emphasizing the public, but

³³Ibid., 486b. Given that this is almost precisely what occurs in the *Apology*, it appears that Callicles is correct on this point. However, Callicles representation of what occurs in the *Apology* demonstrates his

rather transforming it into his own private domain. In this way he destroys the potential for virtue of both realms by eliminating their essential characteristics.

Ultimately the tyrant cannot be satisfied. According to the ideal of the philosophic life true virtue is impossible in a tyrannical regime because (in public) there are no free men among whom communication is possible. The tyrant has no equal with whom he can speak, with whom he may compare and contrast experience of the world and discover what he is fitted for. There are only master and slaves. The slaves are without virtue because they can only do as they are instructed. The tyrant is without virtue because he has no way of discovering what he is fit for. His life is consumed by action: in the first place, the action that is required to attain power; and in the second, the action required to maintain it. In either case he is unable to pursue the thought which could direct his action towards what is fitting and thus make him happy.

The tyrant is also dissatisfied by his own standards. His love of honour, glory and recognition cannot be satisfied by his own tyrannical regime. He can only be recognized by his subjects; a recognition which has no value to him. The tyrant's desire for recognition cannot be satisfied by his subjects because his subjects have demonstrated their inferiority through their servitude. In the case of Callicles, he wants his two loves (Demos the boy and the *demos*—the people) to honour him while at the same time he wants to be able to respect them so that he may respect their recognition.³⁴ It is this respect for his people that the tyrant undermines with the ontological position that he is by nature superior. The ancient tyrant is always miserable because theory and action can

ignorance of the purpose of philosophy. He is attempting to understand philosophy in tyrannical terms, to which it appears useless.

³⁴Waller R. Newell, *Ruling Passion: The Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, p.24-25.

never coincide for him. By transforming the political into an image of the private he elevates power above wisdom, action over thought. Power politics is the key to his success; it is also, according to classical understanding, his spiritual demise.

The Apology

Socrates' views of the relationship between thought and action and between the private and public, are considerably more complicated than those of Calicles and the other sophists. Plato begins to develop these themes in the *Apology*, where we see Socrates defend himself at his trial by putting the Athenian political system on trial. It is Socrates' purpose in the *Apology* to do two things. First to give an account of what philosophy is (as opposed to the poetic tradition of the gods); and secondly, to force the Athenian political system to account for itself and be responsible.

The *Apology* teaches us that the philosopher should always be a private man and should refrain from engaging in politics. As the city is threatened by the philosopher's wisdom (through his questioning of convention and law), the philosopher is threatened by the city's power to persecute whomever it pleases.

. . . it is quite certain that, if I had attempted to take part in politics, I should have perished at once and long ago without doing any good either to you or to myself. . . . There is no man who will preserve his life for long, either in Athens or elsewhere, if he firmly opposes the multitude, and tries to prevent the commission of much injustice and illegality in the state. He who would really fight for justice must do so as a private citizen, not as a political figure, if he is to preserve his life, even for a short time.³⁵

Earlier Socrates condemns the multitude and, in so doing, the Athenian democratic system of rule by the multitude, who make judgements based upon opinion instead of

knowledge. The criminal justice system of the time was prone to seemingly arbitrary decisions based upon ancestral veneration, clan politics and rhetorical ability rather than a consistently applied legal code. It is this, which condemns Socrates and will condemn others in their own time. “That is what will cause my condemnation if I am condemned; not Meletus nor Anytus either, but that prejudice and resentment of the multitude which have been the destruction of many good men before me, and I think will be so again. There is no prospect that I shall be the last victim.”³⁶

This is the charge Socrates levels at the Athenian political system and his conduct in the trial is designed not only to defend the philosophical way of life but also to introduce an element of reflection and responsibility into Athenian politics. Socrates does this by continually provoking the jury. He insists he will never change his way of life, not if he must die a thousand times. He refuses to plead and beg for mercy, or to use friends and family to do the same. He insists that not only is he not harmful to the city but rather he is beneficial. Finally, after being convicted of the charges, Socrates further provokes the jury by proposing as his punishment free meals in the prytaneum (the hall of heroes). While the jury may have been willing to allow Socrates to escape with a slap on the wrist, forced to choose between death—the proposed punishment of his persecutors—and free meals in the prytaneum, the jury chose death.

Socrates does this because he is trying to force the jury (and thus the Athenian political system) to follow through on its actions and be responsible. To replace a seemingly random and arbitrary politics (i.e. one based on opinion and power) with a reflective and responsible one. He wants to force them to account for their actions

³⁵Plato, *The Apology*, tr. F.J. Church. Library of Liberal Arts, 1948. 31e.

through reflection. Theory and action are brought together through reflection, and in this way do they become responsible.

Here we have an introduction to Plato's views on the relationship between theory and action. Platonic subjectivity binds thought and action through responsibility. This responsibility, however, requires distance. Theory and action are never combined, but rather are connected through reflection. The *Apology* does not, however, expand upon the full meaning of the relationship between theory and action as it relates to the best way of life and to the best political regime. For this we must turn to the *Republic*.

³⁶Ibid., 28a.

Chapter 3: The Republic

The *Republic* is Socrates true apology. It is the most complete presentation of philosophy and the philosophic life found in the Platonic dialogues. In the attempt by Socrates and his companions to create, in speech—that is, in theory—the perfect city, founded upon the Idea of justice we are presented with the fullest exploration of the themes of freedom, justice and the icons of the philosophic life. This is not, however, the complete teaching of Plato. Because the philosopher lives in the city, among other men, philosophy must always be concerned with politics and must always be political. The *Republic* is therefore also about the relationship between the city and the philosopher, between power and wisdom.

The dialogue opens with Socrates and Glaucon turning towards town after attending a religious festival in the Piraeus. Historically speaking, the *Republic* occurs at the apex of the Athenian Empire in which trade and conquests have exposed the Athenian people to a host of outside influences. The Piraeus was the port of Athens and thus was the most cosmopolitan of places in an increasingly cosmopolitan city. In the opening passage Socrates observes that in his opinion “the procession of the native inhabitants was fine; but the one the Thracians conducted was no less fitting a show.”³⁷ Here we see the seeds of the Athenian moral and spiritual crisis. In the Piraeus it made no difference who was conducting the festival. New religious practices had been normalized. The religious foundation of traditional authority and morality had been reduced to

³⁷ *The Republic*, 327a.

entertainment, a show.³⁸ It is in this twilight of Olympian religion, and perhaps of Athens itself, that philosophy emerges. In the *Republic*, Socrates is attempting to provide a new basis for civic virtue by reconciling the traditional, tribal Athens of Homer (the particular) with the new cosmopolitan Athens of Empire (the universal).³⁹ This is the difference between a civic bond (universal, public) and a clan bond (particular, private). Plato and Aristotle are radically departing from tradition by proposing that citizenship, and not the family, should be the basis for political life.

Socrates and Glaucon are stopped on their way by Polemarchus' (the son of Cephalus, a wealthy arms dealer) slave who forces them to accompany him and his companions to his home. Immediately the themes of power and wisdom, masters and slaves, and freedom are introduced. Socrates (wisdom) has his freedom taken away by Polemarchus (power) and his companions. The drama of the *Republic* is Socrates (the slave) attempting to gain his freedom from his masters through the power of speech (reason).

The theme of justice is introduced by Cephalus (master), Polemarchus' father, who in his old age, after years of eating, drinking, fighting and copulating, is concerned about the justness of his life and his future in the after-life. Prior to Socrates' arrival he had just made a sacrifice in the courtyard as part of his effort to appease the gods and

³⁸ Plato's dissatisfaction with Homer goes beyond the fact that it was no longer providing a functioning horizon for human action. Plato takes issue with the tragic view of life. The basis from which Homer defends certain acts as just, especially Achilles' status as hero, is unpredictable and seemingly arbitrary. There was no universal transcendental criterion for distinguishing justice, for rewarding virtue and punishing vice. Plato tries to replace heroic Achilles with the philosophic Socrates.

³⁹ The setting is further emphasized by the historical backdrop to these dramatic events. The Piraeus was the stronghold of resistance to the oligarchy of the thirty tyrants put in place by Sparta, after the Peloponnesian War, in 404 BC. The family of Polemarchus was at the center of this resistance and Polemarchus was executed by the tyrants. This provides the backdrop to the entire dialogue where "the friendly associations of ten men with whom Socrates talks in the Piraeus will be replaced by a committee of ten men who brutally rule there in the name of the "Thirty" and put the host of this meeting to death. The participants discuss the best regime but are to experience the worst." Ibid., editor's notes, p. 441.

atone for his life. Cephalus wishes to discuss with Socrates, the reputed wise man, the nature of justice. Cephalus equates justice with the gods, which, materially, means law-abidedness. Through conversation they come to the conclusion that Cephalus believes that justice is telling the truth and paying one's debts, rendering to each that which they are owed. This, the business man's view of justice, is refuted by Socrates who points out in a subtle attack on the morality of Cephalus' (the arms dealer) life that "if a man takes weapons from a friend when the latter is of sound mind, and the friend demands them back when he is mad, one shouldn't give back such things, and the man who gave them back would not be just, and moreover, one should not be willing to tell someone in this state the whole truth."⁴⁰

In this passage Socrates does more than simply point out a possible contradiction in Cephalus' view of justice; rather he indicts, through the weapon analogy, the very principle of Cephalus' life. Furthermore, his final admonishing that one should not be willing to tell such a person the whole truth, which is apparently irrelevant to the context of his critique, is indicative of Socrates' general attitude towards the truth and his interlocutors. Socrates' view of justice is that different people are owed different amounts of truth depending upon their different natures.

Cephalus, however, is old and belongs to an ancestral tradition beyond reason. Unwilling and unable to confront Socrates on Socrates' terms he hands the argument down to his heir, Polemarchus, and goes off to look after the sacrifices; to give to the gods that which they are owed. Socrates now turns his dialectic against Polemarchus who, though in the beginning takes up Cephalus' definition, quickly gives his own, aristocratic, definition of justice: doing good to one's friends and harm to one's enemies.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 331c.

Socrates induces Polemarchus to contradict himself by presenting the problem of knowledge. How is one to know what is good and what is bad? Who is my friend and who is my enemy? The aristocratic view of justice can only exist on the basis of appearances. Justice is what seems to be good for those who appear to be my friends. This, while perhaps a working code of honour, does not conform to the Idea of justice that must be the same at all times, in all places, without contradiction.

In the transition from Cephalus to Polemarchus we can see the foundation for the arguments of the *Republic*. Cephalus was a metic from Syracuse, a foreigner who lived in Athens. He paid taxes but enjoyed only a minimum of rights. He was protected by the city but could not participate politically. In his character we see the tension between the city based upon the family and the city based upon empire and commerce. It is telling that of the eleven characters in the dialogue, only five are Athenian citizens. The Universal State proposed by Socrates, and supported by Glaucon and Adeimantus, is appealing because it allows room for those who are excluded in the current political situation. The setting calls into question the ultimate status of the city. The transition from Cephalus to Polemarchus parallels the transition from traditional authority to philosophy. The definition of justice provided by Cephalus is entirely based upon *nomos*. Polemarchus, on the other hand, gives up reference to tradition when he says that it “looks as if he [Simonides, the poet] thought that it is just to give to everyone what is fitting, and to this he gave the name ‘what is owed’.”⁴¹ The definition of justice as “what is fitting” goes beyond the authority of convention, supported by poetry, and the use of property as the basis of virtue. Cephalus’ way of life has been pushed over and Polemarchus has abandoned his inheritance. Polemarchus substitutes *techne* for *nomos*

as the foundation for justice. Justice is an art for distributing what is fitting. For Polemarchus this means that justice is an art for doing good to friends and harm to enemies. In this case, friends are citizens and thus Polemarchus has given an abstract definition without necessary reference to tradition.

With Polemarchus properly subdued, the argument is taken up by Thrasymachus who gives the tyrannical understanding that justice is the advantage of the stronger. Thrasymachus is refuted in exactly the same manner as Polemarchus, on the question of knowledge. The tyrant, without knowledge (wisdom), cannot know what is to his advantage and thus, despite his power, can only act arbitrarily, sometimes acting to his advantage and other times not. Thrasymachus observes that “in every city the same thing is just, the advantage of the established ruling body. It surely is master; so the man who reasons rightly concludes that everywhere justice is the same thing, the advantage of the stronger.”⁴² This does not refute Socrates, but rather confirms the point Socrates has been making throughout Book I, that because all existing notions of justice contradict themselves (the stronger are not always the same), they are products of *nomos* (convention) and are not reflective of the Idea of justice in *physis* (nature).

This is the purpose of Book I; to demonstrate that existing definitions of justice are political and products of power, regardless of whether that power is mediated by tradition, honour or power itself.⁴³ The transition from Cephalus to Polemarchus to Thrasymachus parallels the transition the city itself is experiencing. Athens has developed from a particularized tribal city based upon the family, founded upon the

⁴¹ Ibid., 332c.

⁴² Ibid., 339a.

⁴³ It should be noted that Socrates' civic virtue is equally political and reflective of power in that it protects the slave from the exigencies of the master's power.

Acropolis, to a universalizing empire based on commerce and sea trade coming out of the Piraeus. The discussions of justice through the three interlocutors moves from private to public, particular to universal forms of justice. The problem that Socrates is confronted with is that Universalism that is not based in philosophy ends in the tyranny represented by Thrasymachus. This prompts the intervention of Socrates and the emergence of philosophy as a way to ground the emergence of a new basis for civic life.

Book I ends in a host of questions. On the surface we have seen that the Idea of justice cannot be found in any existing city. This leads Glaucon and Adeimantus to ask what is the just life? Why is the just life preferable to the unjust one? What are the conditions that must pertain for the Idea of justice to be found in the city? Below the surface, however, the dramatic subtext of the *Republic* consists of different, if related, questions. If philosophy is necessary to mediate the potential power of tyranny, to what extent can reason rule? If reason rules do you still have a city? What is lost through the rule of reason?

Socrates is presented with the surface challenges by Glaucon who, dissatisfied with Socrates' treatment of Thrasymachus, points out that Socrates has done nothing but point out the contradictions of the previous interlocutors and has said little about what justice actually is, and why it is preferable—that is, produces more happiness (*eudaimonia*)—to injustice. Glaucon is able, in his rephrasing of Thrasymachus' argument, to avoid the pitfalls that ultimately resulted in Thrasymachus' shame. Glaucon, unlike the previous interlocutors, defends his position not as his own but as what is said by others. In so doing he distances himself from the potentially shameful consequences of his remarks while at same time moving the discussion from the

particular realm of opinion and experience to the more abstract realm of philosophy. Glaucon is also the first citizen of Athens, other than Socrates, to speak. His speech is philosophical as well as political. He refines Thrasymachus crude statements with a polished statement that sums up the Hericlitean ontology as it was drawn upon by the Sophists. Justice is a contract based upon a true account of being in which Nature and Origin are co-terminus. He tells the story of the ring of Gyges in which the holder of the ring is made invisible and is able to kill the king and sleep with his wife without suffering the consequences of his actions. The parallel is with the art of rhetoric that the sophists claimed was the art of being invisible. The skilled practitioner of rhetoric was able to conceal his true nature; able to appear to be the most just while actually committing the worst injustices. Along these lines Glaucon concludes his description of the perfectly unjust man by stating that:

First, he rules in the city because he seems to be just. Then he takes in marriage from whatever station he wants and gives in marriage to whomever he wants; he contracts and has partnerships with whomever he wants, and, besides benefiting himself in all this, he gains because he has no qualms about doing injustice. So then, when he enters contests, both private and public, he wins and gets the better of his enemies. In getting the better, he is wealthy and does good to friends and harm to enemies. To the gods he makes sacrifices and sets up votive offerings, adequate and magnificent, and cares for the gods and those human beings he wants to care for far better than the just man. So, in all likelihood, it is also more appropriate for him to be dearer to the gods than is the just man. Thus, they say, Socrates, with gods and with humans, a better life is provided for the unjust man than for the just man.⁴⁴

In this remarkable description of the perfectly unjust man who can do whatever he pleases, Glaucon has managed to describe the tyrant as the embodiment of each of the definitions of justice provided in Book I—that is, he has done precisely what Socrates did

⁴⁴ Ibid., 362bc.

in the *Symposium*, albeit to produce the opposing effect. In so doing, he has given a more universal and philosophical defense of tyranny than we have encountered previously.

Adeimantus immediately interjects that he does not believe the argument has been adequately stated because Glaucon's speech has focused on political and philosophical concerns without an equivalent discussion of piety. While Glaucon's speech focused on the things said by politicians and rhetoricians in praising injustice, Adeimantus is troubled by the things said by the defenders of justice and the ramifications this may have on the state of Athenian piety. He argues that, "they don't praise justice by itself but the good reputations that come from it."⁴⁵ Furthermore they have identified this conflation of seeming with being with the gods so that:

the things said indicate that there is no advantage in my being just, if I don't also seem to be, while the labors and penalties involved are evident. But if I'm unjust, but have provided myself with a reputation for justice, a divine life is promised. Therefore, since as the wise make plain to me, 'the seeming overpowers even the truth' and is the master of happiness, one must surely turn wholly to it.⁴⁶

Finally Adeimantus concludes by restating Glaucon's challenge to Socrates. "So, don't only show us by the argument that justice is stronger than injustice, but show what each in itself does to the man who has it—whether it is noticed by gods and human beings or not—that makes the one good and the other bad."⁴⁷

We can see in the challenges put forth by Glaucon and Adeimantus the spiritual crisis of the youth of Athens, for which Socrates was eventually blamed, convicted and executed. Courageous Glaucon is an ambitious man who doesn't know what he wants, while pious Adeimantus does not know what he believes. They are left without any

⁴⁵ Ibid., 363a.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 365bc.

object for their desire or for their piety. Socrates, in accepting their challenge, positions philosophy as the answer to both political and religious striving.

Socrates begins his response by proposing that since there would be more justice in a city than in a single man, and thus would be easier to observe, they will “. . . investigate what justice is like in the cities. Then, we’ll go on to consider it in individuals, considering the likeness of the bigger in the idea of the littler.”⁴⁸ In this way Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus seek to establish the foundation of the perfect, most orderly, regime based upon a true, non-contradictory, idea of justice. This analogy of man to the city serves two primary functions. 1) It allows Socrates, as he did with Alcibiades, to engage Glaucon’s *thymotic* sense through the creation of a city. 2) The analogy is representative of one of classical philosophy’s most novel ideas, the idea that the order of the cosmos is mirrored in the order of the city and the order of the soul, and that the city is thus natural. Through this analogy, in direct contradiction to the sophists, Socrates is asserting that *physis* and *techne* come into being together. By taking the theme of the *polis* and transferring it to philosophy, Socrates attempts to found a city that is both natural and conventional. This is based upon a Socratic ontology that states that Nature expresses itself rationally in terms of its intelligible products. In terms of political philosophy this means that human beings cannot be understood apart from their interaction with others because we can’t even see the individual until after he appears in the city.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 367e.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 369a.

⁴⁹ It is to this that Aristotle is alluding when he says that the city is natural and that Man is by nature a political animal.

Adeimantus begins the founding by establishing a city built upon necessity, without excess. It is a pre-political city, without rulers, *nomos*, war or desire. While the inhabitants of the city of sows appear to have their needs satisfied, they are satisfied only in an animal sense. Glaucon objects because there are no relishes in this city. It is a city fit for sows and not for people. There is neither luxury to satisfy Glaucon's material desires nor is their opportunity for him to engage in political activity, to be honoured and recognized by fellow citizens. Glaucon requires more to life than the city of sows can give him and thus the feverish city is introduced. The city becomes complicated as war and warriors are introduced to obtain and protect the luxuries of the feverish city. The transition demonstrates that the order of the city of sows is not a sufficient condition for the establishment of justice. Justice is a quality of human beings experiencing life to its fullest. The inhabitants of the city of sows have attained their order and contentment at the expense of their humanity. Because it is Glaucon's erotic and thymotic desires that spur the discussion towards the feverish city, we see that *eros* and *thymos* are essential components of politics. Furthermore because philosophy is only introduced, albeit in nascent form, with the feverish city and the establishment of the guardians we see the connection between war, politics and philosophy. Philosophy can only exist within the political.⁵⁰

The guardians that are established to protect the city are chosen because of their *thymos*. They have the requisite courage to defend the city. However with the establishment of the guardians, a fundamental political problem is brought to light. How can you ensure the loyalty of the warrior class to the city as a whole? This alludes back

⁵⁰ It is ironic that the participants of this discussion are so enthralled with the discussion of luxury that they choose to talk about luxury in place of experiencing it.

to the discussion with Polemarchus on the nature of justice. In order for the justice in the city to be natural, the distinction between friend and enemy that is at the core of the warriors' understanding of justice must coincide with the distinction between citizen/non-citizen. Thus, true justice requires a movement beyond blood ties and warrior ethos towards an understanding of belonging based upon citizenship. The establishment of such a regime requires that the *thymos* of the warrior class be placed at the behest of reason.

For this reason Socrates, having seduced Glaucon by inflaming his passions, seeks to tame him by purging the feverish city. Socrates' attack on the poets and Homer's depiction of the gods is an embodiment of Socrates movement from a particular to a universal theology. His disciplining of the feverish city represents a genuine lesson on how to deal with the conflict between the empire and the tribe. The movement towards empire requires the modification of particular traditions so that they may be applied universally among the colonies. At the same time, he is attempting to discipline Glaucon's soul. The purging of the feverish city and the education of the guardians in Books II-IV is Socrates attempt to purge Glaucon of his tyrannical desires so that he may be educated as a gentleman, *Kalon ka Agathon*, literally the "noble and the good," the man who is good by both convention and nature. Socrates' education of Glaucon begins in much the same way as with Alcibiades. Socrates grabs his attention by inflaming his desires and then attempts to sublimate them through philosophy. Behind every corner in the discussion with Glaucon, lies the shadow of Alcibiades. Why is Glaucon's education a success while Alcibiades' was a failure? What does this mean in terms of education and the relationship between the philosopher and the tyrant?

The founding of this perfect city based upon the absolute rule of reason thus proceeds through Book II, in which the project is grounded in the *earth*, necessity and the biological needs of the citizens. Book III is about transcending the realm of necessity by providing a basis for the city in the cosmos (nature) and the understanding of pattern change in the *sky*. The gods are re-presented in the sky, re-flected upon and then re-produced in the unity of the city. Book IV develops the analogy of the soul of man and the soul of the city, and that the city is a reflection of man and thus should be organized along the lines of the tripartite division of the soul into the calculating (*logismos*), spirited (*thymos*) and desiring (*epithemeia*) aspects. Since the perfect ordering of the gentleman's soul is the command of the calculating over the spirited to control and guide the desiring, the perfect city should be ruled by the guardians, provided strength by the auxiliaries and built, and sustained, by the workers.

The final requirements for the perfect city are laid out in Book V when Plato establishes that the condition for the realization of this city is the eradication of the distinction between the private and public realms in the form of the three waves.⁵¹ The first wave concerns the elimination of the political distinction between men and women. This implies the de-erotization of politics and the universalization of the State. The second wave concerns communal property, sex, and children in which "all these women are to belong to all these men in common, and no woman is to live privately with any man. And the children, in their turn, will be in common, and neither will a parent know

⁵¹The Greek word translated as waves also means foetus. A foetus is (or was) one of the most unpredictable occurrences of nature. Parents have no control over the nature of their children. This is indicative of Socrates' warning concerning the implementation of the perfect regime. The perfect regime is dependent upon the successful control of the unpredictable and uncontrollable, something that is not possible in the ancient world. The second, literary, meaning of the waves is that waves occur on the ocean,

his own offspring, nor a child his parent.”⁵² This destroys the distinction between the public and private by destroying the family and results in the homogenizing of the state. Finally the third, and most improbable, wave is the combination of thought and action, power and wisdom (as well as *nomos* and *physis* and masters and slaves) in the form of the philosopher king.

Unless the philosophers rule as kings or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize, and political power and philosophy coincide in the same place, while the many natures now making their way to either apart from the other are by necessity excluded, there is no rest from ills for the cities, my dear Glaucon, nor I think for human kind, nor will the regime we have now described in speech ever come forth from nature, insofar as possible, and see the light of the sun.⁵³

As we shall see, the combination of thought and action, power and wisdom represented by the philosopher-king results in the end of history, philosophy and action. For Plato, the Idea of justice in the city can only be realized, in the world, through the unity of the Universal and Homogeneous State (UHS).

At this point in the *Republic* it appears that the task of founding the city in speech has been completed. However, close attention to the establishment of the perfect city based upon the rule of reason suggests that the true argument is that such a city could never exist and, if it could, it would not be the best of possible regimes, but rather the worst. This is made clear by a whole series of objections which the text raises against the city so devised. Dramatically we are given clues that all is not right by the course the dialogue takes to arrive at Book V. At the beginning of Book IV Adeimantus raises the objection that Socrates is not making these men happy. (419a) To which Socrates

the horizon that connects the sky and the earth, Gods and Men. To overcome these waves is to overcome the distinction between men and gods.

⁵²Ibid., 457d.

⁵³Ibid., 473de.

responds that “we are not looking to the exceptional happiness of any one group among us but, as far as possible, that of the city as a whole.”(420b) This statement is in direct contradiction to the purpose of the establishment of the perfect city set forth in Book II by Socrates to prove to Glaucon that the individual life of justice is preferable and provides more happiness than a life of injustice.

Philosophically the city founded by Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus does not conform to the standards of Platonic philosophy. Throughout the *Republic* and the rest of the Platonic dialogues the standard for good is Nature (*physis*). However the establishment of the perfect city consistently leaves out natural elements and where necessary contrives artificial replacements. The theoretical development of the city in Book IV requires an almost complete abstraction of the body in favour of the primacy of the soul, an abstraction that is quickly followed by a practical plan for genetic breeding of the human populace as part of an overall attack on the family structure of the Greek polis. The perfect city is conceived in the face of these obvious contradictions.

While it is clear that in Platonic philosophy the soul is the location of identity, it is equally clear that this does not entail the complete abstraction of the body. As the development of the three icons of the good will later establish, knowledge is always based upon experience and cannot exist outside of the world. In this context, it is only through the body that the soul has any experience from which to base its knowledge of reality. An account of the soul that requires the complete abstraction of the body is necessarily incomplete. Similarly, the breeding program of the guardians and the elimination of the family in Book V represent a violation of the natural standard established throughout. In general what is left out of the perfect city is generation and

decay. It comes into and out of being completely by chance. Eventually the guardians will make an error in calculation and the aristocratic city will be replaced by a timocratic one. This results in the ironic situation that the city designed to overcome chance through the rule of reason is, ultimately, governed by chance. The perfect city is the most corrupt of cities precisely because it is not natural, but rather represents the overcoming of nature.

Further evidence of the dysfunction of the perfect city is provided by the corruption of the analogy of man to city that this city entails. As established earlier, this analogy is representative of the classical belief that man only becomes fully developed through action and recognition in public. From the perspective of the *vita activa*, it is only through the achievement of great deeds and the recognition of others through memory that the reality of the world is assured and duration achieved. From the perspective of the philosopher (*vita contemplativa*), man as knower only comes into being after the establishment of the city and the creation of plurality.

The city in speech, however, ends in the destruction of the plurality that is requisite for both the public actor and thinker. Despite proceeding from the realization in Book II that “each of us is naturally not quite like anyone else, but rather differs in his nature,”⁵⁴ the perfect city is based upon the development and understanding of a single soul to the exclusion of other models. Instead of the Socratic model in which free men compare and contrast their experiences in public so that they may discover what they are fitted for and live the happiest of lives, we have the establishment of a philosophical tyranny in which the governance of the soul is decreed by the guardians in express contradiction to the demands and requirements of nature and experience, in fulfillment of the establishment of an artificial unity. The solution of philosophical tyranny to the crisis

of the Athenian polis is the destruction of the city and philosophy in the name of a Universal State that is neither possible nor choiceworthy. The answers to the questions posed at the end of Book I are suggested here. While philosophy is necessary to mediate the excesses of tyranny, the absolute rule of reason only results in a more insidious tyrannical rule. The absolute rule of reason results in the destruction of the plurality that distinguishes the city, resulting in the elimination of *logos* and, paradoxically, the possibility of reason.

What then is the purpose of the *Republic*? The ideal city created in speech through philosophy, by Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus is, in theory, the best and, in practice, the worst of possible regimes, both a utopia and dystopia. It is both a model and a warning. The perfect city, conceived upon an understanding of men and not cities, is intended as a model for the potential ruler's soul. As Alcibiades was presented with the model of the education of the Persian Kings, Glaucon is presented with the education of the guardians as a model of gentlemanly behaviour. The education of Glaucon is designed to produce the *Kalon ka Agathon* (Noble and Good). The gentleman who is good according to both *physis* and *nomos* or, as Aristotle phrases it, the one who is both a good citizen and a good man. This education, however, is also a warning. If that ideal should be applied to politics and the life of the city, it would result in the most tyrannical and terrible of regimes.

The *Republic* is thus, on a personal, private level, a model for the life of the gentleman, but on the public, political level, a warning of the extreme danger that occurs when philosophy is applied to politics, when theory becomes inseparable from action.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 370a.

The philosopher is the happiest of men because he is most able to connect thought and action (through reflection) in his own soul, to be most complete and excellent. This connection of thought and action cannot, or should not, be applied to politics because while the philosopher, to a certain extent, is able to divine his own nature, to know his own limitations and to live accordingly, the application of this personal, private model onto the life of the city results in the most tyrannical of regimes. Because all men are not fit for the same things (their limitations and boundaries are different), the unity in the city (under the philosopher-king) destroys the possibility of unity within the soul—the good, whole and complete life.

If the initial purpose of the *Republic* is to provide a solution to the spiritual crisis of Athens by providing Glaucon and Adeimantus with an object for their desire and piety, the book is quickly transformed into a vehicle for the education of Glaucon. At the end of Book V the education of Glaucon remains incomplete. He has been introduced to the life of the gentleman and has received a preliminary introduction in philosophic method. What remains is a thorough treatment of philosophy itself and the manner in which philosophy is the best possible life. The gentleman is he who is capable of both ruling and being ruled, who is both a good citizen and a good man. While it is not necessary for the gentleman to be a philosopher and actively seek the good through the pursuit of wisdom, it is required that he be aware of the good and the way in which it is known. For this reason, books VI and VII present three icons of the good and the philosophic life. Prior to this, however, Adeimantus grounds the discussion in political reality by presenting the political problem that philosophy represents to the city, and the reason

philosophy needs to be concerned with the tyrant in order to address the charge of impiety.

The political problem that lies at the root of the failed experiment of Books II-V is that philosophy places a priority upon Being, while politics is concerned with becoming and change. Furthermore, the philosopher-king contradicts the dictum of one man, one job. The very nature of the philosopher-king points towards its inherent impossibility and illuminates the political problem faced by philosophy. If the majority are not philosophical, how can the city be ordered by philosophy? This problem is articulated in the character of Alcibiades. Though attracted to philosophy, he is ultimately dissatisfied by it. The unphilosophic cannot be convinced by philosophic methods. The philosopher-king can only exist under the most unlikely of circumstances. The Philosopher and the King must coincide by chance (because the Philosopher cannot make himself King). The Philosopher must want to rule (because the unphilosophic many will never compel the philosopher to rule) and the people of the city must accept him. The common view of the philosopher is dramatized by Aristophanes in his play the *Clouds*. He portrays the philosopher as being concerned with either physics (the study of nature) in which case he is useless, or with rhetoric in which case he is vicious. Fundamentally, the political problem faced by philosophy is that the city believes that philosophy produces men who are not confined by the laws and conventions of the city and thus when these men seek to rule they become tyrants, and when they do not they remain useless, philosophers. As Adeimantus states:

Now someone might say that in speech he can't contradict you at each particular thing asked, but in deed he sees that of all those who start out on philosophy . . . most become quite queer, not to say completely vicious: while the ones who seem perfectly decent, do nevertheless suffer at least

one consequence of the practice you are praising—they become useless to the cities.⁵⁵

This is the charge against philosophy. That it corrupts the youth by making them either vicious or useless. Socrates' challenge in Book VI is to answer this charge by demonstrating that philosophy is not responsible for tyranny but rather is the solution to it, and in this way is not useless, but rather beneficial, to the cities.

Socrates initially answers the charge of uselessness through the famous pilot metaphor. Socrates portrays the city as a ship at sail at sea. The sailors fight among themselves to see who shall pilot the ship while denying that there is an art to piloting or that it is teachable. They acclaim "skilled sailor" he who is most skilled at getting the rule, either through persuasion or through force, while decrying as useless the true pilot who believes that there is an art to piloting and it is necessary to study the seasons and the stars if one would truly pilot the ship. It is only he who is named stargazer, who has knowledge of the eternal things, who possesses the true knowledge of piloting the ship. However because neither the shipowner nor the sailors ever use the knowledge of the stargazer, they believe both the knowledge and the stargazer to be useless. Socrates blames the uselessness of the philosopher on those who do not use him rather than on philosophy. The pilot image, in this respect however, does not address the fundamental reason for the uselessness of philosophy. As mentioned earlier because philosophy is concerned with Being while politics, and the city, are concerned with becoming and change, the knowledge of philosophy remains at odds with the requirements of the city. The value of philosophy remains to be proven through its treatment and education of the potential tyrant.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 487cd. It is interesting to note that by using city in the plural Adeimantus has moved beyond the

Socrates addresses the charge of the viciousness of philosophers by shifting the question away from the philosopher towards the many. In the hands of Adeimantus the charge regarded the viciousness of those called philosophers. Socrates rephrases it as follows: “Do you want us next to go through the necessity of the viciousness of the many and to try to show, if we are able, that philosophy isn’t to blame for that.” Socrates has turned the question on its head, placing viciousness in the hands of the many and positioning philosophy as a potentially therapeutic educational agent. Socrates continues: “In considering the cause of the slander, we’ve come now to this point: why are the many bad? And it’s for just this reason that we brought up the nature of the true philosophers again and defined what it necessarily is.”⁵⁶

But Socrates is not interested in why the many are bad, but rather how it is that those who are responsible for the reputation of philosophy become corrupt if true philosophy lends itself towards courageous and moderate men. Socrates answer is the same that he gives in the *Alcibiades I*: it is the many that corrupt the potential philosophers and turn them into tyrants. The potential tyrant and the potential philosopher begin as the same person. They are each born with the best natures. “So I suppose it is reasonable that the best nature comes off worse than an ordinary one from an inappropriate rearing.”⁵⁷ This inappropriate rearing comes from the many who, though they charge the sophists with corrupting the youth, are themselves the true corrupters of virtue.

Or do you believe, as do the many, that certain young men are corrupted by sophists, and that there are certain sophists who in a private capacity corrupt to an extent worth mentioning? Isn’t it rather the very men who

particular loyalty to the singular city and is using the language of cities in general.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 489d–490d.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 491d.

say this who are the biggest sophists, who educate most perfectly and who turn out young and old, men and women, just the way they want them to be?⁵⁸

The many corrupt the potential philosopher through the process of politics in which:

[The] many gathered together sit down in assemblies, courts, theaters, army camps, or any other common meeting of a multitude, and, with a great deal of uproar, blame some of the things said or done, and praise others, both in excess, shouting and clapping; and, besides, the rocks and the very place surrounding them echo and redouble the uproar of blame and praise. Now in such circumstances, as the saying goes, what do you suppose is the state of the young man's heart? Or what kind of private education will hold out for him and not be swept away by such blame and praise and go, borne by the flood, wherever it tends so that he'll say the same things are noble and base as they do, practice what they practice, and be such as they are?⁵⁹

Because the multitude can never be philosophic, they can never accept the reasoning of philosophy. Not being philosophic, they blame philosophy for the problems of the city. A charge for which, as Callicles points out in the *Gorgias*, philosophy has no proper response. Ultimately, however, the reputation of the philosophers towards viciousness has occurred not only through the innate harshness of the many towards that which they do not understand, but also through the association of Socrates to such men as Alcibiades who, in the end, became real life tyrants. The shadow of Alcibiades lies across the entire discussion of tyranny in the *Republic*, as demonstrated in this clear reference to the Alcibiades encountered in the *Symposium*. "Don't you also share my supposition that the blame for the many's being harshly disposed toward philosophy is on those men from outside who don't belong and have burst in like drunken revelers,

⁵⁸ Ibid., 492ab.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 492bc.

abusing one another and indulging a taste for quarreling, and who always make their arguments about persons, doing what is least seemly in philosophy.”⁶⁰

In such a situation, Socrates suggests that all that the true philosopher can do is to retreat from public speeches and cultivate private virtue. “Seeing others full of lawlessness, he is content if somehow he himself can live his life here pure of injustice and unholy deeds, and take his leave from it graciously and cheerfully with fair hope.”⁶¹

This, of course, is not what Socrates in fact does. He remains interested in the education of the young philosopher/tyrant; however, it is indicative of his general view of the possibility of public virtue both within the current state of affairs and, as seen in the dystopia of Books II-V, in a city established by philosophy. In the characters of Alcibiades we have witnessed a transition in the methods Socrates uses to educate potential tyrants. Socrates initially seduced Alcibiades by proposing to teach him actual politics. He proposed to teach Alcibiades how to be the best (politically) not only among Athenians but also among the Greeks and the barbarians. Glaucon, on the other hand, is seduced not through the promise of actual political teaching but rather through the founding of a hypothetical theoretical regime. This initial teaching is then supplemented with Socrates’ treatment of the three icons of the good. In Alcibiades’ case his

⁶⁰ Ibid., 500b. Further proof of the subtext of Alcibiades’ presence upon the dialogue lies in the description of the young philosopher/tyrant given by Socrates. Using strikingly similar language to the language and action of *Alcibiades I* Socrates describes the potential tyrant. “Won’t such a one be first among all in everything, straight from the beginning, especially if his body naturally matches his soul? Then I suppose kinsmen and fellow citizens will surely want to make use of him, when he is older, for their own affairs. They will, therefore, lie at his feet begging and honoring him, taking possession of and flattering beforehand the power that is going to be his. What do you suppose such a young man will do in such circumstances, especially if he chances to be from a big city, is rich and noble in it, and is, further, good-looking and tall? Won’t he be overflowing with unbounded hope, believing he will be competent to mind the business of both Greeks and barbarians, and won’t he, as a result, exalt himself to the heights, mindlessly full of pretension and empty conceit? Now, if someone were gently to approach the young man in this condition and tell him the truth—that he has no intelligence in him although he needs it, and that it’s not to be acquired except by slaving for its acquisition—do you think it will be easy for him to hear through a wall of so many evils?”

inspiration never goes beyond world rule. He is notably absent from the philosophical treatment of *eros* as the foundation of civic virtue provided in the *Symposium*. The implication is that the compromise between philosophy and politics represented by Alcibiades is insufficient protection from the corrupting influence of the public. For Socrates it is not possible for the philosopher to teach political action and remain a philosopher. All political activity is inherently corrupting.

This does not mean, however, that philosophy is useless to the city. The viciousness attributed to philosophy results from the fact that the same natures that are drawn towards philosophy are also drawn towards tyranny. These natures are

good at learning, have memories, are shrewd and quick and everything else that goes along with these qualities, and are as well full of youthful fire and magnificence—such natures don't willingly grow together with understandings that choose orderly lives which are quiet and steady. Rather the men who possess them are carried away by their quickness wherever chance leads and all steadiness goes out from them.⁶²

It is these type of men that philosophy must teach for the good of the city. In the absence of a functional civic culture and consistent and meaningful understanding of civic virtue—the situation demonstrated in book I—these men invariably turn towards the tyranny represented by Thrasymachus. It is the task of philosophy to provide a higher, more sophisticated, cultural outlook by universalizing the particular meanings of tribal Athens without the loss of loyalty to the city, family and one's own. Socrates does this by initially appealing to the desires of young men, and then sublimating them by presenting wisdom as the ultimate source of happiness, and philosophy as the road to

⁶¹ Ibid., 496d.

⁶² Ibid., 503c.

wisdom. This represents a shift in value from man as actor to man as knower. To do this, Socrates, through philosophic imagery describes the three icons of the good.

The three icons of the good—the image of the sun, the divided line and the allegory of the cave—provide two critical functions in the dialogue. First, they provide Glaucon and Adeimantus with a glorious vision of the world in which their previous discussion can be grounded. They represent the culmination of Socrates' attempt to provide an object to Glaucon's desire and Adeimantus' piety. Because Socrates represents them as the perfect fulfillment of happiness, they are worthy of Glaucon's desire; and because they are glorious and holy they can satisfy Adeimantus piety. Furthermore, without such a grounding Socrates' attempts to tame the sons of Ariston would ultimately be for naught. The previous education of Glaucon in gentlemanly courage, moderation and wisdom is for naught as long as such an education is not grounded in philosophy and the good. The case of Alcibiades provides a good counter example. Socrates grounded their discussion in politics and it didn't work. It is through the icons of the good that Socrates demonstrates the manner in which the philosopher interacts with and can know the good. Secondly, the discussion represents a serious representation of the philosophic life. Through the images of the sun, the divided line, and the cave, Socrates gives at the same time the most concrete and abstract view of the philosopher to be found in the Platonic dialogues.

At this point the dialogue turns towards the idea of good as a means of grounding the previous discussion. As Socrates states, "the *idea* of the good is the greatest study and that it's by availing oneself of it along with just things and the rest that they become

useful and beneficial.”⁶³ Here Socrates is clearly stating that while he apparently answered the charge of the uselessness of the philosopher earlier, that answer was insufficient. It is only through the idea of the good that the philosopher is able to account for and demonstrate his usefulness.

Socrates quickly runs through the conventional arguments concerning the good. The many believe that, good equals pleasure, while the more refined aristocrats opine that the good is prudence. These arguments are easily refuted. Those who argue that the good is pleasure are easily led to say that there are both good and bad pleasures, leading to the absurd conclusion that the same thing is both good and bad. The argument that the good is prudence is also undone by the inability of its defenders to define the object of prudence, and therefore the similarly absurd conclusion that the good is prudence about the good. Having abused the conventional notions of the good, Socrates is forced by Glaucon to proceed with the discussion and give his own account of the good. Socrates demures slightly saying it is beyond his grasp to give an account of the good but that he will try to the best of his ability to tell what he says looks like the child of the good.

He describes this child of the good through the image of the sun. Socrates divides knowable reality into the visible and the intelligible. Within the visible, it is the sun that connects the things that are seen with the sense of sight. It is only through the sun that it is possible to have concrete vision (and thus experience) in the world. Similarly, within the realm of the intelligible there is a chasm between What Is and the intellect (*Nous*). What bridges the gap is the idea of the good that allows the intellect to have some view of What is. The image of the sun has the role of privileging the sense of sight within the Platonic hierarchy. It is upon that which is visible, tangible and fixed, that the idea of the

⁶³ Ibid., 505a.

good is based. While what is in the dark and always changing is the realm of chaos and illusion.

The idea of the good is fixed strictly within the realm of Being, at the expense of Becoming. The beauty of the image of the sun is that it provides in poetic and philosophic language the conviction that it is not only possible to possess rigorous knowledge (*episteme*) concerning politics—a notion the sophistic position initially espoused by Glaucon would have refused out of hand—but that this kind of knowledge is marginal compared to the beauty and order of the good itself.

That what provides the truth to the things known and gives the power to the one who knows, is the *idea* of the good. And, as the cause of the knowledge and truth, you can understand it to be a thing known; but, as fair as these two are—knowledge and truth—if you believe that it is something different from them and still fairer than they, your belief will be right. As for knowledge and truth, just as in the other region it is right to hold light and sight sunlike, but to believe them to be sun is not right; so, too, here, to hold these two to be like the good is right, but to believe that either of them is the good is not right. The condition that characterizes the good must receive still greater honor.⁶⁴

This provokes Glaucon to the edge of excess. “You speak of an overwhelming beauty if it provides knowledge and truth but is itself beyond them in beauty. You surely don’t mean it is pleasure.”⁶⁵ To which Socrates responds: “Hush, Glaucon. But consider its image still further in this way.” The significance of these phrases is brought out by the footnote by Allan Bloom. “The Greek [for hush] means literally, ‘to say something good’ or ‘to use words of good omen.’ It is primarily a word appropriate to religious

⁶⁴ Ibid., 508e. It is interesting to note that in this passage the good is the cause of knowledge and truth. This is indicative of the classical understanding of Nature and knowledge. Knowledge and truth are not only natural; they are caused by nature and, to follow the Socratic formulation, can only be obtained by acting according to nature (both human and non-human). This is in express contrast to the modern idea that while we may have knowledge about nature (biology, physics etc.), this knowledge comes out of the scientific method. For modern man, the subject of knowledge may be nature (but it can also be of any number of non-natural things), but the cause of knowledge is science.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 509a.

observance; its opposite is, literally, ‘blasphemy,’ and that is what is to be avoided. It is better to say nothing, rather than to use unpropitious expressions.”⁶⁶

The language and tension of the discussion has reached a level of religious seriousness. Two important conclusions can be drawn from this exchange. First of all is the insinuation here of what is known as the scandal of philosophy. Philosophy cannot fully account for the whole. It ends in intuition and awe. Secondly, Socrates does not listen to his own advice. Having quieted Glaucon for potentially blasphemous remarks, he continues on unafraid and unabated. This is indicative of the blasphemous nature of philosophy. The philosopher does not believe in the gods of the city but rather prays to the idea of the good. Socrates is engaged in constructing a substitute morality for the Homeric gods—a morality, as the religious overtones suggest, that he expects to carry the same type of reverence. This is a dangerous and seditious activity.

Socrates develops the image further by pointing towards the natural bounties of the sun. It not only provides the world with sight but also with generation, growth and nourishment. This dual requirement is emblematic of the Socratic formulation. The sun is the child of the good because it is not only the agent through which Nature is observed and experienced (sight), but it provides Nature with the energy required to sustain itself.

Socrates continues with this image by elaborating upon the division between the intelligible and the sensible. This results in the famous icon of the divided line in which Socrates presents a thesis on the structure of human knowledge. The line represents an open-ended continuum from the *nous* (the intelligible) to the *apeiron* (chaos). The line is divided vertically between the objects (things seen—what is) and the faculties that know them; and horizontally, between the visible and the intelligible. The line begins at the

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 464.

bottom with the images of things that corresponds with imagination (*eikasis*) followed by the things themselves which corresponds with trust (*pistis*). The line then moves into intellections with math objects that are intellected by thought (*dianoia*) followed by the forms that are known by intellection (*noesis*). The visible realm of the things is heterogeneous in nature. Not all chairs are the same. The heterogeneous moves to the general with the intelligibility of math objects. Math objects are universally the same at every time in every place. The forms are both general and heterogeneous representing the universal form of particular things. In terms of the faculties, *dianoia* is thought as abstraction from reality while intellection is grounded abstraction. Finally the line (and thus knowledge and philosophy) is open-ended. Within the realm of the visible it is open-ended because it is not possible to predict experiences, while at the top end it is open-ended because there may be forms that have not been discovered.

The image then moves to the allegory of the cave in which the life of the philosopher is grounded in the experience of the city. Socrates grounds his description of the child of the good (an account of the sun as the cause of vision and the idea of the good as the cause of truth, in which the idea of the good serves as the bridge between what is and our understanding of what is) in the allegory of the cave. Socrates synthesizes the previous elements in a new image where the philosopher is situated politically among others.

Socrates describes the city as being like a cave in which the inhabitants of the city are bound from childhood staring at a wall which runs the whole length of the cave. Light comes from a fire burning from above and behind them between which are set the image-makers (the poets). The firelight shines on the puppets of the image-makers,

which in turn cast shadows upon the wall, which the prisoners see and believe to be real. Somehow one of the prisoners is released and compelled to turn around and look toward the light. He sees the image-makers and their puppets and is confused, unable to make sense of either the previous shadows or their apparent source. He is then compelled, by the light of the sun, up out of the cave to the edge to look outside. Casting his eyes on the sun he is forced to avert his eyes. As he becomes accustomed to the light, he looks back into the cave and sees the puppets and puppet makers and the shadows on the wall for what they really are, the "shadows of artificial things" and not as representative of the truth or what is. This man, basking in the light the sun, would be the happiest of men while those left in the cave the most abject. Unfortunately for this man, he is not able to stay at the edge of the cave, he must return to the city and share with his fellow citizens what he has learned: a proposition which is full of danger.

The allegory of the cave represents the fullest exposition of the philosophic life. The city is described as a world of shadows in which the orators compete over whose description of the moving shadows is best. But because the source of the light in the city is fire, and the source of the things seen are the images of the puppet makers (Homer), there is no pattern to the shadows on the wall. This leads the many to the conclusion of the Sophists that "truth is nothing other than the shadows of artificial things."⁶⁷ The sophists realize that the images on the wall are nothing but convention, but fail to see the possibility of a higher truth. This proposition, as discussed before, leads to tyranny. The three icons of the good follow the model of the divided line. Beginning with the abstract image of the sun that is the cause of all knowledge, the image moves to the specific outline of human knowledge found in the divided line. Finally the allegory of the cave is

both general and heterogeneous, containing elements of both the sun and the divided line the entirety of which is grounded (literally) in the earth, the basic bedrock of experience.

Within these three images the basic teachings of Plato concerning the good and the philosophic life can be found. The life of the philosopher is the highest form of life, the life that is most human. The philosopher is the possessor of knowledge. When Socrates states in the *Apology* that all he knows is that he knows nothing, he is giving an important clue on the nature of philosophical knowledge. The philosopher is he who possesses knowledge about knowledge. Similarly the divided line doesn't provide any serious content concerning the forms, but rather provides the structure within which human knowledge exists. The icons of the good range from the cosmological cause of knowledge (the sun and the idea of the good) to the everyday practical source of knowledge (the real experience of life in a cave) bound together through the divided line of human consciousness. Metaphysically, Plato has managed to combine the two previous metaphysical positions of the pre-socratics. Heraclitus' view that all is flux is captured by the images dancing on the wall of the cave. Parmenides view that all is one is found in the image of the sun. These view partial depictions of reality are encapsulated within the Platonic metaphysics in which pattern change is a necessary component of the essential oneness of reality. The philosopher realizes that to be human is to be a knower of things and that the most fundamental form of knowledge is knowledge about knowledge.

The Platonic teaching can be summed up as follows. There is a stable realm of Being. This realm is accessible to the philosopher through experience. Because the experiences of human beings are limited, the knowledge of Being that is based upon

⁶⁷ Ibid., 515e.

those experiences is also limited. Nevertheless, the happiest form of life comes from understanding the world and your experiences through philosophy.

The complete depiction of the icons of the good, however, remind us that the philosopher always lives in a city, among others. This, in fact, is a requirement for philosophy because, as previously noted, the human being only comes into existence after the emergence of cities. Because of this, however, the philosopher cannot remain at the mouth of the cave, but is rather compelled to go down into the depths. Philosophy must always be interested in politics because 1) philosophy can only occur within the city; 2) the city is always in danger from the philosopher because the philosopher is not bound by the gods of the city; 3) for this reason, the philosopher is always in danger from the city; 4) finally, it is only philosophy that can connect knowledge of the heavens to the ordinary human beings of the city. Recalling the image of the ship's pilot, it is dialectic that can connect geometry (stargazing) to human beings. This, of course, presents multiple problems concerning the lack of success in this area throughout the dialogues. One of the primary purposes of the dialogues must be considered reforming the reputation of philosophy so that politics will not be suspicious of its conclusions.

Thus do the three icons of the good provide the most complete depiction of the philosophic life, both as abstract theorizing and practical reality.

Book VIII of the *Republic* returns the discussion to the end of Book IV before that discussion was interrupted by the expanded discussion on the origins of the city. In Book VIII the discussion involves the devolution of regimes from the ideal city to tyranny via timocracy, oligarchy and democracy. This marks a transition from an idealized discussion of formal regimes towards a practical discussion of formal regimes.

Without entertaining a specific discussion on the devolution, a couple of critical points should be made. The transition of cities occurs because the son no longer believes in what his father believes in. This is indicative of the general setting of the book as a whole, represented most starkly by the relationship between Cephalus and Polemarchus. Secondly, and following closely this point, is that while in the description of these cities, the analogy of city to the soul of man is followed closely—for example, the timocratic city is composed of timocratic men—the actual men of the dialogue living in the actual city of Athens do not correspond to this pattern. In the characters of Cephalus, Polemarchus, and Thrasymachus we have already witnessed a similar transition. Cephalus appears as the timocratic man but is quickly shown to have oligarchic tendencies. His heir, Polemarchus, takes up the argument for oligarchic justice and just as quickly undermines it in favour of democracy. Thrasymachus takes up the argument for democracy and gives a tyrannical definition of justice.⁶⁸ It appears that the formal discussion of cities is running parallel to the particular discussion of justice found earlier in the book. However there is one critical distinction to be made. In the four men involved in the discussion in Book I we have representatives from each type of city discussed in Book VIII. Within the real city of Athens you have different souls all living together in the condition of plurality. This underlies the dystopic reading of the perfect city. It is not possible to model a city upon a view of a single soul.

Athens is a democracy in danger of becoming a tyranny. Socrates tries to prevent this from occurring by educating potential tyrants such as Glaucon and Alcibiades. His success in this regard is at best incomplete. However, by seducing Glaucon through the

⁶⁸ Significantly Thrasymachus is not a member of Cephalus' family. The principle of equality found in democracy and tyranny undermines the family principle in politics.

founding of a theoretical regime, Socrates points towards the classical solution to this problem. Alcibiades is a failure because he remains wedded to politics and the many. Socrates attracts his attention through real political imagery and ultimately fails him because he is unable to satisfy his *thymotic* desires politically. In the difference between Glaucon and Alcibiades we see the classical justification for the separation of action and thought, power and wisdom.

This is what separates Socrates and Machiavelli in their relations with the tyrant. Ultimately, by the standards of classical philosophy, the Universal and Homogeneous State conceived by Plato does not and cannot work. However the deroticization of politics, the overthrow of aristocratic virtue and the undermining of classical metaphysics represented by Machiavelli in *The Prince* represents a plausible solution to Alcibiades' ambitions. Machiavelli advises the prince (for Machiavelli there is no distinction between a monarch and a tyrant, between an aristocrat and an oligarch) to unleash his ambitions unrestrained by unreal theoretical speculations of how the world ought to be. Alcibiades requires Machiavelli to be happy. With Machiavelli, modernity introduces the possibility that tyranny may not be bad and that knowledge may be powerful. In the next chapter, I will explore Alexandre Kojève's radical interpretation of modernity and his philosophical justification of tyranny.

Chapter 4: Radical Modernity, Philosophy and Tyranny: Kojève's Interpretation of Hegel

The moral crisis and political problem presented by Book I of the *Republic* is that Socrates and his companions cannot agree on the meaning of justice. Socrates, Glaucon and Adeimantus try to solve this problem by founding the perfect city in speech, a unified city, constructed on the basis of reason, in which all agree on the nature of justice. This is implicitly a question of freedom. In a city in which justice is universal (the same for everyone) and universally accepted, freedom is also universal since to the extent that one is free, all are free. Similarly, if freedom is universal then the state must be governed by the idea of justice.

This interplay between justice and freedom is also the interplay between the philosophy of Plato and the phenomenology of Hegel. Plato's *Republic* is an attempt to create a rational city founded upon the Idea of justice in speech, while at the same time it is a warning against its implementation in action. Hegel's phenomenology is a rational account (in theory and therefore in principle) of how the Idea of freedom has been realized in the world.

In describing Hegel's phenomenology as an account of *how* the idea of *freedom* has been realized in the world, I have already deviated from Hegel's intent in favour of Alexandre Kojève's interpretation found in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*.

Kojève, in reading all of Hegel's thought through the "Lordship and Bondage" section of the *Phenomenology* and jettisoning large parts of Hegelian philosophy, including the entirety of his philosophy of nature, provides the most radically anthropocentric account of human freedom and history. As such, he provides the ideal counterpoint in this

discussion on the relationship between philosophy, tyranny and the Idea of a Universal State. Kojève transforms Hegel's philosophy by providing an anthropocentric, atheistic interpretation.

Hegel's Deism and Kojève's Atheism

In the preceding chapters on Plato we have seen that for the classics, statements about reason are also statements about the world. The mind and the world are connected through the idea of the good that provides the intelligibility of our experiences. Thus the order of *logos* is a reflection of the order of the *cosmos*. With modernity the connection between the mind and the world is arguably shattered. The discoveries of modern physics, represented philosophically by Hobbes' doctrine that nature is nothing but matter in motion, indicate that such order and structure that nature possesses is projected by human reason. Reason, in Hobbes, becomes anthropocentric. The problem is that modernity, in this form, is unable to make sense of nature in anything other than human terms. Modernity lacks a "third term" (Plato's idea of the good) to unite our understanding.⁶⁹ Or as Kant phrased the question: how are synthetic (empirically verifiable) propositions *a priori* possible? This is Kant's scandal of philosophy. Without a third term, it is impossible to pose the questions of metaphysics.⁷⁰ Hegel's dialectic of history is an attempt to restore the comprehensiveness of the classical account. He claims to have accounted for it without returning to cosmology, by replacing cosmology with history, or *geist* (spirit).

⁶⁹ The connection between mind and matter in Plato is incomplete. Ultimately Plato's understanding ends in awe, wonder and intuition. It is not possible, according to Plato, to speak direct *logos* concerning Being.

⁷⁰ Kant's solution is to have a transcendental link that can't be linked to phenomenon.

According to Hegel, the restoration of the Platonic doctrine that concrete things participate in their Forms is only possible through the forward movement of change in time (history). The participation of concrete things in the forms is embodied in history and revealed over time in the form of *geist*. Hegel's solution is to reinvent *telos* (Aristotle's final or end cause) as Time. History recalls the organic development of knowledge. The act of recollection is the *Phenomenology*, which brings to fruition the complete set of experiences that are already there but have not been brought to awareness. History is thus preordained in Hegel. It is an eschatological work that describes spirit reconciling itself to itself through the cunning of reason.

Hegel's thought is thus a historical form of deism. Generally speaking, deists believe that God externalized his nature and that became the world. By externalizing his nature, God externalized his mind and his reason. Thus the order of the world is the order of God's reason. Having set the world in motion through creation, there is nothing left for him to do. To fully know nature is to fully know God. For Hegel this occurs through history and the process of spirit reconciling itself to itself.

This is opposed to Augustinian theism who believed that God (the principle of reality) was not bounded by his creation and thus full knowledge of either nature or history does not constitute full knowledge of reality. Hegel's deism is also opposed to the anthropocentric atheism of modernity as represented by Kojève. For Kojève, absolute knowledge is not the full knowledge of spirit's reconciliation but rather the realization of man's finitude as infinitude. Absolute knowledge is the realization that all there is and has been is man, and that this knowledge is all that can be said, complete, eternal, circular truth.

Kojeve's atheistic interpretation of Hegel is derived, via Heidegger, from Nietzsche's response to Hegel in *Genealogy of Morals*. Kojeve's anthropomorphism is demonstrated in the difference between Hegel's and Nietzsche's titles.⁷¹ The German word *geist*, translated here as spirit, carries connotations that the English word does not. As with the Greek word *telos*, *geist* implies purpose and direction. To speak of history in terms of *geist* is to speak of the meaning or purpose of history. Phenomenology attempts to give reasons for the appearance of phenomena: why things are the way they are and not otherwise. Morals, on the other hand, are abstractions that are not rooted in the real. Similarly, the method of genealogy asserts that the question "why?" is simply an abstraction, and that the true question is "how?". By shifting the terminology from the "phenomenology of spirit" to the "genealogy of morals" Nietzsche strips the meaning from history. In effect, Nietzsche argues that it may have happened the way Hegel says it did but that it could have happened any number of other ways and therefore there is no reason, purpose or meaning underlying history. Nietzsche concludes that the end of history is equivalent to the death of God. As he states famously in *The Gay Science*, "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves?"⁷²

For Nietzsche the murder of God is the story of the west. We have murdered God through reason by transforming philosophy into science. Kojeve takes Nietzsche's atheism and radical anthropocentrism and applies it to Hegel's historicism. By reading the entire *Phenomenology* through the Lordship and Bondage section, and thus placing existential value in the anthropocentric element of history, Kojeve is implicitly agreeing

⁷¹ While Kojeve shares with Nietzsche a general atheistic approach to history, the content of their analysis of history differs greatly. Nietzsche is more anti-Christ than atheist.

with Nietzsche's assertion that there is no essential meaning and purpose in history beyond the meaning men give it. History is no longer the process of spirit reconciling itself to itself, but rather the process of slaves overcoming masters. In Kojève's interpretation, the meaning of history is only, and can only be, human meaning. Kojève remains, of course, confronted with the problem diagnosed by Nietzsche. How are we to comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? As we shall see, Kojève does this by replacing God with the State.

The difference between Hegel and Kojève can be summarized as follows. For Hegel there exists implicitly subjective knowledge that is always there. History is simply the process of becoming conscious to that which already is. Kojève's interpretation, on the other hand, is radically anthropocentric. Man is essentially opposed to Nature and, as such, his knowledge of nature is similarly opposed to nature. The pursuit of wisdom, therefore, is not a process of recollection of that which already is (as it is for both Plato and Hegel) but rather comes out of and is inextricably linked to man's struggle (against men) and work (against nature).

This leads to Kojève's rejection of Hegel's philosophy of Nature. It is Kojève's view that Hegel identifies the Concept (*Begriff*) [the Idea of ideas] with Time. This means that the essence of man's being is Time and that all human knowledge and understanding is necessarily historical. As Kojève states:

It must *first* be said that there is conceptual understanding only where there is an essentially temporal, that is, historical, reality; and *secondly*, that only historical or temporal existence can reveal itself by the Concept. Or in other words, conceptual understanding is necessarily *dialectical*. Now if this holds true and if Nature is only Space and not Time, one would have to conclude that there is no conceptual understanding of

⁷² Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, tr. Walter Kaufman. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, p. 181.

Nature . . . One would have to say so. But Hegel does not. And that, I believe, is his basic error.⁷³

It is for this reason that Kojève is forced to reject Hegel's philosophy of nature. Hegel presents us with a contradiction when he says that Nature is only space while also claiming that biological life is a temporal phenomenon, and thus that life (*Leben*) is a manifestation of Spirit (*Geist*). But Hegel also says, according to Kojève, that human existence is made possible only by the negation of life. Kojève thus concludes that there is "an opposition of *Leben* and *Geist*. But if this opposition exists, Life is not historical; therefore there is no biological *dialectic*; therefore there is no conceptual understanding of life."⁷⁴ But Hegel does make the claim that there is a dialectical biology and expresses it as part of his philosophy of Nature. For Kojève this leads to the absurd conclusion that Hegel is the creator of the world.

To assert, as Hegel does, that *all* understanding is dialectical and that the natural World is understandable is to assert that this World is the work of a Demiurge, of a Creator-God conceived in the image of working Man. And this is what Hegel actually says in the *Logik*, when he says that his "Logic" (that is, his ontology) is "the thought of god before the creation of the World." It would follow that Hegel understands the World because the World is created according to the Concept that *Hegel* has. And thus we are in the midst of a paradox. Hegelian anthropotheism ceases to be an image; Hegel is actually God, God the *creator*, and the *eternal* God.⁷⁵

The difference between Hegel and Kojève is captured by Kojève's assertion that for Hegel human existence is only possible through the negation of life, and that there is an opposition of *Leben* (Life) and *Geist* (Spirit). For Hegel such an opposition is not eternal but rather exists only in the moment of opposition between master and slave in the fight to the death for recognition. Kojève extricates Hegel's philosophy of history out of

⁷³ Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, assembled by Raymond Queneau, ed. Allan Bloom, tr. James H. Nichols Jr.. Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1969. p. 145-146.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

the entirety of his system by prioritizing a single moment as the essential reality of human beings and self-consciousness. By prioritizing the essential opposition between man and Nature and then accounting for the opposition from first principles, Kojève provides justification for the modern act of transforming the world through technology that began with such men as Machiavelli (in politics) and Bacon (in science).

Clearly Kojève's interpretation of Hegel represents a distortion of Hegel's intent and spirit. Why, then, speak of Kojève in lieu of Hegel?

Hegel attempted to restore the comprehensiveness of classical philosophy by replacing the notion of *telos* with the reconciliation of *geist* through history. In so doing he departed from the essential moment of modernity in favour of what he believed was absolute knowledge. Kojève by providing a radically anthropocentric, and thus radically modern, account of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, makes far clearer than Hegel the implications of modernity.

Kojève's account of life, as modern, is the life we are living. For instance the modern attitude towards nature represented by technology is indicated by Kojève's interpretation. Furthermore the value of the totality of Hegel's system—the synthesis of the philosophy of history with the philosophy of nature—lies in its theological elements. It is discourse with God, or perhaps the discourse of God. While perhaps interesting, this is beyond the scope of those concerned with politics and cannot be validated, historically or otherwise. Finally Hegel's system is fantastic and highly implausible. His philosophy of nature does not correspond with the theory and practice of modern science. The facts of history seem to refute Hegel. There is nothing, however, in Kojève's interpretation

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 146-147.

that is immediately implausible based on historical evidence, either past or present. For the time being Kojeve's interpretation appears much the "truer".

Kojeve's Interpretation of Hegel

Kojeve begins by asking the following epistemological question:

'What is absolute knowledge and how is it possible?'; that is to say: what must Man and his historical evolution be, so that, at a certain moment in that evolution, a human individual, by chance having the name of Hegel, sees that he has an *absolute* Knowledge—i.e., a Knowledge that reveals to him no longer a particular and momentary *aspect* of Being (which he mistakes for the totality of Being), but Being in its integral *whole*, as it is in and for itself.⁷⁶

Kojeve's answer is that:

Absolute knowledge became—*objectively*—possible because in and by Napoleon the *real* process of historical evolution, in the course of which man *created* new Worlds and *transformed* himself by creating them, came to its end. To reveal *this* World, therefore, is to reveal *the* World—that is, to reveal being in the *completed* totality of its spatial-temporal existence. And—*subjectively*—absolute Knowledge became possible because a man named Hegel was able to understand the *World* in which he lived and to understand *himself* as living in and understanding the World.⁷⁷

According to Kojeve, the purpose of the phenomenology is, first of all, to give an account of the French Revolution by giving an account of the history that has given rise to it; and secondly to account, historically, for the existence of the man who understands history (Kojeve-Hegel). He does this by attempting to deduce the historical fact of Napoleon from the first principles of his philosophy and thus give a total account of

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.33. The difference between Kojeve and Hegel is demonstrated by Kojeve's phrasing of the question. "'What is absolute Knowledge and how is it possible?'; that is to say: what must Man and his historical evolution be, so that, at a certain moment in that evolution, a human *individual*, by chance having the name of Hegel." For Hegel there is no chance in history; rather it is the progressive reconciliation of that which already exists. Kojeve removes the teleological element from Hegel's teaching in favour of the randomness of chance, which is in turn overcome through human Work and Action.

history and therefore achieve absolute knowledge (knowledge that refers only to itself, i.e. knowledge that is non-relative, circular and complete)—the sum total of all possible knowledge. Kojève-Hegel's philosophy is therefore a philosophy of history. To write a philosophy of history, history must be over. If history is not over then all thoughts concerning history must be historical.

Now to know what history is, it is necessary to know what the Man who realizes it is. Kojève's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, therefore, is a philosophy of Man and thus begins with the most fundamental of all questions: what is man? Kojève tells us that what separates man from animals is consciousness of self, the "I" of self-consciousness.⁷⁸ Therefore to understand man in his origins (that is from first principles) is to understand the origin of the "I" revealed by speech. This knowledge of self that reveals the existence of the "I" cannot be achieved through contemplation because contemplation only reveals the object that is known and never the subject that knows. It is desire and the negating power of action that separates man from object and reveals him as "I" opposed to "non-I". However, animal desire is only a necessary but not sufficient condition of self-consciousness. Because desire is essentially empty (the presence of an absence), the positive content of desire and thus the positive content of the "I" brought about by desire, is a function of the positive content of the negated "Non-I". Animal desire, therefore, is insufficient to give rise to the "I" because, directed towards the natural "non-I", the "I" that it reveals will itself be natural—that is biological or animal. For self-consciousness to occur—and thus the concept "I"—the desire that separates subject from object must be directed towards a non-natural object: an object that goes

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 35.

⁷⁸ Animals possess sentiment of self as opposed to self-consciousness.

beyond the given reality. According to Kojève the only thing that goes beyond the given reality is desire itself. Thus for self-consciousness to occur, desire must be directed towards another desire. This desire for another desire produces an “I” essentially different from animal “I’s”. It is the human “I”. “This I, which “feeds” on Desires, will itself be Desire in its very being, created in and by the satisfaction of its Desire. And since Desire is realized as action negating the given, the very being of this I will be action.”⁷⁹ The being of the human I is becoming, and the form of this being is not space (which is natural) but time. The essential character of the human I is thus “not to be what it is (as static and given being, as natural being, as ‘innate character’) and to be (that is, to become) what it is not.”⁸⁰

Now for the human to be truly human, human desire (the desire for desire) must conquer animal desire (the desire for life). The proto-human must risk his life for a non-vital end in order to reveal human (as opposed to animal) reality. Desire for desire is the desire to be recognized as an autonomous value. It is the desire to transform your subjective certainty into objective reality by imposing it upon others and having it recognized. Therefore, “to speak of the ‘origin’ of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for ‘recognition’.”⁸¹

For humans to exist as humans they must exist in a plurality of at least two united by the desire for desire. They must fight and both survive. One loves life more than recognition and thus submits and becomes the slave. The other loves recognition

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 5. This quintessential expression of modern ontology represents a dramatic reversal from classical thought. At first glance this appears very similar to Heidegger’s view that *physis* is *genesis*. However we have already seen that for Kojève it is not possible to possess discursive knowledge concerning *physis*. Therefore in place of Heidegger’s *physis=genesis* which emphasizes the *leben* (life) element of Hegel, Kojève derives Man=Becoming from Hegel’s historicism.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 7.

(honour) more than life, triumphs and becomes the master. Since Man only becomes self-conscious (human) after the fight, Man is always, by nature, either a master or a slave. Likewise freedom is also rooted in masters and slaves, because without self-consciousness man is simply given-being. Therefore if human reality is nothing but universal history, universal history must be the story of masters and slaves, since they are the origins of human reality. And if universal history is the history of the interaction between masters and slaves, history must stop at the moment the difference between masters and slaves ends. This can only be accomplished by the slave overcoming himself, his fear and revolting against his masters.⁸² Why is this? To understand we must examine the existence of both masters and slaves a little more closely.

The master is the man who, preferring honour and recognition to life, chooses to risk his life for the sake of prestige. That is to say, to his real, biological life he prefers something ideal, spiritual and non-biological. In so doing he proves his superiority over biological life. This superiority, which at first exists only in principle, is made real by the work of the slave. The slave, forced to recognize the master, is in turn forced to work at

⁸² There are three distinct understanding of politics and nature within western philosophy. Aristotle argued that "Man is by nature a political animal." By this he meant that the public, political forum of the city was the whole association of human beings to which the parts (individual, family, tribe) developed. Because the city (whole) was grounded in the individual (part) and the individual is natural, the city is also natural because, within a cyclical understanding of the world, the whole, logically, precedes the parts. Hobbes argues that man in a state of nature is motivated by "fear of violent death" and that "life is nasty, mean, brutish and short." Man forms political associations and alienates his natural power in order to gain peace within the rationalized order of the Leviathan. Politics is not natural, but rather is the attempt to rationalize the irrational natural world. However, the totally rationalized state, the Leviathan, implies the end of politics because in the creation of peace, man is no longer motivated by "fear of violent death" and the battle for recognition is over. Rousseau counters both Aristotle and Hobbes by arguing that man is by nature independent and anti-social. Rousseau agrees with Aristotle in the manner that the city and politics have developed but, because of his historical, causation oriented, understanding of time, disagrees that the whole logically precedes the part but rather concludes that the parts precede the whole. Politics, the city and the battle for recognition are not, therefore, natural but rather alienate man from his natural virtue. This alienation is resolved by Hegel who radicalizes Hobbes' account of the state of nature and then attempts to reconcile these distinctions by justifying Hobbes' reason through history thus solving the problem of Rousseau's alienation. It is no accident that the description of man at the end of history found in Alexander Kojève's interpretation of Hegel is almost exactly the same as Rousseau's noble savage.

the master's behest and yield the fruits of the slave's action to him. The master, by dominating the slave, in turn dominates nature through the work of the slave. The master, removed from the toils of nature, is able to simply enjoy its fruits. His life, to the extent that he is not fighting for recognition (honour), is one of pleasure. He spends his life eating, drinking and copulating and, sometimes, fighting.

At first glance it appears that the Master is perfectly satisfied in his desires. This, however, is not the case. The tragedy of the master is that while the slave recognizes the master, the master does not recognize the slave. He has risked his life for a recognition that has no value to him. He cannot realize his end (to be recognized), the end for which he has risked his life. Satisfaction for him lies only in death: his death or the death of his adversary. Death eliminates either his own consciousness, in which case he cannot be satisfied, or it eliminates the consciousness of his adversary, in which case satisfaction is only momentary. As Kojève states:

Mastery is an existential impasse. The master can either make himself *brutish* in pleasure or *die* on the field of battles as Master, but he cannot *live consciously* with the knowledge that he is *satisfied* by what he *is*. Now, it is only conscious satisfaction that can complete History, for only the Man who *knows* he is *satisfied* by what he is no longer strives to go beyond himself, to go beyond what he is and what is, through Action that transforms Nature, through Action that creates History. If History must be *completed*, if absolute Knowledge must be possible, it is only the Slave who can do it, by attaining Satisfaction.⁸³

The slave, on the other hand, became a slave through the fear of death.⁸⁴ By refusing to risk his life for recognition, the slave remains an animal, a biological being.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 47.

⁸⁴ There is another, positive aspect to this fear which results in the slavery of the slave. As Kojève states: "Through animal fear of death (*angst*) the Slave experienced the dread or the Terror (*Furcht*) of Nothingness, of his nothingness. . . . Now—we have seen it and shall see it again—the profound basis of Hegelian anthropology is formed by this idea that Man is not a Being that *is* in an eternal identity to itself in Space, but a Nothingness that *nihilates* as Time in spatial Being, through the *negation* of this Being—

In so doing he has suppressed his desire for recognition in favour of his instinct for life. However, by becoming a slave, the slave is forced to work for the master. To work for another is contrary to the instinct that drives man to satisfy his own needs. The slave does so from fear of the master. However this fear is different from the fear of death that occurs in the moment of the fight. In the case of forced work, the danger is not immediate. The slave knows that the Master can kill him, but he does not see it and is not currently experiencing it. His servitude is conditioned by the *knowledge* of the fear of death and not by the fear of death itself. "The Slave who *works* for the master represses his *instincts* in relation to an *idea*, a *concept*."⁸⁵ It is through work that the slave overcomes his biological animal nature and becomes fully human. The slave, by acting to satisfy an instinct that is not his own (the masters), is acting in relation to what is not—for him, instinct. He acts in relation to an idea, a non-biological end. To actively transform Nature in relation to a non-material idea is Kojève's definition of work.

It is also through and by work that the path to freedom is opened. The master realized his freedom by surmounting his natural instinct for life in the fight to the death for recognition. The slave, by transforming nature in relation to an idea through work, succeeds in dominating Nature (both human and non-human) and thus succeeds in dominating his nature: the same nature that dominated him during the fight that resulting in his slavery. The slave, through work, is no longer dependent upon the given natural conditions of his existence. He has modified them, beginning with the idea he has of

through the negation or transformation of the given, starting from an idea or an ideal that does *not* yet exist, that is still nothingness (a 'project')—through negation that is called the *Action* of Fighting and of Work. Hence the slave, who through fear of death—grasps the (human) Nothingness that is as the foundation of his (natural) Being, understands himself, understands Man, better than the Master does." Ibid., p. 47-48.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p.48.

himself. The slave, through work, discovers thought and forms the notion of freedom that has been discovered through his work.

Now, for the slave, the idea of freedom does not correspond to actual reality. He remains enslaved to the master. However, by actively transforming Nature, the Slave has overcome his given biological reality and realized the essential character of his humanness: that he is free with respect to given nature, that his being is becoming, and that his essential character is freedom in relation to Nature. Again, this is why it is only the slave who can realize history and become totally satisfied, because it is only the slave that is motivated by an essential difference between his experiential and ideational reality.

The slave remains confronted with a significant problem. How can he reconcile the difference between his idea of freedom and the fact of his slavery? To do this he develops ideologies. The first of these ideologies is stoicism. The slave persuades himself that he is actually free simply by knowing that he is free. This attitude ends, according to Kojève, in boredom. Because, in its very essence, stoicism precludes action (that is change) and is merely talk. The boredom of this ideology forces the slave to find another solution because the slave can only be satisfied in and through action. Unable to actualize his freedom in the real world, the slave seeks to negate the given of his thoughts and becomes a skeptical-nihilist. This attitude, however, cannot be maintained since it ends in the nihilation of the knowing subject. The nihilist contradicts himself by his very existence. How can one live when one denies the value of the world of existence? The logical conclusion of nihilism is suicide. The nihilist who remains alive, however, becomes aware of this contradiction and seeks to remove it. This can only be done, in

actual fact, by modifying the actual conditions of existence through action by fighting the master.

The slave, at this point, is still unable to do this. Instead he seeks to justify the contradiction between the idea of freedom and the reality of slavery. This gives rise to the third and final of Slave ideologies: Christian ideology. The Christian justifies the contradiction by saying that all existence is necessarily contradictory. He posits an “other” world that exists beyond this world in which the contradiction is removed. In this world there is no reason to act to remove slavery because in this world all is slavery. However the idea of freedom is real. Freedom is realized in the other world of the Kingdom of Heaven. The stoic attitude can be maintained but without the boredom, because now one does not remain eternally the same. The transcendent nature of the other world necessarily implies change, even if that change remains inaccessible to those living on earth.

In accepting the Christian God the slave has managed to rationalize his idea of freedom with the reality of his slavery. He has affirmed his equality with the master by accepting the existence of an “other” world and the authority of an absolute Master in the form of a transcendent God. In so doing he frees himself from the authority of the human master without ceasing to be a slave. “He is a slave without a Master, he is a Slave in *himself*, he is the pure essence of slavery.”⁸⁶ He is the master’s equal only insofar as they share absolute slavery before God. Thus the Christian slave is even more slavish than the pagan slave. The Christian slave accepts this divine master for the same reason that he accepted the human master; through fear of death. The pagan slave accepts his human

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

slavery as the condition for this biological life. The Christian slave accepts his divine slavery in return for eternal life.

For the fundamental motive of the ideology of the “two worlds” and the duality of human existence is the slavish desire for life at any price, sublimated in the desire for an *eternal* life. In the final analysis, Christianity is born from the Slave’s terror in the face of Nothingness, his nothingness; that is, for Hegel, from the impossibility of bearing the necessary condition of man’s existence—the condition of death, of finiteness.⁸⁷

Thus, according to Kojève, in order to overcome the insufficiency of Christian ideology (to become free from human and divine mastery, that is to realize freedom and to live in the world as a human being) it is necessary to accept the idea of death and atheism. For Kojève, the evolution of the Christian World has been nothing but “a progress toward the atheistic awareness of the essential finiteness of human existence.”⁸⁸ For Kojève this awareness was effected in and by the French Revolution which completed the evolution of the Christian World and began the “third historical World” in which realized freedom is conceived by philosophy through modern ideology. The question remains: if the French Revolution represents the actual overcoming of the Christian World, how did the pagan world of Mastery become the Christian World of Slavery without a fight between Masters and Slaves?

The Pagan World of mastery is comprised of warrior-citizens in whom only the universal element of human existence (the risk of life) is recognized. Only those who fight for the city are recognized as citizens. Furthermore, this recognition of citizenship is based solely on the capacity and willingness to fight and risk human life and does not comprise recognition of the particular elements of the citizen (the family) or the

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 57.

individuality of the citizen (universal-particular). The Master is trapped within the tragic conflict between the pagan conception of the public and private.⁸⁹

The pagan state, however, is not immune to attempts to resolve this tension. Men come to power and attempt to make the most of the familial, particular elements of their being. They attempt to transform the public state into the private household, into a family patrimony, and to make the citizens of the state his subjects. The inability of the Pagan World of Masters to provide satisfaction in essential mastery leads to the inevitable drive towards tyranny. The hero becomes a tyrant in the attempt to resolve this existential impasse.⁹⁰

According to Kojève, the tyrant ultimately succeeds in transforming the city into his household and this success spells the doom for the pagan world. This occurs because the essence of the Pagan State is to engage in perpetual wars for the sake of prestige. Consequently, victorious cities become stronger and begin to swallow weaker cities. "The *victorious City* is thus transformed, little by little, into an *Empire*—into the Roman

⁸⁹ Kojève goes on to explain the source of the conflict between the public and private in pagan life. "Wherever the human Actions of Fighting and of Work are not synthesized in a *single* human being, Man is never fully 'satisfied.' The realization and the recognition of solely universal *Action* in the State 'satisfies' Man as little as the realization and the recognition of his personal, particular *Being* in the family.

To be sure—in principle—a synthesis of the familial Particular and the political Universal could satisfy Man. But such a synthesis is absolutely impossible in the pagan World. For the Family and the State are mutually exclusive, and yet Man cannot do without the one or the other.

In effect, for the Family, the supreme value is the *Sein*, the natural *Being*, the biological *life* of its member. Now, what the State demands of this member of the Family is precisely the risk of his life, his *death* for the universal cause. To fulfill the duty of the Citizen, therefore, is necessarily to break the law of the Family; and inversely.

In the pagan World this conflict is inevitable and has no solution: Man cannot renounce his Family, since he cannot renounce the Particularity of his Being; nor can he renounce the State, since he cannot renounce the Universality of his Action. And thus he is always and necessarily *criminal*, either toward the State or toward the Family. And this is what constitutes the *tragic* character of pagan life." Ibid., p. 63.

⁹⁰ The ancient Greeks were well aware of this tendency. Witness Sophocles' heroic tragedy of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which dramatizes the essentially tragic character of Pagan life and the drive towards tyranny as an attempt to resolve this tension. Of course for the tragic poets, unlike Kojève, the hubris of the tyrant only further condemns him.

Empire.”⁹¹ Over time the inhabitants of the founding city, the warrior-citizens, become too few to defend the empire. The Emperor is forced to rely on mercenaries with the effect that the citizens are no longer obliged to make war. No longer engaging in battle, no longer risking their lives for the sake of recognition, they are unable to resist the particularism of the Emperor and thus become private persons, subjects of the emperor. They become slaves because they have given up that which made them masters (the fight and risk of life). “And that is also why they accept the *ideology* of their slaves: first Stoicism, then Skepticism, and—finally—Christianity.”⁹²

In this way the masters accept the ideology of their slaves and the pagan “Man of Mastery” becomes the “Christian Man of Slavery” without a fight or revolution. Without the need to fight and risk their lives, the masters become slaves.

Or more precisely: *pseudo*-Slaves, or—if you will—pseudo-masters. For they are no longer real *Masters*, since they no longer risk their lives, but they are not real Slaves either, because they do not work in the service of another. They are, so to speak, Slaves without Masters, pseudo-slaves. And by ceasing to be true Masters, they end in no longer having real Slaves: they free them, and thus the Slaves themselves become Slaves without Masters, pseudo-Masters.⁹³

The slave without a master and the master without slaves becomes the bourgeois, a private property owner. For Kojève the Roman Empire exists in contrast to the Greek city because it is a bourgeois world and it is as such that it becomes a Christian World.⁹⁴ The real historical development of this bourgeois world (civil law, private property, and

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 62.

⁹² Ibid., p. 63.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 63.

⁹⁴ Reading of the *Republic* demonstrates that this not precisely true. Socrates description of oligarchy-democracy, with its emphasis upon property and freedom, elucidates the essential conditions of the bourgeois world. Here Kojève is in implicit agreement with Nietzsche that Socrates is the product of a dying culture. The world of Socrates described in the *Republic* is no longer truly Greek. The solution of Platonic philosophy to the spiritual crisis of Book I spells the end of the Greek *polis*.

the bourgeoisie) corresponds to the ideational development of the three slave ideologies (stoicism, skeptico-nihilism, and Christianity).

The bourgeois is the real, social, historical reality (substructure) that corresponds to Christian ideology (superstructure). It does this by elaborating a civil law and the notion of a "legal person". The notion of a "legal person" corresponds both to the stoic and familial (particular) notion of human existence. Like the family, civil law attaches supreme value to the Being of Man (the person), independent of his actions. Like the stoic, the value attributed to this person exists independently of the concrete conditions of his existence. "And we can say that the bourgeois State founded on the idea of *civil* Law is the *real* basis of Stoicism, of Stoicism taken not as an abstract *idea*, but as a social, historical *reality*."⁹⁵ Similarly, private property provides the real, social and historical basis for nihilistic Skepticism. The attitude of the solipsistic slave who attributes supreme value only to himself is "found again in the private property-owner, who subordinates everything, the State itself, to the absolute value of *his* own property."⁹⁶

This bourgeois essence of the Roman Empire explains the transformation from a pagan world of mastery into a Christian world of slavery. The bourgeois, to lead a truly human existence, must work (since he cannot fight) just like the slave. This work, as discussed earlier, must be carried out in relation to something other than the worker-itself, that is an idea (if he is to preserve his human character). He cannot work for a master (because he no longer has one) nor can he work for the State (because the bourgeois world is nothing but the agglomeration of private property owners); he can only work for himself. He solves this problem through the *idea* of private-property. "He

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

works for himself taken as a 'legal person,' as a private *Property-owner*: he works for Property taken as such—i.e., Property that has now become *money*; he works for Capital."⁹⁷

The Bourgeois worker presupposes and conditions an "abnegation" of human existence. He transcends himself by projecting himself onto the idea of private property (capital) which, though the product of the bourgeois' work, exists independently of him. This "abnegation" in favour of Capital reflects itself in dualistic Christian ideology while providing it with a new, specific, nonpagan content. Thus the ideology of Christianity is mirrored by the real, social and historical reality of the Bourgeois World.

It is the same Christian dualism that is found again in bourgeois existence: the opposition between the "legal person," the private Property-owner, and the man of flesh and blood; the existence of an ideal, transcendent world, represented in reality by Money, Capital, to which Man is supposed to devote his Actions, to sacrifice his sensual, biological Desires.⁹⁸

Thus the pagan world of mastery has become the Christian bourgeois world through the transformation of warrior-citizens (masters) into subjects (private property owners). The pagan master accepts the ideology of his slave, an ideology that makes him the servant of an absolute master, because he sees that, in no longer risking his life, he has ceased to be a citizen who can find satisfaction in political activity. He becomes aware that he is the passive subject of the emperor. As such he has nothing to lose and everything to gain by "imagining a transcendent World, in which all men are *equal* before an omnipotent, truly *universal* Master, who recognizes, moreover, the absolute value of each *Particular* as such."⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 65. This distinguishes him from the skeptico-nihilist who works only for *his* property not private property as such, that is private property taken as a value

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

Christianity is able to solve the essential tragedy of pagan life by opposing the universal value of mastery (recognition through risk of life) with the particular value of immediate life (being). However it goes beyond this. It also implies the synthesis of the universal and the particular (mastery and slavery) in the idea of the individual, defined by Kojève as the “realization of universal values and realities in and by the Particular; and of that universal recognition of the value of the Particular, which alone can give Man, the supreme and definitive ‘satisfaction’.”¹⁰⁰ The historical key is to actualize the Christian idea of individuality in the here and now and not, as Christianity supposes, in a world that is essentially “other” than mine.

For Kojève the realization of this ideal as a human ideal can only occur if the transcendent universal (God) is replaced by an immanent universal, the State, or rather the Universal and Homogeneous State, the realization of the Christian Kingdom of heaven. Kojève concludes finally that:

The history of the Christian World, therefore, is the history of the progressive realization of that ideal State, in which Man will finally be “satisfied” by realizing himself as Individuality—a synthesis of the Universal and the Particular, of the Master and the Slave, of Fighting and Work. But in order to realize this State, man must look away from the Beyond, look toward this earth and act only with a view to this earth. In other words, he must eliminate the Christian idea of transcendence. And that is why the evolution of the Christian World is dual: on the one hand there is the *real* evolution, which prepares the social and political conditions for the coming of the “absolute” State: [the transformation of pagan world of masters and slaves to the Christian World of bourgeois-subjects through the introduction of Empire, civil law and private property] and on the other, an *ideal* evolution, which eliminates the *transcendent* idea, which brings Heaven back to Earth, as Hegel says. [The development of the slave ideologies of stoicism, skeptico-nihilism and Christianity culminating in Kojève’s atheism.]¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67. It is significant that Kojève omits Platonic philosophy from his account of the *ideal* evolution. Especially considering that Socrates lived during the Athenian empire and consequently within

The ideal evolution of the Universal State is the work of the intellectual, a man who, like the bourgeois, is neither master nor slave. However, unlike the bourgeois, he does not work either. Thus he is as stripped of the essential character of the slave as he is of the master. Not being a slave, he is able to rid himself of the slavish prejudices of Christianity, its theological transcendent element. Not being a master, he can preserve the particular, individualist ideology of Christian anthropology. Neither master nor slave, he is able to conceive of the desired synthesis of master and slave. However, participating in neither action nor work—he is unable to realize his conception. It remains theoretical.

In order to realize in the world his conception of it, he requires the political actor, or more precisely, the most effective of political actors, the tyrant. In the midst of this radically modern anthropocentric account of history we are confronted with the encounter between philosophy and tyranny in precisely the same place it appears with Plato. Only in the bourgeois world—Plato's oligarchy-democracy—does the thinking man (Socrates) appear. This is because an oligarchy (a property based polity) allows "one man to sell everything that belongs to him and another to get hold of it; and when he has sold it, allowing him to live in the city while belonging to none of its parts, called neither a moneymaker, nor a craftsman, nor a knight, nor a hoplite, but a poor man without means."¹⁰²

a Bourgeois (thought not Christian) World and that Plato taught Aristotle who taught the real emperor Alexander. This curiosity is furthered by the great interest in Plato that Kojève takes in his other writings.¹⁰² *Republic*, 552a. It is significant that Socrates' objection to the "intellectual" is that he belongs to none of the city's parts, or perhaps that he "does not believe in the gods of the city", while Kojève re-presents these criticisms as advantages. For Kojève there is no *a priori* objection to the thoughtful life but merely the "problem" of implementing his ideas.

As demonstrated in previous chapters, for Plato, the philosopher represents both the best of possible lives (the philosopher) and the greatest of all dangers (the philosopher-king). For Kojève, however, the danger that Plato elucidates is precisely what makes the philosopher the best of possible citizens. The modern philosopher is a tyrant. Thus in Kojève's philosophy, as with Plato, the philosopher is confronted with the tyrant and we must turn towards Kojève's fuller exploration of this theme in *Tyranny and Wisdom*, Kojève's response to Leo Strauss' interpretation of Xenophon's *Hiero or Tyrannicus* found in *On Tyranny*.

Tyranny and Wisdom

In *Tyranny and Wisdom*, Kojève responds to Strauss' analysis of Xenophon's dialogue, *Hiero or Tyrannicus*. In this dialogue Xenophon reports a conversation between Hiero, the tyrant of Syracuse, and Simonides the poet and reputed wise man. *Tyranny and Wisdom* consists not simply of a review of Strauss' scholarship but rather the result of Kojève's reflections upon the problem of tyranny and its relationship to philosophy.

Kojève begins by posing the problem of the relationship between tyranny and philosophy by presenting the nature of the wise man's advice as utopic. While it may be our assumption that the tyrant should "drop everything" in order to implement the advice of the wise man, the political reality is that the tyrant, or any political actor, always has some "current business" that must be completed before the advice can be undertaken. Furthermore it may be that the "current business" contradicts the advice of the wise man or that it will take more years than the tyrant's life to complete. Ultimately, the utopia

presented by the wise man “does not show us how, here and now, to begin to transform the given concrete reality with a view to bringing it into conformity with the proposed ideal in the future.”¹⁰³

The wise man, Simonides, is unable to bridge the divide between the ideal and the real, between thought and action, and make his advice practical. According to Kojève, Xenophon-Strauss (following the classical tradition as I have elaborated it earlier) conclude that it is not possible to reform tyranny into an ideal tyranny and that all such philosophic advice is utopic and that tyranny is always bad. Kojève disagrees and proposes that it may be possible to actualize the ideal tyranny described by Simonides because the time required for the “current business” has elapsed (that is history is over), and that therefore it is possible to achieve the ideal (or philosophic) tyranny in the form of the UHS.

To resolve this question it is necessary to examine the philosopher’s capacity and willingness to engage in politics and governance. As Kojève asks, “*can* the philosopher govern men or participate in their governance, and does he *want* to do so; in particular, *can* and does he *want* to do by giving the tyrant concrete political advice?”¹⁰⁴

The first part of the question to be addressed is whether the philosopher has any advantage over the “uninitiate” (including the tyrant) concerning the question of

¹⁰³ Kojève, Alexandre. “Tyranny and Wisdom,” in *On Tyranny: Revised and Expanded Edition Including Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*. ed. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth. New York: The Free Press. 1990. P. 138.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 147-148. This is a rephrasing of Kojève’s initial question that was phrased as follows: “The question of principle that remains to be resolved is whether or not the wise man, in his capacity as a wise man, *can* do anything but talk about a political ‘ideal,’ and whether he *wants* to leave the realm of ‘utopia’ and ‘general’ or even ‘abstract ideas,’ and to confront concrete reality by giving the tyrant ‘realistic’ advice.” (147) In rephrasing the question Kojève has substituted “wise man properly so-called” with the ‘philosopher’ and does not discuss the question concerning the wise man (the possessor of wisdom) but rather restricts his discussion to the philosopher (the lover of wisdom). The difference, so Kojève says, is significant and thus, we can conclude, so is the omission, or rather silence.

government. According to Kojève, the philosopher possesses three traits in contrast to the “uninitiate” that would give him an advantage in governing. 1) The philosopher is an expert in the art of dialectic and thus is more able to see the weaknesses in the arguments of others and to make his own arguments most convincing. 2) The art of dialectic allows the philosopher to free himself of conventional prejudices and thus is more open to reality, as it actually is constituted and opposed to the way historical men suppose it to be. 3) By being more open to the real the philosopher comes closer to the concrete than the “uninitiate” who confines himself to abstractions, all the while being unaware of their abstract, unreal, character.¹⁰⁵ For these reasons Kojève believes “with Hiero, Xenophon, and Strauss, and contrary to a widely held opinion, that the philosopher is perfectly capable of assuming power, and of governing or participating in government, for example by giving political advice to the tyrant.”¹⁰⁶

The whole question thus rests on the difficult and complex question as to whether the philosopher wants to rule, or participate in ruling. The difficulty of this question rests upon the basic reality that Man requires *time* to think and to act. The finitude of Man's existence forces the philosopher to choose between the quest for wisdom, and political

¹⁰⁵ Kojève's demonstration of this paradoxical (according to common sense) assertion that the knowledge of the philosopher is more concrete than the non-philosopher is as follows. “This assertion appears paradoxical only if one fails to think about the specific meaning of the words ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract.’ One reaches the ‘abstract’ when one ‘neglects’ or *abstracts* some features implied in the ‘concrete,’ that is to say the real. Thus, for example, when in speaking of a tree one abstracts everything that is not it (the earth, the air, the planet Earth, the solar system, etc.), one is speaking of an abstraction that does not exist in reality (for the tree can exist only if there is the earth, the air, the rays of the sun, etc.). Hence all the particular sciences deal, in varying degrees, with abstractions. Similarly, an exclusively ‘national’ politics is necessarily abstract (as is a ‘pure’ politics that would, for example, abstract from religion or art). The isolated ‘particular’ is by definition *abstract*. It is precisely in seeking the *concrete* that the philosopher rises to the ‘general ideas’ which the ‘uninitiate’ claims to scorn.” Ibid., p. 148 (in the note) for more on the concrete nature of the philosopher's knowledge see “The Dialectic of the Real and the Phenomenological Method in Hegel” in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. None of these advantages apply to force. But then force is only necessary to the founding of a regime. The founding of a regime is a pre-philosophic act since philosophy only comes into being in a city already constituted. The founding of a city, as Machiavelli first noted, is another way in which philosophy is dependent upon tyranny.

action. Initially the definition of the philosopher (the lover of wisdom who devotes all his time in its pursuit, it being his supreme value and goal) leads us to conclude that he will renounce all action in favour of the pursuit of wisdom. This leads to the conventional view of the philosopher as represented by the "Epicurean" philosophers, manifest either in the aristocratic Epicurean, who withdraws from the world into the isolation of his "garden" in order to engage in contemplation; or in the Christian (bourgeois) intellectual who, due to his poverty, is compelled to do something, in which case the "garden" is replaced by the "republic of letters". In either case the situation is basically the same. The "bourgeois republican" like the "aristocratic castellan" is "ready to renounce all *active* interference in public affairs in return for being 'tolerated' by the government or tyrant."¹⁰⁷

While at first glance this Epicurean attitude of the philosophers appears to be implied by the very definition of the philosopher, Kojève takes issue with it on the basis of his own pseudo-Hegelian ontology. He argues that in order to justify "the philosopher's absolute *isolation*, one has to grant that Being is essentially immutable in itself and eternally identical with itself, and that it is completely revealed for all eternity in and by an intelligence that is perfect from the first; and this adequate revelation of the timeless totality of Being is, then, the Truth."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 151. Kojève goes on to sketch this relationship between the "republic of letters" and the government in further depth. "The government or the tyrant would 'leave him in peace' and permit him to exercise his trade of thinker, orator, or writer unimpeded, it being understood that his thoughts, speeches (lectures), and writings will remain purely 'theoretical'; and that he will do nothing that could lead, directly or indirectly, to an *action* properly so called, and in particular to a *political* action of any kind." This is precisely the attitude taken by Kant in his essay "What is Enlightenment?" in which he defends the policies of Frederick II as evidenced by this famous quotation: "My people and I have come to an agreement. I have agreed that they can say what they want and they have agreed that I can do what I want."

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

However we have already seen that Kojève does not accept this theistic conception of Truth and rather asserts that Being=Becoming and that Being=Truth=Man=History. Therefore it is not through isolation from history that the philosopher can reveal Being, but rather through participation in it. And there is no reason why this participation should not be active participation in the form of advising the tyrant, since we have already demonstrated his capacity to do so. The only question remains is that of time, the fundamental problem of the philosophic life.

Before addressing this problem and the concomitant political problem, Kojève goes on to refute the Epicurean attitude on the basis of its own ontology through the problem of recognition. The problem posed by the Epicurean attitude is that it presupposes that subjective certainty always coincides with objective truth. This criterion of truth for the isolated philosopher is insufficient due to the existence of madness. "In short, an 'isolated' thinker's subjective 'evidence' is invalidated as a *criterion* of truth by the simple fact that there is madness which, insofar as it is a correct deduction from subjectively 'evident' premises, can be 'systematic' or 'logical'"¹⁰⁹ Thus the Epicurean philosopher living in the isolation of his garden can never know whether he has attained wisdom or sunk into madness and thus is forced to flee the garden and its isolation. For this reason, the Epicurean philosopher always has a certain number of followers. The problem this solution presents is that the inhabitants of the various "gardens", "academies", "lyceums" etc. who manage to exclude madness through the inclusion of followers and the formation of a "society", maintain their isolation by cloistering themselves. The solution to madness of the cloistered mind leads to the fostering of

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

prejudice and the undermining of the philosophic pursuit of wisdom in favour of the justification of the prejudices of the cloister.

In any case, the Epicurean philosopher—whether in a pure form (the garden) or in a social form (the republic of letters)—is always confronted by the problem of either madness or prejudice. The problem of madness is solved through the introduction of the social element of the republic of letters. The problem of prejudice is introduced by this republic through the artificial limitation on those who are able to “recognize” the wisdom of the philosopher. This problem of prejudice can be addressed by removing the limitations on the followers of the philosopher. This reintroduces the political problem by bringing the philosopher in conflict with the tyrant. Thus, as we saw with Socrates (who accepts the idea of immutable Being but not the Epicurean attitude), the philosopher and the city come into conflict surrounding the education of young citizens.

Thus the political problem that the philosopher is confronted with is the same with Kojeve as it was with Plato. The relationship between the philosopher and the city, between power and wisdom, or, in our case, the relationship between the philosopher and the tyrant. The philosopher has to be a pedagogue and has to extend his activity indefinitely. In so doing he comes into conflict with the State (city, in the form of statesman/tyrants) which is itself an educator. Hence the charge of “corrupting the youth” that was brought against Socrates.

Because the success of the philosopher’s pedagogy is the only objective criterion of his doctrine, the philosopher is unable to give up his pedagogy when confronted by the State.¹¹⁰ This forces the philosopher to try to influence (educate) the tyrant, and thus the

¹¹⁰ Witness Socrates’ claim that all knowledge can be taught and if it can’t, as in the case of Pericles’ supposed wisdom and justice, then it is not valid knowledge. The philosopher who does not commit to a

State. The philosopher is thus inevitably (if his pedagogy and thus his philosophy is successful) led to participate in politics and government. Because the tyrant, of all political actors, is the most likely to receive and implement philosophical advice, this participation tends to be in the form of advice to the tyrant.

The problem is that, by definition, to be a philosopher is to devote all of one's time in the pursuit of wisdom. Likewise, governing a State also takes all of one's time. Because the tyrant can only act in the present, the philosopher who would advise the tyrant must have day to day knowledge of the "current business" at hand. Clearly to have "day to day" knowledge of the "current business" would also take all of the philosopher's time. Thus the philosopher is confronted with the problem that "to devote *all of one's time* to government is to cease to be a philosopher and hence to lose any advantage one might have over the tyrant and his 'uninitiated' advisors."¹¹¹

Faced with the impossibility of acting politically without giving up philosophy, the philosopher gives up political action and compromises by writing about politics to no immediate effect. Kojève's question is whether this decision to renounce political action in favour of philosophy can be justified philosophically. It has been demonstrated by both Strauss and Kojève that this is a problem that presents itself to no obvious philosophical solution and is generally left at the level of "discussion". Kojève, dissatisfied by the failure of 2500 years of discussion, proposes to go beyond the "mere" discussion of the problem to the objective method of historical refutation. It is plausible that while no individual has been able to solve this problem (due to lack of time), the

philosophical pedagogy is forced to submit to the subjective criteria of "evidence" or "revelation" and is thus subject to "madness". The philosopher who artificially limits the scope of his pedagogy is subject to the prejudices of the "cloister".

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 165.

entirety of history may have. Kojeve thus turns to the lessons of history concerning the relations between philosophers and tyrants.

Kojeve does this by examining who he considers to be the architectonic tyrant: Alexander the Great, student of Aristotle, who was a student of Plato, who was a student of Socrates. On the basis of this pedigree, Kojeve concludes that Alexander received the same philosophical education we witnessed earlier in the form of Alcibiades. They both desire to go beyond the narrow confines of the ancient city and “nothing prevents us from assuming that these two political attempts, only one of which met with failure, can be traced back to the philosophical teaching of Socrates.”¹¹²

What distinguishes Alexander from other political actors is that he was guided by the idea of empire. A Universal State with no *a priori* given limits, no pre-established capital and no geographic or ethnic center in which conquerors and conquered merge based upon their common humanity.

Alexander was clearly ready to dissolve the whole of Macedonia and of Greece in the new political unit created by his conquest, and to govern this unit from a geographical point he would have *freely* (rationally) chosen in terms of the new *whole*. Moreover, by requiring Macedonians and Greeks to enter into mixed marriages with “Barbarians,” he was surely intending to create a new ruling stratum that would be independent of all rigid and *given* ethnic support.¹¹³

In short Alexander attempted to create a state in which citizenship was based not on the particular, clan based ties of the Greek nation, but rather upon the universal concept of Man. He attempted to inaugurate a raceless state. The question is: what can

¹¹² Ibid., p. 170. Here Kojeve characterizes the education of Alcibiades and Alexander as indicative of Socrates’ political and philosophical teaching. This implicitly draws a parallel between Kojeve and Plato surrounding the Idea of a Universal State and conveniently forgets the distinct education received by Glaucon and Adeimantus.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 170.

account for the fact that the head of a national State conceived of and attempted to implement the idea of a truly universal State (empire) in which conqueror and conquered merge—a hereditary monarch who consented to expatriate himself (as Polemarchus does in Book I of the *Republic*) and merge the nobility of his native land with the nobility of the vanquished? “Instead of establishing the domination of his *race* and imposing the rule of his *fatherland* over the rest of the world, he chose to dissolve the race and to eliminate the fatherland itself for all political intents and purposes.”¹¹⁴

According to Kojève only the disciple of Socrates-Plato could conceive of the unity of a Universal State by taking as its point of departure the “idea” of Man as elaborated by Greek philosophy. All men can become citizens of the same State because they possess one and the same essence; this essence that is common to all men is *logos* (as expressed by Plato and Aristotle). “The Empire which Alexander had projected is not the political expression of a *people* or a *caste*. It is the political expression of a *civilization*, the material actualization of a “logical” entity, universal and one, just as the *Logos* itself is universal and one.”¹¹⁵ Thus, for Kojève, the political goal of the raceless State, which found its first historical expression in the Empire of Alexander, has as its origins the philosophical “advice” of Socrates-Plato. However the political, and historical goal that humanity is pursuing is not simply that of the politically universal state but also of the socially homogeneous State or the “classless society”.

Kojève traces the remote origins of this idea to St. Paul and the idea of the fundamental equality of all who believe in the same God. This transcendent conception of social equality is fundamentally at odds with the classical conception of the identity of

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 171.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 171

all beings who share the same essence (rational nature). For St. Paul, there is no essential difference between Greeks and Jews because they both can *become* Christians through conversion (that is the negation and synthesis of their Greek and Jewish qualities into a new Christian synthesis). The fundamental equality, therefore, is not based on the essential Being of the subject but rather through the active profession of faith. For Alexander, the product of the Greek philosopher, no mixture of masters and slaves were possible because they were "contraries". Thus his Universal State, which was raceless could not be homogeneous, that is classless. St. Paul, however, through the negation of the opposition between pagan Mastery and Slavery in the form of a new Christian unity is capable of providing the basis not only of the State's political universality but also of its social homogeneity.

However the universality and homogeneity of St. Paul exists only on a theistic, religious basis and cannot account for the existence of a State, here on earth. The universality and homogeneity of the Church's "mystical body" can only be actualized in the beyond of the Kingdom of Heaven. For the Universal and Homogeneous State to exist as a political goal, the religious Christian idea of social homogeneity must be secularized, that is rationally transformed into a coherent discourse, by modern philosophy. Thus, insofar as the idea of social homogeneity exists politically, it is because of the efforts of philosophers and intellectuals. Thus Kojève can conclude that, insofar as history is concerned, if: "all that the 'tyrannical' King and the tyrant properly so-called did was to put into political practice the philosopher' teaching (meanwhile

suitably prepared by intellectuals), then one can conclude that the philosophers' political advice has been essentially followed."¹¹⁶

This points towards the general relationship between political action and philosophical thought that is implicit throughout Kojève's thought. Political actions are, ultimately, guided by philosophy, so that history "appears as a continuous succession of political actions guided more or less directly by the evolution of *philosophy*."¹¹⁷ Philosophy, in turn, is guided by historical progress, that is work and action. If philosophy is to make judgements concerning politics (Strauss' initial problem) it must go beyond the project of merely understanding the given reality.¹¹⁸ The philosopher must be able to distinguish between the political reality and the idea that he has of it. For Plato this "going beyond" is an act of recollection (*anamnesis*) of the Forms (that which always is) which provide a standard for judgements. For Kojève, on the other hand this "going beyond" the given (historical present) as constituted as philosophical progress is dependent upon successful historical action.

For a "going beyond" or for philosophical *progress* toward Wisdom (=Truth) to occur, the political given (which *can* be negated) must actually be *negated* by Action (Struggle and Work), so that a new historical or political (that is to say human) reality be, first of all, *created* in and by this active negation of the already existing and philosophically understood real, and, then, *understood* within the framework of a new philosophy In short, if philosophers gave Statesmen no political "advice" at all . . . there would be no historical *progress*, and hence no History properly so-called. But if the Statesmen did not eventually *actualize* the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 173.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 174.

¹¹⁸ In the introduction to his essay "On Tyranny", Strauss writes the following concerning the problem modern social science has had addressing the question of tyranny. "Tyranny is a danger coeval with political life. The analysis of tyranny is therefore as old as political science itself. The analysis of tyranny that was made by the first political scientists was so clear, so comprehensive, and so unforgettably expressed that it was remembered and understood by generations which did not have any direct experience of actual tyranny. On the other hand, when we were brought face to face with tyranny—with a kind of tyranny that surpasses the boldest imagination of the most powerful thinkers of the past—our political science failed to recognize it." p. 22-23.

philosophically based “advice” by their day-to-day political action, there would be no philosophical *progress* (towards Wisdom or Truth) and hence no Philosophy in the strict sense of the term.¹¹⁹

Kojeve’s position here is clearly of the most radical historicism and it is upon that basis that he rejects Strauss’ condemnation of all forms of tyranny.

It would be equally *unreasonable* for the philosopher to condemn Tyranny *as such* ‘on principle,’ [that is in general] since a ‘tyranny’ can be ‘condemned’ or ‘justified’ only within the context of a concrete [specific] political situation. Generally speaking, it would be *unreasonable* if, solely in terms of his philosophy [as opposed to history], the philosopher were in any way whatsoever to criticize the concrete political measures taken by the statesman, regardless of whether or not he is a tyrant, especially when he takes them so that the very ideal advocated by the philosopher might be actualized at some future time.¹²⁰

It would appear, on the basis of this evidence, that Kojève is in fact open to Strauss’ initial charge that contemporary social sciences, due to the often unacknowledged and corrosive influence of historicism (both conscious and unconscious), are unable to make judgements concerning modern tyranny. It seems that Kojève’s radical and sophisticated brand of historicism is equally vulnerable to this charge as its more pedestrian advocates—a charge which, if anything, is supported by Kojève’s concluding statement in which he clearly disavows the possibility of making human judgements concerning tyranny.

In general terms, it is history itself that attends to “judging” (by “achievement” or “success”) the deeds of statesmen or tyrants, which they perform (consciously or not) as a function of the ideas of philosophers, adapted for practical purposes by intellectuals.¹²¹

However there is nothing in Kojève’s thought to support the position that Kojève (and thus all modern thought) is unable to ever make judgements concerning tyranny.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 174-175. It is indicative that Strauss, who rejects Kojève’s historicism, does in fact believe that there has been no philosophical *progress* since the Greeks.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 176.

The essence of Kojève's position is that it is not possible to condemn tyranny outright—in essence—on the basis of philosophy, because tyranny is necessary to the progress of philosophy and history.¹²² Without tyranny there is no philosophy, without philosophy there can be no philosophic criticism of tyranny, understood generally. This does not mean that it is not possible, within this understanding, to make political judgement on the basis of philosophy and history. To do this requires a philosophical understanding of history of the type that Kojève provides, and I have outlined in the process of this chapter. In the next chapter I will describe how the philosophical knowledge provided by Kojève can be used to understand ideology and technology and make rational judgements concerning our own political world.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 176

¹²² It remains, of course, possible to condemn tyranny outright on the basis of any number of theistic and pantheistic conceptions, which is ultimately what Plato, and ultimately Strauss do, in fact, do.

Chapter 5: Ideology, Technology and the UHS

The dual evolution of History, elaborated in the last chapter, culminates in Napoleon, (the World Historical Individual—as Hegel calls him—the individual whose actions affect the whole world) who actualized the ideas of the French Revolution, and Hegel, who recognizes the significance of Napoleon’s action. Here the idea of freedom is actualized in principle, because Napoleon put into practice a situation where in principle all people are free. History comes to an end when Hegel realizes the significance of Napoleon’s action and thus thought (Hegel) and action (Napoleon) come together in principle (Hegel’s explanation of Napoleon).¹²³

History is over in principle because it is now possible for the idea of freedom to be realized everywhere. Napoleon inaugurates the Universal (because it is everywhere and everyone is recognized) and Homogeneous (because for everyone to be recognized everywhere, everything must be the same, in terms of the idea of freedom) State (from *le stato* meaning static). If everyone, in principle, is recognized, there is no longer any need or action, courage or risk (which starts history) to acquire recognition, therefore nothing changes and the universal and homogeneous is static.

What does this state look like? What are its citizens like? Hegel’s description of this state is remarkable in its similarity to Plato’s *Republic*. As in the *Republic*, the Hegelian State founded upon the idea of freedom is comprised of a tripartite division—the State, civil society and family. Plato’s guardians are replaced by Hegel’s thinking class who run the State and embody both the universal and the particular. The warrior

¹²³The difference between Plato and Hegel can be seen in their relationship with their respective heroes. The actions of the Platonic hero (Socrates) are never explained by Plato. The philosophy of Plato cannot be divined literally from the dialogues but can only be discovered through reflection. It is reflection that brings together thought and action, Plato and Socrates. Hegel, on the other hand, explains the significance

auxiliary class is replaced by the business, moneymaking class that comprises civil society and embodies the universal. Finally, the desiring worker is replaced by the agrarian farmer who embodies the particular. The unity of the state is based in mutual recognition of the idea of freedom (human rights) and thus is the actualization of the idea of justice, because everyone agrees on the nature of justice.

Hegel's philosophy of history, as interpreted by Kojève, throws light upon the drama of the *Republic*. Socrates, the pseudo-slave, is seeking to gain his freedom from Polemarchus (pseudo-master) through the use of speech (reason). The problem is that the ideal city in which the freedom of the philosopher is guaranteed is the worst of possible regimes because, in the name of civic virtue, it corrupts the citizens and destroys private virtue. The ideal city can only come about through the transformation of citizens into subjects. Within the cyclical time consciousness of classical metaphysics, the slave cannot justify overthrowing the master. The best the philosopher can do is to justify his existence to the city, achieve limited protection, and pursue philosophy, and thus virtue. But this can only be private virtue.

Philosophy in history, however, of which Kojève-Hegel is the culmination, seeks to transform the world via the political intellectual. Machiavelli, by teaching that power is superior to wisdom and that virtue is determined by success (that is, by history), teaches wisdom to be powerful. In advising the Prince that it is better to be feared than to be loved, he de-eroticizes politics. The tyrant who can conquer nature in himself is better able to conquer nature (*fortuna*) in the world. This leads the slave to use his greatest tool

of his hero's (Napoleon) actions. Thought and action, Hegel and Napoleon, are brought together in the world.

(reason) to actively transform the world and, ultimately, to realize his freedom—culminating in Hegel's recognition of the significance of Napoleon's actions.¹²⁴

With Kojève's Hegel, however, history is over and the idea of freedom realized, only in principle. So what are principles? Principles are ideas and ideals and are not real and actual. By transforming our ideas into ideals or values we can transform the real and actual so that it is made to conform to our principles. Thus principles have to do with possibility, which in this instance means that it is *possible* for everyone, everywhere to be free; it does not mean that they are, *in fact*, free. For history to be over in practice the world must be brought in line with the idea of freedom.

The question remains: whose idea of freedom will rule the world? Hegel thus gives birth to modern ideologies that actively seek to transform the whole world in the name of their understanding of freedom. These ideologies developed out of the battle cry of the French Revolution (which realized the idea of freedom in thought): *liberté, égalité, fraternité*. These slogans developed into our modern ideologies of liberalism, marxism and fascism. The liberal understands freedom in terms of the freedom of the individual (understood in terms of property rights and ultimately the right of capital); the marxist in terms of freedom of the group (understood in terms of the disenfranchised); and the fascist in terms of freedom of the tribe (understood in terms of race).

These ideologies can be interpreted by applying Plato's criticism of ideology in the *Republic*. At the root of the satirical dystopian reading of Book V is the idea that public affairs should never be governed by a private understanding of the soul, but rather

¹²⁴ According to Kojève this process of the slave transforming the world through the cunning of reason has been occurring since the establishment of masters and slaves. What changes with the modern period (of which Machiavelli is an early example) is that the intellectual slave becomes conscious of the transformative power of reason and begins to develop modern science, which, in the end, emancipates him.

that the best form of public organization is that which allows people to meet in public, to compare and contrast their experiences in order to understand what they are fit for and how they should live. Formation of the UHS, along the lines of ideology, requires that everyone's experiences be common. The formation of the city along the lines of a particular (private) formation of virtue destroys the possibility of virtue. Furthermore, these three ideologies correspond not only with the slogan of the French Revolution but also with the Hegelian division of the State, which in turn corresponds with the Platonic tripartite division of the soul and the City. Fascism corresponds with the agrarian family and the particular, liberalism with the business class and civil society, while marxism represents the thinking class and the State. Just as the wars of the crusades were over whose interpretation of God was true, the wars of the twentieth century had a religious flavour as people fought over whose interpretation of freedom should serve as the foundation of Universal rights and the Universal and Homogeneous State.¹²⁵

The twentieth century has demonstrated that none of these ideologies, in corresponding to parts of the Hegelian system, are representative of the whole; complete and absolute knowledge. While history may have been driven by the idea of freedom, at the end of history it is not freedom that drives the world, but rather that which creates the possibility of freedom in the world—technology. History has ended because it is possible for everyone, everywhere in the world, to be free and thus there is no longer a necessary

¹²⁵By using the terminology of the UHS I am implicitly using the language of liberalism and marxism. Fascism, by identifying freedom with a specific group (the tribe), particularizes politics, invigorates the family (as the foundation of the tribe distinction), aestheticizes politics and promotes action, honour and recognition. The fascist tries to preserve the politics of the master in the modern age. The irony is the individual remains a slave. Under fascism it is not the individual hero who is recognized but rather the race as a whole. The Fascist State is homogeneous without being universal.

(natural) need of masters and slaves.¹²⁶ Since it is the power of technology that emancipates human beings and allows for the realization of freedom, then it must be technology that rules the world if freedom is to be actualized. The idea of freedom carries the flag but technology drives the engine, creates (or destroys) the horizons, and defines the standards.

Technology, as commentators as diverse as Martin Heidegger, Jacques Ellul and George Grant have noted is not a neutral object.¹²⁷ It is an autonomous value, which creates the standards needed to reinforce its own autonomy. The standard of a technological world is always efficiency—and not efficiency towards this or that end, as the ideologues would proclaim (or those who believe that all there is, is ideology)—but rather efficiency-towards-efficiency. This is the standard that ultimately will decide which ideology, and whose idea of freedom, bears the mantle of the global state. The question cannot be decided any other way, short of brute force (which itself will be decided technologically).

Technological globalization, the flight of the gods and the triumph of history—in short the entire process of modernity—has left us in a position of moral uncertainty. We are unable to confront technological progress on the grounds of justice or morality because our understanding of justice and morality are dependent upon our understanding

¹²⁶ Aristotle argued that slavery is natural because it creates the leisure necessary for the exercise of politics. While particular slaves may only be slaves due to convention, because they had the misfortune to lose a war, slavery itself is natural because without it there would be no *polis*, no politics and thus no *politikon zoon*. Aristotle also elucidated the conditions under which slavery could be abolished. "For suppose that every tool we had could perform its task, either at our bidding or itself perceiving the need, and if—like the statues made by Daedalus or the tripods of Hephaestus, of which the poet says that 'self-moved they enter the assembly of the gods'—shuttles in a loom could fly to and fro and a plucker play a lyre of their accord, then mastercraftsmen would have no need of servants nor masters of slaves." Aristotle, *The Politics*, tr. T.A. Sinclair, London: Penguin Books, 1981, p. 65.

¹²⁷ See Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. William Lovitt, New York: Harper & Row, 1977. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, tr. John Wilkinson, New York:

of technology. Our modern understandings, insofar as they are modern, come from the same account of reason (Hobbes' reckoning with consequences) that has produced modern science and technology. Presupposing the same rationality, we are unable to step outside reason in order to make judgements, since our entire understanding of justice is based upon modern reason.

Expressed another way, the manner in which technology is implemented in everyday life is determined by politics, understood generally. Modern politics is shaped by an understanding of society that is derived from the same account of reason that developed technology. Modern politics makes rational choices based upon what is known about a given situation. Since what is known is determined by technological instruments, the choice in how to use technology is always technological and thus there is only one use for technology and the choice is not made by humans but determined by the form. As George Grant states:

... when we seek to elucidate the standards of human good (or in contemporary language 'the values') by which particular techniques can be judged, we do so within modern ways of thought and belief. But from the very beginnings of modern thought the new natural science and the new moral science developed together in mutual interdependence so that the fundamental assumptions of each were formulated in the light of the other.¹²⁸

Similarly, the progress of History destroys moral standards because whatever morality is; it is always in eternal identity with itself. It is defined by pre-existing standards based upon an understanding of Nature, however defined. History, however, is always in a process of becoming what it is not. History is thus essentially amoral and human beings, to the extent that they are aware of history and thus of their own

Vintage Books, 1964. George Grant *Technology and Justice*, Toronto: Anansi Press, 1986 and *Technology and Empire*, Toronto: Anansi Press, 1969.

historicity, are equally amoral. The process of History is the progressive revelation of the world through the work of the slave. The “is” of the historical present is determined by the successful process of work. The standards of History, therefore, are determined by whatever combination of social networks and techniques are currently successful in revealing that specific historical world.

The standard of the end of history can only be that which has allowed the slaves to revolt against their masters and thus complete history by becoming satisfied—that is, technology. In evaluating modern ideologies we have no recourse to vague concepts such as universal human rights and the value and sanctity of life. Philosophically speaking, all that matters is the truth. The truth, whether understood in terms of Being or Becoming, is and always has been determined by what is. In our “historical” world what is, is determined by success. To wish, envision or otherwise dream, does not change this fundamental reality. The question is merely under which ideology does technology operate most efficiently. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the failure of fascism in Europe indicate that, for the time being anyway, liberalism is the most efficient of ideologies.¹²⁹ Liberalism, however, by basing freedom upon the historical and

¹²⁸ Grant, George. “In Defense of North America”, in *Technology and Empire*, p. 32.

¹²⁹ While Goebbels may have believed that: “National Socialism understood how to take the soulless framework of technology and fill it with the rhythm and hot impulses of our time”, the historical facts demonstrate the inefficiency of Nazi science. As Jeffrey Herf points out in his book *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p. 201-202. “The Nazis were more successful at preserving their ideological souls than the engineers were at imposing pragmatism on the German dictatorship. The examples of lack of coordination of political ends with technical requirements are impressive. The most spectacular, of course, was the damage done to German nuclear physics by the doctrine of ‘Aryan physics.’ But German technical advance was hindered in less visible ways as well. The combination of appointments based on ideological rather than scientific and technical criteria with bureaucratic conflicts over jurisdiction hindered technical innovation and research. For instance, the number of patents actually declined from the levels at the end of the Weimar Republic. This was the case even in chemistry, in which twice as many patents were awarded in 1932 as in any of the years from 1933 to 1937. Todt’s program of highway construction along with the advances associated with the four-year plan were based on research that took place before 1933. Hitler’s view that innovation was the outcome of the creative forces slumbering within the German soul was hardly

conventional notion of property rights and capital, remains a partial association (ideology) and cannot represent the form of the true, technological Universal and Homogeneous State.

Identification of liberalism as the most efficient of ideologies does not resolve the problem that human beings living in our time are left without a grounded moral position from which they confront the world. Jose Ortega y Gasset, in his book *The Revolt of the Masses*, identified this fearsome problem resulting from the overthrow of the master by the slave as, "the radical demoralization of humanity."

Ortega, in attempting to come to terms with this problem, asked the question "who rules in the world?" In identifying this modern problem, Ortega points out that,

from the XVIth century, humanity has entered on a vast unifying process, which in our days has reached its furthest limits. There is now no portion of humanity living apart -- no islands of human existence. Consequently, from that century on, it may be said that whoever rules the world does, in fact, exercise authoritative influence over the whole of it.¹³⁰

The problem for Ortega was that the time had been reached when Europe was no longer sure it ruled in the world. In this situation of crisis Ortega posed the following as the critical question of his time. "Who is going to succeed Europe in ruling over the world? But is it so sure that anyone is going to succeed her? And if no one, what then is going to happen?"¹³¹

conductive to the requirements of scientific and technical research. The Nazis accumulated a large number of weapons, but their qualitative technical backwardness in such crucial areas as torpedoes, radar, communications, air defense, and airplane design became apparent during World War II.

¹³⁰Ortega y Gasset, Jose. *The Revolt of the Masses*. New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1932, p. 125-126. While Ortega is describing the inter-war period the corollary with globalization is obvious.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 129.

In order to understand the significance of these questions we must first understand what Ortega means by “rule”. By “rule” he does not mean the exercise of material power, but rather that the,

stable, normal relation amongst men which is known as ‘rule’ *never rests on force*; on the contrary, it is because a man or group of men exercise command that they have at their disposition that social apparatus or machinery known as ‘force’ . . . It is necessary to distinguish between a process of aggression and a state of rule. Rule is the normal exercise of authority, and is always based on public opinion, to-day as a thousand years ago, amongst the English as amongst the bushmen.¹³²

The radical demoralization of humanity is occurring because we may have reached a point in which no one “rules”, in which there is no public (common) opinion upon which rule may be based. “A society divided into discordant groups, with their forces of opinion canceling one another out, leaves no room for a ruling power to be constituted. And as ‘nature abhors a vacuum’ the empty space left by the absence of public opinion is filled by brute force.”¹³³

This is the problem of ideology and the story of the twentieth century. Western civilization divided along ideological lines had no concrete foundation for public opinion: into this vacuum entered brute force, two world wars, and a succession of regional ones and untold millions of deaths. As modernity is globalized we are reconfronted with the conflicts at the end of western civilization on a global scale. While the world wars of the twentieth century were fought around the planet despite their names, they remained essentially the battles of western powers. The global wars of the twenty-first century will involve global powers, multiplying the capacity for destruction an infinite number of

¹³²Ibid., p. 126.

¹³³Ibid., p. 127.

times. As the sides are drawn can we return to Ortega and his solution to the moral crisis of Europe as a solution to the moral crisis of the globe?

Ortega argued that we need to reinvent the State or we'll stagnate and die. Ortega defines the State-principle as "the movement which tends to annihilate the social forms of internal [natural] existence, and to substitute for them a social form adequate to the new life, lived externally [history]." ¹³⁴ The State is the political unit that results from the transformation of nature into history. The State is the political form of the unifying force of modernity. As Ortega states:

That is the State. Not a thing, but a movement. The State is at every moment something which *comes from* and *goes to* At every hour it is going beyond what seemed to be the material principle of its unity. This is the *terminus ad quem*, the true State, whose unity consists precisely in superseding any given unity. When there is a stoppage of that impulse towards something further on, the State automatically succumbs, and the unity which previously existed, and seemed to be its physical foundation—race, language, natural frontier—becomes useless; the State breaks up, is dispersed, atomized. ¹³⁵

The moral crisis results when the State can no longer further the impulse towards unification and thus begins to break apart, turning towards the past and becoming naturalized and barbarized. This is the moral crisis that Ortega sees in Europe in the thirties. His solution is to solve the moral crisis by giving the people something to do, to continue the universalization that is inherent in the formation of the State by transforming the principle of Europe, into a literal Europe, the formation of a "United States of Europe, the plurality of Europe substituted by its formal unity." ¹³⁶

Seventy years later we remain confronted with this problem of moral decay and political indecisiveness. We have not satisfactorily dealt with the problems associated

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 155.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 163.

with the underside of modernity: the death of God and the demoralization of humanity. These problems require an “ideal” tyranny that will act in the name of the unity of the State. It is necessary to replace God with the State founded upon the Idea of the Universal Citizen and against any and all partial, cultural and religious associations. Those associations that do not conform to the demands of the State and universal citizenry should be undermined and eliminated as efficiently as possible

In Canada, and throughout the West, one of the prevailing political phenomena of the “fin de siècle” is identity politics and the encounter between group and individual rights. In many cases the phenomenon arises from the fact that the Universal and Homogeneous State is insufficiently established and many individuals, and categories of individuals, have been denied citizenship rights, on the basis of their group (particular) traits. The resolution of this contradiction is inherent in the Idea of the Universal State. To achieve the true UHS, all citizens, without exception, have to enjoy equal rights regardless of race, creed, sex, social preferences, etc. (this list is limited only by our ability to identify particular traits). However, when identity demands go beyond “equal” rights towards recognition of “group” rights—that is recognition of difference—then the modern spirit demands that these identity claims be opposed. It is the recognition of difference that provided the basis for the denial of citizen rights in the first place. Conflict between group and individual rights exists only insofar as a group demands special “recognition” of its innate “difference”. There is no such thing as “proper” or “safe” recognition of group differences. Politics conducted on the basis of group differences is always reducible to power while politics conducted on the basis of

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 139.

individual citizens is reducible only to dialogue. This is the ideal that the Universal and Homogeneous State embodies.

Similarly, a large proportion of international security threats (fundamentalism, global activism, revolutionary terrorism) result not from the failure of the UHS as a concept, but rather the failure to achieve a truly universal and homogeneous State. For this to occur requires either inclusion (in which case freedom would have to be redefined on something other than capital rights) or total and permanent exclusion (on the basis of technological force). These issues are further complicated by the existence of different cultural heritages (Islam, Hindi, Confucianism etc.). The UHS, as a model, is a result of the secularization of classical and Christian theology. It is altogether possible that the secularization, modernization and technologization of other theologies would result in a different Idea of the State that would replace God. This presents a serious problem to be considered. Does technology operate differently outside the western context? For the purpose of this paper, however, it is necessary to restrict the question to western thought.

The most profound western objection to the UHS, as expressed by Strauss, is that historicism, of the type that Kojève employs, has resulted in this moral crisis. "Syntheses effect miracles. Kojève's or Hegel's synthesis of classical and Biblical morality effects the miracle of producing an amazingly lax morality out of two moralities both of which made very strict demands on self-restraint."¹³⁷

He goes on to make the following statement, perhaps his most important philosophical criticism of Kojève and the modern tradition.

It [the modern tradition] came into being through a conscious break with the strict moral demands made by both the Bible and classical philosophy; those demands were explicitly rejected as too strict. Hegel's moral or

¹³⁷ *On Tyranny*, p. 191.

political teaching is indeed a synthesis: it is a synthesis of Socratic and Machiavellian or Hobbian politics. Kojève knows as well as anyone living that Hegel's fundamental teaching regarding master and slave is based on Hobbes' doctrine of the state of nature. If Hobbes's doctrine of the state of nature is abandoned *en pleine connaissance de cause* (as indeed it should be abandoned), Hegel's fundamental teaching will lose the evidence which it apparently still possesses for Kojève. Hegel's teaching is much more sophisticated than Hobbes', but it is as much a construction as the latter. Both doctrines construct human society by starting from the untrue assumption that man as man is thinkable as a being that lacks awareness of sacred restraints or as a being that is guided by nothing but a desire for recognition.¹³⁸

I have outlined Plato's objections to the UHS in the two chapters devoted to his dialogues. Ultimately he, like Strauss, objects on the basis of human nature. The creation of the perfect city is unjust not merely because its foundation is improbable (the philosopher and the king must coincide by chance) and ultimately unsustainable (due to the impossibility of mastering chance absolutely, that is dominate nature); or that it requires unspeakable deeds (invitation to incest, banishment of all adults from the city). It is also unjust because the absolute rule of reason require that everyone's experiences be the same and—because experience is the foundation of the divided line by which the philosopher ascends towards the Good to gain knowledge of the Forms—to limit experience, limits knowledge of the Forms and thus limits the Good.

These are powerful objections, objections that carry the full weight of years of tradition and common sense. Ultimately, however, the words of Plato, though appealing and perhaps resonating with my own nature, speak of a reality that is not my own and which is beyond reason. Forced to choose between an unnamed and undefined abstraction (however seemingly real) and the power of reason, I have to choose reason. Ideas like the order of the cosmos, the good by nature, or eternal Being, ultimately

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 192.

contain little or no substance. Similarly I am surprised by Strauss' assertion that man is unthinkable as a being who lacks awareness of sacred restraints. Perhaps it is the same shock that Strauss expresses when confronted by "the more than Machiavellian bluntness with which Kojève speaks of such terrible things as atheism and tyranny and takes them for granted."¹³⁹ Hearing the words "sacred restraint" I am forced to conclude that Strauss is speaking of a world that is essentially "other".

Furthermore, the terrible and shocking deeds that Plato saw as required for the establishment of the perfect city either don't seem so shocking anymore (the political equality of women) or so terrible (the elimination of the family). This is not to say that terrible things have not been done in the name of the UHS (the "reign of terror" and countless subsequent imitators, for example); but they have already been done and, so long as they have been successful in eliminating the legacy of tradition, need not be repeated.

Finally, the question turns to whether the citizens of the UHS will be happy, satisfied, content etc. The question here can be divided into the three types of humans inhabiting the State: the tyrant, the philosopher and the many. We have already seen how the tyrant is essentially dissatisfied with the classical State. Both Alcibiades and Hiero are unable to find satisfaction in, nor are they able to give up, tyranny. At the cusp of the modern age, Machiavelli promises the tyrant satisfaction through active wisdom. Kojève's account of history demonstrates that this satisfaction only occurred in the form of Napoleon-Hegel, that is, in the form of Hegel becoming conscious of the significance of Napoleon's action. For a human person acting as a tyrant to be satisfied, he must also be a philosopher who is aware of the significance of his own actions. In any case this

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

question is irrelevant because the formation of the UHS precludes the domination of a single, personified tyrant (or ideology or any form of particular association), in favour of the true tyrant of modern times, technology. Under the rule of technology, judgement is the role of the citizen.

The criticism generally laid against the citizens of the theoretical UHS is that they would be Nietzsche's "last men"—latecomers with nothing left to do or say. As Hannah Arendt concluded in her own study of the human activities of labour, work and action: "What we are confronted with is the prospect of a society of laborers without labor, that is, without the only activity left to them. Surely, nothing could be worse."¹⁴⁰

However it appears that this criticism of the universal citizen as the person with nothing left to do is only derogatory from a historical perspective, a perspective the classics appear to disavow. The argument that the person with nothing to do (i.e. the person in possession of leisure) will be dissatisfied is contrary to the classical view of aristocratic virtue and the aristocrat who never has anything "to do" and at his highest merely contemplates nature and the good.

There is no reason why the "last man" could not contemplate as well, should he so choose. Furthermore, the fact that the "last man" cannot engage in politics as defined historically does not mean that he cannot participate in post-historical politics, that is in discussion or dialogue. Ultimately, however, it is not the "last man" who complains of his existence, for why would a slave complain about being freed from slavery? It is the artist, the thinker—in short the philosopher—who imagine the dissatisfaction of those who seem content with mere entertainment, and who base the dissatisfaction of the many upon their own dissatisfaction.

In the end, the question of the satisfaction of the "last man" is only relevant from the perspective of security and stability, because their actual satisfaction has been precluded from the beginning. Only the philosopher could be satisfied by the UHS, because it is built upon principles that only a philosopher would ever accept—self-consciousness as ultimate value. The practical question of the "last man" is simply whether they are dangerous or not. Yet there is little evidence that the danger presented by the rebellion of "japanized man" is serious.

The key question is whether the philosopher can be satisfied by the UHS. Argument that the philosopher is dissatisfied is based upon the argument that the end of history represents the end of philosophy. This possibility is based upon two separate and plausible suppositions. 1) That the domination of nature presupposed by technology and the UHS will eradicate the essential opposition between subject and object necessary to philosophy. 2) The creation of an absolute State is predicated upon the elimination of opposition. Since it is the nature of philosophy to question everything, it is supposed that the philosopher and the UHS will inevitably come into conflict with the end result (due to the technological apparatus of the State) the destruction of the philosopher, and thus the destruction of the ultimate Good of the State.

The first possibility can be addressed by the simple observation that the classic (master's) understanding of nature has always been mediated by the product of the work of the Slave (leisure). Thus the contemplation of nature (including politics, which they considered natural) has really been the contemplation of leisure produced by work. This can still be done under conditions of absolute leisure resulting from the domination of

¹⁴⁰ Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1958. P. 5.

nature.¹⁴¹ Philosophy can be maintained by shifting the object of thought from nature (which was an error in any case) to technology. Philosophy thus progresses from the philosophers of nature, to philosophers of history to philosophers of technology—that is scientists, or perhaps philosophers of science.

The possibility of philosophy reconstituting itself as philosophy of technology represents the resolution to the second possibility. For the UHS to become Universal and Homogeneous in actuality instead of simply in principle, it must become increasingly perfect. For this to occur the State will have to undergo a process of more or less continuous questioning of the type that philosophy can best contribute, provided only that it affirm the basic value of the State—that is, universal citizenship based upon the technological domination of Nature. The former has been the value of all philosophy since the time of Socrates, while the affirmation of the latter it is a small price indeed.

The reaction against the UHS by modern philosophers is part of a visceral reaction against the horrors that have been implemented by charlatans and criminals who either misinterpreted the meaning of modernity (marxism), attempted to infuse modernity with the spirit of the volk (fascism), or used the power of technology for their own aggrandizement (liberalism). It is the confusion between totalitarian and universalistic visions. The reality is that the totalizing potential of technology can always be infused, at least for a time, with the spirit of particular interests (however defined) at the cost of all others. The resolution is for the philosopher, who is most immune to these errors, to participate as much as possible in the formation of government. The answer is not to

¹⁴¹ The domination and transformation of Nature is the domination and transformation of both human and non-human nature, that is, the transformation of both the object of thought and the subject that thinks. This would imply the possibility that the philosopher could lose the ability to philosophize. However, so long as the domination of human nature does not include biological manipulation, this domination remains of a

mediate the tyrant and prevent him from tyrannical action. but rather to advise (or perhaps to become) the tyrant so that the terrible errors of the twentieth century need not be repeated.

Confronted with the tension between civilization and culture, there is every reason for the philosopher to opt for civilization rather than national, traditional or group identity. There is no possibility of preserving micro cultures outside of the technological system. Furthermore, the attempt to solve the moral emptiness and industrial ugliness of modern technological society by utilizing technology in ways that conform with cultural spirit (the aesthetic state of Nazism), is highly contradictory, dangerous and ultimately destructive.

In this context there simply is no choice. To create a human, free, future requires the formation of the Universal and Homogeneous State run along the principles of technology and efficiency, justified through propaganda and illusion. Plato gives the most profound criticism of modernity and the UHS in his *Republic*. However, history does not allow us to opt for the Platonic position. The invention of a new kind of space (the State) has resulted in a new kind of time (history) which destroys the natural world and transforms the virtue of the tyrant (success) and the virtue of the philosopher (truth, or what is) into a formal unity found in the successful implementation of the real (UHS). The logic of technology tells us that the alternative to universalization and homogeneity is barbarism. Those who seek to conform may be able to guide globalization. Confronting it leads to the dangerous, and potentially fascistic, realm of aesthetic politics.

social variety. In this case, the philosopher is simply confronted with the problem philosophy has always been confronted with, overcoming the limitations of conventional prejudices.

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