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8 Eros in the *Republic*

The *Republic* repeatedly treats eros as if it were unruly or bad and ought to be remade to be more congenial to good government. The illegality of choosing a mate for oneself, compulsory coed exercising in the nude, the imposition of eugenically determined match making, and the enforced discipline of having many sexual partners but no single partner to call "one's own" are decidedly strange institutions. Such attempts to coerce and mold eros to fit abstract justice imply a negative judgment about the political effects of ordinary erotic desire that is not in harmony with the liberated views about love and sex prevalent in most liberal democracies today. Nor are the coercive and legalistic stances toward sexual unions taken in the *Republic* and other political dialogues (e.g., *Pol.* 310bff.) in harmony with certain other dialogues of Plato, namely, the "erotic"[1] dialogues, which literally sing the praises of eros: in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, eros is said to lead upward to pure beauty and goodness. In fact, the coercive parts of the *Republic* are not even in harmony with other parts of the *Republic* itself, for – just after the erotic regimen has been legally imposed – there follows a disquisition on eros that reads like a *Symposium* in miniature, with a profligate,

[1] English "eros" in this essay translates the Greek "*erōs*," which in the classical period referred primarily to passionate love or strong lust – with the proviso that the object need not be a human being, e.g., lust for learning in Plato. Classical *erōs* thus covered a much broader range than English eros (usually confined to sexual desire), but the fact that modern psychology has sometimes increased the range of eros by using it to mean sublimated desire for a multiplicity of objects justifies substituting the English term without italics. Two Greek passions that contrast with eros in this essay, *thumos* (spiritedness) and *philia* (familial affection and friendship), will initially be italicized but will lose their italics as their meanings emerge from the discussion.

promiscuous eros providing humanity's primary mode of access to the Forms.

This disparity is not the only sign of ambivalence toward eros in the *Republic*. The famous tripartite division of the soul introduced in the *Republic*, Book 4, is an insult to eros when considered in the context of the *Symposium*'s ladder of love. The tripartite division relegates eros to the lowest part of the soul, lumping eros together with other irrational desires, such as hunger and thirst (439d). All these desires, including eros, are said to be deaf to reason, unruly until policed by *thumos*, that is, the proud irascible "spirited" part (which can at least listen to reason). But in the erotic dialogues, and elsewhere in the *Republic* itself, reason and eros have a synergistic relationship. Most mysterious of all is the fact that elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, Socrates the exemplary philosopher is characterized as eros incarnate (e.g., *Tht*. 169c). By contrast eros is so corrupting in the *Republic*, Book 9, that the tyrannical man is characterized as eros incarnate. Eros is said to be the tyrant within the tyrant.

Harmonizing the *Republic* with the erotic dialogues and with itself involves sorting out the separate contributions of eros and *thumos*. Why should the tyrant be considered predominantly erotic – particularly in view of the fact that the *Republic* introduces the distinction between *thumos* and desire? Plato could have made *thumos* the chief characteristic of the tyrant if he had wanted to reserve eros for the chief characteristic of the philosopher: tyrants are characterized by pride and vengefulness (*thumos*) at least as much as they are characterized by acquisitiveness and luxuriousness (desire). Why make eros, and not *thumos*, guilty by association with tyranny? And what is the relationship between eros and that other prominent love believed to hold both families and cities together: *philia*, a love closely associated with *thumos*? How, more generally, is the strangeness of the *Republic*'s treatment of eros to be understood?

1. TENSION BETWEEN LOVE AND POLITICS?

Sexual communism and coed nudity in particular cry out for explanation. In the *Republic*'s regimen, natural attraction between lovers and beloveds must give way to a lottery system that ostensibly matches partners randomly and equally but in reality is a rigged lottery controlled by master eugenicists who make sure that individuals

get matched with one another in keeping with the city's need for genetically superior citizens rather than with the individual's need for love or fulfillment. The couplings are monogamous only in the sense that they are serially monogamous. The private family based on love and affection is abolished, and the fundamental law against incest is breached, at least insofar as blue bloodlines are sometimes useful for producing better, swifter, smarter – if also more fragile and highstrung – thoroughbreds. Attributing these utopian – or dystopian – arrangements to a tension between love and politics has been a fruitful and influential interpretive strategy. An abbreviated chain of the reasoning through which certain types of love come into conflict with political justice might be the following: because private property is a source of injustice, communism of property is a necessity for the best regime. But inanimate property is not the only thing we call "ours": whatever we desire, including especially sexual partners such as spouses as well as the children produced through desire, we tend to consider as belonging to ourselves. Lest such "possessions" become sources of injustice (e.g., through favoritism and nepotism), the perfect regime would require that sexual partners and children, too, must be held in common (461e–462c; 464c–e). But then those desires that impel us toward some sexual partners and not others, as well as the possessiveness that drives us to hold on to them once we have them, must be remade to permit holding them in common – if legal arrangements can be found that will do so.

According to various interpretations based on the tension between love and politics, human nature and its passions are at odds with the imposition of communism, especially sexual communism.[2] The institution of sexual communism, on such "tension" readings, would be conceivable only as (at best) a thought-experiment that ignored or abstracted from the passions that would ordinarily lead couples to rebel against the system and establish their own secret

[2] Interpretations based on the tension between love and politics go back to Aristotle's *Politics* (2.1–5), which finds *philia*, rather than eros, incompatible with communism (see the subsequent discussion). "Tension" interpretations received a distinctively modern rendering at the hands of Leo Strauss, who thought that the *Republic* "abstracts from the body and from eros" (Strauss 1964, p. 138). Although tension interpretations can be derived from Strauss' overall hermeneutic approach, they are separable from that approach and are therefore available to scholars who have reservations about it. The general notion of "abstraction from eros" raises questions of how and with what aim the *Republic* abstracts from eros.

private realm, falling in love and producing the seedbed of a new family where families had been abolished. Coed nudity – that second strange institution – would likewise (on a "tension" reading) be possible only in the dialogic fiction, impossible in real life because real eros would be unable to handle the salacious sights without rearing its head, so to speak. This is certainly the way Allan Bloom in his commentary on the *Republic* understood the matter:

> Men can be naked together because it is relatively easy to desexualize their relations with one another; but the preservation of the city requires the mutual attraction of men and women. The city can forbid homosexual relations. . . . But it cannot forbid heterosexual relations, and men and women could hardly be expected to be above attraction to one another at any particular moment. Hence the purpose of the gymnasia would be subverted. . . . This is part of Socrates' attempt . . . to act as though [eros] made no demands that cannot conform to the public life of the city. Once more, Socrates "forgets" the body. . . . [3]

Bloom assumes that the Greek homosexual attractions that were partly cultural in origin were susceptible of being modified by or for cultural institutions such as public nudity. Cultural or legal remedies can deeroticize relations between certain classes of citizens. This is a very big assumption and one that merits serious attention. For Bloom, however, there are natural limits to the efficacy of legal and cultural remedies. Heterosexual attraction is more difficult to suppress than homosexual attraction for two implicit reasons, both of which concern natural necessity: (1) human communities need heterosexual eros for replenishing the stock of citizens (a purposive claim of human nature on us), and (2) heterosexual attraction is so natural in so many people – it just springs up at the sight of a naked body – that its advent would destroy or make a mockery of the naked exercises (because eros is an irresistible efficient cause or "push," irrespective of purposiveness). The two different meanings of natural necessity implied in this reasoning, however, yield two very different results. Communities that were not underpopulated could temporarily ignore (1) and practice coed nudity for some time. If (2) is true, however, the coed nudity would be ruined practically on the first day. But as Natalie Bluestone in her criticism of Bloom

[3] Bloom 1991 [1968], p. 382. We can hear Strauss' phrase "abstracting from the body and eros" in Bloom's "forgetting the body."

points out, both males and females can and have exercised control in situations of coed nudity. Bluestone puts it pungently: "In the vaudeville review *Oh! Calcutta*, where nightly nude dancing of men and women was a theatrical spectacle, just such control was exercised for hundreds of performances. I cannot vouch for the rehearsals, of course."[4] One could multiply examples: men and women in coed nudist colonies and camps, for instance, coexist without eros falling upon them and destroying their volleyball games.

But if it is not the case that the institution of coed nudity is rendered impossible by eros, then it is also not the case that this part of the *Republic* simply ignores human passions or abstracts from them. Rather, we should follow up Bloom's other point that legal or cultural remedies can be found to deeroticize (partially or fully) relations among classes of citizens: Socrates could be intending to *use* nudity and communism to curb and control sexual love. If the nudity and serial relationships are intended to be corrosive of sexual shame and possessive attachment, respectively, then the passionate intensity and mystery that build up around sexual love as a result of these can be expected to be diminished. Elsewhere in Book 5, too, the guardians' eros seems meek and bovinely complacent,[5] all too easily at the beck and call of the regime. Why do they not rebel and choose the partner they desire – engaging in sex as an act of political rebellion, like the protagonists of Orwell's *1984*? Instead of attributing, with Bloom, this meekness to the fictional thought-experiment, we might consider whether the meekness is not the result of Socrates' instituting measures that themselves force eros into a meek and bovine mold. It would be in keeping with the erotic dialogues if Socrates intended for his guardians to expend only so much erotic attention on marriage and child production as was strictly necessary, while channeling the rest of their erotic energies into higher loves (e.g., 485d), such as their philosophical education.

Before pursuing this possibility, this juncture might be an appropriate moment to meet a significant objection to the foregoing: namely, the claim that Book 5 of the *Republic* is not about eros at all. Instead, Book 5 might seem to be principally about the family and

[4] Bluestone 1987, p. 220.

[5] Compare the overtones of herds and animals at *Republic* 451c–d, 459a–b, 460c–d, 466c.

about female equality, with love and sex being red herrings chased by modern readers. Clearly, Book 5 is about marriage and what becomes of it in the new regime: Polemarchus and Adeimantus ask to hear more about how the communism of property will be extended to include communism of women and children, too. But it might be a merely modern assumption that marriage necessarily entails eros. Historically, in Athens and many Greek cities, males seem to have had erotic experiences outside their marriages. The marriages themselves were mostly arranged rather than love matches. It might be anachronistic to say that replacing natural attraction between lover and beloved with a eugenics regime matching citizens who can produce good offspring is unnatural or unconventional, since natural attraction played a much smaller role in making ordinary Greek marriages successful than did the production of legal offspring. The *Republic* does not depart as violently from Greek contemporary practice as modern sensibility might assume. Add to these historical considerations Plato's disdainful attitude toward child production found in the erotic dialogues (e.g., *Smp*. 208e–209e; *Phdr*. 250e–251a), and it becomes plausible that Plato simply did not conceive of marriage and family as being especially erotic. Precisely because the elite philosophic life is so erotic for Plato, it follows that the household life of the masses is less so.

This strong objection is almost certainly a mistake. With regard to its historical component, plenty of evidence exists to show that Greeks assumed marriages with erotic content.[6] The declared purpose of Socrates' eugenically arranged marriages is to prevent "erotic necessities" from joining the wrong people (458d–e). Hence marriage – at least as redefined by Socrates – clearly concerns eros in the assumptions of the discourse itself. The reader need not be hot-blooded him- or herself to perceive the sexual interest behind the young interlocutors' question of how the guardians will hold their women and children in common (449c). Behind that question lies, at the very least, the thought: How will it be possible when everyone wants his own? Most probably, the young men have thought further and anticipate the pleasures that would await them if they were guardians: Now I can sleep with whomever I want – they're all mine! They do not initially appreciate the full implication of

[6] See Redfield 2003, pp. 48–54, and Calame 1999, pp. 116–29.

sexual communism: namely, that just as all the women belong to every man, so all the men belong to every woman. The addition of "and children" in the communism of women and children, and the issue of how children will be brought up (449d), make it clear that eros is not the only love under consideration in Book 5. Marriage is a *philia* relationship at least as much as it is an erotic relationship. Crucially, *philia* wants exclusive property rights as much as – perhaps much more than – eros does. As a preliminary way of distinguishing these two loves, we can say that nothing in Book 5 contradicts the notion that eros is an intense, questing passion, while *philia* is an enduring, lower-key passion: eros acquires but *philia* maintains.[7] *Philia* is a feeling of attachment to what one already possesses (or once possessed), that is, a love of one's own.[8] In lieu of discussing *philia* thematically, however, the *Republic* focuses attention directly on "one's own" (*oikeion*). We will subsequently argue that such love or affection for one's own finds its source in the *thumos* or spirited part of the soul.

The textual component of the above objection might wish to insist that Socrates in Book 5 speaks primarily of how females will share tasks equally with the males, while he speaks of eros only secondarily. The first wave of laughter (about training naked) is a sexual issue that arises only out of the equal-task issue. Yet it is precisely male eros that is prohibiting female task equality. Here again, the reader need not be a feminist to see the feminist relevance of Socrates' ideas: if female achievement were erotogenic for males, then eros would not be standing in the way of full female participation. But instead, men prefer their sexual objects, whether female or male, to be dependent and weak (*Phdr.* 239a). It is hard to see where the laughter at coed nudity comes from if eros is not the subtext of equality-as-coeducation, a subtext always threatening to break out

[7] On eros and *philia* together, see *Symposium* 179b–c, 182c; cf. *Lysis* 221b–d. Eros was popularly thought to destroy the status quo of *philia* relationships but also to lead the way to new *philia* relationships; see Faraone 1999, pp. 30, 86–88.

[8] In Greek, *to oikeion*. The definition is entertained at a dramatic moment in the *Lysis* (221e–222a); cf. *Symposium* 192c, 193a–d, 205d–206a with Aristotle's *Politics* 2.4. See also Price 1989, pp. 1–14. Proprietary feeling must not be thought to exhaust the higher potentialities of *philia*; rather, the politically relevant meaning of *philia* involves this sense of "one's own."

and become the primary text again. Eros is, in fact, the thread linking Book 5's topics together: the erotic philosopher-kings, who represent the third wave of laughter, otherwise have little to do with the first two waves: naked exercises and sexual communism. If we do not blind ourselves to the erotic theme of these first two waves (449c–472a), we can see how they fit together with the intense discussion of (the more recognizably Platonic) elite philosophical eros that immediately follows the third wave (474bff.). But even if we temporarily restrict ourselves to the female drama, eros emerges as an obstacle (if not *the* obstacle) to full female equality and thus an obstacle to justice. Eros will either thwart the perfecting of the political regime, or the political regime must change eros.

But in our earlier look at what created tension between eros and justice, the culprit seemed to be precisely the possessive element in eros – the desire for exclusive property rights. Hence our preliminary account of philia (namely, that philia is related to holding on to what is already one's own) becomes immediately relevant. What offends justice is not the erotic desire itself, but rather the possessiveness that tends to accompany or follow erotic desire. If an erotic desire without any sense of belonging could be imagined, such desire would never give rise to injustice. But philia in this politically relevant sense is precisely that feeling of belonging or "attachment." If the guardians can purge their eros of the love of their own – give up feeling any attachment – then they will accordingly be left to enjoy sexual intercourse in their brief couplings, albeit without philia. It is the absence of philia in their couplings that strikes modern readers as "loveless." But if a couple's eros were to produce philia as well, then the specter of a private household's putting its own interests ahead of the polity's interests arises once more.

Eros without attachment – without permanent belonging – is what the elite philosophers feel toward their subject matter in the third-wave discussion that now ensues. The philosophic eros is profligate and promiscuous: the philosophers in their quest for knowledge move from one erotic object to the next. The guardians are being asked to conduct their sex lives after the same fashion. Each guardian's eros is purged of its connection to the love of his or her own (or else the sense of "one's own" is radically expanded). It is

correct, then, to distinguish the common or vulgar heterosexual eros, assumed to motivate many of the guardians after the integration of women, from the elite pederastic eros considered from 474b on. But it is a mistake to drive too deep a wedge between the two forms of eros. We argue that the sexual innovations (community of partners and coed nudity) are intended to transform heterosexual eros in ways that would enable it to enjoy as much as possible the political and philosophic advantages Socrates claims for elite pederasty. Accordingly, section 2 is devoted to the political purposes behind the transformation of eros. Section 3 is devoted to the philosophical purposes.

II. PLATO'S TREATMENT OF GREEK CITIES AND CIVIC IDEOLOGIES

Pursuing now the possibility that the *Republic*'s sexual legislation is intended to transform eros politically – rendering eros more pliable for the regime – we find the preponderance of historical evidence on the side of the *Republic*'s treating heterosexual eros in conscious imitation of the way actual cities in the Greek world treated homosexual eros. Or more accurately: we find the *Republic* basing its sexual legislation on interpretations of the historical evidence that Plato puts forward in the erotic dialogues (esp. *Smp.* 178d–179a, 182a–d). In the latter, Plato entertains (or makes his characters entertain) theses from a variety of civic ideologies in which both eros and philia were considered political principles creating supports on which oligarchical and (to a lesser extent) democratic regimes could be, in part, based. That Sparta was a model for the best regime has often been noted. But the Spartan model has not often been applied to the *Republic*'s sexual legislation. Socrates in the *Republic* seizes upon the Spartans' political use of pederasty, their common meals and sleeping arrangements (as well as male nudity) and expands them into coed nudity, common arrangements for everything (including sex), and a political use of eros between both sexes, not merely between males. Plato makes Socrates perfect or take to their logical conclusion tendencies inherent in Sparta but also found in greater or lesser degrees of institutionalization among the Cretans, among aristocrats in Athens, in the stories and ideology surrounding the Sacred Band of Thebes (which Plato knew and made his characters anachronistically refer to), as well as

in several other Greek cities.[9] A variety of ideologies considered it good to have citizens who loved one another, all other things being equal, because they formed tighter bonds and fought harder on each other's behalf. Offshoots of such traditions asserted that male citizens who were erotically involved with one another were freedom-loving and anti-tyrannical (as for example in the Athenians' political myth of the homoerotic tyrannicides Harmodius and Aristogeiton): tyrants outlaw pederasty because they fear the strong bonds it creates among subjects whom they would prefer to keep weak and disunited.[10] The *Republic* makes use of these models, in which homoeroticism was thought to provide social cohesion between citizens and military cohesion between warriors. The *Republic* extrapolates from homoeroticism to include heterosexual eros as a glue cementing male-female pairs of citizen-warriors (instead of cementing families) in order to capitalize on the same alleged power of eros in political harness. Let us then examine sexual communism in light of the way Plato uses the historical and ideological precedents.

On erotic military tactics and the question of whether Sparta actually stationed lovers and beloveds side by side in the ranks in order to make them fight harder, the historical sources are ambiguous; but Plato was willing to interpret Theban and perhaps Spartan practice in this way.[11] Traditionally, armies were organized by tribe and hence were family affairs: grandfather, father, and son might all fight within sight of one another. In the heat of battle, soldiers fight not for their country or an abstract cause but for each other: they protect their comrades. All the more so if their comrades are friends and relatives (*philoi*). The traditional military arrangement thus relied on philia to motivate unit cohesion. Aristotle (*Politics* 2.4) asserts that philia among citizens was commonly thought to be the greatest good for cities. Cohesiveness or solidarity, literally "being one," was thought to be the work of philia. Militarily, Sparta and Thebes were thought to have innovated by substituting erotic love in place of philia (eros being more volatile than philia but perhaps for that reason a more

[9] Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* 2.12–14; Ephorus in Strabo, *Geography* 10.4.21; Plato, *Laws* 636a–d. See also Cartledge 1981; Figueira and Nagy 1985; Ludwig 2002, pp. 173–78.

[10] *Symposium* 182a–d; Thucydides 1.20, 6.53–59; cf. 2.43.

[11] *Symposium* 178d–179a; cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* 8.32–35; *Hellenica* 4.8.39.

powerful passion on which to ground solidarity). This is only one among several ways in which Sparta was believed to have structured its incentives so that private passions would not conflict with – but would instead bolster – public concerns.

Going to war with someone you love, even with a sexual partner, was hence thinkable within contemporary discourses and provided a prototype for the *Republic* to use and develop. The move to include female sexual partners continues a pattern. Homoerotic cohesion between pairs of soldiers is widened to include heterosexual cohesion. Glaucon enthuses about how "it won't be permitted to refuse anyone who wants to kiss someone, so that if he happens to be in love, either with a male or with a female, he will be more zealous to win the prize for prowess" (*Rep*. 468b–c). Socrates agrees that marriages will be more easily obtainable for the brave than for others (in part because eugenics also dictates such legislation). Sexual success is harnessed to success in war.

Socrates imagines great numbers of guardians bonding together the way that family members previously did. Insofar as all citizens are to share in the joys and pains of possessing the same things, a form of philia is to be the prime mover in Socrates' larger project to make the city entirely unified. "*Philoi* hold possessions in common" (cf. *Rep*. 424a and 449c with 462a–b). Socrates wants to revolutionize the meaning of "one's own" (*oikeion*): all are to share "one belief about their own" (464c–d). If there is a child or a woman about whom any one guardian says "mine," all guardians should say "mine" about the same person. Again, philia is the type of love associated with one's one. The philia that used to help create private families is to go into making the city into one great public "family."

Historically, such ideas were not without example. Sparta weakened families by taking boys away at age seven, when the boys were formed into herds.[12] Adult males were also kept away from their families. Spartan communism in meals and sleeping arrangements for adult males deprived private homes of their titular heads, presumably so that the men would put the public good ahead of their narrower family interests. Spartans could thus be thought to have already undergone a partial revolution regarding "one's own." An erotic

[12] See note 5 and the separation of children at *Republic* 541a. Cf. *Laws* 666e–667a, 684d–685a; *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* 2.1–14.

component – Spartan pederasty – played a central role in these severe arrangements. Socially esteemed, legally encouraged pederasty gave adult males a sexual interest outside the home, and the boys were available because they had been taken away from the control of their families. The erotic lover-beloved bond partially replaced the father-son philia relationship, with the older lover taking over the functions of parenting in his surrogate-father role toward the younger beloved. The stranglehold over the education of children exercised by parental pride was thus overcome. Here, as in the military arrangements, eros can be said to have replaced philia. The family was weakened, and its resistance to republicanism – for example, resistance in the form of nepotism and clannishness – was neutralized. In the space ceded by the family, the city could then construct a male collective, a kind of men's club or garrison within the city that effectually was the real city.

If Spartan homoeroticism contributed to the creation of a male collective, Socrates' polymorphous, incestuous eroticism radicalizes the Spartan project in order to create a unisex collective. Socrates expands the pool of citizens whom each individual can view sexually, that is, as potential erotic partners: he adds family members such as brothers and sisters previously considered off-limits to the pool (461e). Such encroachment by eros into the territory traditionally reserved for philia has the effect of ironing out differences within the citizen body, creating civic homogeneity. As Aristotle points out, family structure differentiates the citizen body into diverse roles. Family relations imply multiple roles for each individual: "the same man is addressed as son by one, as brother by another, and as cousin by a third" (*Politics* 2.3). Socrates' city is more unified if every guardian in a certain age group is actually or potentially the sexual partner of everyone else, rather than exclusively the spouse of one, daughter of another, cousin of a third. Serial sexual partners are far more interchangeable than family members in their exclusive roles could ever be. Detachable and homogeneous (i.e., "modular") citizens more easily fit together to form a uniform and unified whole. Spartan pederasty pried men and boys away from the family, giving them new roles more useful to the city. Socrates' polymorphous sexual communism finishes the job, prying women, girls, and everyone else away from the family and giving each one a single role: that of guardian.

Socrates veers away from total homogeneity by outlawing parent-child incest (461b–d). Presumably, Socrates wishes to capitalize on the social cohesion and civic obedience to be had from the belief that all older men are one's fathers: a citizen must treat a thousand or more seniors with the reverence ordinarily reserved for a single father and likewise with mothers. Had Socrates permitted sexual relationships between the generations to erode the parent-child philia relationship, he would have pitted the incentive structure of eros against the incentive structure of philia. Instead, he ostensibly preserves the best of both.

Yet this incentive strategy of Socrates' redefines and expands the philia it intends to harness. While abolishing family roles to achieve unity and homogeneity, Socrates simultaneously derives political incentives from philia by preserving family roles in new, expanded forms. The structuring of incentives so that private passions bolster public concerns is somewhat at odds with removing privacy and destroying the private sphere altogether. In the limit (and the limit appears to be where Socrates is taking this), there could conceivably be no private passion left to harness. How much philia can a guardian really feel for one thousand fathers, or for one thousand children? Will each guardian really fight harder under the gaze of the whole batch of the city's children born within ten months after the copulations in each of his or her serial marriages, that is, the vast array of children that biologically could be, and therefore politically are considered to be, his or her offspring (*Rep*. 467a–b, 461d; cf. *Smp*. 178d–179a, 207a–b with 208c–d)? Why care about those children more than the city's other children? At worst, Socrates would dilute the passions on which he intends to rely.

This reading of the *Republic*'s sexual communism as employing love to bring about unification and homogeneity goes back to Aristotle. "We think that philia is the greatest good for cities . . . and Socrates praises the city's being unified, [alleging that it is] the work of philia to unify" (*Politics* 2.4). Aristotle, stressing the heterogeneity of roles necessary to create a city ("a city does not come into being from members who are the same"; *Politics* 2.2), severely criticizes Plato's Socrates for overhomogenizing, overemphasizing sameness and unity. The alleged good of unification actually destroys cities, according to Aristotle. He imagines the unifying philia as produced by eros, comparing the *Republic* to Plato's "speeches on eros" (i.e.,

to the *Symposium*), in particular to Aristophanes' speech. Aristophanes' two lovers who desire to grow together and become one (*Smp.* 192b–e) necessarily desire their own destruction, says Aristotle (*Politics* 2.4), because one will be subsumed into the other, or else both together will become some third entity, not identical to either of the original two. Analogously, if a city were to become totally unified through love, such a city, too, would be destroyed. Excessive unity would collapse the city into a household or even, with further homogenization, into an individual (*Politics* 2.2). Something has to give: either the city collapses like a neutron star, or the philia that was supposed to unite it must break or snap. Real ties that bind cannot be spread thin over a thousand sons or a thousand daughters without losing their attractive force (*Politics* 2.4).

If philia is the object, Aristotle argues, better to make the ruled (not the rulers), that is, the farmers (not the guardians), hold their women and children in common. For those who practice sexual communism will feel no philia. Precisely if philia is the greatest good for cities, then the guardians need families and heterogeneous roles in order to experience philia (*Politics* 2.4). The implication is that philia will always be private or, at best, semi-private. Citizens should be differentiated and interdependent rather than homogeneous and modular. Thus Aristotle understands only the negative side of Socrates' sexual communism to be practicable. Sexual communism sweeps away clannishness and factionalism but without achieving the positive goal of creating one great family, every citizen bonded together through philia. Citizens cannot avoid loving their families or their factions more than their city except at the cost of not loving anything at all. It is impracticable to require every citizen to love every other citizen as strongly as he today loves his family. Socrates thus burns the candle at both ends, diluting the philia he hopes to channel into public avenues. If we agree with Aristotle's analysis – as I do – then the expansion of philia seems to lose its political raison d'être. But we said earlier that sexual communism was intended to transform eros in such a way that the philia that accompanies eros was either expanded or purged. That expansion project having failed, we are left with an eros from which philia has been purged, in effect a philia-less eros.

The case with coed nudity is similar in many respects to the foregoing account of sexual communism, and treating it at length would

retrace much of the same ground.[13] Briefly, female nakedness radicalizes and completes a historical trend of civic rationalism about what is truly shameful (*Rep*. 452a–b). Socrates intends a revolution in shame just as he intends a revolution in "one's own." Through nudity, he encourages a shameless eros along parallel lines with his encouragement through sexual communism of a philia-less eros.

Of the three political aims for sexual communism – justice, unification, and eugenics – unification has been seen to fall short. Justice is partially implicated in the failure to create a unified collective, or communism: the things of friends are common, but the citizens cannot all be friends. Perfect justice will be destroyed if attachments are permitted; but bonding into a collective requires attachments. (The third political goal, eugenics, meets with failure only eventually, with ignorance of the "nuptial number"; 546a–547b.) We are thus led to look beyond the political for other purposes behind the transformation of eros. Educational and philosophic purposes also govern the transformation of eros, which seems to aim at purifying eros of extraneous elements, such as shame and philia. For example, removing the mystery of clothing can be seen to rationalize the guardians' response to beauty and ugliness (452d–e). But rationalizing the erotic response to beauty and removing the shame that prevents the guardians from seeing are goals analogous to the projects of the *Symposium* and the other erotic dialogues. Likewise, purging eros of philia enables eros to seek a wider pool of objects. Engaging in impersonal sexual unions is propaedeutic to seeking impersonal erotic objects, such as wisdom. A shameless eros that forms no attachments is ripe for the philosophic transformations discussed from 474b onward. The political purposes point beyond themselves. In short, having many partners constitutes part of the depersonalization of the erotic object that takes place in Plato's erotic theory more generally. This would definitively link Book 5's sexual legislation with the disquisition on eros from 474b onward.

Perhaps it is unsurprising that educational and philosophical motives should trump political motives in Plato. Whether Plato intended for the failure of unification to be deliberate on Socrates' part or (as Aristotle implies) a mistake is less important for the present argument than the fact that the sexual legislation perfects

[13] See Ludwig 2002, pp. 261–318.

several tendencies already inherent in Greek cities and ideologies. Socrates perfects the available politics by identifying tendencies and pushing them conceptually to their logical extremes. He thus shows the limiting case toward which the imperfect poleis existing in the world were – consciously or unconsciously – striving. He reveals the essence of the polis by showing it in its fullest, perfected form. The *Republic* thus continues to offer a political science even if it disappoints our expectation that it offers a political blueprint. Expanding male nudity and common meals to include female nakedness and common arrangements for everything was one of Socrates' ways of perfecting the politics of those cities, even – it should be added – at the cost of distorting love. He perfects politics not because a perfect politics is necessarily good, but because a perfect politics is perfectly revelatory of what politics is.

III. FROM THE SEXUAL LEGISLATION TO THE PHILOSOPHIC EROS

Earlier we suggested that the coercive erotic institutions of the *Republic* seem alien to the spirit of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* and indeed alien to at least one major passage in the *Republic* itself, a kind of "*Symposium* in miniature" beginning at 474b, directly following the imposition of the erotic regimen. Now an analogy between these two diverse stances on eros has been suggested. The transformation that eros undergoes in the *Republic*'s erotic regimen is analogous to what takes place on the initial rungs of the ladder of love in the *Symposium*. As we saw, detaching the guardians' sexual unions from family concerns and child rearing corrects the political problem of injustice arising from possessiveness only at the great, perhaps unacceptable, cost of removing the basis for affectionate love. However, the same detachment from family and child rearing incidentally also corrects the philosophic deficiencies of narrow closedness and lack of ambition associated with the heterosexual, child-producing eros in the erotic dialogues (*Smp*. 208e–209a and context; cf. *Smp*. 191c with *Phdr*. 256a–e).

Through the many marriages of sexual communism, the heterosexual unions of the guardians are forced to share in the transience that historically characterized pederasty but not marriage. Having many partners forces eros to become open and flexible rather than

focused on one exclusive love. An open, flexible eros is educable, and philosophic education is the theme from 474b onward. The guardians' enforced shamelessness about appearing naked in front of the opposite sex and about consorting with many partners constitute a preparation for philosophic shamelessness about baring one's ideas (cf. *Tht.* 169a–b) and consorting with many ideas. Philosophy is a realm in which the parochial attachments to family and the philia felt exclusively for one's personal "own" are detrimental to progress. In permitting the education of the philosopher-kings to trump the sexual legislation's more strictly political motives, however, the dialogue raises the questions of whether and how its philosophic purposes fit together with its political purposes. The mini-*Symposium* within the *Republic* must now be examined.

Starting at 474b, the *Republic* duplicates some of the major topics of the *Symposium* speech of Diotima. In the *Symposium*, Diotima recommends that the young Socrates frequent many beautiful bodies, an activity that looks like promiscuity from a legal-political perspective. Yet if Socrates were to fall in love with one person and wish to remain permanently with that one (establishing a philia-relationship), he would also doom himself to remaining permanently at that level on the erotic ladder: his eros would never be permitted to climb the ladder of love to higher, impersonal objects of eros. Instead of seeking permanency, young Socrates must become an eroticist, beginning while still a young man to go to many beautiful bodies. First he must love the body of one person, but then he must recognize that the beauty in any one body is akin to the beauty in another. Realizing that it is foolish not to believe that the beauty in all bodies is one and the same, he must establish himself as a lover of *all* beautiful bodies (*Smp.* 210a–b).

The *Republic* duplicates this line of thought from the *Symposium*: Socrates places young Glaucon in the role of the young Socrates. He calls Glaucon an erotic man and a boy lover (474b). In place of the young Socrates' going from body to body in the *Symposium*, Glaucon allegedly loves the body parts of many different boys. (Diotima's discourse is normative advice, while Socrates' discourse to Glaucon is descriptive, but we shall see that this difference does not affect the argument.) A real lover, Socrates argues, never loves only one part and not another, but desires the whole (474c). He goes on to apply this principle to the whole class of boys: the eroticist Glaucon calls

snub-nosed boys "charming," eagle-beaked boys "regal," and boys in between these extremes "well proportioned." He furthermore calls dark-skinned boys "masculine" and light-skinned boys "children of the gods." Pale or sallow boys he denominates "honey-green," seizing upon any excuse to find beauty in every single boy (474b–475a). Glaucon's eros leads him to do naturally and as a matter of course what Diotima encourages the young Socrates to do on the lower rungs of the ladder.

This whole disquisition linking elite pederastic eros to philosophy, which begins in Book 5 and carries over into Book 6 (474b–487a), is motivated by the third wave of paradox, following the first wave (coed nudity) and the second wave (sexual communism). The third wave is the paradox that philosophers must become kings. To determine who the real philosophers (and hence future kings) are, Socrates compares them to eroticists (and thereby to Glaucon). Just as eroticists love all parts of all boys, young philosophic natures love all branches of all learning. They are not picky. Unbeknownst to themselves, both the eroticist and the young philosophic nature dimly divine the intimations of the Forms: the eroticist sees beauty itself in his many beloveds, and the young philosophic nature sees wisdom glistening weakly amid the dross in the many branches of learning. Otherwise they would not be insatiable for the *whole* class of boys and the *whole* of learning, respectively: if they were capable of limiting themselves to monogamy or to, say, astronomy, then some illiberal motive other than pure beauty or wisdom, respectively, would be motivating their behavior. It is their very indiscriminateness – the promiscuity of their attractions – that marks them out as possessing natural potential.

But is their expansiveness simply natural? Societal influences, as well as nature, play a role in encouraging and discouraging the kind of erotic expansiveness that Glaucon experiences. Glaucon's tastes are hard to imagine apart from the transience inherent in the normal conventions of Greek pederasty (boys soon grew into men and became off-limits), together with the convention of athletic nudity – with its many bodies – in the gymnasiums and palaestras. As we saw earlier, the sexual legislation is essentially an extension of such pederastic conventions and practices to heterosexual unions. The regimen of many partners creates a field-bed from which an expansive, impersonal eros can emerge. The *Republic* is intensely interested

in the contribution that political institutions can make to philosophic education. Socrates simply legislates that all the guardians shall be forced into an opportunity to develop tastes as expansive as Glaucon's. Glaucon, in turn, by loving all parts of all boys, has already gone far down the path Diotima recommends to Socrates: instead of settling down and becoming tied down to one exclusive beloved, Glaucon is attracted to them all. His eros is not currently leading him to find his other half, not leading him to "his own" (*Smp.* 193d, 205d–206a). Instead, he is ripe for higher rungs on the ladder. Analogously, the *Republic* prevents the eros of the guardians from leading them to "their own"; the institutions push them toward the ladder.

As if rehabilitated by the coercions and exertions it has undergone, erotic desire finally begins to be treated as a good thing late in Book 5. Desire, which in Book 4 needed *thumos* to stand guard over it (in consultation with reason) and eros, which earlier in Book 5 needed the schooling of coed nudity and sexual communism, now come into their own as the attractive urges to philosophize. "The philosopher is a desirer of wisdom" (475b); nothing is said about philosophic *thumos*, if indeed such a thing exists at all. Like the *Symposium*, the *Republic* explicitly deflects eros away from sexual intercourse and toward learning. "In proportion as the desires incline vehemently toward some one thing, we know that they are weaker toward the rest, like a stream that has been channeled away in that direction" (485d). Once the desires "have flowed toward learning," the citizen will "abandon those pleasures that come via the body."

Like the *Symposium*, the *Republic* forms a hierarchy out of the lower physical loves (e.g., for bodies and wine), the middle-level love of honor (*philotimia*), and the highest or culminating level: *philosophia* (*Rep.* 475a–b; cf. 581a–c). As we know from Diotima's *Symposium* speech just before her ladder of love (*Smp.* 208c–209e), she describes lovers pregnant in body who beget children; lovers pregnant in soul who engage in *philotimia*; and finally lovers pregnant in soul who engage in *philosophia*. The three are positioned hierarchically. The same hierarchy from sexual love to *philotimia* and from there to *philosophia* is also observed at *Phaedrus* 256a–e: there are couples who consider blessed the act of which quadrupeds are capable, then there are *philotimic* couples who only occasionally slip and permit themselves sexual intercourse, followed by philosophic

couples who do not engage in bodily congress at all.[14] This hierarchy from the erotic dialogues represents the erotic parting of the ways among the three classes of the *Republic*. Child production alone characterizes the eros of the lowest class, the farmers and artisans. Child production is kept (as far as possible) from weighing down the guardians, whose eros will include love of honor and jealous protectiveness of the city. Emerging out of the guardian class will be the kings whose eros is oriented toward philosophy.

But this coincidence of philosophical aims with the more strictly political aims of the *Republic* may appear as the tail wagging the dog. Socrates shows us the whole class of guardians undergoing extraordinary erotic rigors so that a few might go on to become philosopher-kings. The nonphilosophic guardians cannot partake of the philosophical goals set for the philosopher-kings (except vicariously through having philosophically educated rulers). They can partake only of the political goals such as unification (which do not meet with success). The nonphilosophic guardians now seem to exist totally for the sake of the philosophers. More and more aspects of the *Republic* begin to point beyond the political. Socrates reverses a common charge against philosophers, that is, that they do not live up to moral and political standards (487c–d): he complains rather that no constitution of any current city lives up to the potential of the young philosophic nature (that is why philosophic types often go bad). Greek cities are not helping philosophers to realize their full growth (497a–b). Politics is for the sake of philosophy, not the other way around. Even justice, which initially motivated the inquiry into politics (to view justice writ large), now finds its fulfillment not in the political order but in the soul of the philosopher. True philosophers fulfill the promise of communism simply owing to the nature of the objects they desire: the ideas they traffic in are common property for anyone who wants them and has the capacity. Philosophers (qua philosophers) therefore lack possessiveness, wanting only to behold, not to own. Justice would still find fulfillment in philosophic souls, according to Socrates, even if the best regime never existed (592b). We gradually realize that Socrates has constructed an

[14] The *Republic* also parallels these erotic dialogues in what it has to say about the top of the "ladder" (*Rep*. 476c with *Smp*. 211b–e; *Rep*. 490b with *Smp*. 206e and 212a).

entire city in which his own activity is the very definition of justice. Callipolis mirrors the philosophic soul to the greatest extent possible.

On this reading, Socrates would be showing us a distorted image of political life reflected in the mirror of the philosophic life. That is, he shows what ordinary citizens' eros would look like if they consorted with bodies the way philosophers consort with ideas. Citizen life is assimilated as closely as possible to philosophic life (and is turned inside out by that assimilation). As we saw earlier, however, it was the city's own aspirations to justice that required coercing the citizens' eros into these strange, philosophic molds. Civic justice demands a perfection that goes beyond the limits of civic possibility and is available only in philosophy. Of all thinkable cities, Callipolis fails the least or comes closest to realizing the goal of mirroring philosophy. This is instructive because it represents the limits of politics. Politics points beyond itself. With the main focus of the dialogue shifting to philosophical education, the characters and aspirations of Socrates' young pupils come to the fore. Speeches about eros are themselves erotic, and vicarious participation in the sights and spectacle of the sexual institutions has operated on the desire of Glaucon and Adeimantus in such a way as to encourage them to talk about previously unmentionable topics, such as incest. Socrates loosens up the young men's conventional morality by appealing to their erotic desires, allowing their eros for thinking to come partly out of the box, to lose its habitual sense of shame. That shameless, polymorphous eros so useful for philosophizing will in turn have important political implications for the study of tyranny, particularly in the case of Glaucon, who (qua eroticist) is flattered to consider himself one of the young philosophic natures and a potential philosopher-king.

IV. THE EROS OF THE TYRANT AND GLAUCON'S AMBITION

There still remains the last, most mysterious eros of the *Republic* to be explored: the tyrant's eros of Book 9.[15] Why, after rehabilitating eros, should the dialogue turn around again and make eros the prime suspect in the psychology of tyranny? Why should eros take

[15] See also Richard Parry's chapter 14 in this volume.

precedence over *thumos* – with its aspects of pride, self-assertion and vengefulness – in motivating the tyrannical personality? Part of the answer is that the rehabilitation undergone by eros involved separating eros from *thumos*. The lack of possessiveness in the philosophic eros and the lack of attachment (philia) in the sexual unions of the guardians were examples of *thumos*-free eros. If, as we have argued, philia in this politically relevant sense is associated with possessiveness and one's own (*oikeion*), *thumos* has a vital connection to both. In the anecdote of Leontius, his *thumos* polices and maintains his self-respect against bad desires that threaten to make him a worse person (439e–440a).[16] Likewise, *thumos* will fight to the death to vindicate the self's rights against injustice imposed from without (440c–d). *Thumos* in these two examples, by opposing enemies both internal and external, asserts the self. In Homeric Greek and in various classical texts, the word *thumos* sometimes meant the whole self.[17] In Book 4 of the *Republic*, *thumos* is at the very center of the soul, between reason and desire. One's sense of self can apparently be enlarged so as to infuse itself into people and things beyond the self, which then become one's own. *Thumos* is capable both of savagery toward its own (*tous oikeious*) fellow citizens (destroying them along with the enemy when first introduced in Book 2, 375b–c) and of mildness toward its own, recognizing a face that is dear (*philēn*) to it and protecting the familiar in opposition to the alien and strange (376b). The key seems to be educating *thumos* (like a noble dog, 375e) to consider those citizens as belonging to it (and to consider itself as belonging to them). The familiar or status quo (like the family of owners whom a dog also "owns" as his) will then receive the affection. This seems to be the connection between philia and *thumos*.[18]

Having shown us the rarefied heights of thumos-free eros in the best regime, the dialogue in its portrayal of the decline of the regime now descends to eros that seeks exclusive possession. The souls of

[16] See also the subsequent discussion. For the punitive function of *thumos*, see *Laws* 731b.

[17] Ludwig 2002, pp. 194–97.

[18] Aristotle (*Politics* 7.7) makes explicit what he regards as only confusedly present in the *Republic*: "*thumos* creates the disposition to love [*to philētikon*], for *thumos* is the faculty of soul by which we feel philia." Hereafter we remove the italics from thumos, as we did previously with philia.

those declining human types that belong to the declining regimes can no longer maintain the separation of eros from thumos. But the portrait of the tyrant is complicated by the fact that Socrates gives only small indications that thumos is even partly responsible (571c–572b, 586a–587b); instead, he deliberately readopts the partial, merely political view of eros that obtained before 474b. Eros is said to cause tyranny. We are back to the nonphilosophic vantage point from which Cephalus expressed relief that old age had taken away his sexual desires (329a–d) and from which Glaucon assumed that the first things anyone would do upon discovering Gyges' invisibility ring would be to commit adultery and seize political power (360a–b). We must follow this strand that runs throughout the dialogue: the political "ambition" of Glaucon.[19] The political perspective on eros that Glaucon shares with most of his fellow citizens holds that eros is naturally possessive and selfish and so must be restrained. But as we have seen, the philosophical perspective on eros is that pure eros desires no exclusive possession; indeed, the objects of thought cannot be exclusively possessed. The admixture of thumos within eros was to blame for the philia that stood in the way of perfect justice; thumos seems to be at the root of all possessiveness. Why does Socrates continue to adhere to the lower, political view? How are we to understand the separate contributions of eros and thumos in the tyrant's desires?

The potential tyrant's handlers and hangers-on conspire to instill an eros in him that will organize all his other desires around it (572e–573a). The madness of this eros drives him over the edge, and he becomes actually tyrannical. This "drone" may be a sexual eros oriented toward a single individual: the tyrant engages in violence against his parents in order to get money for a girlfriend or boyfriend (574b–c), whom he apparently wishes to gratify and impress. His beloved is only a catalyst, however, and the handlers seem to know it. The synergy – personal desire and political desire working together – is in keeping with stories of other tyrants and potential tyrants in Plato and elsewhere. Callicles is lover to a boy named Demos but is also said to feel eros for the masses (*dēmos*), and his political ambition is characterized as wanting the masses to feel philia toward

[19] Xenophon attributes actual political ambition, including speechifying in public, to Glaucon (*Memorabilia* 3.6).

him in return (*Grg.* 481d, 513a–b). In Xenophon's *Hiero* (1.26–38), sexual desire is thought to lead the tyrant Hiero to desire tyranny, but he complains that political power prevents tyrants from knowing for sure whether their beloveds reciprocate genuine philia. In both cases, the tyrannical personality's eros is ordinary insofar as it wants secure attachment and belonging. The philosophic eros, by contrast, is unreciprocated: philosophers do not need to be loved back by the ideas they contemplate. Likewise, the serial unions of sexual communism were intended to preclude proprietary feelings. The tyrant's sexual eros is mixed up with his thumos. If he desired without hoping to possess exclusively, no amount or intensity of desire that the handlers instilled in him could make him commit to tyranny.

If to Glaucon's ambition we add his eroticism, Glaucon would seem to be in more danger than most of wanting to become a tyrant. Glaucon is both attracted to and repulsed by Thrasymachus' tough-talking denigration of justice. On the one hand, Glaucon is manly and spirited (357a, 548d with 581b) and therefore chafes under the irritating possibility that Thrasymachus may be right. On the other hand, there is hope that Glaucon will remain a solid citizen because he is more ambivalent than Callicles and Polus (*Grg.* 470c–471d), who openly confess their admiration for bloody tyrants such as Archelaus and the Great King and are attracted to the rhetorician Gorgias because they imagine that his art promises to help them subdue the masses. As we shall see, constraints arising from the ongoing education that Socrates is giving Glaucon dictate that Socrates continue to flatter his thumos, giving it more than its due.

Sorting out the separate contributions of eros and thumos in the tyrant's desires requires that we begin with the least distorting of cities – that "truest" and most natural "city of pigs" – and the role it plays in the psychology of Glaucon. In Book 2, Socrates constructs a small, basic city based on need. The denizens of this city feast on simple foods, are convivial and happy. They are in a sense the most erotically normal citizens in the *Republic*, having pleasant intercourse (an ambiguous term until the sequel): producing children but not too many (372b–c). But Glaucon rebels against their rustic simplicity, pejoratively calling this a "city of pigs." Citizens worthy of the name should have "relishes" (372c). He apparently despises the inhabitants for not enjoying the finer things in life. Socrates gives

Glaucon what he desires, allowing the basic city to transform itself into a luxurious, feverish city. He allows this on the grounds that justice and injustice will be more obvious in a bloated city full of unnecessary luxuries: relishes, courtesans, servants and many others (372e–373c). Wanting these luxury items leads directly to the necessity of seizing a neighbor-city's land – and therefore leads to war (373d–e). The whole need for a "guardian" class of warriors thus arises out of a concession to Glaucon's desire for relishes, a desire that has more to do with ambition (a desire that the citizens make something of themselves) than with simple hunger or the pleasure to be derived from eating the relishes. Ambition in fact combines with the pleasure of eating: if the relishes were not tasty, ambition would not claim that one "ought" to have them. Ambition uses desires and pleasures as counters (what in modern parlance would be called "perquisites").

The advent of the guardians will indirectly lead Socrates to introduce thumos into the soul as well, in order to preserve the one-to-one correspondence between parts of soul and classes of city (e.g., 440e–441a). In the city of pigs, thumos was scarcely necessary. In the feverish, bloated city (perhaps in all actual cities) thumos will be the lynchpin of the soul, just as the guardian class (i.e., the class with the most thumos) will be the lynchpin of the city. But it is not clear that matters had to be this way. Adeimantus was happy with the city of pigs. The move to a less "natural" city was motivated by Glaucon's thumos, which says, in effect: "My city deserves better." Likewise, Leontius in Socrates' anecdote gets angry at himself and his own eyes for being drawn to look at the sordid sight of executed criminals' corpses. He does not want to be the kind of person who enjoys seeing punishment. Leontius' thumos says, in effect: "I ought to be better than that." The fact that Glaucon's thumos manifests itself in pride or disdain, while Leontius' manifests itself in anger, shows the link between the two: prouder people, people with pretensions, are more likely to get angry if their self-image is violated either by others or by their own moral slip-ups. The denizens of the city of pigs had needs but no pretensions; they hence had no need of a military. They essentially had nothing to defend. Socrates has accommodated thumos in his city because Glaucon has a lot of thumos. The whole discussion of the tripartite scheme of the soul thus seems to grow out of an accommodation of the fact that Glaucon has

thumos (in addition to mind and desire), that is, an accommodation of the fact that Glaucon's soul – like most souls – is tripartite.

But could there be a soul without thumos? Desire and mind would be together, with no third entity coming between them. Thumos is what separates the one from the other in Glaucon and most of the rest of us. Thumos seems natural: children exhibit thumos from a young age. Thumos of small children is activated mainly in aid of desires. When a desire is thwarted, thumos flares up and the child gets an additional impetus toward fulfilling the desire. Later, however, a very different use of thumos comes on the scene. Slightly older children learn to use thumos to squelch desires they know should not be fulfilled; their thumos reins in desires that are not in accordance with their self-image. Attempting to squelch desires by angrily and pridefully beating them down predictably leads to self-conflict, as it did for Leontius. While perilous, learning to use thumos to squelch desires seems indispensable if people are to live in society. Not all desires can be met.

Nevertheless, people in most or all societies could conceivably require a second education to liberate them from this first education they inevitably undergo. Undoing the damage wrought by thumos' repression of desires would entail substituting reasons why certain desires cannot be fulfilled in place of irrational anger (i.e., understanding why they cannot be met) and substituting rational desires in place of irrational desires. This second education would thus entail learning to let go of one's own when it was necessary to do so, that is, would entail "practicing dying" (*Phd*. 67e, 80e–81a).[20] This philosophical education would aim not only at making desire rational but, especially, at making reason desirous. This bipartite philosopher's soul cannot be natural in the sense of what springs up ordinarily ("nature naturing"). Humans "naturally" have thumos and therefore have tripartite souls. Besides, had thumos not been introduced as a third part, eros would never have been diverted from the low, unphilosophic desires of the city of pigs in the first place. Nevertheless, the bipartite soul could be seen as more fully natured ("nature natured"). Such a natural condition would be something like

[20] Given the association between thumos and one type of philia, the possibility of a philosophic soul without thumos raises the question of what the psychological basis of philosophic friendship is.

Aristotle's description of choice as "desirous mind" (*orektikos nous*) or "mindful desire" (*orexis dianoētikē*; *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2). The interchangeable formulations hint at healing the bipartition much as the tripartition was healed: the fusion of mind and desire holds out the prospect of a unified soul.

Possibly the worst consequence of thumos' necessary collaboration with political society in separating mind from desire is the tendency to consider most desires as unruly or lower. This seems to be the origin of the political perspective on eros, a distortion in society's account of desire that is one consequence of the tension between love and politics. With the best of intentions, thumos relegates desires to the basement and sends the mind upstairs where, stripped of its desires, mind can do nothing but calculate. This political view is the very image of the tripartite soul.[21] Socrates flatters the thumos-centered view and pays lip service to it because of Glaucon's soul and because the philosophic soul is so rare as to be politically irrelevant. Yet a good politics would at least not remove the conditions for the emergence of the philosophic soul. The morality of using thumos to control desires may be the closest practicable approximation to the truth, but it remains a compromise. Socrates' interlocutors (and Plato's readers) could do far worse than to believe that political decline is caused by letting desires get out of control. But there is a tragic paradox, since the thumos that enables citizen virtue also prevents the ascent to philosophic virtue.

Socrates finally admits in Book 9, shortly after the discussion of the tyrant's eros, that – within the tripartite soul – not only the "desirous" part but also the other two parts have "desires." Thumos loves victory and honor, while the mind loves learning and wisdom (581a–b). But if desire is now distributed over the whole, how can the desirous part any longer be a part? Reading this new account of the soul back on the discussion of the tyrant would mean that "desire" should no longer be automatically construed in opposition to

[21] On political and moral reasons for adding thumos to the soul, see (from very different perspectives) Penner 1971 and Benardete 1989, pp. 203–10, 224–25. Cf. also Burger 2004–5. Stanley Rosen's otherwise very similar account contains an important difference: he characterizes Glaucon's wish for relishes to be primarily erotic rather than stemming from thumos; cf. Rosen 2005, pp. 75–76, 81, with pp. 394–96, 154. Rosen's earlier interpretation had implied that thumos was primarily responsible for Glaucon's wish, while the philosophic eros, in contrast, was gentle rather than spirited; see Rosen 1988 [1965], pp. 102–18 of the reprint, esp. pp. 111, 115.

thumos. Thumos has its desires. Indeed, the new scheme for the soul, in which desire informs each part,[22] seems motivated by the need to explain how mind and desire can combine in the philosopher's soul and how thumos and desire can combine in the tyrant's soul.

The tyrant satisfies in waking life the bad desires that occasionally afflict most people only in dreams: for incest, murders, and "terrible food," probably referring to cannibalism (571a–d, 574d–575a). Such desires are called unnecessary and against law (*paranomoi*). This distinction between unnecessary and necessary desires was first introduced in Book 8 during the slide from oligarchic to democratic personalities (558d–559a). Yet "unnecessary" is inadequate (if not euphemistic) for the horror of the desires that come in dreams: cannibalism would be wrong for no other reason than too much chocolate is wrong – people can do without it (cf. 559b–c). The distinction between necessary and unnecessary in fact assumes that thumos never makes desire seek "a pleasure alien [to it]" (587a). In what can hardly be a coincidence, Socrates signals the inadequacy of the distinction for capturing the synergy between thumos and desire by alleging that the desire for relishes is "necessary" (559b). We remember relishes were unnecessary in the truest and natural city, and were rather a concession to Glaucon's thumos. Relishes represent not desire alone but thumos acting through desire.

The contrariness to law (*paranomia*) of the tyrant's desires also requires scrutiny (571b; cf. *anomia*, 575a). Socrates' latter word choice implies that the tyrant seeks objects that just happen to put him beyond the law, while the former choice could mean the tyrant seeks out laws to break. We said earlier that thumos functions in two different ways: adding force to desires and restricting desires not in one's self-image. The tyrant's anger, for example, at running short of money (573e), probably helps push him to transgress the law. The question of greatest interest concerns the second function of thumos and whether the tyrant simply stops deriving his self-image from the conventional just opinions or whether he constructs a new self-image as a breaker of those conventions. Socrates asserts that the new opinions (clustered around eros) that used to come only in

[22] This desiring soul answers more closely to the *Phaedrus*' image of the soul as a charioteer and two horses. While the dark horse seems to monopolize sexual desire, the white horse is an erotic lover (*erastēs*) of honor, and the charioteer also experiences longing (*pothos*; 253c–254b).

dreams simply master the old opinions from the time when he was under the laws and his father (574d–e). Bad desires get out of control. Yet only the opinions based on those bad desires are new: Socrates concedes that the bad desires themselves came in dreams while still under the law. Nothing prevents us from wondering whether the bad desires originate partly with the laws themselves, perhaps acquiring their fascination from the prohibition. Only by comparison with his erotic counterpart, the philosopher, does the extent to which the tyrant is governed by thumos and convention become clear. Unlike the philosopher, the tyrant does not rationally ignore convention and proceed to fulfill natural desires. The tyrant is not merely anomian but antinomian. He wishes to flout convention. Why else, for example, should he wish to partake of "terrible food"? A murder could at least be construed as removing someone who prevented the tyrant from fulfilling a natural desire. But eating bad food can hardly be a pleasure; rather, his cannibalism implies vengefulness against an enemy, or else a reaction against the convention that previously restrained him, that is, a desire to commit an act merely because the act was previously forbidden. Conventionality,[23] in the latter case, is still remotely governing the tyrant in his embrace of the unconventional; thumos is still policing his soul, asserting a new self that is a breaker of laws. In both cases, thumos informs the desire.

In this way the *Republic* highlights the effectual, political truth that eros is almost always mixed together with thumos, while remaining true to the possibility of a philosophic eros unadulterated by thumos. The political account of eros, with its need to restrain desire, partially mirrors but in the end radically departs from the philosophical account of eros, in which desire is liberated along with reason. At the risk of some distortion to each, Plato combines the two accounts in the *Republic*, demonstrating the extent to which the political and the philosophic may be brought together. The closeness of the two accounts and yet the remaining gap between them reflect at once the need to base politics on thumos and the moral imperative of preserving the potential for philosophic eros in a good political order.

[23] Compare how Glaucon lets convention (*nomos*, in *nomizetai*; 372d) tell him the finer things that the city of pigs "ought" to have.

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