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Plato's Theory of the Arts in the *Gorgias* and in the *Republic*

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Abstract: This paper examines Socrates' theory of the arts in the *Gorgias* and in the *Republic*. It shows how that theory changes, as the discussion takes focus first in relation to moderation, then to justice, where it is tied to the idea of a *techne* of rule, to notions of virtuous work and civic health, and to five levels of 'art' represented in the cave. It argues that both Socrates' vision of a scientific and benevolent political art and Thrasymachus' sophistic theory of

tyrannical rule are undercut in the dialogue, the former by doubts concerning the epistemic closure it seems based on, the latter by the tyrant's character, which impels him toward self-destructive government.

Keywords: Plato, *techne*, arts, moderation, justice.

The arts and moderation in the *Gorgias*

Socrates' theory of *techne* in the *Gorgias* identifies four genuine and counterfeit arts of the body (medicine and gymnastics vs. cookery and cosmetics) and of the soul (jurisprudence and legislation vs. rhetoric and sophistry), and two criteria for true or genuine art: (i) it must be directed to the real good of the person who is to be served by the art; and (ii) the (true) artist can give an explanatory *logos* for her means of attaining that end, relating what the art does to the universal nature of its object (body or soul).¹ Like Max Weber, Socrates deploys both a conception of technical rationality, and a conception of value-rationality, but, unlike Weber, he connects the two.

In contrast to true medical skillfulness, counterfeit medicine would be like an empirical 'knack' such as cake-baking, which aimed at pleasure, rather than nutrition, and could not explain what it did except by reference to previous experience at producing those results for their clients.² The arts, to be genuine, would also have to be aimed at their clients' real benefit in the light of knowledge of the nature of

¹ *Grg.* 465a. The wording of this passage is obscure in the Greek, but this rendering seems to me to best convey Socrates' intention, and the role that the ideal of *techne* plays in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*; cf. also Arist. *Metaph* 1.1 981a13-21. For a general introduction to Plato and the arts, see Roochnik, 1996.

² Thus failing both the rationality and beneficial goal criteria. Cf. the description of rhetoric as a semblance (*eidolon*) of politics, *Grg.* 463a, and the comparison of the genuine arts vs. counterfeit 'arts', 464b f.

the body and the soul, and the reason (*logos*) why their methods were effective in relation to their object. A 'scientific' physician who sought to poison her patient would not be a true artist, because she would not be aiming at his real end; a 'rightly intended' folk healer who saved his patient without understanding the relationship of her treatment to the nature of the human body would also lack true skill. The true artist knows the relevant good of her client, the appropriate means to advance or bring it about, and can offer a true account (*logos*) of those means to others.³

The true arts are related to a virtue ethics – true jurisprudence and legislation aim at virtue, the good of the human soul (470e), and can explain or justify their actions relevant to that object, true arts of the body produce means conducive to their end, physical health, and can explain why they do what they do.⁴ Both in the case of the counterfeit arts of the body and the counterfeit arts of the soul, the arts would not be as effective as they are if their clients were not receptive to the pleasure-goods they deliver, and the rhetorical justifications offered for them – which seem to offer reasons, but do not. Thus the counterfeit arts not only promote, they also depend on the immoderation of their clients, their love of 'flattery' and pleasure, as well as their 'irrationality,' their lack of true beliefs concerning their own welfare and the nature of their bodies and souls.⁵

Socrates advances this theory of the arts in the last part of the dialogue, in considering the imperial Athenian democracy and its most renowned leaders. The Athenian imperial state constitutes the encompassing source of 'counterfeit art,' both in its provision of

³ Compare *Chrm.* 165c f., 170e-171c. The doctor on this model possesses self-knowledge as an artist. He knows the method and goal of his art. This does not imply he knows what constitutes 'knowledge' per se, nor that he knows his own and the other arts, in the manner of an art of rule (vaguely alluded to at 166ce), nor that he knows what he knows and does not know (167a).

⁴ Cf. *Grg.* 470e, 508a. This ethics should be understood in relation to the 'objectivist-participatory' framework found in the *Republic*, as discussed in Gill, 1996.

⁵ Cf. Gorgias' remarks compared to those of Socrates at *Grg* 456b-c vs. 458a-b, 469b-c, 470e.

material goods, complex weaponry, craftwork and wealth for its population (by its version of a ‘military-productive complex’), and in its provision of egoistic goods and self-esteem for its citizen-soldiers (the Long Walls are such a good, as is the Acropolis). Its leaders feed the appetites and ambitions of the *demos* for these goods, even as they use them as war-instruments of the State. The rhetoric which sells “the glory that is Athens” works off unexamined images and stories that flatter the Athenians and swell their pride, no less than the public and private material goods the Empire brings them swell their appetites. The counterfeit arts create a regime of irrational immoderation, in which the dominant rhetoric is the war-song of Athenian imperialism, but this contributes not only to the desire for war with other states, but also to a general attitude among Athenians of competition and ‘war’ with their fellow citizens, in the quest to acquire as much of those goods for ‘one’s own’ as possible. The figure behind the idols of the Athenian cave, its fake truths, fake goods, and fake citizens – i.e. rationally blinkered, appetitively bound – is the supreme artist, the city, and its supreme rhetorician, Pericles.⁶

Socrates’ theory of the true and counterfeit arts is deepened by consideration of his chief interlocutors, each of whom presents a figure of the parts of a corrupted soul.⁷ Thus dramatically the dialogue anticipates the tripartite theory of the soul advanced in the *Republic*, as well as the moral psychology advanced there: the true good of the soul consists in establishing a hierarchy in which right reason rules over manly spiritedness and unbridled appetite. Gorgias presents the corrupted intellect, in that he confuses philosophy and politics with rhetoric, the art of advertising and salesmanship, which eschews truth and justice in favor of persuasion and self-gain, and functions on the basis of a false/unethical conception of the good for man in terms of freedom and rule (452d). Polus presents corrupted ambition and spiritedness, in that he confuses what is truly noble and shameful with social superiority and inferiority (cf. 466a and his

⁶ *Grg.* 519a-d. See also *Menexenus*, which constitutes an ironic rejoinder to Pericles’ “Funeral Oration;” for discussion, see Salkever, 1993.

⁷ See Stauffer, 2006.

refutation, as per 482c-e). Callicles, the synthesizing figure, confuses maximizing states of pleasure and superiority with happiness, though he goes much further than either Polus or Gorgias in recognizing the radical implications of the doctrines and values they defend (482e f., 486c, 491e-492c). In that respect, although he is more immoderate and tyrannical in his appetites, pride, and intellect than they are, he is in one sense more rational, insofar as he is more able to reveal the grounds in his (albeit mistaken) conception of nature for what he espouses – a theory of the art of rule that will receive fuller articulation in the *Republic*. Already with Callicles, however, there is some indication of the problems associated with that theory, including the question of conflicts between its ideal of manly acquisitiveness and the natural boundaries of human need and desire, as well as between that idea and truth, on the one hand, and friendship, including civic friendship, on the other.⁸

Socrates' theory of the arts in the *Gorgias* contributes to a powerful social-political critique of Athens' imperial democratic regime. We are made to envision a society in which the counterfeit arts of the body and soul produce: (i) vast amounts of pleasure-commodities, appetite-objects, which have no relationship to the true needs of their consumers; (ii) similarly, vast amounts of public pride- or status-objects, paid for by self-indulgent acceptance and votes, created by and sustaining an imperial regime whose values and rationale goes unexamined, because it feeds the immoderate, self-corruptive desires and self-image of its citizens; (iii) corresponding to that, a vast effort of interdependent economic, political and military activity, which produces the means for and dominates the work lives of its citizen-consumer participants; and (iv) a conception of knowledge which, in relation to rationality, eschews the concept of truth for the concept of opinion-power and persuasiveness, based almost entirely on enthymeme, imagery, emotional branding and iconic stories, creating a social context of unexamined 'fake truth' which shapes a false understanding of both public and private good.

⁸ *Grg.* 493a f., 494c and 498b f., 508a.

Socrates' account suggests how the arts, when used to feed and increase immoderate desires, contribute to a luxurious and unjust, albeit somewhat democratic society.⁹

I will return to the topic of justice in discussing the *Republic*, but must first conclude the treatment of the arts and moderation in the *Gorgias*. Earlier, Socrates seemed, in relation to the arts of the soul, to have in mind two forms of psychic art, relating to persuasion in the legal and political systems. In the latter part of the dialogue, Socrates presents moral dialectic as a medical art of the soul, which potentially removes false pride- and appetite-beliefs, and imparts a dialectical test for moral knowledge and the rationality of such beliefs. Socrates' art of dialectic works coercively to expose the lack of moral knowledge and with it, lack of self-knowledge in the interlocutor, who can then admit cathartic shame and open his humbled soul to the principle of truth, as a ruling value over pride and a goad to seeking moral self-knowledge through philosophy.¹⁰ This '*techne* of the soul' fails with Calicles – as it had with Alcibiades – but not without in either case disrupting their intellectual self-confidence, though, in the

⁹ This picture invites comparison to post-modern and neo-Marxist critiques of late capitalist society (e.g. Baudrillard, 1994; Jameson, 1991; Lasch, 1979) which thematize (i) consumption (as opposed to ethical work), in which the 'manipulator-artists' are corporate persons whose profit-oriented commodities service and intensify beliefs, desires, and self-images that go unperceived as images; (ii) internal and external colonization, which reconfigure those persons as narcissistic appetite- value- and opinion-consumers with 'minimal selves', supported by neo-liberal economic imperialist domination of non-citizen (e.g. 3rd world) others; (iii) a corresponding intensification of economic and political-military work life, with a concomitant decline in non-economic, non-colonized institutions of civil society; and (iv) collective irrationality in which its consumer-citizens are ideologically blinded by a media advertising, propaganda, and entertainment system which projects unconscious content, corrupts moral apperception of others, and denies or obscures the concept of truth entirely. For discussion, see Simpson, 1995, p. 135-163; Xavier, 2018.

¹⁰ *Grg.* 458a-b, 470c, 471d f., 474a-b, 475e-476a, 482b-c, *Sph.* 230d. For discussion, see Vlastos, 1983; McKim, 1988; Moss, 2005.

case of Callicles at any rate, this does not appear to avert his attraction to tyranny.¹¹

In addition to a true art of soul-medicine, Socrates also proposes toward the end of the dialogue a true art of soul-gymnastics or legislation, which would inspire its clients toward a well-ordered community, not addicted to false goods and false self-knowledge. This would not, however, seem to be a technical or 'causal' art in the manner of the arts of the body and the fake arts of the soul, since it would have to engage its clients, like the medical art of dialectic, in a deliberative process, which brought out their own beliefs and related them to the construction of rational order in themselves, as well as in their society. In other words, in this art, presumably working with the art of true jurisprudence, the client would have to be a co-creator of the good that was sought, and of the *logos* which justified that good. Something rather like this idea of a kingly and dialogic art of rule is reflected in Socrates' initial dream of a knowledge-based society in the *Charmides* (171de). There, as in the *Gorgias*, 'science' at the highest level is formed by a zetetic and deliberative community – rather than a dictatorial set of political experts, the ideal the future tyrant Critias fantasizes.¹² Thus Socrates' discussion of *techne* in the *Gorgias* ends with the ideal of a moderate, well-ordered society populated by citizens with healthy-moderate bodies and souls, who cooperate in the true arts of rational persuasion and rational-deliberative rule, and who exhibit an epistemically open form of rationality in their practice of self-government.

¹¹ *Smp.* 216a-b, *Chrm.* 176c-d; and West & West, 1986, n. 68. I refer to Plato's Callicles, who may well be a purely literary figure, and Plato's Alcibiades. For a different view of the historical Alcibiades, conceivably reformed by the historical Socrates, see Forde, 1989.

¹² See *Chrm.* 166c, 173a-d; and West & West, 1986, p. 39, n. 48. For discussion, see Schmid, 1998, p. 124-146.

The arts and justice in the Republic

Socrates' theory of the true and counterfeit arts in the *Gorgias* anticipates important themes in the *Republic*, inasmuch as it connects the arts to immoderation in appetites, pride, and thought, and to a holistic cultural-political system which Socrates implies promotes moral and political injustice, Athenian imperial democracy. In the *Republic*, the theory of the arts is developed more completely in relation to the themes of knowledge, justice, and war.

I discuss these aspects of the *Republic* in three segments. First, I consider the overall picture that Plato offers of education with the parable of the cave, and its relation to the theory of the arts. This will largely confirm the account offered in the *Gorgias*, but add some new elements, with respect both to the criterion of rationality and that of benefit. Second, I examine the art of medicine in relation to justice, as well as to Socrates' two criteria for true art. Finally, I examine the ideal of a tyrannical art of politics, seen from the perspective of the relationship between Thrasymachus' account of justice in *Republic* I and the analysis of tyranny in *Republic* VIII-IX. This comparison reveals why Plato believes a tyrannical art of rule must fail, and offers further considerations for his argument that moral control over the arts is essential to the formation of a just city.

The arts in the parable of the cave

The parable of the cave, subjected to *dianoetic eikasia*, poetic-philosophical interpretation, offers an overall framework for Socrates' theory of true and false arts.

At the basic level of conventional life, people's minds and wills are ideologically 'blinkered' and 'constrained' by beliefs and desires formed by the artists of the 'idols' of the social order. The image, at least in one respect, seems to fit both the corrupting manipulators of

the *Gorgias*, as well as the benefactors of the Republic.¹³ The prisoners' lives are governed by trust in aesthetic-rhetorical truth and value images formed by others, with their only cognitive functions being those of empirically organizing them by name and predictive anticipation. In the unjust cities, the prisoners' know-how of living lacks any true understanding of the value or the reasons behind what they are doing, as the artists do not operate on the basis of the prisoners' welfare, nor do they possess, much less transmit, a fully rational account of their method. The ruler-poets of the Republic, by contrast, may claim they are instilling patterns of conduct, emotion, and reason conducive to justice and happiness (cf. esp. 399a-b, 401a-402c), and in this sense their citizens do possess true beliefs concerning themselves, their treatment, and the benefit it affords them. But apart from those among them who rise to monarchy, the citizens are not positioned to examine that claim or those beliefs. In this respect, they do not truly see themselves or each other in full, intellectually and socially emancipated personhood, but act out their lives oriented by the truths, such as the patriotic noble lie, which the rulers have used to shape them.

The second stage of 'artfulness' constitutes the first reflective, as opposed to merely habitual level of social life. Here, the citizens have been released from their blinders and ties, enabled to see how the construction of their social reality operates, and presumably enabled to see each other, including those still blinkered and bound. They must infer the creators of the idols, but that does not seem to be what still limits their self-awareness. Rather, it seems, the light of the cave itself has restricted their ability to see and move. This stage of enlightenment would seem to correspond, were it to stop here, to 'critical-machiavellian' theories like those of Thrasymachus and Callicles, who achieve a quasi-realistic assessment of their societies and the beliefs and desires they instill, but whose thought and agency

¹³ In creating the image, Socrates is himself a "wonderful craftsman" (596c). I refer to the book as the *Republic*, use non-italicized Republic for Socrates' just city. Translations are from Cooper, 1997.

is dimmed by the absence of any other kind of light or desires.¹⁴ In this situation, the alternative is not to rise out of the cave, but only to become a manipulator and artist oneself. Here, clever artists in the unjust cities may claim to know the nature of their subjects and what they believe is good – i.e. may possess a shrewd empirical assessment of common human weaknesses, and what will motivate belief and action – but lacking a fuller appreciation of human nature, these ‘artists’ will not be fully rational, nor will they take up the work of emancipating others for any reason other than to enlist them in their service.¹⁵

At the third level, Socrates envisages someone who has risen to a higher level of a rational understanding in their art, insofar as it has truly universal objects and can prove its truth-claims, based on its governing principles, though he does not have an evaluative understanding of the benefit of his art, nor of its place within nature as a whole.¹⁶ This would be comparable to a scientific doctor who could explain why he was recommending a particular procedure in relation to the beneficial outcome of re-establishing the proper functioning of the leg or eye in the human body, but not how that functioning was relevant to the overall good of the patient and her rightful place in society.¹⁷

¹⁴ See also note 9. The social sciences in late capitalism are distorted, according to C. Wright Mills, by the uncritical conceptualization of knowledge he calls ‘abstract empiricism.’ See Mills, 2000; Taylor, 1971.

¹⁵ Compare the discussions of the corruptions of potential philosophers, e.g. *R.* 490e-495b, esp. the ‘knack’ of wisdom, 493a-c, 537e-539c.

¹⁶ This is most obvious in relation to the mathematical arts, which have no material products (*Grg* 450d-e, 454a-e), and whose practitioners neither dialectically examine its principles (*R.* 501c-511b), set them in relation to other forms of knowledge (537c), or consider the value of mathematics in relation to the whole. On *eikasia*, mathematics, and the line, see Klein, 1965, esp. p. 112-125. For discussion of mathematics and the good, Gill, 2007. For how a narrow perspective on arithmetic might from Plato’s perspective corrupt the conceptualization of that art, see Klein, 1968.

¹⁷ This level of art seems to be considered in the *Charmides* (170a-174e, esp. 171b-c) where Socrates and Critias discuss an artist who knows his art, but not ‘knowledge’ or ‘the good;’ see notes 3 and 12. Prodicus or Theodorus or other craftsmen who understood their art and passed that standard of rationality would

At the fourth stage, taking it to culminate in the daytime inference to the Good as the inclusive illuminating principle of all cognition and agency, Socrates pictures a philosopher who thinks she has risen to a complete dialectical understanding of the operation of her art, including an evaluative understanding of its benefit. This image includes a comprehensive relationship of reason, through the idea of the good, to all of nature and society, but it does not seem to include a creative relationship to others or to self-motion. It is the image of a purely theoretical 'scientific-dialectical' artist, not practically or lovingly related to other persons (except perhaps teachers or other theorists, cf. 528b, 539c). This image contrasts to that of the 'dialectical-emancipative' philosopher who returns to the cave, carefully serving to free others and perhaps also herself (as there she too would be subject to its dimming light, though presumably she would also, in the interpersonal process of guidance, recurrently examine and renew her vision).¹⁸

The final, highest form of social-cognitive art and life is represented by the erotic, emancipative artists of the cave, whose work presupposes not only *logos*, dialectic and recollection, but *ethos*, practical habituation, resulting in political wisdom and virtue.¹⁹ These artists draw on sharper and more wonderful cognitive tools (e.g. discursive images of the astral gods, thinking, and living animals), as well as an element of coercion (e.g. intellectual medicine). Their art is informed by a synoptic activity of reflection,

fall short of the ideal standard, which includes concern with how the art contributes to the good of their clients. Another example might be a judge who knew the application of his city's laws to practical circumstances, but not why its constitution was good. Cf. the legalistic believer in chapter 1 of Averroes, 1976.

¹⁸ Note Socrates' epistemic caution in this context both in relation to himself and his fellow 'citizens' in the inquiry, 506c-e, 533a, compared to the picture of epistemic closure at 534b-c, 540a-b. For criticism of this conception of 'scientific' philosophy as it applies to the Republic, see Howland (2018) and Weiss (2016), who seek to uncover the 'coming-into-being' of the city.

¹⁹ For a recent discussion of *logos* and *ethos* in the ancient art of living, see Sellars, 2003. For the philosopher as erotic, see *Smp.* 207d, 209a-d and 210a f., *R.* 475b f., 485c, 499b, 501d. *R.* 500c-d indicates ethical wisdom is possible without political wisdom, but 539e-540a suggests otherwise.

together with a synthesis of the art of self-gain with that of other-benefit, in the theory and practice of living. This image, like Socrates' initial dream in the *Charmides*, leaves open the possibility of a political form of rationality that does not presuppose epistemic closure.

Thus the parable of the cave can be interpreted to represent five levels of art from the standpoint of rationality, although ultimately only one, from the standpoint of full benefit and goodness.

The art of medicine in the *Republic*

The discussion of the arts in the *Republic* adds several new elements, in addition to the overall conception of knowledge and human life suggested by the three great metaphors and discussion of Books VI-VII. These new elements include: (i) Thrasymachus' conception of the arts on the model of the shepherd; (ii) the moral or cultural arts represented by *musike* and *gymnastike*, which fall neither into the arts of the body nor into the arts of the soul in the *Gorgias*; (iii) a reorientation of the arts from the goal of bringing about moderation, to the goal of bringing about justice, which is understood not in relation to the body and soul separately, but in relation to the good of the whole person in community; (iv) the identification of the person's good with 'minding their own business,' i.e. focusing on their ethical work and contribution to the common good; (v) the realization that the arts in the just city may not be as rationally advanced as those in unjust cities; (vi) the implication that at least the political arts in each type of regime will reflect the dominant value and power of that regime; and (vii) the realization that the arts may not only have to work in harmony with nature, but coercively. Whereas in the *Gorgias*, the true arts are clearly identified as arts of peaceful relations and harmony among men, gods, and the cosmos as whole (508a), in Kallipolis this is no longer obviously the case, as there is a tension between art and nature in certain of its key

institutions, e.g. those relating to procreation and *eros*.²⁰ This poses the question whether the Socratic assumption of a scientific *techné* of government – in which the discussion of dialectic in Book VII seems to culminate (540a) – is justified, and the Republic is even possible.

The first important theoretical innovation concerning the arts in the *Republic* arises in the debate between Socrates and Thrasymachus. On Thrasymachus' model, the distinction between the true and counterfeit arts will typically be blurred in the unjust cities, as the art of the shepherd may include corruption both of Socrates' rationality criterion and his client-benefit criterion.²¹ This aspect of Thrasymachus' model is also relevant when we consider the fine arts (*musiké*) in the Republic (including religion). While Socrates would argue that these arts, unlike those of the unjust cities, are oriented to their clients' true benefit, it is evident they are part of an encompassing theoretical and practical regime intended to fix both standards of moral rationality and standards of desire, role-responsibility, and well-being in the citizenry. The moral arts are prototypical of the model of the arts in the Republic as opposed to the model in the *Gorgias*, insofar as they are neither of the body nor of the soul understood as purely rational, but of the 'body-soul', an aesthetically formed product, who is not educationally prepared to question the rationality of his life-world, because he is so deeply habituated, mentally, socially, and physically, in it. The spiritual warfare the rulers carry out with respect to the citizenry is complete;

²⁰ This tension is evident from the beginning of the city's construction (cf. 370d vs. 373b), 458d-e vs. 461e, 466d-467b, to the city's eventual demise, 546a-547a. Cf. also Howland, 2018, p. 177; and Weiss, 2016, p. xxx.

²¹ Applied to medicine in contemporary democratic-capitalist society, this would reference not only type II malpractice (proscribing unnecessary procedures) and TCM acupuncture, along with 'false advertising' concerning specific products, but the production of research-based 'fake knowledge' (e.g. denying links between specific drugs or pollutants and illness), and more generally persuasion-based 'fake common knowledge' forming the public's conception of what constitutes 'health' and 'well-being', and thus of what services they need. In the fake art of medicine, what constitutes benefit is defined by the art of gain (war). Cf. Anderson, 2002; Baudrillard, 1994 on 'hyperreality', the social condition in which the real and imaginary are confused, and note 9 above.

and for the few who do not conform and do not do their own work, but meddle in activities external to them and the common good, the alternative is first shaming, finally exile or death.

The art of medicine in the Republic is thus secondary to the gymnastic-developmental arts, broadly understood, which seek to ensure the ‘civic fitness’ of body, will, and mind needed for a productive and ethical work force and the officers to manage it. By this reconceptualization, the line between physical and mental health is redrawn, to include the former within the latter.²² This change affects both the kind of rationality the medical art will attain within the Republic as opposed to other societies, e.g. the democracy, and the kind of benefit it will aim at. As Socrates acknowledges, the ‘technical-rationality’ side of the art will be less advanced in a Platonic city, because there is a greater need for extreme medical therapy in other societies, due to their unnatural strains and conflicts relating to impulsive desire, material and cultural poverty, exploitation, imperial and civil warfare (cf. 408ce). As a result, there will be less experience with the range of illnesses and injuries found in those societies, e.g. sexual diseases, addiction, mental sicknesses of various kinds, ill health due to lack of medical care, immobilizing war wounds and unemployment, etc. and there will also be no profit motive to encourage their study and treatment. The critical distinction again consists in the way in which the standards of rationality and benefit are oriented to ethical work and public, not private health in the Republic, as opposed to unjust societies.

Medical rationality in the Republic is understood in relation to the good of the whole person, their ethical work, and the public good. As noted, this does not mean the patient can explain why she receives the treatment she is given, and the physician does not, as part of her practice, teach the patient entirely why she does what she does, relative to their nature. Whereas Plato’s model of the ‘free’ medical patient in *Laws* IV (720ae) imagines someone who co-determines, with informed consent, the physician’s course of treatment, the

²² R. 412ab and prior discussion of the art of medicine and the health, 405a f.

'prisoner-citizens' of the Republic, other than the rulers, are in one respect on the model of 'slavish' patients, insofar as they are initially treated with lies ('drugs,' e.g. stories of the gods, the noble lie) to 'persuade' them to act on what the rulers advise. In this respect, the Republic might be called by modern readers tyrannical. However, it is not a form of 'hard', i.e. selfish and violent tyranny, but rather one that is largely 'soft', i.e. culturally induced, responsive to its citizens' needs and interests, and meant to be beneficial. Furthermore, the citizens *are* free and arguably self-governing, insofar as they willingly apply the rulers' guidance in carrying out their lives, and possess true beliefs concerning how carrying it out that way is best for them, given their place in the community.²³

Medical rationality in the Republic also involves the notion that there is an *essential* relation between the patient's nature and its good and conceives of that nature differently than how it is understood in the unjust societies. This has implications for medical diagnosis, medical treatment, and medical research. (i) Whereas the 'causes' of physical and mental illness in unjust societies tend to be located in the private individual, the medical art in the Republic would take a holistic view of the etiology of physical and mental illness, defining them differently. Someone who did not acquire a mentally healthy

²³ On this reading, the auxiliaries and the material-productive class act rationally and for their own good, out of a condition of psychic harmony as instilled by right religion and culture (377b f.), ethical work (441d-e; also 406c-e, 401c), and social life, living justly and in a relationship of mutual respect and regard for the other citizens (cf. 463a-b, 547c, 590d). For discussion of the honor- and city-loving class, see Gill, 1985; also Kamtekar, 1998. The argument is more difficult regarding the productive class, but insofar as they choose to live justly (441d-e; also 406c-e) and moderately (389d-e), and find satisfaction in each part of their lives and their lives as a whole, they would seem to practice moderation and justice for their harmonizing value in their lives and relations with others, not simply the external appetitive or social goods they bring. The soldier in the Republic would do his job and not obey an illegal order, even if it meant demotion; the craftsman would do his job and honor his (verbal) contract, even if it cost him profit (425c-d); each would do it because it was right. Learning in the Republic is free as well (536e); despite the suggestion of coercion in the ascent depicted in the cave, the learner must not reject the guide's leadership, but consent to it and commit freely to the labors, studies, and tests of virtue involved in higher learning.

attitude toward their physical well-being, their work, and the social order as a whole, even their death, would not be healthy, and the medical analyst would look for an explanation within the patient's life-training, e.g. an insufficient habituation or socialization in right religion, music, and gymnastics.²⁴ This is not to say that illness would not occur within the Republic, even ideally; only that sickness, i.e. wallowing in it, would not. (ii) Treatment would also differ. In the unjust societies, the benefit for the patient is understood relative to the standards of individual organic balance, pain-avoidance, and life-preservation, by whatever means prove generally to be effective, and medicine will be thought of as acting to *change* the course of nature to attain the patient's self-perceived benefit. But in the Republic, medicine is thought of as assisting the patient's nature to self-heal and restore oneself to focusing on one's own work and place in the whole. Thus, while the same narrowly causal explanation might be offered for a treatment in the other regimes as in the Republic, the relation of that explanation to their true nature would be occluded. (iii) Finally, this re-orientation of care would inevitably impact medical research as well, not only because doctor would know less about how to treat extreme and unusual physical and mental illnesses, but also because they would be less interested in attaining a causal understanding of the operation of these aspects of nature, which are considered alien to true nature rather than as part of it. Their chief goal would be to identify, release, and draw out the healthy capacities in persons who are not deeply and chronically sick, so that they could return to their own work and reconnect with the whole.

The criterion of benefit will also be transformed in the Republic, insofar as the subject of medical care is understood within the framework of the overall health of the body-mind complex, and that in relation to the role of the citizen as a 'healthy,' i.e. productive and ethical part of the community as a whole – an understanding which

²⁴ See Burnyeat, 1999, on the holism of the Republic's moral-cultural-educational system; also Taylor, 2000.

has been severely criticized.²⁵ This is why medical care has a much more decidedly utilitarian appearance than in the unjust societies. This is most evident in relation to euthanasia and abortion/infanticide, and the cultivation of mental health in relation to them, but it also applies to all health matters including procreation and 'healthy' intercourse. In the Republic, the healthy citizen will want to forego extreme medical treatment, if they cannot return to their ethical work and offer their contribution to the city, and they would think of accepting that situation as rational.²⁶ Their sense of justice will demand it – having lost the capacity to 'do his own work' and having become a burden to his community, the 'Republican' would wish to find another role, or slip away; both fathers and mothers in this state would understand that if their children cannot develop that capacity they would be condemned to wasteful, destructive lives. Similarly, a healthy citizen would have learned to want to mate and procreate or not, depending on its relation to their ethical work and the common good. While they might balk at the coercive manipulation of the lottery, were they to know of it, they would in principle accept the idea that the ruler's reason should govern the spirited class's erotic desires, and those should rule over those of the materially reproductive class.²⁷ In Kallipolis, the good of the *polis*, justice and the common good, takes precedence over the good of the *oikos*, private well-being, so that, to the greatest degree possible, the right hierarchy of social reproduction would occur and each generation might have more virtuous citizens than the last. Nevertheless, there is a clear tension here between the political art and human nature, which is indicated by Socrates' reluctance in Book

²⁵ For a powerful, but narrowly political interpretation and criticism of Socrates' theory of mental health, see Kenny, 1969. This effort, by contrast, seeks to read its political surface with an ethical lens. On this way of reading Plato, see Annas, 1998, p. 72-105; R. 592a-b.

²⁶ R. 406d-e. Compare the argument for 'death with dignity' in contemporary bioethics.

²⁷ Thus establishing 'right order' in their own souls, guided by reason, spirited attachment to noble activities and pleasures and aversion to base ones, and a happy level of desire-satisfaction in their appetites, and with that achieving a virtuous life in community with other citizens (443e-444a). See Kraut, 1973; Gill, 1985.

V to discuss the possibility of actualizing the institution of marital communism, and his acknowledgement in Book VIII that it is in the area of erotic life and reproduction that the eventual collapse of the Republic must be found.²⁸ This reinforces the impression that governance in the Republic, insofar as it operates from the position of a ‘closed’ scientific stance, may be doomed to failure.

In contrast to this strict public health and well-being model, the more individualistic and democratic medical art of a Herodicus (406ab), which sought to extend life for all citizens would unjustly distribute medical attention and resources from those to whom it belonged (young or fit) to those for whom it was inappropriate (old and unfit), i.e. to the private from the public good.²⁹ Similarly the provision of medical care that extended the lives of children who would never be fit for ethical work would be unjust, given the austerity of the community with respect to material well-being. Medical systems in other regimes would not only distribute inappropriate kinds of treatment, for those who did not merit and would not use it to wise ends; more importantly, they would fail to habituate all citizens to the right conception of how medicine relates to mental and social well-being.

The just city would instill a healthy attitude toward a self-chosen life of public service, with self-chosen good love relations and a self-

²⁸ Plato appears to have a very strong sense of the plasticity of human desire, especially in philosophers, and the capacity of ‘health art’ broadly construed to shape it (485c-d; but cf. also 588d f.). In the *Republic* this includes guardian men and women wrestling naked in competition and the selection of reproductive partners by rational government rather than patriarchal family or individual will, in the *Laws* the elimination of homosexual desire (*contra* Aristophanes in the *Symposium*). The innate motive for love of one’s own would seem to be ignored or suppressed (387d vs. 603e), together with the aversion to incest (461e). Cf. notes 18 and 20, and Aristotle’s critique in his *Politics* 2.1-4; also *Pl. R.* 603e-604c, 605c-d, 606a-c on what reason conceals of nature.

²⁹ Cf. contemporary debates in bioethics and public health ethics over expenditures on end-of-life care vs. positive early life training and education, cosmetic surgery, “forever young” models of old age, whether viagra should be provided by Medicare, state ordered immunization (e.g. measles), and in general the positive notion of health and health promotion as behavior modification; cf. Holland, 2007.

chosen good death, together with the norm of equal opportunity to achieve such a life. Managing this process of distribution and correction, both for oneself and for the health of the whole city, would not be strictly scientific, but a matter of judgment informed both by existing circumstances, including foreign relations, and by a larger vision of health than that found in other societies. The unjust societies would not validate such an ideal of the 'just and healthy life,' such experiences of love and death, or consider the opportunity for them a deep aspect of the social bond.

The art of medicine in the Republic thus operates as a subset of the art of rule and spiritual warfare (including sometimes coercion in the form of deception) for mental health, subordinating private to public health and well-being. Nonetheless, Socrates concludes that insofar as individual well-being is grounded in doing one's own work as part of a community of individuals who respect each other's right and happiness to do the same, the citizens of the Republic experience extraordinary social health, mutual good feelings, and self-actualization.³⁰

The tyrannical art of politics in the *Republic*

In this section, I compare the ideal of a tyrannical art of politics found in Thrasymachus' account of justice in *Republic* I and Socrates' account of tyranny in *Republic* VIII-IX. This analysis will reveal why Plato believes the tyrant's art of rule must fail, and offers further considerations for his argument that moral control over the arts is essential to the formation and preservation of a just society. While there is evidence, noted above, that even in the Republic an epistemically tyrannical or dogmatic art of rule is doomed to failure, this segment of the dialogue shows that the tyrant's own failure is not due merely to his presumption of knowledge, and its occlusion of aspiration to higher goods, but to the corruption of character which

³⁰ This point does not seem to me to be fully incorporated in the discussion by Kenny (1969), or in unnuanced critiques of the *Republic* such as Popper's *Open Society and its Enemies*.

attends and feeds that presumption. The tyrant, precisely because he follows his passion for rule and self-will, rather than learning from others and seeking wisdom, invariably debases his character and that of those around him. Even if he could in theory apply the more cunning art of rule that a Thrasymachus might counsel, he cannot, for he cannot order himself to its prudence.

In Book I, Socrates wins the debate with Thrasymachus, but not the war, in part because Thrasymachus does not reply as effectively to Socrates' criticisms as he might have.³¹ It is not obvious that Socrates' model of the political artist in the strict sense is superior to Thrasymachus' model based on the art of the shepherd. If government at any level were to function in the manner of a corporation like McDonald's or Citibank, it would follow Thrasymachus' model, not that of Socrates. For Socrates, the art of politics or kingly rule is not directed at the benefit of the rulers, even if it is also to their advantage, and although it involves some level of deception and coercion, it is chiefly an art of peace, not war. But for Thrasymachus, the art of politics would be essentially an art of war-making, insofar as it was not directed toward the good of the whole, and only toward the good of others to the extent that that good or perceived good was necessary to achieving the good of the ruler. Furthermore, whereas Socrates' art of war – issuing in his 'soft' tyranny – relies on minimal use of force, preferring persuasion and the willing consent of the citizenry to the laws and policies of the rulers, Thrasymachus makes no such distinction.

Despite these differences, we will see that Thrasymachus' model of the ruler's art might conform to something similar to the Socratic model. But first let's consider how he might better have responded to Socrates' three criticisms of the notion that injustice was more advantageous than justice. For (i) the criticism that no artist wishes to 'outdo' his fellow artists ignores the distinction Thrasymachus

³¹ For overall general analyses of the *Republic*, including Book I, see Annas (1981) and Irwin (1995); for what I take to be the correct understanding of its overall framework, Gill, 1996.

might make between 'outdoing' in the sense of technical excellence vs. 'outdoing' in the sense of competition. Certainly no artist would wish to do anything but meet the standard of excellence that was normative within their art, e.g. compose and play a complex piece of music of great beauty (this model of art being static/classic, rather than dynamic/innovative), but it is just as true that artists often strive to be the best in their field, and be elevated above all others. Socrates might reply that the quest for excellence would trump the competitive quest for recognition, but to that Thrasymachus could reply that this was exactly where the art of rule was different: being essentially competitive for rule, winning the contest for power *was* the final standard, ruling 'with great skill' measured by that.

Similarly (ii) Thrasymachus can agree that justice, in the sense of compacts that form and sustain trust and cooperation, is necessary even among a band of robbers.³² But his point would be that this is useful not only for the band to prey on others, but also to keep from being preyed on. Socrates was ignoring the truth that 'moral neutrality' is not an option in the competitive real world, where one is either a hammer or an anvil, which includes participating either in a winning or a losing community, and hopefully becoming the ruler of a vast and successful community (e.g. a corporation competing both for market share and the best workers, or an ancient empire such as Athens). Thrasymachus could point to the shepherd seeking to gain the loyalty of his dogs (warriors, managers), in order to herd and feed healthy sheep in the fields, normally taking them to market for shearing, not slaughter.

Finally (iii), Thrasymachus might reject Socrates' final argument against him, based on the notion that the function of the soul was to "take care of things, ruling, deliberating, and the like" (353d) or more simply, skillfulness in ruling. Whereas Calicles foolishly insisted that the wise tyrant would not rationally rule himself, Thrasymachus

³² This model fits not only to Glaucon's notion of the social compact unhappily made to protect oneself from other robbers, but to Polemarchus' definition, as well as to the imperial Athens of the *Gorgias*, regarded as a band of robbers (pirates) preying on the Aegean cities.

could insist he would, whenever and insofar as his power was threatened. By prudently restraining his ambitions and using them to curb his appetites for pleasure, even offering timely benefits to the people, he would advance his power and rule over them.³³ For is not the true function or work (*ergon*) of the human soul actualized by ruling in a tyrannical or kingly fashion, integrating self-rule with the goal of maximum rule over a maximum of others – and is that not the greatest and finest cause of happiness for a human being?³⁴

Thrasymachus would therefore reject the concessions that a ‘bad’ soul takes care of things poorly and that ‘justice’ is a soul’s virtue. In fact, an able, but conventionally bad soul – i.e. one who practices the ‘unjust’ art of tyrannical rule – takes care of things for himself very well indeed, guaranteeing that he gets the most of what is good (including pleasure), gets what he values most highly (the most noble, and least slavish human functioning), and is most realistic about life (that it is more about war than peace). By contrast, justice as conventionally understood is not constitutive of or conducive to virtue or happiness, except perhaps in the collective sense indicated in section (ii) above, but rather is ‘noble simplicity’ or ‘goodness of heart’ (348cd).³⁵ Granted, the tyrant would want to rule in such a way that others would seem benefited by his rule, and would willingly accept his commands and do his will, but even if his tyrannical rule actually did in a limited way benefit them, that would from his perspective not be itself an end but merely necessary means to the true end, his own well-being, which was actualized in his knowledge of government and exercise of power over them.

With this preliminary conception of the tyrannical art of rule in mind, let’s turn to Plato’s account of the tyrant in Books VIII-IX. To compare Thrasymachus’ conception of the tyrannical art and Socrates’ account, it is important to consider all of the regimes and

³³ This prudential and benevolent form of tyranny is what Simonides recommends to the tyrant in Xenophon’s *Hiero*. For discussion, see Strauss, 1963.

³⁴ Cf. *Grg* 452d; compare *R.* 353d vs. 345e f., 519d f.

³⁵ On the translation, see Shorey, 1930, p. 84, n. b.

character-types of the fallen societies, as well as his argument for the superiority of the life of philosophical monarchs vs. that of tyrants. In these discussions, Socrates shows that the tyrant is driven by contradictions within his own character, and by his failure to exercise a proper art of self- and other-rule, leading to his own isolation, dehumanization, ignorance, and enslavement. This inner self-destructiveness is not reflected directly in Thrasymachus' theory of the tyrannical art of rule in Book I, which otherwise might offer the basis for an argument against Socrates' theory of justice. But the tyrant, by his choices and actions, destroys his ability to effectively rule others as well as himself.

Socrates argues somewhat infamously that tyranny arises 'naturally' out of democracy, defining this type of regime by a number of distinctive features: (i) it regards *eleutheria*, freedom, as the foremost human good, and grounds all value in it; (ii) it is pluralistic, containing individuals of every other sort within itself, including those with every form of erotic passion; (iii) it came about through a democratic revolution which overthrew a plutocracy, but did not undo the vast harm of that regime, which included creating a dangerous class of 'drones' who lack their own work; (iv) it includes great tolerance for moral differences, and belief in natural human equality and fitness for political office; (v) its trans-generational character-type is a 'liberal' youth who himself lacks a clear hierarchy of values, lifework, or lasting goals other than personal pleasure. Finally (vi) it is a society torn by two kinds of civil wars: (a) a political/economic war between the factions of the rich and poor, exacerbated by the greed and fear of the rich, and by the need, indignant anger, and envy of the working class poor; and (b) a cultural/moral war between the 'conservative' voices for honor and property, law and tradition, civic virtue and piety, and 'revolutionary' voices for freedom and equality, anarchy and novelty, hedonism and skepticism.³⁶

³⁶ Note Socrates' picture of democracy focuses almost entirely on its internal, domestic aspect – the citizen-warrior, imperialistic theme prominent in the *Gorgias* is absent. The democracy does include, in addition to sophists, philosophers who

The internal contradictions of the society – economic freedom vs. political equality, civic piety and virtue vs. skeptical relativism – become ever more evident, dividing the state into warring political and ideological camps, which in turn produces a dynamic inner logic of fear and anger, mistrust and attack (563e, 565b-c). Soon hatred and revenge among the warring factions begin to possess the society and large-scale civil disorder, lawlessness, mistrust and violence begin to spread, including a breakdown in recognition of common moral values and language. (Thucydides details this logic from a political-historical perspective in his description of the civil war in Corcyra in *History of the Peloponnesian War* 3.82-4.) The common people, the *demos* – as well as some of the rich – look to a ‘strong man’ who will govern by force of will and readiness to act outside conventional law to restore what he claims will be order (565c).³⁷

The development of the tyrannical regime in Book VIII then proceeds through several stages, which are loosely mirrored in the description of the development of the tyrant himself in Book IX.³⁸

enjoy its freedom of speech and thought, which makes it, in one respect, the best and most heroic of the fallen cities.

³⁷ For discussion, influenced by Plato, of the relationship between Donald Trump, tyranny, and democracy, see Sullivan, 2016. For other current applications, see Stanley, 2016; 2018.

³⁸ The stages in VIII include: (i) he pretends to be a gentleman, but soon enflames the bitter and envious poor with promises he can satisfy only by stealing from domestic “enemies,” the rich and ‘noble’ (566e, 569a) vs. enflaming his own desires (573d-e); (ii) he makes peace with the rich if they submit to him, thus rejecting communism and breaking his promises, after which, having temporarily established domestic order, he initiates wars against foreign “enemies,” which increases the people’s sense of need for him (566e-67a) vs. needing money and harming others to gain it (574a-b), (iii) when his continuous war-making is criticized in public, he attacks free speech, silencing critics, and soon after is waging war against all decent and virtuous or otherwise outstanding citizens (567a-c) vs. his greed for wealth and outdoing all, ignoring his parents’ objections, and alienation from his heritage for new loves (574a-b); (iv) he expands the guard around him with ‘drones’ who have no work of their own, but share his love of lawless pleasures and violence, in contrast to decent people, foreign and domestic, who now hate him, adds to his guard ‘slaves’ taken from free citizens, and robs his parents, private homes, and common, sacred treasures for gain (567d-e, 568d-e, 574d) vs. repudiates all noble and pious opinions, replacing them with lawless, shameless, ungoverned ones, and establishes his unlimited passions as his inner

These stages describe the transformation of the strong man into a bold and vicious tyrant, with a bodyguard of 'drones,' similarly violent men (and their violent desires) to defend him first from his enemies, 'the few,' and eventually from his supposed friends, 'the many,' so by the end virtually everyone, man and god, is his enemy and slave (565e-569e, 577c; compare 572e-573e). When we compare the two accounts, we see that the tyrant (and tyranny) is shaped by two tremendous forces for vice: (i) his acts of violence, which nurture blood-lust and cruelty in him (565c), together with (ii) "a powerful erotic love, like a great winged drone," installed as the leader of his idle desires (572e). This transforming experience – potential in every human soul (572b, 577a) – is initiated by the immoderate arts that Socrates condemns in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* II-III, then led by the completely unrestrained and counterfeit arts ("voices") of rhetoric and sophistry, which nurture in him not only deeply false desires, but deeply false beliefs and a deeply false self-concept.³⁹

The "winged drone" of Dark Eros Socrates speaks of as taking hold in the tyrant's soul is often taken to be sexual lust, but a better characterization would be a deep covetousness and expansive, angry, egotistical will to superiority (*pleonexia*) which 'guides' the tyrant's soul, and eroticizes all of his loves (for honor, wealth, freedom and pleasure), such that they are no longer contained with the boundaries of morally and interpersonally responsible satisfaction, but are

autocrat (573b, 574d-575a); and (v) when the people resist, he violently suppresses any insurrection or opposition to his will to fix himself as 'master' over a society of fearful slaves (569a-c) vs. 573c, 575c-e, where he has become slave to his desires and self-flattering opinions, 576a, 577d, 579b-e to that. On the tyrant's 'dark *eros*' see also note 41 below. On his self-isolation from participation in political and contemplative community, see e.g. 575a, 576a, 578e, 579b, 582b.

³⁹ Socrates identifies these 'voices' as tyrannical in 560b-e, given the absence of proper music education, noble ways of living, and true *logoi* in the soul – "the best guardians of men whom the gods love" – but he indicates the democrat, albeit unfocused, accepts the restraints of traditional shame and law. The transition to the tyrannical-criminal regime involves release from those restraints, and a more deep-seated, resentful, and aggressive willfulness among the people (563d), in the tyrant-criminal himself egotism and lawlessness, fed by cruel violence, power, unrestrained desire, and shameless, unreasoned opinions (see notes 38, 41). For a critique of music related to tyranny, see Scruton, 2002.

irrational and insatiable.⁴⁰ Unlike the timocrat, oligarch, and democrat, who respected and experienced themselves as part of an interpersonal fabric of shame (*aidos*) and law (*nomos*), and had no inner desire to harm and subjugate other human beings, the tyrant and his political culture, henchmen and ‘mob’ does have that desire (e.g. the Nazis, or predator banks). The tyrant is completely transformed, at the level of mind, social affinity, and dominant pleasures: he revels, with warlord pride, in his acts of dominance and pleasure, the language of morality has for him become a foolish sham, and other persons do not exist for him, except as threats and marks, or quasi-worshipping admirers.

If we look for differences between Thrasymachus’ political art aimed at achieving and sustaining rule, and the ‘art’ of tyrannical rule, several features stand out: Thrasymachus’ art did not exclude (i) the possibility of ruling by persuasion, rather than violence, even of ruling within a framework of law; (ii) of appealing to and cultivating the better, rather than basest desires and beliefs in his followers; (iii) of peace-making and peace-propaganda together with defensive, not imperial war-making and factional hate-nourishing as public activities; (iv) of avoiding, as much as possible, arrogance and cruelty to others; (v) of utilizing, rather than destroying traditional institutions, distinguished persons, and the free working class; (vi) of cultivating a sense of common good and domestic fraternity; (vii) of

⁴⁰ Whereas the democrat resists claims to authority over his private freedom, the ruthless, ‘ego-pathic’ tyrant will not broker any obstacles to his autocratic will. I take 563e “in the end” to refer to the transformation of the prototypical democrat into the tyrant. The democrat’s values are grounded in his freedom, his mere preferences, but he nonetheless has a social conscience, lives emotionally within and respects the boundary of the law – in contrast to the ‘mad’, sociopathic, eventually psychopathic tyrant, who does not; see e.g. 571d, 573b-c, 574e-575a. The tyrant takes a modern ‘technological’ view of nature and of other persons, as resources for use, if possible without constraint, for the achievement of his ends. Like technology, his form of ‘purposive rationality’ is closed to questioning its ends, and thus to the world of human meaning and love – the realm of friendship and community, the true, the just, the beautiful, the good – receptiveness to all of which is occluded by his obsessive will to power. Compare Simpson, 1995, p. 13-24.

regarding knowledge as a quest for truth, rather than the will of the tyrant. Granted that the commitment to these factors was contingent on the ultimate criterion of achieving and sustaining rule, these differences point to much deeper corruption of the political arts in the tyrannical polity itself and a much deeper disorder within the tyrant as ruler, than Thrasymachus' art of rule need imply.

These differences point to Plato's reasons for thinking that the art of tyrannical rule would fail, and that the failure would lie not simply in the model of rule suggested by Thrasymachus, but in the corruption of the tyrant's mind and character by his violent deeds and lack of restraining moral education. Just as in the development of the tyrannical state, so in the development of the tyrannical soul, there is a 'dynamic logic of dissolution' which stands behind the inner conflict, eventual isolation, irrationality, and misery of the regime. Whereas the political art in the Republic coincides with 'soft tyranny,' involving the cultivation of civic health, fraternity, and concord, the tyrant's 'art' of rule, based on violence, flattery, and bribery, creates a near-universal state of fear, conflict, and mistrust.

This logic of dissolution plays out on both a private and public level. The tyrant's insatiable greed for domination, together with his lusts for honor, wealth, pleasure, and radical freedom, render him incapable of being satisfied not only quantitatively, but intrinsically, because the internal contradictions and consequences of his vices ultimately frustrate them. On the ethical level, his insatiable quest for honor is undermined by his proud assertion of superiority, making others' praise that of unworthy slaves or self-serving flattery he should mistrust; his greed for wealth leads him to acquire it by bankrupting and harming others, who (not altogether unjustifiably) hate him for it; his lust for sex leads to ever-new companions, a process that alienates him from loving family and friendship relationships; his lust for freedom to do whatever he wants, manifested in arrogance and cruelty, gives rise to moral shock, social repulsion, and enmity, when brought out in public. His desires are so strong and self-willed, he is increasingly callous, and this brutality, along with his bullying and love of war, alienates him still further

from others.⁴¹ The interpersonal language of moral life becomes increasingly opaque and irrelevant to him. He lives in a world of desires and preferences, rather than one grounded in norms and evaluations he makes his own by critical examination with others. Nor does he care for or understand other persons, because he does not care or even think about their freedom, their notions of benefit, or whether they might be right. The more alienated he becomes, the more he lives in a fantasy world, perhaps one where he gains cruel revenge on everyone who does not look up to him as they should (cf. high school mass murderers or terrorists). He is dimly aware of these difficulties, yet nonetheless settles a lawless will for self-aggrandizement as the governing principle in the ‘citadel of his mind’ and seeks to live by it in the world (573a-b, 574e-575a).

Once the tyrant is free to externalize and validate his fantastic, ‘mad’ desires and beliefs in public (574e), he becomes a true tyrant, and the logic of political dissolution takes over. At first he lives his dream of war-making glory, fabulous wealth, unlimited sex and power, and, worshipped by his mindless, slavish followers for all that he represents, he acts out his tyrannical *eros* for violent godhood. But eventually he runs into what theorists of war call ‘friction,’ the circumstances of fortune – which he had previously mastered by ruthless boldness and will – that slow and finally stop his advance. He has alienated too many; vigilant enemies surround his household and he knows all too well he must be incessantly on guard against threats, deceptions, and incursions to his great honor, wealth, power, from others at least some of whom he must suspect are just as deeply violent and deceitful of temper and mind as he is, so that in the end he can trust no one (576a, 578d-e). (Nor would he lack for numerous vengeful enemies, though Socrates, focused on the inner evil of tyranny, does not mention these.)

⁴¹ On the tyrannical passion for honor, see 549d and 567b, e, 575e); tyrannical passion for wealth: 553c-d and 555d-e, 568e, 574a; tyrannical lust for sex: 573d, 574b-c, also 571b-d; tyrannical lust for freedom, manifested in domination and cruelty: 569b, 575a, also 571d; brutal callousness toward others: 569b, 574b-e; related vices: 580a. Compare the discussions of these vices in Taylor, 2006.

Protected by his victories and vast cocoon of flattery, the tyrant had come to believe in his own invincibility and indestructibility, but now, when he needs the greatest loyalty, he (and his government) have lost the loyalty of the better citizens, including the working class; now, when he needs more than ever the capacity to process critical information, which would enable him to understand his weaknesses and his enemies' strengths, he is too deeply arrogant to know how to seek or if found, receive it.⁴² Having degraded and debased all around him, he ends up living in a claustrophobic world, an isolation chamber of his own heart and mind surrounded by enemies who openly despise him and a small army of alien slaves whose only allegiance depends on their own greed and fear, so he must begin to live entirely for them, and provide for them what they say they want. The man who might have mastered an 'art of rule' which made all others his slaves, becomes in the end a man whose rule and very survival depend on being the slave of others (577d, 579a-b).

The *techné* of government defended by Socrates in the *Republic* depends, for its origin and ongoing success, not only on the most fortuitous circumstances (541a), but on the claim that its rulers have attained absolute, i.e. seemingly scientific knowledge of the good, and of human and all of nature (534a, 537c, 540a). This claim is undercut in the dialogue with respect to the tension between art and nature in certain key institutions, particularly those relating to procreation and *eros*, leaving Plato's readers to question not only the desirability of Socrates' utopia as a political ideal, but whether it is possible. Nevertheless, it offers an art of government which, in its appreciation of the moral arts, of a life centered in ethical work, its educational system, and its ideal of moral health, is meritocratic and benevolent, aimed at securing the needs and promoting the interests of its citizens.

The tyrannical art of government suggested by Callicles, Critias, and Thrasymachus, by contrast, is doomed to failure, not only by its

⁴² See *Men.* 80a-b and the discussion of *amathia* in Klein, 1965, p. 185, 237.

presumptuous claim to be a science of perfect rule over others, but by the character and emotions of the men who seek it. The tyrant's 'art,' debased and blinded by his nature, creates a regime in which the deluded warlord behind its activities gets trapped in an intensifying cycle of insatiable desire, violence, ignorance, and fear, both externally and internally. That regime cannot survive, because it is inherently unstable in relation to others, because he is inherently unstable within himself. For a while, and under extraordinary social circumstances, the tyrant can carry the day, enlist legions, keep his proud regime expanding. But a day of reckoning is ahead, a great turn in the wheel of his fortune.⁴³

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