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Fall 1993

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### Recommended Citation

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**SOCRATES ON THE DECLINE AND FALL OF REGIMES:**

**BOOKS 8 AND 9 OF THE *REPUBLIC***

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Published in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* (Fall 1993): 15-39.

## Socrates on the Decline and Fall of Regimes: Books VIII and IX of the Republic

At the end of Book 9 of the Republic, Socrates describes the human soul as an amalgam of unrelated parts, one third human, one third lion, and one third many-headed beast, or hydra. Reason is the human part, spiritedness the lion, and appetite the hydra. Covering this soul is a body which in appearance is entirely human. Needless to say, the body's uniform exterior misleads as to the reality within, for within there is absent any unity of form, and, barring education, any unity of purpose. Human beings are a composite of body and soul and of reason, passion, and desire. When left to their natural and uncultivated condition, they are divided and factious. Now it is Socrates' contention--and more will be said of this below--that man and city are analogous entities, that what is present in the individual is reflected in the collective. If man is a combination of parts, so too is the city a combination of classes. And if man's parts are unrelated in their natures and discordant in their union, so too are the classes of the city. Accordingly, civil strife, rather than a temporary disequilibrium, is the common and expected state of political affairs. Why is there faction in politics? Because there is true diversity within human beings. More importantly, there is diversity among human beings, with some predominantly appetitive, others spirited, and a few who are rational. While it may be possible to so order these types that the whole can function as a unit, the whole in question is nevertheless a monstrous fabrication, the social equivalent of a hydra tied to a lion tied to a human, all wrapped up in a form that is human.

Socrates argues that psychic parts and human beings do lend themselves to a right ordering and that right ordering exists when reason rules appetite with the assistance of spirit, or when philosopher-kings with warrior auxiliaries rule over a city of workers. Faction is a problem, but seemingly not one which defies resolution. The question is how to effect the remedy. Since the soul is naturally diverse, unity must be created, and created out of elements apt to be at war. Only reason can create this unity because only reason is just: it gives to other parts their due (586e), whereas the other parts, when exercising power, take for themselves and

oppress (587a, 590a-b). The soul cannot be ruled well by a lion or a hydra, and the city cannot avoid faction by any scheme to set free the emotions and appetites. The liberation of emotion and appetite is thought by modern authors to be a realistic expedient and not at all incompatible with civil peace; for with the proper institutions in place, "ambition counteracts ambition" and an "invisible hand" distributes society's resources to self-serving competitors. But in Socrates' estimation these structured freedoms represent the feeding of the lion and the many-headed beast, with the result that the lion and the beast "bite and fight and devour each other" (589a3-4).<sup>1</sup> For when the lion is over-fed, the soul becomes stubborn and ill-tempered to the detriment of the beast and the human; and when the beast is over-fed, the lion and the human suffer injury as the soul becomes soft, licentious, and cowardly. Civil peace depends, therefore, not on the institutions of politics and economics, but on the moral discipline imposed by reason. "When all the soul follows the philosophic and is not factious" (586e4-5), says Socrates, each part receives its own pleasures and only the savage heads of the beast are suppressed (589b).

What exactly is faction? Socrates' answer is somewhat unusual, for he does not define it as political division caused by disagreement about who should rule. Such a definition would identify faction as the opposite of moderation and make it a vice ~~available to every member of~~ <sup>infecting</sup> the community (431d-432a). Aristotle defines faction in much this way, as a problem of distributive justice.<sup>2</sup> But to Socrates faction is tantamount to privacy, <sup>it also</sup> and is the consequence of privacy (464c-d). Faction is the greatest evil that can befall a city, he contends, and its counterpart, a "community of pleasure and pain," is the greatest good (462a-e, 464b1). A community of pleasure and pain exists when citizens say "my own and not my own" about the same things, or when privacy is eradicated. Socrates is something of a "republican" here, or what present-day scholarship calls a "civic humanist,"<sup>3</sup> for he reveres the public over the private, and he proposes a homogeneous community of patriotic citizens as the solution to faction. Aristotle, by contrast, is more of a "liberal," for his solution is a compromise, a polity regime, in which citizens retain a class identity, if not a separate and private existence, and where law and a sharing of offices protect against the abuse of power.<sup>4</sup>

It should be noted, however, that what Socrates recommends, an extreme melding of interest, applies mainly to the ruling class (464a9, 464b6, 466a8-b2). The rulers must surrender



their private lives and transform themselves into perfectly public beings; they must all be as one, like-minded and in agreement. The ruled, on the other hand, are not asked to agree, and no measures are taken to insure their loyalty. Even in an aristocracy little attention is paid to teaching the ruled moderation. The supposition throughout is that the ruled will support the established order, or at least not actively oppose it, and that faction arises when private pleasures divide the rulers and interfere with the performance of their duties (465b, 545d). Thus Socrates' focus in the middle books is on forming a ruling class that is wholly public and united. The difference between the best regime of Books 5 to 7 and the defective regimes of Books 8 and 9 is not that the ruled are more rebellious in the latter, but that no one in the latter is responsible for holding the rulers together.

As Socrates remarks, the kind of faction that can topple regimes occurs among the rulers: "Or is it simply the case that change in every regime comes from that part of it which holds the ruling offices--when faction arises in it--while when it is of one mind, it cannot be moved, be it composed of ever so few?" (545c9-d3). Since stability is a consequence of unanimity at the top rather than of inclusivity and breadth of support, it should follow that the fewer the people who need to agree, the more unified and secure the regime. Accordingly, the most durable regime is monarchy, whether a kingship or a tyranny; and the least durable is democracy.

But this conclusion is incorrect, for it presumes that the individual, in his original state, is a unified whole with a single interest or purpose in life. Socrates' analogy of the tripartite soul says otherwise. So too does the conversation in Book 1 of the Laws about the ubiquity of war and the political primacy of war preparations. Two of that dialogue's discussants, Cleinias and the Athenian Stranger, agree that not only are cities perpetual enemies but also neighborhoods within cities, individuals within neighborhoods, and persons in relation to themselves (625e-626d). When discord is carried this far, into a person's very identity, it is impossible to determine victors and vanquished in the war of all against all. There must be some stable entity on whose behalf the battle is fought in order to make sense of the contest. Cities cannot recognize victory, much less achieve it, if their citizens are divided in their ends, and the soul cannot pursue its selfish interests if the self is a chaos of discordant parts. The soul or the city

must be mastered and made whole before the combatant is ready for a world at war. Thus whether monarchy is a lasting regime depends less on the concentration of power than on the harmony of the monarch's soul. Education is what harmonizes, and if the king is educated while the tyrant is not, then kingship and tyranny, rather than equally durable monarchies, are political opposites with opposite prospects for success.

Education is mentioned frequently in Book 8 but never with precision (unlike in Book 7 where it is described as the turning around of the soul). Sometimes it is called argument, sometimes speech, sometimes music, and sometimes practice (546d, 548b, 549a, 552e, 554b, 559b, 559d, 560b). It seems to include both instruction and habituation. Its purpose is not truth and the idea of the Good but psychic constancy. The soul has many parts; willy-nilly some ordering will obtain with some one part in command. But whether that part remains in command depends on its skill as a guardian, and guardianship depends on education. Unless there is education, the order of the soul and the order of the city will not endure. Education is the means to peace and stability.

We have been considering such questions as why faction exists, what faction is, whether it is curable, and how it is cured. Before a final answer is given to these latter two questions, some observations are in order about the general character of Socratic regime analysis. The starting point of Socrates' political science is the proposition that the individual is prior to the regime or that the city is an image writ large of the soul. This principle is first stated in Book 2 as Socrates begins the work of founding (368d-369a), and it is repeated here in Book 8 as Socrates relates the history of political decay (544d-e). What it means is that the democratic soul, for instance, comes before and is the cause of the democratic city. From this relationship Socrates concludes that the regime is a function of the likes and dislikes of the ruling class. By whatever means the souls of the rulers come to be arranged (whether by the education of a founder or by the interplay of chance events), that ordering of parts shows itself in the regime, or in the laws, customs, and institutions of the city. And the regime in turn shapes the souls of the ruled; it "tip[s] the scale, as it were, draw[ing] the rest along with [it]" (544e1-2). But how this "tipping" occurs exactly is not explained, for we never see the regime in action, or the rulers relating to the ruled.<sup>5</sup>

Socrates classifies regimes not by the number of their rulers (as with the one, few, and many of Aristotle's typology)<sup>6</sup> but by the good to which the rulers aspire. What they love and honor most determines who they are and how they behave.<sup>7</sup> Applying this method, Socrates defines aristocracy as the regime in which the rulers love virtue or wisdom; timocracy is the regime where the love of honor or reputation prevails; in oligarchy the love of wealth is primary; in democracy it is freedom, and in tyranny love itself. There are five regimes in all examined, although aristocracy, the subject of the middle books, is seen only in transition.

One element missing from the analysis--and conspicuously so when once we think of Machiavelli<sup>8</sup>--is any consideration of the durability of regimes. We are not told how long they last, and they are not evaluated in terms of their relative staying power. Instead, regimes are ranked on a descending scale corresponding to the capacity of the thing loved to make people happy (580b, 583a, 587c-e).<sup>9</sup> Socrates does not explain why the oligarchic man is happier than the democratic man or why the timocrat is next to the aristocrat. The contrary might well be expected, for the oligarch knows something of the happiness of the timocrat and rejects it; likewise the democrat rejects oligarchic happiness knowing something of the necessary pleasures of money-making--and so on down the scale (582a-c). One point is clear: the important rankings are those of aristocracy and tyranny at the extremes; the king or aristocrat is happier than the tyrant, Socrates affirms; indeed the former is 729 times happier than the latter (587e). The middle three regimes seem ranked by their proximity to the worst regime,<sup>10</sup> and what makes them proximate or remote is the degree of self-restraint operating in the ruling class:<sup>11</sup> democrats are restrained by law, oligarchs by law and necessity, and timocrats by law, necessity, and honor. If this observation is true, democratic freedom is not less conducive to happiness than oligarchic wealth (democracy is heroic on the Hesiodic scale, whereas oligarchy is bronze [546e; Strauss, 1964, p. 130]).<sup>12</sup> It is rather the case that democracy, because of its freedom, is closer to tyranny and that tyranny is the regime least conducive to happiness. Democracy is the precipice and tyranny the abyss.

Defective regimes are all afflicted by the presence of mixed principles in the ruling class. Timocrats are defined by their love of honor, but they harbor a secret attachment to wealth.

Oligarchs love money-making but also the unnecessary pleasures which money can buy. And freedom-loving democrats are tempted by the lawlessness of tyrannical lust. In every case the rulers expel an alien element from their company only to find that the division without has been replicated within. Mixed principles co-existing in the souls of the rulers are the bane of politics and the cause of a regime's decline. That mixed principles are a political good, stabilizing the city through a balance of power, is an outcome which Socrates does not foresee, although his remarks would seem to invite a consideration.

Given that political faction is an evil, the question of its prevention is understandably foremost. To this end it is worth noting that in Socrates' story of decline and fall mixed principles seem not to be the consequence of necessity. It is not as if timocrats need oligarchic wealth in order to buy off the working class, or that oligarchs need democratic numbers in order to fill the offices of state and to broaden support for their money-making regime. Nor do democrats, in fact, need the leadership of a tyrant in order to defend against oligarchs bent on reprisals (oligarchs are described quite differently). (It is true that philosophers need warriors, but this particular mixing of types is not what brings about the destruction of aristocracy.) If coalition governments were a political imperative, their diversity of purpose might cause it to seem that faction is constant and degeneration unavoidable. But what we observe instead is that mixed principles are freely adopted by the people in charge, that timocrats, for instance, change themselves into oligarchs. This choice, which follows from the claim that faction occurs among the rulers, suggests that the preservation of single principles and pure types is within the rulers' disposing and requires only that the rulers take seriously the work of education.<sup>13</sup> The fact that ameliorative legislation is hinted at and sometimes proposed furthers the impression that political science is equal to the task of supplying political peace, even outside the best regime.

But an optimistic reading of Books 8 and 9 is finally impossible, for stability is not made attainable by having education named as its cause. Education means either the knowledge which informs reason when reason rules in the best regime, or the habits which restrain emotion and desire when emotion and desire rule in defective regimes. Human knowledge, however, is insufficient to understand causes and to control effects, and habits are unsustainable without the

support of knowledge-directed legislation. To a degree, an educated reason is causative when it rules the city or the soul, but there are causes outside itself which are fundamentally mysterious. The situation is much worse when reason is merely advisory, with spirit or appetite holding sway, for with the "acropolis" (560b7-8) thus vacant, the causes impacting the city or the soul grow in number and complexity. If even the best regime and the rational soul are prone to change,<sup>14</sup> defective regimes and irrational souls are hopelessly unstable.

## I. Timocracy

Timocracy declines from aristocracy because the philosopher-kings, at some point in their tenure, make a mistake in the timing of births. Several generations later the ruling class is revealed to be a composite of all four metallic types. A compromise is effected in which one of these types is excluded (gold), and in which one of the remaining three (silver) dominates the other two (bronze and iron). A single timocrat emerges as ruler, but his soul is divided between love of honor and love of money.

Socrates will not tell the tale of the fall of aristocracy in his own voice, but invokes the authority and tragic irony of the Muses. How "faction first attacked" is explained by an act of poetic imagination, as must indeed be the case since Socrates ties political decline to revolutions of the cosmos and to the life cycles of organic beings--of these distant subjects only poets and prophets can speak. To say that all created things (even those created by man) will of necessity decompose is to resign oneself to the city's fate and to discourage accusations that its founding was imperfect. The founding was perfect in the sense that philosophers were installed as rulers. But the intelligence of philosophers is a part of nature, and like nature its capacities rise and fall. Reason passes through cycles of vitalization and exhaustion. When worn down by time, it misidentifies the period for conceiving divine offspring, a period comprehended by perfect numbers and ascertained mathematically. Socrates is a tease: there is knowledge to be had which can correct the impermanence of becoming; but we cannot have it or have it with



sufficient regularity. We are invited to look for solutions, in particular to fix the problem of faction, but we are cautioned that no fix will forever hold. Even in the best regime where philosophers are in power, reason is defeated by a mysterious nature, and social harmony gives way to discord.

Decline is not immediate, however. Four generations are needed to ruin the ruling class. In the first generation a mistake is made in timing the matings with the result that the best of the offspring are unworthy. The second generation, upon coming of age, fails to defend the education, and so its children are less worthy still. Being unmusical, this, the third generation, is unable to perform the testing of the races. Thus the fourth generation is a "chaotic mixing of iron with silver and bronze with gold" (547a2).<sup>15</sup> The mixing of metallic types inside the ruling class produces "unlikeness and inharmonious irregularity" which in turn produce "war and hatred." Socrates' conclusion is that "faction must always be said to be 'of this ancestry' wherever it happens to arise" (547a4-5).

The expression "of this ancestry" is borrowed from Homer's *Iliad* (6.211); Glaucus speaks it after reciting the generations of his forefathers. Because of this recitation, Diomedes, the Achaean enemy to whom the speech is addressed, recognizes Glaucus as his family's guest-friend and proposes that the two of them exchange armor--his bronze for Glaucus's gold--and that they agree to avoid each other in combat, or that they declare a private peace. Peace and friendship rather than enmity and war are the results of an encounter used by Socrates to illustrate, paradoxically, that mixing breeds faction. This puzzle is further complicated by the fact that the mixing in question (all four metallic types in the ruling class) does not lead to faction and civil war but to compromise and civil peace: "Struggling and straining against one another, they came to an agreement on a middle way: they distributed land and houses to be held privately, while those who previously were guarded by them as free friends and supporters they then enslaved and held as serfs and domestics; and they occupied themselves with war and with guarding against these men" (547b-c). The compromise is a "middle way" because the money-makers get private property while the guardians get mastery and combat. But what has become of war and hatred, said to be the consequences of faction in the ruling class?

One prominent feature of the Glaucus-Diomedes story is the judgment by the poet that Glaucus's exchange of gold armor for bronze was a witless transaction (6.234-36). Now it is well worth noting that in the Republic the silver-souled warriors of the timocratic regime trade away their alliance with golden-souled philosophers for an alliance with bronze (and iron)-souled laborers. Is this too a bad exchange, even though Socrates calls the deal a "middle way" and specifies the social peace that issues from it? Yes it is, for without the guardianship of philosophers, this "middle way" comes to favor the lesser of the contracting parties (timocrats become oligarchs) and sets in motion a process of decline characterized by ever increasing levels of violence: Aristocracy's transformation into timocracy is wrought by compromise rather than by war; but then the enslavement of free citizens is an ugly feature this new regime. Oligarchy comes about through intimidation or force of arms (551b3-5), democracy through civil war (556e-557a), and tyranny through a usurpation and betrayal which Socrates twice calls parricide (569b, 575d).

The mixture that is timocracy consists of elements drawn from aristocratic and oligarchic regimes and of elements peculiar to itself. Vestiges of the old aristocracy are the honoring of rulers and their separation from the money-making classes, plus common meals and gymnastic training. Harbingers of the oligarchy ahead are the love and accumulation of wealth concealed from view behind the walls of the timocrats' private homes. Missing from this new regime are the "three waves" of sexual equality, familial communism, and philosopher-kingship. What is distinctive about timocracy is the exclusion from rule of the wise few on grounds that they are "no longer simple and earnest but mixed" (ouketi . . . haplous te kai ateneis . . . alla meiktous; 547e2-3). Is it to be understood that the philosophers have suffered a fall from perfection similar to that which has afflicted the city? Are they corrupt because they are "mixed"? And when was it that they were "simple and earnest?" Since the philosopher-king is the product of a dual education of music-gymnastics and dialectics, and since his responsibilities are twofold, that of philosophizing and of ruling, he is from the outset a mixed personality. Mixing ought not then to be regarded as a mark of his corruption and a disqualification from office. But if so, who were the simple and earnest rulers that are "no longer" (ouketi)? Presumably, these are the elder

warriors (412c2) who were installed as provisional guardians before the advent of philosopher-kings. The warrior-guardians are said to be wise (428b-429a), and one feature of their education is that they avoid mixed imitation (of bad and good characters alike) and the company of mixed men, because "there's no double man among [them], nor manifold one, since each man does one thing" (397e1-2). The exclusion of mixed philosophers represents then not a weeding out of deceitful sophisticates,<sup>16</sup> but a rebellion by auxiliaries against philosopher-kings, as well as a rejection of the other institutions which so radicalized the regime of spirited warriors.

Having described the timocratic regime as a mixture of principles in which the love of victories and honors is predominant, Socrates turns to the character of the timocratic man. Socrates' purpose is to point out the correspondence between city and man (548d). And indeed the correspondence is fairly exact: there is some remembrance of the aristocracy-lost in the timocrat's love of music and rhetoric, but without skill in either; some anticipation of the oligarchy-to-come in the timocrat's growing love of money; and much of timocracy at the core in the timocrat's devotion to war, gymnastics, and the hunt. It might be recalled, however, that Socrates said more than that the citizen corresponds to the city. He said that the citizen, or the ruling class of citizens, by their loves and their hates, cause the city to be what it is, that the city's regime is a reflection of the dispositions of its governors. But nowhere in Books 8 or 9 do we see Socrates establishing this causal connection. Indeed, the whole question of cause and effect is left in the dark. For not only does the citizen not plainly produce the city, but the city in no instance plainly produces the citizen. What is meant by this claim is that Socrates chooses to examine how a timocratic youth emerges from an aristocratic household rather than examine how a household in tune with the regime produces a citizen just like the regime (and the pattern is repeated with every regime). Nor will it do to answer that Socrates is looking for the very first timocrat, who necessarily comes from a household that is not timocratic; for the household in question exists in a city that is already a timocracy (this too is true of all other households, except the one producing a tyrant; that is, the timocratic household exists in an oligarchy and the oligarchic household exists in a democracy). Why then does Socrates begin with "the young son of a good father who does not live under a good regime" (549c2-3)? Bloom has noted that



Socrates' beginning indicates the possibility of an aristocratic man if not of an aristocratic city; also that families, banished from the best regime, play an important, conservative role in the history of defective regimes (1968, pp. 415, 420). But it is also true that the choice of households compromises the formative power of the city. How does the timocratic youth come by his beliefs and loves? Not by law or by public education as such, but by the accidental clash of contradictory influences. His aristocratic father nourishes the calculating part of his soul. But this father, unambitious and apolitical, is despised and abused by his timocratic neighbors and by his wife and servants wanting property and respect. Public opinion weighs in against private instruction, and the result is a contest among the three parts of the soul with spiritedness emerging victorious. The youth becomes a timocrat, but easier and more certain would the outcome have been if the father were himself a timocrat, who, in concert with the city, simply taught the son to love honor above all else. The choice of an aristocratic father, then, serves to obscure the operation of causes and to impugn the importance of regimes. But of course the regime is itself an effect caused by the character of the man. What then produces the man? This question also will yield no clear answer since Socrates chooses to investigate the city before the man, his reason being that the city is the more "luminous" of the two (545b4).

## II. Oligarchy

But can we not do better in discovering the origins of oligarchic man? He is a timocrat whose secret love of wealth, supported by a private storehouse of treasure, looks for something to buy. Timocracy is an austere regime, and timocrats abstain from farming, manual arts, and money-making (547d). In theory they do. In practice they break the law, first by accumulating wealth, then by spending it conspicuously and forcing others into a rivalry with them, finally by changing attitudes about who and what is worthy (550d-551a). The oligarch is an erstwhile timocrat whose love of money displaces his love of honor. And oligarchy is created when a property qualification confers power and privilege on a wealthy few.

There is no founder of oligarchy, or of any of the other defective regimes. They come about because, in the absence of education, the soul's center of gravity moves from reason, to spiritedness, to appetite. They come about because nature, of a kind--the body's nature--assumes command when unimpeded by wise legislation. Aristocracy is safeguarded by the music and gymnastic education, which is its law, and the neglect of this education is the efficient cause of aristocracy's decline (546d). Timocracy declines when its prohibitions against money-making are ignored (547d, 548a, 550d-e). Oligarchs fail to pass a law against the alienation of one's property (552a, 555c, 556a) and a law withdrawing protection from commercial contracts (556a-b). Finally, democrats lose their regime because they lack the foresight to control by law the criminal and beggar drones (564b-c).<sup>17</sup> In every case the man, whose soul is writ large in the regime, is not self-made or the product of fatherly tutoring or of some founder's design, but is a result of legislative/educational errors which set free the lower powers of his soul. Hence the first cause of either man or city is traceable to mistakes too various to identify, committed by people too numerous to name. Causality is truly obscure. It follows then that there is no political science, armed with the knowledge of causes, able to prevent the occurrence of faction.<sup>18</sup> When Socrates laid the blame on the ruling class for their own disintegration and demise, he made it seem that remedial actions could be taken if only rulers would consult their true interests. But since they do not know exactly where they came from or who they are, much less know what their regime is or how it functions, they are at a loss to protect their regime when dangers to it arise, especially when those dangers arise from within--"We have met the enemy and they are us!" Unfortunately, Socrates' citizens never attain this particular of self-knowledge, or attain it in time.

Every man, every family, and every city mixes its own defining principle with that of its successor--this is a constant of Socrates' analysis. Aristocracy is a mixture of wisdom and spiritedness in the ruling class. When wisdom is banished by spiritedness, a new division emerges between spiritedness and money-loving. And when spiritedness is banished from oligarchy's ruling circle, appetite divides into necessary and unnecessary desire. Likewise, when necessary desire is excluded, unnecessary desire splits into lawful and lawless pleasure. Under

the influence of the higher principle, the lower principle appears to be some one thing: when serving as reason's auxiliary, spiritedness seems to be wholly separate from appetite; but when reason is gone, spiritedness shows itself to be just another form of desire, half honor-loving and half money-loving. The downward pull of the body, ending in the tyrant's lust, is what causes the divisions--along with the defectiveness of the principles themselves: For honor is dependent on the opinions of others; it is a noble but voluntary sentiment displaced by the compulsions of self-interest. Wealth is more substantial than honor; but wealth is not for its own sake, and the virtues which produce it are lost in the indulgent life which enjoys it. The indulgent life is the free life, and the free life is pleasing; but if freedom is nice, license is better. Accordingly, the timocrat exchanges honor for the independence of the oligarch, who is drawn to the enjoyments of the democrat, who sinks into the excesses of the tyrant.

How is the oligarch defined? He is a greedy man and parsimonious, but hard-working and capable of self-denial. Wanting to succeed in his labors, he allows himself little time for education or amusement. Socrates' traces his determination to the disgrace of his timocratic father and the loss of his family's fortune. Once again the youth is raised in a "retrograde" environment, and his character, rather than a product of conscious design, is a chance blending of dissonant forces. But on this occasion no conversation is recorded between father and son. It seems that the elder timocrat has nothing to say, either because he is unmusical, or because he cannot manage to vindicate honor in a city dedicated to profit.<sup>19</sup> All other fathers fight for the souls of their sons; but then all fathers save the timocrat have an identity apart from the city and can survive the change of regimes. In any event, the youth swears himself to a life of acquisition and makes calculation and spiritedness the servants of enterprise.

Despite such singleness of purpose, the oligarch is not whole inside (554d-e). His continence is the work of fear, rather than education. It is not true virtue, and its control of the soul is uncertain. Thus the oligarch is tempted by unnecessary pleasures and is unjust when out of the sight of law. Pity the orphan entrusted to his care (554c).

The oligarchic city, says Socrates, corresponds to the oligarchic man. Like the man, the regime is defined by its dominant passion, which is avarice. Money-loving is institutionalized by

a property qualification which reserves the honor of citizenship for those most successful at amassing wealth. Oligarchy is also defined by three deficiencies relating to class-functions in society and to faculties of the soul. Ruling is done badly in an oligarchic regime because the requirement that citizens be rich excludes from office some of the city's most gifted individuals. War-making is ineffective because the city is weakened by factions of rich and poor and because miserly oligarchs are unwilling to put up the funds for an adequate defense. And the economy is poorly managed because the principle of job specialization, or one person, one art, is not respected: as money-makers, oligarchs are meddlers in political affairs; as politicians, oligarchs are meddlers in financial affairs (which may explain why oligarchs encourage profligacy even to the point of engendering "the greatest of all evils" [552a4], the classes of stinger and stingless drones). Oligarchy is the first of the defective regimes in which appetite rules. Hence it is not surprising that there would be shortcomings respecting reason and spiritedness. But like the man, the regime does not abandon these higher faculties as much as it twists them to its own purposes (Nettleship, 1937, p. 297).

One final point: because oligarchs are former timocrats, the principle holds that faction in the ruling class is the cause of regime transformation. Oligarchs come to power by excluding from the ruling elite those timocrats who have not made the conversion from honor-loving to money-loving.

### III. Democracy

Can the same be said of democracy, that it comes about because of division among the rulers of the preceding, oligarchic regime? What Socrates contends is that the lean and tanned poor make war on the soft and fat rich (556c-d). Apparently, oligarchy falls, not from internal dissent, but from outside assault--by the democratic drones who disagree that wealth entitles a person to rule, who think instead that physical prowess, or the right of the stronger (when the stronger is the multitude), is the origin of political legitimacy.

Civil war is the cause of democracy's institution, and the warring parties do seem to be of different social classes. But Socrates indicates that the drones who live in oligarchic cities are themselves the scions of oligarchic families--"human beings who are not ignoble" (555d4). They are the more self-indulgent of the rich who sell their property in order to purchase their pleasures (552b). They are déclassé oligarchs, and in this respect their rebellion is faction within the ruling class.

Nor are they alone, or alone for long. For the oligarchic work ethic is threatened by its own success. Wealth relieves the pressure of necessity and with that the fear which impels the oligarch to work. Socrates observes that the children of wealth and privilege are luxurious, soft, and idle (556b-c). The suggestion is that what distinguishes oligarchs from democrats--necessary versus unnecessary pleasures--passes in a generation or two.

Thus not only are rebels former rulers--and the civil war a struggle within the ruling class--but the two classes are more alike than they are different. The oligarch is a "squalid man," says Socrates, "getting a profit out of everything . . . exactly the kind of [man] the multitude praises" (554a10-11). Who is it, then, that the the have-nots admire?--the haves. True enough, that as lean and tanned rebels against oligarchic rule, the poor withdraw their "consent" and even look to be timocrats spoiling for a fight; but once they are in power, their respect for money-making again asserts itself. Moreover, the primary difference between oligarchs and democrats, that the former love money and the latter love freedom, is not as firm as it may at first appear. For freedom requires money, and money is for the sake of freedom--democrats need oligarchs, and oligarchs complete themselves as democrats. The necessary and "money-making" desires of the oligarch provide the foundation for the unnecessary and "spendthrift" desires of the democrat (559c). And insofar as unnecessary desires are judged "harmful to the body and the soul with respect to prudence and moderation" (559b10-11; emphasis added), the oligarch himself succumbs to their charms, for his love of wealth, says Socrates, is incompatible with moderation (555c7-9), and his destruction of fellow oligarchs is the epitome of imprudence (like Marx's bourgeois despoiling their own class). The oligarch who is busy becoming a monopolist has much in common with the democrat whose life is given over to hedonism, for the pleasures



of each are unnecessary. One is reminded that in the best city oligarchs and democrats are treated as appetitive money-makers, members of the one, chrematistic class (when a distinction is made, it is between kinds of money-making--bronze artisans and iron farmers--rather than between amounts--rich and poor). There is, then, in these middle regimes a blurring of class divisions.<sup>20</sup>

Democracy is created when the victorious democrats extend equal rights to those who remain and when the ruling offices are distributed mostly by lot (557a). Lot distribution defines democracy as property qualifications define oligarchy. Democracy rests upon the principle of equality, but Socrates says that its animating passion is freedom. In fact, freedom and equality are presented as complements, and they combine to produce an individualism verging on autonomy.

Notwithstanding the individual's <sup>extreme independence</sup> near-autonomy, democratic citizens live in a distinctive way, and their community is called a regime, although Socrates is again imprecise about whether the regime is a consequence of the citizens or the citizens a consequence of the regime (557a-b).<sup>21</sup> Specifically, they are free to say and do as they wish. On account of this freedom they are private and various, and their city is home to all possible types of people and regimes. Political responsibilities are non-existent as are political restraints: Anyone can rule or not rule, be ruled or not be ruled as he sees fit; even a private war and a separate peace are permitted entitlements. Criminals are condemned but rarely punished. Education is neglected because useless to political advancement (supposing politics to be one's fancy). Substituting for education is professed loyalty to the multitude. All in all, democracy and its practices are thought to be fair, exquisite, and sweet; it is the regime most appealing to females (557c).<sup>22</sup>

When aristocracy changes to timocracy and timocracy to oligarchy, the new order in each case sets its sights on the father of the unregenerate household. It humiliates and ruins him, causing the son to forswear his father's values and to remake himself in the image of the ascendant regime. This pattern, however, is not repeated with the establishment of democracy, perhaps because democracy has no central base or authoritative core from which to launch an attack against the family; democracy is amorphous and tolerant. What happens instead is that

bad influences present in society take hold of the son and fill his soul with illicit desires. It is the son, not the father, who is the target, and the targeting is a seduction rather than an insult and rejection. The seduction reenacts the civil war that brought democrats into power. For the son's soul, divided between necessary and unnecessary desires, is like the oligarchic city divided between rich and poor citizens. Each part of his soul receives advice kindred to itself--from the father shame and order (560a), from the drones " manifold and subtle pleasures" (559d9)--just as the factions of the city receive assistance from partisan allies without. The outcome is not pre-determined, for both the father and the oligarchs can win temporary victories. Eventually though the armies of the new prevail--in the case of the son by storming a psychic acropolis that has been left empty of its "best watchmen and guardians," namely "fair studies and practices and true speeches" (560b8-10). No detail in the city's civil war corresponds to this undefended acropolis, but if there were one, likely it would be the failure of oligarchs to train and finance a warrior class (551d-552a, 555a). The democrats' victory is accomplished by killing and banishment, the drones and Lotus-eaters' victory by the "transvaluation of values"--virtues are reconstituted vices and driven out; vices are renamed virtues and brought in. The allusion to the Corcyrean Revolution is unmistakable.<sup>23</sup> Finally, with each of these conflicts there is a happy ending, for the democrats institute "a sweet regime, without rulers and many-colored, dispensing a certain equality to equals and unequals alike" (558c4-6); while the son, if he has the luck not to be swept away by the fury of desire and if in growing older he readmits his exiled relations, "lives his life in accord with a certain equality of pleasures" (561b2-3). Just as the democratic city establishes and defines itself by lot distribution, so the new-made democratic man chooses his pleasures as though by lot (561b4). City and man come together at this very point of relativistic egalitarianism<sup>24</sup>--the city despising, but with sympathy and without pettiness, all of Socrates' educational plans (558b); the nonjudgmental man honoring all pleasures and desires equally (561c). The democratic city holds within its borders every possible human type (557d), and the democratic man takes up and puts down every significant human activity (561c-d).

Is it possible that contained in democratic relativism is a solution to the problem of faction? Socrates does not pose this question as such, but he has just portrayed a "good"

democracy at peace with itself, and it is worth considering whether its institutions and practices hold any promise of enduring. Where there is diversity coupled with equality--as in a supermarket--there is less cause for people to quarrel, for everyone gets what he wants. In the democratic city all occupations are present, but no one occupation is thought better than another. Philosophy is present, as are soldiering and money-making (561d). These represent the three main classes of the best regime, and Socrates labored mightily to arrange them in their proper order. But in democracy there are no rankings to create, no hierarchy to defend, no pursuit of virtue or concern for education, no determination to train and empower good leaders (558b, 561b-c). Could it be that such looseness is the formula for civil peace?

It should first be noted that democracy is something of a mixed regime in that oligarchic exiles are reintegrated into the political life of the city. Democratic inclusiveness means that all citizens are members of the ruling class. On the other hand, democratic apoliticism means that the city is effectively without a ruling class (558c4). The former point is cause for worry, since with so many rulers agreement is difficult to attain; but the latter point is cause for hope, since there is little that democratic citizens need to agree about: the one thing people have in common is the conviction that nothing is worth having in common. Democracy is practically a non-regime regime.

It is a non-regime because democrats love freedom but count among their fellow citizens oligarchs who love wealth. On the other hand, neither freedom nor wealth is necessarily a principle of rule. Democrats and oligarchs are not like timocrats, who to satisfy their love of honor must be given power and recognition. Democrats and oligarchs are private people, or at the least they are capable of leading private lives. Moreover--and as mentioned above--freedom and wealth are complementary principles: freedom is the end, and wealth is the means; money is not self-justifying, and unnecessary pleasures are not free. Socrates even suggests that rich and poor can live together in relative harmony. For the rich are orderly (564e6) and seemingly well-disposed toward the multitude (565b9-11), and the poor are just insofar as they stick to their work and do not meddle in affairs (565a1-2).



#### IV. Tyranny

But if democratic relativism can result in diversity and tolerance (everything is available, everything is sampled, nothing is important), it also can result in suspicion of inequalities and impatience with restraints (the rich are thieves, and the law itself is a tyrant). Socrates blames the fall of democracy on the principle of democracy made absolute. Anything carried to excess, says Socrates, tends to engender its opposite (563e). Now democracy and oligarchy are the only regimes faulted for carrying their defining principles to excess (562b, 555b), but all regimes, in a sense, produce their opposite and despise what they leave behind: the wisdom-loving aristocrat produces the brutal and boorish timocrat; the violent timocrat produces the cowardly and parsimonious oligarch; the miserly oligarch the spendthrift and hedonistic democrat; and the freedom-loving democrat the slavish and enslaving tyrant. By comparison with these other regimes, democracy seems an exemplar of tolerance and moderation, for instead of expelling its predecessor and racing headlong toward its successor, democracy welcomes the return of oligarchs on an equal basis with everyone else. How then does our happy hedonist, the consummate amateur who makes no judgments, become the furious partisan of freedom? Part of the answer is pride. Freedom is elevating--adult-like--and democracy is the only regime befitting free men (562b-c). Pericles in his Funeral Oration expresses the pride Athenians feel in the democratic character of their city.<sup>25</sup> But if it is freedom which makes the city great and its citizens superior human beings, then more of this freedom should enhance their status even further. Thinking it impossible to overdo a good thing, democrats are predisposed to accept uncritically any enlargement of their liberty. Thus democratic excess arises partially from a mistake in judgment.

It arises also, and more importantly, from the appetitive character of freedom and equality. As appetites, freedom and equality intensify once they are tried; when overindulged, they turn insatiable. The appetite for free-living becomes insatiable when the demos, as if at a wine party, over-drinks from an "unmixed draught." Their respect for authority erodes along

with their willingness to be governed by law. The authorities, in turn, fearing the loss of their positions and wanting not to offend, back away from enforcing the rules. Soon thereafter the anarchic spirit spreads from the political to the social and the familial, and teachers fawn on students and parents ape the manners of their children. In this lawless climate, nothing is so tyrannical as the presumption to know better than others and to deserve one's place in society's hierarchy. Hierarchy is tyranny; equality is freedom. The culminating gesture is the effective emancipation of slaves and the equal treatment of women. Even domestic animals are said to benefit from the absence of authority.

This last point about horses and asses taking right of way is of course a joke (or it would have seemed to be a joke before the advent of "speciesism"; perhaps it is prescient instead). But the point about slaves and women is of a different order. Why should there be human beings whose lives are purchased by others? And why should women be inferior to men? These are serious questions which are called to mind by the very way in which Socrates speaks--that he highlights the conventional nature of this slavery,<sup>26</sup> and that sexual equality is a feature of his own best regime (563b). Is Socrates, then, being critical of democracy when he attributes to it the abolition of slavery and the equality of the sexes? He is explaining how the passion for freedom is a slippery slope leading to tyranny. But it is arguable that part of the attraction is an advance in justice which democracy brings about. Democratic partisans, it seems fair to say, are not out simply for a good time; they want also to make the world better. Their desire for equality, while given to ludicrous extremes, has a tinge of righteousness about it.

Still, it must be admitted that there is little political consciousness animating Socrates' democrats. They are tender souls who so love their independence that they resent public interference of any kind and would rather live without laws than be lawgivers themselves (563d). Apoliticism is their characteristic fault--or "individualism" in the words of Tocqueville.<sup>27</sup> Preferring private pleasures to public power, they leave vacant the highest offices of state, as do their money-making compatriots. Democracy might survive its apoliticism if there were no warriors ready to seize control. But democracy breeds a warrior-like class of drones, both criminal and beggar, who become its leaders in the absence of citizen involvement. The main

political force operating in a democracy <sup>is</sup> are the demagogue and his henchmen. They are the "bad winebearers" who intoxicate the demos with an "unmixed draught" of freedom. Socrates implies that the drones could have been suppressed by prudent legislation (564b-c), but prudent legislation requires a "good doctor" or "wise beekeeper" to see far off dangers and to guard against emotional weaknesses. Democracy lacks this person and these precautions and is thus prey to a usurpation from below.

The demagogic drones have but one objective, to foment a class war between democrats and oligarchs. As stated above, Socrates can imagine these classes living peaceably together in a kind of advanced "city of pigs." But add drones to the mix, and the solution is combustible. The first step in the drones' conspiracy is to make the public business more agreeable by paying the people for their participation. Freedom means also, if secondarily, public power, and it is a plausible surmise that the drones play to the people's democratic pride, suggesting to them that anything less than full democracy is an assault upon their dignity. Reminded thus of the special legitimacy of popular rule, the people look with a suspicious squint upon mixed elements and social inequalities. They are drinking now that strong fermentation which excites freedom to excess. And one mark of this excess is the demand that oligarchs surrender their property in order to finance the people's attendance at assembly. Predictably, the oligarchs object, and their resistance is interpreted as hostility toward the people and as evidence of a plot to overthrow the democracy. In the process of defending themselves against these accusations, largely unwarranted, the oligarchs become in fact enemies of the people. The class war has begun.

But why would a civil war between oligarchs and democrats end in tyranny, instead of in oligarchy or democracy? The outcome is not predetermined (despite Aristotle's reading that it is):<sup>28</sup> an oligarchic restoration is possible, but a sustainable democracy seems not to be. The reason why democracy must fall, one way or the other, is its need for a leader to champion its cause against the oligarchs. This leader, Socrates argues, will utilize the judicial system as an instrument of murder; and once his lupine instincts are excited by blood, he, the people's champion, becomes their oppressor unless he is first destroyed by his intended victims. Indeed, it is the very effort to target the leader that makes possible his transformation into a tyrant: For

his own defense he asks the people to supply him with a bodyguard. He then proceeds to kill his opponents among the wealthy, again calling them enemies of the regime. To curry favor with the people, he cancels debts and redistributes land. It is now that he is established in power, and he provokes a war in order to insure that the people will continue to need his leadership. The war effort impoverishes the citizens, depriving them of the wherewithal to plot against him. The war is also a pretext for proscribing free thought and free speech. Those among his associates who speak up and speak back are eliminated, as are the courageous, the great-minded, the prudent, and the rich. Foreign mercenaries and domestic slaves are hired as bodyguards. Sacred money is spent and private property taken. Finally, when these limited supplies are exhausted, the property of the people is confiscated for the support of the tyrant's court. Since the tyrant was promoted to power in order to defend the popular interest, it was expected that he would conduct himself as a fiduciary agent and as a respectful child. Thus when he turns against the people who made him eminent, his oppressive measures are likened to a parricide committed by an ungrateful son.

Socrates' account of the tyrannic youth and the tyrannic man returns almost imperceptibly to the debate in Books 1 and 2 over the relative goodness of justice and injustice. What brings about this return is the choice given the tyrant, or the tyrant-in-making, of a private or public life. The tyrant is asked to consider carefully the effects political power would have upon his chances for happiness. Because Socrates means to dissuade the tyrant from seizing power, and thus from changing a democratic regime into a tyranny, it could be said that the whole discussion of happiness adds up to a practical, if not theoretical, defense of democracy. Recall that democracy changes to tyranny because of agitation by the drones. That there will be drones in a democracy is a given; that democrats will be open to their propaganda is also a given. But what now seems not a given, rather a matter of deliberation and choice, is the demagoguery of these drones and their tyrannic leader. For they are advised by Socrates--and have the option of following his advice--not to enter politics with the goal of grabbing power, but to remain in private and to let democracy alone. To be sure, the continuance of democracy is not the main point of Socrates' conversation with the tyrant;<sup>29</sup> it might, however, be the consequence if Socrates succeeds rhetorically.

That Socrates has effected a subtle shift from detached regime analysis to activism on behalf of democracy and against tyranny is evident from his description of the tyrant as someone petty and contemptible. Every human type hitherto presented is animated by love--of virtue, of honor, of wealth, of freedom--but the tyrant is the embodiment of love itself.<sup>30</sup> Lest we think well of the tyrant for an eroticism so exorbitant that it needs no object, Socrates likens eros to an insect, a winged drone. And since he earlier distinguished the winged drone from the footed drone who is human (552c), Socrates is in effect saying that the tyrant is not a human being; he is a bug. But he is not a harmless bug, for unlike most winged drones which are parasites without stingers, the tyrant has the "sting of longing" in him (573a7-8). He is a gadfly (577e2).

What sort of harm does the tyrant contemplate? The target of his malice are those nearest to him, his parents when he is still a private citizen, and his fatherland when he moves up to political power. Socrates speaks of a tyrant in the "precise sense" (573c7) who "gets the better of" his father and his mother (574a8-9). An artisan in the precise sense, from the account in Book 1, is a worker who is governed by the knowledge of his craft, who serves others, and who gets the better only of his inferiors in knowledge and virtue. The tyrant, by contrast, has no art of tyranny and no respect for nature's hierarchies. Indeed, he seems particularly vindictive toward those who have commanded him.

Even though the tyrant aspires to enslave his fatherland (575d) and to rule over human beings and gods (573c), it cannot be said that power is the object of his love. More often than not the tyrant is described as lusting after sex and food (571c, 573d, 574c, 574e, 579b). He is feckless, just like his democratic forebear, although he is more energetic. What is unique about the tyrant is the intensity of his love, and that it is unconstrained by reason, by honor, by necessity, or law. The tyrant has no single object that defines him but is more audacious in the pursuit of any object that attracts him.<sup>31</sup> He is lawless and will do while awake what others dare only in their dreams (572b, 574e, 576b).

The tyrant as eroticist is not a man of high ambition. This fact becomes clear if we consider for a moment an alternate entry of the tyrant into history. We might recall that oligarchy and democracy decline because of excessive attachment to their defining principles:



oligarchs love money and democrats love freedom with unabated zeal. It is curious that similar ardor is not attributed to timocrats. It is not their excessive love of honor that causes the decline of their regime. Decline happens to timocracy because of failure to protect its defining principle against corruption by wealth. If timocracy were to go the way of oligarchy, the more honorable of the timocrats would exclude from office their less honorable peers, until only one timocrat was left or rebellion brought about a change of regimes. The love of honor carried to its conclusion is the love of glory; it points to monarchical rule and imperial expansion. Is it not possible then that tyranny could arise out of timocracy and that the tyrant could be described as a glory-seeking, world-conquering monarch? Such a man would inspire admiration and convince many an onlooker that the tyrant's life was well worth living. But instead of a lordly figure with grand designs--a distinct possibility--the tyrant we are given is a lusty gourmand and a petty criminal.

It is worse for the tyrant, says Socrates, if he actually achieves power, for then a life driven by vulgar eros becomes a life tormented by mortal fear. The tyrant dreams of a city whose only purpose is the satisfaction of his desires. But in such a city he is defenseless, as vulnerable as a slaveowner alone on an island with his slaves (578d-e). The tyrant must somehow escape his isolation by giving others a stake in his career. As it happened, there were others who first came to him, looking for a leader to help them lay hold of a greater share of the city's resources (572e). The tyrant, then, has his own band of followers, but as they support him, so he has responsibilities to them--it is his job to "bring the beer," so to speak. The problem facing the tyrant is that he is dependent on and responsible to people who are also erotic (573e6), people whose loyalty is suspect because they are apt to aspire to becoming tyrants themselves. They are the tyrant's bodyguards, but they can hardly think themselves inferior for that since under different circumstances the tyrant was himself a bodyguard (575b). Add to this the fact that a life of pleasure-seeking leaves the tyrant soft and unprepared to contest with others (579c-d), and the conclusion is that the tyrant is threatened both by his associates and by the finer members of society. In the end Socrates says of the tyrant that he gets no satisfaction (579e) and that it is bad luck that has brought him to power (578c, 579c).

A sensible person would not choose to be a tyrant; tyranny should be resisted. It will be resisted, or not, depending on what the soul loves, or on what part of the soul rules. Socrates provides a reasoned account as to why the pleasures of appetite and spirit are inferior to the pleasures of mind. If this account succeeds in restructuring the soul's desires, the lawless eroticism of tyranny will cease to attract, to say nothing of the less intense pleasures of timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy. But where has the voice of reason been throughout the reported history of regime transformation? Funny that it should be heard from only in conversation with someone described as "most distant from philosophy and argument" (587a7). Socrates pays the tyrant the compliment of arguing with him.

Again, where has reason been? In aristocracy it was in charge, educating the spirit and commanding the appetites. Outside the best regime, and without authority, reason has either been silent (timocracy) or weak and ineffectual (oligarchy and democracy). It speaks now to the tyrant because the tyrant is, or may be, not the low-class sensualist as pictured above, but the philosopher's soul-mate and pedagogic rival. What the philosopher and the tyrant have in common is the desire to transcend necessity--the "cave" of opinion in the case of the former, the reach of the law in the case of the latter. As such they stand equidistant from the oligarch, the man of utmost necessity whose way of life is determined by fear.

The commonality of the philosopher and the tyrant can be better perceived when looked at from the vantage point of oligarchy. Oligarchy, rather than the middle regime of Socrates' description, situated on a downward slope between aristocracy and tyranny, is a pinnacle rising from two points on a plane below. Or so oligarchy might see itself, claiming to be the best and the highest regime on grounds that it alone performs the grownup work of providing for life's necessities. Other regimes are childish by comparison, because in their pursuit of unnecessary pleasures they pretend that the necessary is secure. Most childish of all are aristocracy and tyranny, regimes dedicated to good life but negligent of mere life. The aristocrat wants virtue or the unnecessary pleasures of the mind (581e); the tyrant wants license or the lawless pleasures of the body.<sup>32</sup> When viewed against the realism of oligarchic fear, aristocracy and tyranny are equally hopeful and fantastic regimes.

Tyranny is the body's attempt to render itself free of its own necessities, to find an almost spiritual delight in carnal indulgence and limitless freedom. This attempt to escape all limitation and to defeat all resistance explains why the philosopher bothers to talk to the tyrant, why reason is enlisted, after a long quiescence, as an instrument of political conservation.<sup>33</sup> The message to the tyrant--the first message (576b-580c)--is that tyranny is dysfunctional. It does not make the tyrant powerful but exposes him to death and impoverishment, deliverance from which requires that he return to the ways of past regimes--that he save his life by democratic lawfulness, and that he husband his resources by oligarchic orderliness. But there is little cause for supposing that the tyrant is better disposed toward pragmatic reasoning than is any other political type, that an explication of consequences would make a difference to him but not to the timocrat or the oligarch. The real attraction is the second message (580c-588a), which states that the tyrant's pleasures are ill-chosen since they are more apparent than genuine, are mixed with pains, and are tainted by the impurities of becoming--mutability, mortality, and falsity (585c).<sup>34</sup> Rather than asked to retreat from tyrannic ambition because of fear--of little influence with this maddened soul--the tyrant is invited to push ahead in pursuit of pleasures that are altogether satisfying. But he must take it on authority that there are such pleasures, pleasures of the mind, and he must accept the fact that his life will be led outside of politics. Socrates has set it up that the tyrant is more private than public, for the love of power is not what defines him, but has Socrates explained why a man so resentful of authority would ever accept the philosopher's word? Perhaps not, particularly if we think of the tyrant as the crazed parricide. But if for the tyrant we substitute Glaucon, then the project of philosophical seduction seems much less improbable.

Glaucon, and Adeimantus his brother, set the conversation on its course by wondering aloud whether they should choose a life of tyrannic lawlessness. They are close to being enemies of the democracy when Socrates seduces them with the charms of philosophy, so delighting them with its mysteries that by the dialogue's end they are his captives, Glaucon especially. Reason is determining what their souls will love, although without the benefit of office and without the support of disciplined auxiliaries. Private education is its work when public education, or ruling, is forbidden it, and democracy is the regime where private education



thrives. It is too much to say that tutelage of the young will save democracy from falling into tyranny. Not every youth, after all, can have a philosopher for a tutor, and there are examples of failure even among those who do. Nevertheless, this attempt to deflect the erotic young from careers as tyrants imparts a small note of hopefulness to Socrates' study of political decay. And since the defense of democracy is conducted by the making of philosophers (or gentlemen at the least), there is a return implied, if not to the aristocratic regime, then to the aristocratic family. But what better way of preserving democracy than by the addition of aristocrats, especially when these aristocrats are would-be drones? Aristotle is of a similar mind,<sup>35</sup> but then Aristotle faults Socrates for indecisiveness about the fate of tyranny when by his own analysis it ought to belong to a cycle and be followed by the best regime.<sup>36</sup> In point of fact, there is a cycle of sorts and a renewal.

Renewal, however, is personal rather than political. Glaucon is quick to catch on that Socrates' just and happy man is not a ruler of anyone but himself(592a-b; also 580c2). And while Socrates does say that divine chance could institute the best regime in practice, divine chance would have to do more than make a philosopher king. For this "lover of wisdom" would have to become wise, even infallible; and once wise he would have to interest himself in bringing peace to the unwise, who in turn would have to accept as their ruler someone radically unlike themselves. All things considered, the best regime is impossible. And defective regimes are unreformable for the very reason that they are defective--they lack education or the rational control of emotion and appetite. The most that can be done, or that Socrates can think to do, is to draw away from politics a few of the young who are tyrants-in-waiting. It is important to note then, and others have noted before,<sup>37</sup> that when Plato wants to reconsider the future of politics and what advantages might lie in law, he chooses a protagonist more political than Socrates.

## Notes

1 Translations of the Greek are from Bloom (1968). Line numbers are those in Platonis Opera (1978) and are given only when needed.

2 Politics 5.1.2-5.

3 See Arendt (1958) for a discussion of the origins of the republican tradition among the ancients; Pocock (1975) for its revival among the moderns of the Atlantic community; and Wood (1969) for its role in the American Revolution and in the founding of the American regime. Political decline owing to a loss of virtue is an important part of this tradition and is another sense in which Socrates is its progenitor (although the honor is often given to Aristotle). See, for instance, Wood (1968, pp. 48-53) and Pocock (1975, pp. 66-74).

4 On the sharing of power by the classes of rich and poor, see Politics 6.3.

5 Benardette (1989, p. 194) observes that the slaves of the aristocratic father inculcate the love of honor in his son. Benardette concludes that the slaves reflect the values of the timocratic regime, and he generalizes that "the principle of the regime is never embodied in the rulers" and that "it would never be the case that the rulers of any city show to the fullest extent the impress of the ruling element." Maybe. But still there is no instance of the rulers educating the ruled.

6 Politics, 1.7.2.

7 Augustine and Montesquieu, it might be mentioned, adopt a similar approach to regime analysis (City of God, 19.24; The Spirit of the Laws, 3.3-9).

8 See, for example, The Discourses, 1.6.

9 Regimes are examined in the order in which they are thought to occur. The intimation of relative worth arises, by and large, from the fact that the best regime is in the beginning and the worst regime is at the end. But Socrates also attributes the ranking to what people commonly praise (544c). Popular consensus favors the Cretan or Laconian regime (timocracy), and oligarchy is second in popular esteem. Socrates' own assessment, however, may be somewhat

different, for he describes oligarchy as a regime "filled with throngs of evil," whereas democracy he describes--without untoward comment--only as oligarchy's adversary.

Barker (1959, pp. 176-77) observes that the state declines in the reverse order in which it was constructed. The state began with workers, then added warriors and philosophers; so when it unravels, the first to be removed are philosophers, then warriors, then successive stages of appetitive workers.

10 If the middle regimes were ranked also by their proximity to the best regime, then the timocrat should be more rational than the oligarch and the oligarch more rational than the democrat. But the timocrat is described as an unmusical brute (548e-549a), the oligarch as a calculator of gain (553d), and the democrat as a philosophical dilettante (561d). The further one is from aristocracy, the more one has in common, intellectually, with the aristocrat. On the other hand, the timocrat has more of the habits of virtue than does the democrat, although without any of the aristocrat's prudence. And the timocrat is more public-minded.

11 See Strauss (1964, p. 132). Bloom says that the ranking reflects the measure of desire present in a regime: the more appetitive a regime, the lower its rank (1968, pp. 417, 421). Nichols says that regimes are ranked by the extent of their fragmentation and that fragmentation is caused by the dominance of privacy and selfish desires (1987, p. 125).

12 There are three passages in Book 9 which argue the contrary. At 580b Socrates says--or invites Glaucon to say--that the degree of virtue and happiness corresponds to the regimes in their order of presentation. At 583a Glaucon asserts--following Socrates' lead--that the pleasures of honor are superior to the pleasures of gain. Finally, at 587c Socrates says about the oligarchic man that his pleasures are midway between those of the tyrant and the aristocrat. In each case the precise ranking of regimes, of their citizens, and of what they love is seemingly reaffirmed. But the contexts in which these reaffirmations occur do not support the precision: In the first, Socrates is explaining that the tyrant is miserable because he is a master rather than an equal and because his desires exceed his true power. But little can be inferred about other regimes from the tyrant's weakness and isolation; indeed, if these are the causes of unhappiness, then democracy

would be preferable to oligarchy on grounds that it is the stronger and more inclusive regime. In the second, Socrates is arguing that each part of the soul has its own peculiar pleasure. But the three parts of the soul (reason, spiritedness, and appetite) and their pleasures do not correspond to the five regimes and their loves; specifically, oligarchy and democracy are each subsumed under the pleasures of gain; consequently, precise comparisons with the pleasures of honor are impossible. And in the third, Socrates is contrasting the pure pleasures of being with the impure pleasures of becoming, included in which are the pleasures of gain and honor treated quite equally (586a-d). If any status attaches to honor, it is as a consequence of spiritedness's capacity to ally itself to reason (589a-b). But the situation in Book 8 is that education is absent and that spiritedness and appetite are at liberty to pursue their own ends.

13 Taking education seriously, however, means returning to the regime of philosopher-kings.

14 Socrates ends Book 9 by affirming the possibility of an ordered soul, though not, it seems, of an ordered city (592a-b). But is there some deficiency of soul and body which brings about a decline of the best individual parallel to the decline of the best regime? Is passage through the stages of life a reproduction of oneself equivalent in riskiness to the reproduction of metallic types through mating?

15 Why does iron mix with silver and bronze with gold? They do have similar colors (the gray of iron and silver, the yellow of bronze and gold), but something more may be intended by these particular combinations. The Noble Lie assigns to reason or the philosopher the element of gold, to spiritedness or the warrior the element of silver, to appetite or the farmer the element of iron, and to appetite or the artisan the element of bronze (415a). The mixing of iron and silver means then the mixing of farmers and warriors; likewise the mixing of bronze and gold means the mixing of artisans and philosophers. At 373d farmers and warriors do mix in the sense that warriors are added to, or taken from, the city's population in order to provide through conquest the extra land needed by farmers for "pasture and tillage." And at 495c-e artisans mix with philosophers when a worker in bronze, leaping "out of the arts into philosophy," takes his

master's daughter as his bride; the result of their union is sophistry (496a). Now the common understanding underlying conquest and sophistry is that justice is the advantage of the stronger. In other words, sophistry is the use of philosophy to rationalize conquest, such as the theft of land by avaricious farmers and the destruction of aristocratic rule by subordinate classes not minding their own business. Foreign and domestic injustice are what these metallic combinations therefore suggest.

What they do not suggest are new class alliances. For when faction does come to the best regime, it is gold and silver lining up against iron and bronze (547b).

16 Sterling and Scott (1985) translate tous sophous (the wise) as "clever men" and meiktous (mixed) as "equivocators."

17 What Nichols (1987, p. 218, n. 1) observes of oligarchy is in fact true of all regimes--that a failure of statesmanship is the cause of their decline, that law could save if only the rulers had the intelligence to legislate.

18 James Madison in Federalist 10 recognizes the mysteriousness of the human soul and so backs away from any project to prevent faction through education--the "giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests" (1961, p. 78). He does not, however, despair of controlling faction's effects through the institutions of representative government.

19 He might also be dead or in exile (553b4). Still, there would have been time for fatherly counsel had Socrates thought it fitting.

20 But none of this reasoning seems sufficient to explain away the civil war that brings oligarchy to an end. There are angry people outside the ruling class, and whether or not they once were insiders themselves, they have since assumed a new identity by virtue of their exclusion and their poverty; and they topple the government, often with the help of foreign powers (556e). Accordingly, the survival of oligarchy depends on something more than the unanimity of oligarchs. Why then is Socrates' analysis indifferent to the phenomenon of class struggle? Perhaps he confines regime transformation to faction among the rulers in order not to



detract from the lesson that a common love as the basis of unity is unsustainable without education, and that education rightly done requires the guardianship of philosopher-kings. But philosopher-kings could not even save the regime in which they ruled. Thus it is of little use to regimes in which they do not rule to have their importance reaffirmed. The more Socrates emphasizes education, the more hopeless the problem of faction becomes.

21 Because there are many different individuals present in a democracy, there are also many different regimes (557d); hence the individual corresponds to the regime (man and city parallel is maintained), although it is not stated which of the two is causative. The formative power of formless democracy is indicated by the description of democratic man at 561c-d: democratic relativism induces the individual to try every activity. In other words, because democracy refuses to say that one way of life is superior to another (philosophy, soldiering, money-making), the individual is incapable of sustaining a choice for any one way of life, and so must choose them all.

22 It is also the regime most appealing to Socrates. Strauss (1964, p. 132) observes that this description of democracy has the look of a Socratic fantasy, for the regime's pluralism provides the philosopher with his subject matter, its apoliticism allows the philosopher the privacy to mind his own business, and its leniency saves the philosopher from exile or execution.

23 Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, 3.82.

24 Cf. Bloom (1968, pp. 417, 419) who contends that the democratic man is unlike the democratic city. See also Annas (1981, pp. 301-02).

25 Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, 2.37-41.

26 At 578d Socrates likens household slavery to tyranny in the city.

27 Democracy in America, vol. 2, bk. 2, ch. 2.

28 Politics 5.12.10-11.

29 Proving that the just man is happier than the tyrant is the main point.

30 I do not believe that anything can be made of the fact that the word for "love" changes from philia (as in philonikiai kai philotimoai [548c6-7] and philochrematon [553d9]) to

erōs. In the first place, the democrat's love is never called philia but "greediness" (aplestia; 562b6, 562c5) and "thirst" (dipsa; 562c8); thus it is not the case that all three intermediate regimes are given a form of desiring, philia, that is in some way distinct <sup>from</sup> erōs. Second, the tyrant's erōs, while a leader of the soul rivaling the philosopher's reason, is a leader that is one with its followers: leader and followers are both named "desire," or epithumia. Erōs is desire, but so too are money-loving and freedom-loving (and possibly honor-loving); they are all belong to the appetitive part of the soul.

31 White (1979, p. 220) calls the tyrant's eros and "unremitting obsession" that is active "whether its object is present or not." Is it then the case that oligarchs, by contrast, desire wealth only when economic opportunities are present before them?

32 Aristocracy is also "lawless" in that it condones incest and attacks the structure of the family (cf. 461e and 571c-d; 457dff. and 574a-b). And of course the philosopher is an erotic—at least he is in other dialogues. Hence there are several points of commonality.

33 Aristotle makes the same point, that a tyrant, identified as a person wanting painless pleasures and independence of others, is properly satisfied and best restrained by philosophy (Politics 2.7.12-13). See Bloom (1968, 424-25).

34 For a discussions of the quality and choiceworthiness of philosophical pleasures, see Nussbaum (1986, pp. 147-48); Murphy (1951, pp. 207-23).

35 Politics 5.8.17-18.

36 Politics 5.12.11.

37 Strauss (1987, p. 78); West (1979, p.172).

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