

The Just Society and its Enemies

Week 1: Last Night in Suburbia

Some terminology:

pleonexia: the self-interested, maximizing desire to 'have more' [*pleonektein*] of the good (i.e., wealth and power)

Guardians [*phulakes*]: practitioners of the art of politics: the *political class* of a just city, from whom its rulers [*archontes*] are drawn

Auxiliaries [*epikouroi*]: the military class of a just city, from whom its Guardians are drawn, and together with them making up the *elite class*

moneymakers [*chrêmatistikoi*]: the third, non-elite class of a just city, motivated by wealth

the Book V mechanisms: the abolition of private property, abolition of the household, and abolition of the traditional family required for the elite class of a just city

the feminist rule: in a just city, women practise the same occupations as men, including Auxiliary and Guardian, as appropriate to their natural abilities, and thus must have the same educational opportunities

the principle of justice (general): in a just city, every citizen practises the occupation appropriate to their natural abilities, and thus must have the appropriate education for doing so

the principle of justice (special): in a just city, politics must be the occupation of those who have the natural abilities appropriate for political work, and have been given the appropriate education for it

the separation rule: in a just city, wealth and political power must be kept apart: (i) no moneymaker can participate in politics (*the no-meddling rule*); and (ii) no member of the political class may be motivated by wealth (*no-corruption*).

the oak or rock principle: certain properties of a city, including justice and other salient ethical traits, are a function of the same property in its citizens, transferred to the whole by the structure of the city (435d9-6a3, 544d5-e2)

the general possibility claim: a just city *can* exist [*einai*], since its practices would be in accordance with nature [*kata phusin*] (456b-7c)

the transitional possibility claim: a just city *can* come into being [*gignesthai*], since this requires only a not-impossible convergence of political power and philosophy (471c-2b, 473a-d, 499b-d, 502a-c, 540d-1b)

Passages:

I. Transitional possibility:

"Unless," I said, "either philosophers rule as kings in cities or kings (the ones now so called) and dynasts philosophize genuinely and sufficiently, and philosophy and political power coincide, with the many natures of those who go down the one path without the other being of necessity shut out -- there is no rest from evils, my dear Glaucon, for cities, nor I suppose for the human race. Nor would this constitution which we have now gone through in words ever before then grow as far as possible and see the light of the sun. This was what for so long has inhibited me from speaking

-- seeing how very paradoxical it would be to say. For it is difficult to see that there in no other way would there be private or public happiness."¹

Ἐὰν μή, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἢ οἱ φιλόσοφοι βασιλεύσωσιν ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἢ οἱ βασιλῆς τε νῦν λεγόμενοι καὶ δυνάσται φιλοσοφήσωσι γνησίως τε καὶ ἱκανῶς, καὶ τοῦτο εἰς ταῦτόν συμπέσῃ, δυνάμεις τε πολιτικὴ καὶ φιλοσοφία, τῶν δὲ νῦν πορευομένων χωρὶς ἐφ' ἐκάτερον αἱ πολλαὶ φύσεις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀποκλεισθῶσιν, οὐκ ἔστι κακῶν παῦλα, ὃ φίλε Γλαύκων, ταῖς πόλεσι, δοκῶ δ' οὐδὲ τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ γένει· οὐδὲ αὕτη ἡ πολιτεία μή ποτε πρότερον φύῃ τε εἰς τὸ δυνατόν καὶ φῶς ἡλίου ἴδῃ, ἦν νῦν λόγῳ διεληλύθαμεν. ἀλλὰ τοῦτό ἐστιν ὃ ἐμοὶ πάλαι ὄκνον ἐντίθησι λέγειν, ὁρῶντι ὡς πολὺ παρὰ δόξαν ῥηθήσεται· χαλεπὸν γὰρ ἰδεῖν ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ἄλλη τις εὐδαιμονήσειεν οὔτε ἰδίᾳ οὔτε δημοσίᾳ. (*Rep.* V, 473c11-e4)

II. Constitutional indifference:

"I say," I said, "that this type of constitution which we've now described would be one, but it could be named in two ways. For it one exceptional man arose among the rulers it would be called a kingship, but if many, an aristocracy."

"True", he said.

"Well then, I said, "I say that this is one form. For whether it's many or one who arise, none of the city's laws that are worth mentioning would be changed, if he uses that rearing and education we described."

"It's not likely", he said.

Λέγω, εἶπον, ὅτι εἷς μὲν οὗτος ὢν ἡμεῖς διεληλύθαμεν πολιτείας εἴη ἂν τρόπος, ἐπονομασθεῖη δ' ἂν καὶ διχῇ· ἐγγενομένου μὲν γὰρ ἀνδρὸς ἑνὸς ἐν τοῖς ἄρχουσι διαφέροντος βασιλεία ἂν κληθεῖη, πλειόνων δὲ ἀριστοκρατία. Ἀληθῆ, ἔφη.

Τοῦτο μὲν τοῖνυν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἐν εἶδος λέγω· οὔτε γὰρ ἂν πλείους οὔτε εἷς ἐγγεγόμενοι κινήσειεν ἂν τῶν ἀξίων λόγου νόμων τῆς πόλεως, τροφῇ τε καὶ παιδείᾳ χρησάμενος ἢ διήλθομεν.

Οὐ γὰρ εἰκός, ἔφη. (*Rep.* IV, 445d4-e3)

III. Transitional possibility again, with barbarians:

"Well then, if some necessity for those who are at the summit of philosophy to take charge of the city has arisen in the limitless time gone past, or even now in some foreign land, far away from our view, or even if it indeed *will* arise in the future -- concerning this, we are prepared to fight in argument, that the constitution we have spoken of has existed and exists and will come to be, whenever the Muse herself comes into power in a city. For it is not impossible for it to happen, nor do we speak of impossibilities. But that they are difficult, we also agree."

¹ Translations from the Republic are revised from A. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* (New York, 1968)

Εἰ τοίνυν ἄκροις εἰς φιλοσοφίαν πόλεώς τις ἀνάγκη ἐπιμεληθῆναι ἢ γέγονεν ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ τῷ παρεληλυθότι χρόνῳ ἢ καὶ νῦν ἔστιν ἐν τινὶ βαρβαρικῷ τόπῳ, πόρρῳ που ἐκτὸς ὄντι τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐπόψεως, ἢ καὶ ἔπειτα γενήσεται, περὶ τούτου ἔτοιμοι τῷ λόγῳ διαμάχεσθαι, ὥς γέγονεν ἡ εἰρημένη πολιτεία καὶ ἔστιν, καὶ γενήσεται γε, ὅταν αὐτὴ Μοῦσα πόλεως ἐγκρατὴς γένηται. οὐ γὰρ ἀδύνατος γενέσθαι, οὐδ' ἡμεῖς ἀδύνατα λέγομεν· χαλεπὰ δέ, καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν ὁμολογεῖται. (*Rep.* VI, 499c7-d6)

[Cf. "...And won't this be the quickest and easiest way for the city and the regime of which we were speaking to be established, becoming happy itself and bringing the most benefits **to whatever nation it comes to be in?**"

"Very much so," he said. "And how it would come into being, if it ever were to come into being, you have, in my opinion, Socrates, stated well."

καὶ οὕτω τάχιστα τε καὶ ῥᾶστα πόλιν τε καὶ πολιτείαν, ἣν ἐλέγομεν, καταστᾶσαν αὐτήν τε εὐδαιμονήσῃ καὶ τὸ ἔθνος ἐν ᾧ ἂν ἐγγένηται πλεῖστα ὀνήσῃ;

Πολύ γ', ἔφη· καὶ ὥς ἂν γένοιτο, εἴπερ ποτὲ γίγνοιτο, δοκεῖς μοι, ὦ Σώκρατες, εὖ εἰρηκέναι. (*Rep.* VII, 541a-b)]

IV. 'Idealism':

What about this, then: weren't we too, so we claim, making a paradigm in speech, of a good city?

-- Very much so.

So do you think that we spoke any the less well if we are not able to prove that it is possible for a city to be founded in the way we said?

-- Definitely not.

Well then that's the truth of it, I said. But if then to please you I must exert myself to do this too, to prove in what way it would above all be possible and on what basis, let's agree the same points with regard to this proof.

-- Which ones?

Is it possible for anything to be done as it is said, or is it natural that action lays hold of truth less than speech, even if someone doesn't think so? Do you agree that it's so or not?

-- I agree, he said.

Then don't compel me necessarily to present it as coming into being in every way in deed as we described it in speech. But if we are able to find that a city could be governed in a way most closely approximating what has been said, say that we've found the possibility of these things coming into being on which you insist."

[vc Reeve: "Then don't compel me to show that what we've described in theory **can** come into being exactly as we've described it."

Griffith: "Then don't keep trying to compel me to demonstrate that the sort of thing we have described in a theoretical way **can** also be fully realised in practice."

Adam: "Do not compel me to shew that what we described in words is in all respects reproduced by experience"]

Τί οὖν; οὐ καὶ ἡμεῖς, φαμέν, παράδειγμα ἐποιοῦμεν λόγῳ ἀγαθῆς πόλεως;
Πάνυ γε.

Ἴητόν τι οὖν οἶει ἡμᾶς εὖ λέγειν τούτου ἔνεκα, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχωμεν ἀποδείξαι ὡς δυνατόν οὕτω πόλιν οἰκῆσαι ὡς ἐλέγετο;

Οὐ δῆτα, ἔφη.

Τὸ μὲν τοίνυν ἀληθές, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οὕτω· εἰ δὲ δὴ καὶ τοῦτο προθυμηθῆναι δεῖ σὴν χάριν, ἀποδείξαι πῇ μάλιστα καὶ κατὰ τί δυνατότατ' ἂν εἴη, πάλιν μοι πρὸς τὴν τοιαύτην ἀπόδειξιν τὰ αὐτὰ διομολόγησαι.

Τὰ ποῖα;

Ἄρ' οἷόν τέ τι πραχθῆναι ὡς λέγεται, ἢ φύσιν ἔχει πρᾶξιν λέξεως ἥττον ἀληθείας ἐφάπτεσθαι, καὶ εἰ μὴ τῷ δοκεῖ; ἀλλὰ σὺ πότερον ὁμολογεῖς οὕτως ἢ οὐ;

Ὁμολογῶ, ἔφη.

Τοῦτο μὲν δὴ μὴ ἀνάγκαζέ με, οἷα τῷ λόγῳ διήλθομεν, τοιαῦτα παντάπασιν καὶ τῷ ἔργῳ δεῖν γιγνόμενα <ἂν> ἀποφαίνειν· ἀλλ', ἐὰν οἷοί τε γενώμεθα εὐρεῖν ὡς ἂν ἐγγύτατα τῶν εἰρημένων πόλιν οἰκήσειεν, φάναι ἡμᾶς ἐξηυρηκέναι ὡς δυνατότα ταῦτα γίγνεσθαι ἃ σὺ ἐπιτάττεις. ἢ οὐκ ἀγαπήσεις τούτων τυγχάνων; ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ἂν ἀγαπῶην.

Καὶ γὰρ ἐγώ, ἔφη. (*Rep.* V, 472d9-3b2)

V. 'Kallipolis':

"Then to the greatest extent possible," I said, "those in your beautiful city must be enjoined in no way to abstain from geometry, For even its by-products aren't slight." (527c1-3)

Ὡς οἷόν τ' ἄρα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, μάλιστα προστακτέον ὅπως οἱ ἐν τῇ καλλιπόλει σοι μηδενὶ τρόπῳ γεωμετρίας ἀφέξονται. καὶ γὰρ τὰ πάρεργα αὐτοῦ οὐ σμικρά.

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