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The First City and First Soul in Plato's *Republic*

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Abstract: One puzzling feature of Plato's *Republic* is the First City or 'city of pigs'. Socrates praises the First City as a "true", "healthy" city, yet Plato abandons it with little explanation. I argue that the problem is not a political failing, as most previous readings have proposed: the First City is a viable political arrangement, where one can live a deeply Socratic lifestyle. But the First City has a psychological corollary, that the soul is simple rather than tripartite. Plato sees this 'First Soul' as an inaccurate model of moral psychology, and so rejects it, along with its political analogue.

Keywords: Plato, Socrates, *Republic*, Soul, City of Pigs, Justice

Introduction

Plato's *Republic* is famous for describing in detail an idealized political arrangement while using the same principles to provide a model of human psychology. Plato's ideal city, Kallipolis, begins in a much simpler First City, which Glaucon quickly rejects as a "city of pigs" (372d4). This leads Socrates to replace it with what will eventually become Kallipolis. Most scholars have followed Glaucon in not taking the First City seriously. But Socrates says that the First City is a true, complete, just, and healthy city, and Plato never directly addresses why Socrates would be wrong in this assessment. This presents readers with an interpretive puzzle: why did Plato have Socrates praise the First City and then abandon it without any philosophical explanation of its faults?

In this paper I seek to answer this question. In section 1 I discuss the First City in detail, arguing that Socrates's assessment of the First City is both sincere and accurate given Plato's conception of justice in the *Republic*: the First City is a viable and just political arrangement. In section 2 I canvas contemporary treatments of the First City. These views come in two groups. The first group fails to

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account for the fact that the First City is a true, just city. The second gets this right but does not give an adequate explanation of the First City's role in the overall context of the *Republic*. However, all these treatments help us see the desiderata which a successful account of the First City needs to satisfy; hence going carefully through these attempts will provide a better grasp of what a good explanation of the First City should look like. Finally, in section 3 I provide what I take to be a better explanation of the First City. I argue that the First City reflects a Socratic approach to moral psychology in which the soul is simple, a view that Plato took seriously and developed in his early dialogues. But Plato later came to replace this view with a new one positing a tripartite soul, which he expounds in the remainder of the *Republic*. As a political arrangement, there is nothing wrong with the First City: it represents an admirably Socratic lifestyle. But it would imply what Plato came to see as an inaccurate conception of the soul and, consequently, the collapse of the city/soul isomorphism on which the *Republic* rests. Hence Plato abandoned the simple First City and the corresponding simple Soul in favor of a tripartite city (Kallipolis) and a tripartite soul.¹

1 The First City

Plato introduces the First City as part of a larger project attempting to show that that it is in one's own interest to be just rather than unjust. This project is grounded in the idea that (i) there is an isomorphism between the city and the soul that allows conclusions on one side to apply to the other, and (ii) justice is shown to be the same thing in both cases (369A, cf. 441C–D). This proposed isomorphism shapes the discussion of justice throughout the *Republic*.

This discussion starts with Socrates arguing that cities come to be because no one is self-sufficient, and so each person must cooperate with others to meet each individual's needs (369B). There are a few basic needs to which all humans are subject, namely food, shelter, and clothing (369D). When working with others to meet these needs, it is more efficient if each person specializes in a single task (370B). A city is, at bottom, is this system of interdependency (369C3–4).

¹ The distinction between Socrates as character and Plato as author is always important and often easy to overlook or confuse. In what follows, I will use 'Socrates' to refer to the character of the platonic dialogues, particularly when referring to quotations from the text, and 'Plato' to refer to the author, particularly when referring to larger questions of design and authorial intent. Any answer to a 'why?' question about what Socrates says in the *Republic* is ultimately reducible to 'because Plato wrote it that way'. Thus, our real concern is the reasoning behind Plato's choices.

We will examine the details of the First City presently, but I want to begin by highlighting an unappreciated fact about it: the First City is a true, just city. Once the occupation of each of its citizens is settled, the First City is described as “completed” (Πλήρωμα, 371E7) and “finished” (τελέα, 371E10) and is likened to a well-ordered city (ὀρθῶς οἰκουμέναις πόλεσι, 371C5–8).² And after Glaucon objects to this claim on the grounds that the First City’s citizens live like pigs, Socrates draws a stark contrast between the First City, which he describes as a “true city” (ἀληθινὴ πόλις, 372E6) and as a “healthy one” (ὑγιής τις, 372E7; cf. 373B3), and the city which will become Kallipolis, which is a “luxurious city” (τρυφῶσαν πόλιν, 372E3) and a “feverish, festering city” (φλεγμαίνουσαν πόλιν, 372E8). Finally, as Socrates completes his description of Kallipolis in Book IV and questions what makes a city just, he argues that the relevant feature – that each does his or her own work – has been present since the founding of the First City (433A1–6, 443B7–C7).

But even if the text is clear about the fact that the First City is a true, complete, and just city, we may still wonder what makes it so. ‘True’ and ‘complete’ here presumably have both descriptive and normative aspects such that a true, complete city does a good job at being whatever it is a city is. The bigger question is what makes the First City a good city. To answer this question, we have to look more closely at both the First City and at Plato’s conception of the nature of justice. In short, a just city has three features: (i) it follows the Principle of Specialization, (ii) it is healthy, and (iii) it is internally stable. The First City, I argue, has all three of these features.

Let us begin with the Principle of Specialization, that each does one’s own work. This principle is introduced early in the discussion of the First City, at 369E2–370C5, where Socrates remarks that people have more needs than they can satisfy alone, can work more efficiently on one job than on many, and have different aptitudes from one another. This principle is alluded to as a principle of justice at 371E12–372A2 but it is not fully expounded until Book IV where Socrates notes that

Justice, I think, is exactly what we said must be established throughout the city when we were founding it – either that or some form of it. We stated, and often repeated, if you remember, that everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited. (433A1–6)

He goes on to conclude that “Then, it turns out that this doing one’s own work – provided that it comes to be in a certain way – is justice” (433B35; cf. 433E12–

² I use Reeve’s revision of Grube’s translation of the *Republic* throughout, with some modifications.

434A1). For Kallipolis, the Principle of Specialization applies primarily at the class level: each of the three classes of the city – artisans, auxiliaries, and guardians – performs its role relative to the other two classes (434C7–10). But the First City does not have distinct classes; rather, the Principle of Specialization applies at the individual level, where each person performs their own occupation rather than trying to do more than one.

The second important feature of the justice of a person in the *Republic* is that it makes the soul healthy; indeed, on Plato's view psychic health effectively is moral justice. In many ways, this is the most important idea in the *Republic*, for it provides the normative underpinning for Socrates's response to Glaucon and Adeimantus (and Thrasymachus) that everyone would and should choose to be just rather than unjust. This argument is first suggested at the end of Book I where Socrates argues that justice is the virtue required for the soul to function well (352D–354A). Its most explicit formulation comes at the conclusion of Book IV. Here Socrates argues that “just and unjust actions are no different for the soul than healthy and unhealthy things are for the body” (444C5–6) because both health and justice are harmonious relationships between the component parts of the body and soul respectively (444D3–11). Socrates's conclusion is that “Virtue seems, then, to be a kind of health, fine condition, and well-being of the soul, while vice is disease, shameful condition, and weakness” (444D13–E2).

As we have already seen, the First City is explicitly described as a healthy city (372E7, 373B3). But the health of the First City is not due to a relationship between its constituent classes, because there are no classes. Rather, each individual leads a healthy life and has a healthy relationship to other citizens. This is part of what Adeimantus means when he suggests that justice is to be found in the need that citizens have of one another (372A1–2). Everyone has a useful role to play in the city (371C5–8, 371E1–5), each person's needs are met, and all live in peace with one another (372D2) without poverty or war (372C1).

The First City is also healthy in a more literal sense. It is notable that a physician is one of the first occupations listed in the First City (369D9). While the language here (τιν' ἄλλον τῶν περὶ τὸ σῶμα θεραπευτῆν) might at first seem non-committal, Socrates uses a similar phrase at 341C6–7 to pick out the person who is truly a doctor rather than a money-maker. Moreover, the uses of *θεραπευτῆν* seem to refer to one who cares for the body through a preventative regimen rather than by treating unnatural diseases, that is, to one who accords with the Asclepiadic method of treatment discussed in detail and praised by Socrates at 403D–408C. This suggestion is corroborated by the lifestyle led by the inhabitants of the First City. Socrates is surprisingly specific about the kind of diet the First Citizens live on:

For food, they'll knead and cook the flour and meal they've made from wheat and barley. They'll put their honest cakes and loaves on reeds or clean leaves, and, reclining on beds strewn with yew and myrtle, they'll feast with their children, drink their wine, and, crowned with wreathes, hymn the gods ... They'll obviously need salt, olives, cheese, boiled roots, and vegetables of the sort they cook in the country. We'll give them desserts, too, of course, consisting of figs, chickpeas, and beans, and they'll roast myrtle and accords before the fire, drinking moderately. (372A6–D1)

The diet utilized by inhabitants of the First City is stereotypically moderate; it is regimented and simple but not austere.³ It is also suggested that they will engage in the moderate physical activities necessary for good health, especially when contrasted with the luxuries that are present in what we can call the Second City, the city composed of decadent citizens without rulers (373A–C). Hence it is no surprise that the description of the First City ends with the claim that its citizens live a long, peaceful, and healthy life.⁴

The moderation of the First City naturally leads to the final important feature of justice: stability. This aspect of justice is only hinted at in the early books of the *Republic*, but it is developed more clearly in Book VIII where Socrates explains how timocracy emerges from aristocracy. While the devolutions to the lower constitutions seem rapid, the move from aristocracy to timocracy is less natural. We are told that “It is hard for a city composed in this way [i. e. for Kallipolis] to change, but everything that comes into being must decay. Not even a constitution such as this will last forever” (546A1–3). While admitting that even aristocracy is a transient state, Socrates nevertheless implies that aristocracy is far more stable than other constitutions, because aristocracy is free of injustice, that is, of a kind of civil war between the parts of the city where one part tries to usurp the role of another (545C8–D3; cf. 351D4–352A8, 444B1–8).

The First City is also a stable city free of civil strife. As we've already seen, the inhabitants of the First City live in peace with one another. Because there are no classes in the First City, there will be no usurpation of one class's role by another. The same would seem to apply at the individual level. Because each person is given a job for which they are well-suited (370A7–B2) and everyone has a role to play (371C5–E5), there is no incentive to try to take another person's occupa-

³ For more on this issue see Davidson (1997), pp. 3–35, and especially the discussion of this passage at pp. 20–26. See also Mason (1995), Wilkins (1995), and Zoller (2015).

⁴ There is at least one sense in which the First City is actually *healthier* than Kallipolis. Kallipolis needs an educational regime to purge the Second City's fever (399E5–8), while the First City is healthy from the start. Plato asserts that it is better to live a life not needing cures than to be cured of a disease, especially when that disease is caused by licentiousness (405C8–D4, cf. *Grg.* 478c).

tion. And even if they did, the repercussions would be much less drastic than in Kallipolis, because it is easier to recover from one person failing to do their part than to recover from a constitutional change in the city. It is therefore no surprise that the description of the First City ends with the claim that “they’ll live in peace and good health, and when they die at a ripe old age, they’ll bequeath a similar life to their children” (372D1–3). While we shouldn’t think that the First City is immortal, it is notable that, in contrast to Socrates’s lengthy discussion about the stability of Kallipolis, we are not told of the mechanism by which the First City would break down.

The conclusion we should draw, then, is that Socrates is right to call the First City a true city by his standards. The First City is a just city, because it follows the Principle of Specialization, is healthy, and is internally stable. This raises an obvious interpretive puzzle: why does Plato have Socrates so quickly abandon the First City for what will become Kallipolis if it is a true, just city? Glaucon’s objections do not reveal any substantive flaws with the First City and Socrates is not the type to passively submit to questionable assumptions or faulty reasoning. So why did Plato write the dialogue so as to give us no answer here? I will supply an answer to this question in section 3. But before doing so, we must first discuss the various rival treatments of the First City. While I think that previous attempts to explain the First City’s role in the *Republic* have not succeeded, their efforts will reveal important aspects of the First City that will help us find a better answer.

2 Rival views

Though the First City is not discussed as often as many other topics in the *Republic*, it has not been totally ignored. I have organized previous treatment of the First City into two groups of three views each. The first group (sections 2.1–2.3) fails to accurately capture Plato’s description of the First City. But each of these three views has a counterpart in the second group (sections 2.4–2.6) that gets the First City right. The problems with the second group lie in situating the First City in the larger context of the *Republic*. But I think each view gets progressively closer to the truth, especially as we begin to focus on the moral psychology that corresponds to Plato’s depiction of politics.

2.1 The False Start View

We can call the first view on offer the *False Start View*. On this view, the First City has no clear role in the *Republic* at all. Plato begins with something like a state of nature, which is a common rhetorical device for political theory (cf. 358E–359B, *Prt.* 320C–323A, Aristotle’s *Pol.* 1252^a–1253^a), but the real philosophical work does not begin until Socrates starts discussing the luxurious city, and in particular the guardians that such a city requires.

This view is not often explicitly defended. However, the First City is also rarely discussed in any detail, and it is reasonable to suspect that many authors who do not find the First City worth discussing would subscribe to the False Start View. However, Julia Annas provides one explicit defense of this view:

The first city is allowed to develop, and becomes corrupt, in a very odd way, which forces us to ask what is the point of the first city in the *Republic*’s argument... The ideally just state ... develops not from the first city but from the purging process that gets rid of what is unhealthy in the luxurious city... we have to conclude, though reluctantly, that Plato has not given the first city a clear place in the *Republic*’s moral argument. The real argument starts from fact about human nature and co-operation which we see at work in the luxurious city.⁵

To be fair, Annas reaches this conclusion by means of a kind of argument from elimination: what she takes to be the most plausible interpretation of the First City (discussed in section 2.2 below) doesn’t work, and so we’re left unable to explain it. To truly show that the False Start View is a non-starter, we need a successful positive account of the First City’s role in the *Republic*, which I will attempt in § 3.

But for now, we can note that there are reasons to resist the False Start View, even if our positive accounts fail. For one, we’ve seen that the First City is a true city. It is implausible that Plato would have described the First City as he did if he were not trying to make *some* point, notwithstanding our difficulty in discerning what that point was. More substantively, one of the reasons that the First City is a true city is that it exhibits the Principle of Specialization, which is so central to Plato’s conception of justice.⁶ Plato repeatedly refers back to the First City when he defines justice in Kallipolis in terms of the Principle of Specialization (374A4–E3, 417A6–B5, 433A1–B5, 443B7–C7). This shows that Plato did not take the First City to be a false start, but rather as providing a crucial starting premise for his argument. But the question remains: what exactly is that argument?

⁵ Annas (1981), pp. 76–78.

⁶ Annas (1981), pp. 73–76.

2.2 The Progressive View

Perhaps the most common reading may be called the *Progressive View*.⁷ On this view, Plato introduces each city as an improvement on the previous one. Reeve summarizes the view as follows:

The three poleis might constitute an ordered series of good poleis each of which, when modified, is a component of its successor, only the third and final member of the series being itself a real possibility. And this suggestion, in turn, suggests another – namely, that the account of the Kallipolis incorporates such an ordered series of poleis as a way of explaining why the Kallipolis must have the elaborate structure it does, replete with philosopher-kings, guardians, and producers, if it is to be a real possibility.⁸

On this view, the First City is not to be entertained as a serious contender for the kind of city in which justice may be found; political justice requires a more complex civic arrangement. As Barney argues:

Now the First City very strikingly lacks any such rational control; instead, it is presented as *spontaneously* moderate and self-regulating. And this is just what the appetitive part, and the people dominated by it, can never be. It is true that the austere economic circumstances of the First City will be comparatively favourable to moderation. But even in the First City, we could not hope that the unnecessary and savage desires will simply fail to occur... Nuts and berries are no substitute for the rule of reason.⁹

In other words, on the Progressive View the First City couldn't exist from which its proponents infer that it would be unable to tell us anything interesting about justice. The role of the First City is to demonstrate by its failure the need for rational political rule as exemplified by Kallipolis.

Like the False Start View, the Progressive View's primary failing is that it does not take seriously the positive terms with which Plato has Socrates describe the First City. Plato describes it as a true city that peacefully exists from one generation to the next (372D1–3). This is because the First City is not composed of the kind of decadent citizens that compose the artisan class in Kallipolis. First City citizens eat and drink moderately, they have only the number of children they can support (and are therefore, apparently, sexually temperate), and they are careful to avoid poverty and war. The only passage which comes close to describing the

⁷ Barney (2001), pp. 218–21. See also Nettleship (1922), pp. 67–76; Reeve (1998), pp. 170–77. Annas (1981), pp. 76–79, discusses this view but does not endorse it.

⁸ Reeve (1998), p. 171.

⁹ Barney (2001), pp. 219–20. Cf. Reeve (1998), p. 178.

First City's inhabitants as appetitive is where Socrates says that inhabitants of the First City will enjoy sex (ἡδέως συνόντες ἀλλήλοις), but even this remark is immediately followed by a comment on the moderation of this activity (372B8–9). The drive for unnecessary goods is not part of the First City but is rather introduced against Socrates's better judgment by Glaucon (372D–373D).

The Second City, on the other hand, contains decadent professions like “tutors, wet nurses, nannies, beauticians, barbers, chefs, cooks, and swineherds” (373B1–4), along with “all sorts of delicacies, perfumed oils, incense, prostitutes, and pastries...houses, clothes, and shoes... painting and embroidery... and gold, ivory, and the like” (373A2–8). Socrates complains that “[w]e didn't need any of these in our earlier city, but we'll need them in this one” (373C4–6).¹⁰ None of these are present in the First City. Hence the Progressive View errs in conflating the First City and its inhabitants with the luxurious Second City that follows. The First City is, in fact, described in more positive terms than the Second City.

Once the First City and Second City are properly distinguished, however, we might worry that the First City is not really a *human* city at all. If all humans do is meet their basic needs, they would essentially be living the life of animals, as Glaucon complained. But this approach underestimates the activities that citizens perform in the First City.¹¹ The First City is not a city of animals or of unnatural ascetics; it includes sophisticated professions like architecture and sailing (a topic we will return to below).¹² The First City has symposia and feasts of simple but not austere foods and wine. It might not contain the amount of comfort and culture that Glaucon wants, but according to Socrates it is an appropriate amount: it is certainly more comfortable than a life of bare subsistence. Glaucon thinks that the First City leaves something to be desired compared to the Second City, but Socrates does not seem to share that assessment.

¹⁰ The parallels with the *Gorgias* here are notable. See esp. 462C–464D.

¹¹ Devereux (1979), pp. 36–37.

¹² This point can be easily seen by comparing Socrates's discussion of the First City with Protagoras's discussion of the origin of man in his eponymous dialogue (*Prot.* 321C–323A; cf. *Statesman* 274C–E), where human existence is much more fraught than it is in the First City. A moral natural (though not perfect) parallel with the First City comes from *Laws* Book III, where Plato again depicts a civilization that is good in virtue of occupying the mean between poverty and opulence (see esp. 679A–E).

2.3 The Utopian View

This brings us to the last view in our first group, which I call the Utopian View. On this view, the First City is meant to hearken back to an idyllic, Hesiodic Golden Age. As Annas describes it,

Many have been naturally led to think that we are meant to take seriously the claim that the first city is the true one and the allusions to the Golden Age in the description of it. On this view, the first city is a picture of human association given an ideal picture of human nature – for in it only necessary human needs are met; and as long as this is the case, there will be no corruption. Plato, however, was aware that it is no good basing a political theory on the optimistic assumption that people will limit their demands to what they have natural and necessary needs for; they just won't.¹³

The First City on this view is utopian in the derogative sense: it is a kind of city that cannot exist, because it is grounded in unrealistic assumptions about human nature.

There are two fairly straightforward objections to the Utopian View. First, Kallipolis is no more realistic than the First City. Plato frequently concedes that his ideal city might not be able to exist in reality (472C–473B, 592A–B). Moreover, the idea of a highly stratified caste systems where everyone is content to be ruled by philosophers, where guardians have no private property and no private relationships, where the masses have no political rights to speak of, and where mothers are forced to give up their children to the state, is, I should hope, no less credible than a small society where people are content with a moderate lifestyle. If the mere fact that the First City is unrealistic means that it can tell us nothing about justice, then the same should apply to Kallipolis.

Second, the Utopian View mischaracterizes life in the First City. The Progressive View made the First City sound too harsh, but the Utopian View makes it sound much better than Socrates's description of it. The First City is pleasant, but not idyllic. In particular, it does not correspond to Hesiod's Golden Age: the First City inhabitants still have to work for their sustenance, e. g. by laboring barefoot and naked in the summer.¹⁴ In fact, the entire foundation of the First City is a kind of division of labor grounded in scarcity and inefficiency, hardly ideal conditions. Moreover, the level of technical sophistication is much higher

¹³ Annas (1981), p. 77. Cf. Barney (2001), p. 215; Devereux (1979), pp. 38–39; Nichols (1987), pp. 66–69.

¹⁴ The First City doesn't correspond to any of Hesiod's other ages either. Unlike the Silver Age, they worship the gods. Unlike the Bronze Age and Heroic Age, there is no war. Unlike the Iron Age, their lives are not full of toil and disagreement.

than found in a Golden Age, with doctors, merchants, sailors, and craftsmen rather than only simple farmers or hunter-gatherers. The realism of the First City is easily seen when it is contrasted with the actually utopian past depicted in the *Statesman*, where people flourish without toil in a land of peace and plenty (271A–272E).¹⁵ What we have in the First City is something less simplistic than we see in either the Progressive View or the Utopian View.

The Utopian View is therefore no place to start making sense of the First City. But proponents of the Utopian View can respond by reframing their critique as a philosophical rather than a textual one. Even if Plato presents the First City as a live possibility, he is wrong to do so because such a political arrangement would only work for creatures very different from human beings as we know them. In this case, we would read Glaucon's remark about the First City being fit for pigs as reflecting Plato's own more cynical views about human nature.¹⁶ Hence Barney argues, "the [First] City is not a genuine possibility at all: for it embodies the hypothesis that a city without rational rule could be moderate in its appetites, and that hypothesis is false."¹⁷ In fact, we can combine elements of the Progressive and Utopian Views to create a dilemma. If First City citizens are real humans, they will be disposed to want more than what is necessary and will therefore not be moderate without some external rule to prevent them from acting on their desires and, consequently, from disintegrating their city. But if the First City doesn't need external rule because its citizens are not disposed to excess, it does not describe human nature accurately (since proponents of this view take humans to be, in reality, unable to moderate their appetites on their own), and is therefore irrelevant to a theory of justice.

We can slip through the horns of this dilemma by looking more closely at the activities of the First City's inhabitants. Rather than as acting from desire for material goods or physical pleasure – as the artisan class of the Second City and Kallipolis does (and, later, as the oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical cities do) – the inhabitants of the First City are consistently described as acting from a calculation about what is to their practical benefit (369B5–C4, 370B10–C5, 371C5–D3, 372B8–9, 372D1–3). In other words, though the terms are never used, the First City demonstrates good judgment (εὐβουλία) if not practical wisdom (φρόνησις). They do not have professional philosophers, to be sure, but this is not as much of a problem as it seems, for Book IV does not refer to professional philosophers either. Though Socrates goes on to argue that Kallipolis is only possible if it is run by

¹⁵ See n. 62 below for more on the *Republic/Statesman* comparison.

¹⁶ Barney (2001), p. 216.

¹⁷ Barney (2001), p. 220. Cooper (2000), pp. 253–60 gives a similar reading.

philosophers, in Book IV the guardians are described throughout in terms of practical rather than theoretical wisdom (e. g. 424E–427C, 428C–429A, 439C–442C).¹⁸ For instance, the education that is proposed in Book IV is musical and athletic training (424B–C), i. e. education which habituates the non-rational part of the soul, not philosophical education for the rational part. The wisdom of Kallipolis is explicitly described as good judgment (428B3–8, 428E10), which the inhabitants of the First City seem to possess. And there are at least hints of an educational regime in that citizens pass on their lifestyle to their children (372D2–4), and in the symposia and hymns to the gods (which are so important to education in the Kallipolis) are explicitly noted to include children (372B6–7).¹⁹

Moreover, we have reason to think that citizens of the First City do have a sense of justice rather than mere self-interest. It is true that cities exist in the first place because each person is not self-sufficient (369B7–9), and so need will compel people to live together on the grounds that “each believes that this is better for himself” (369C6–7).²⁰ But Socrates also describes the citizens of the First City as “partners and helpers” (κοινωνούς τε καὶ βοηθούς, 369C3) and says that the reason why the city was founded was to be a partnership (κοινωνίαν) and to “share with one another” (ἀλλήλοις μεταδώσουσιν) goods and service that each provides (371B5–7). All this suggests that inhabitants of the First City have some conception of the connection between self-interest and the common good.²¹ Moreover, citizens of the First City seem to have an admirable amount of self-knowledge vis-à-vis

18 Cf. Ostwald (1971). I think Ostwald goes too far in conceiving as the city ruled by guardians and the city ruled by philosopher-kings as distinct constitutions, but he is right to note the apparent lack of high-level Form-centered philosophy in the original description of Kallipolis.

19 Socrates does not say enough about the details of life in the First City to let us know to what extent the education of children goes beyond the family. But one interesting detail concerns vocational training. Though Socrates says that inhabitants of the First City “bequeath a similar life to their children” (372D4), we are also told that each person will have a job for which they are naturally suited, given that people differ by nature (370A–B). This variation will undoubtedly occur even within a single family: Plato's Myth of the Metals shows that he is aware of the likelihood of this even under a tightly controlled eugenic regime. The implication, then, is that, counter to the traditional model of children learning their parents' craft within the family, in the First City, children are likely to be trained outside the home by practitioners of the craft who share the natural aptitude for it.

20 See Smith (1999), p. 40 for an argument that self-interest in the First City is conducive to justice, not in conflict with it.

21 Cooper (2000), p. 258 writes that “Justice requires not merely fair taking of turns, so to speak, but doing so with some countervailing motivation not to do it, or at least while recognizing that one might get something quite nice if one shirked.” But the First City is described in exactly these terms, when we are told that its citizens will “enjoy sex with one another, but bear no more children than their resources allow, lest the fall into either poverty or war” (372B7–C2). Both desire for pleasure and awareness that they shouldn't pursue it immoderately are shown in this description

their own abilities and limitations, for they seem to spontaneously self-sort into the occupations they are naturally suited to, to find a job for everyone, and to live in a sustainable way that can be passed along through generations.²²

Not only do citizens of the First City calculate what serves their interest, they also have a source of rational rule. There is not a separate political class in the First City, but there are experts in various sophisticated crafts, and these experts serve as rulers within their domain. So, for instance, a physician will be ruler when it comes to treating disease, a captain will rule when it comes to sailing, and so on, just as we are told in Book I (341C–342E, 345E–347E). So even if, contrary to the text, we think that all the residents of the First City are as disposed to excess as the residents of the Second City, they could still be kept in check by the experts, who would tell them, for example, ‘You’ll get sick if you eat too many acorns’, or ‘You’ll run out of money for food if you spend it all on shoes in the market’. That Socrates thinks this a viable arrangement is shown by his repeated claim that the citizens of the First City are successful at pursuing their desires while also maintaining both their individual good and the common good (371A4–5, 371B5–7, 372B7–C2, 372D2–4). There is no indication that they try to overstep their place or claim to know more about another person’s occupation.

Hence the worry is not that no one is in charge, but rather that the First City lacks a class of rulers who, because of the Principle of Specialization, engage in nothing but political rule. But it is a common theme outside the *Republic* that politicians do not understand the subject of their pursuits, while craftsmen do (cf. *Ap.* 21B–22A, *Meno* 92D–94E, *Prt.* 319A–320B). So, it would not be at all surprising if Plato thought that the citizens of the First City can all rule one another in a kind of technocracy where each person is in charge of the domain in which they are an expert. And we should remember that the guardians and philosopher-kings also do a variety of jobs; in particular, the philosophers are polymaths who variously serve in the army, study a variety of disciplines, and rule the city (535A–540B). If it is within the purview of a single occupation for philosophers to both study the Good and apply it politically, then it should also be within the purview of a single occupation to, say, treat the sick and also rule the city on matters of health. Irrespective of other questions about the connection between technical knowledge and philosophy, the point here is simply that the Principle of Specialization allows for the same person to practice a discipline and to engage in political rule at the same time.

²² As an anonymous referee points out, this kind of self-awareness is suggestive of the kind of Socratic self-knowledge (i. e. knowing what he knows and doesn’t know) that characterizes wisdom in the *Apology*. We will return to this topic in section 3.

All this shows that we can slip through the horns of the Utopian View's dilemma. The citizens of the First City do not act excessively, but that does not entail that they have an unrealistic or inhuman moral psychology. Once we distinguish between the First City and the artisan class of the Second City, we can see that regulation of desire can be internal rather than external. Individual members of the First City can provide a conception of a particular good based on their expertise and serve as rulers on that topic. The rest of the city will be motivated by a sense of the common good to abide by that ruling and live moderately. The First City, where people live moderately and justly, is a city that operates in a rational way, even if it is not explicitly governed by philosopher-kings.²³

This concludes the first group of explanations of the role of the First City in the *Republic*. The common theme in this group is that each view fails to take seriously just how good the First City really is. When Plato has Socrates praise the First City as a true, healthy city, it appears to be sincere. We need to explain why Socrates is made to say this, not explain it away.

2.4 The Educational View

In what follows of section 2 we will look at three views that take Socrates at his word on this point. To this extent they represent an improvement over the first group. But, as I will argue, they each fail to get the second part of the puzzle right: given that the First City is a true city, why did Plato abandon the First City in favor of Kallipolis?

We can call the first of these interpretations the *Educational View*; it posits that Plato abandons the First City for pedagogical, not philosophical, reasons. Like the False Start View, the Educational View does not see a philosophical reason for abandoning the First City for Kallipolis. That is because, on this view, Socrates's praise is taken to indicate that the First City is actually *superior* to Kallipolis.²⁴ But because it is a better city, it makes a worse teaching tool, and so Plato switches to the Kallipolis model to teach the reader, represented in the dialogue by Glaucon, an important lesson about justice. Jonas, Nakazawa, & Braun, representatives of the Educational View, write:

²³ We will have more to say about the place of reason and philosophy in the First City in section 3 below.

²⁴ Jonas, Nakazawa, & Braun (2012), pp. 356–57.

The reason for discovering justice in a city is ultimately to discover justice in the soul. ... Unfortunately, after the interlocutors construct a city that, as we shall argue, Socrates takes to embody justice (the First City), Glaucon is unable to see the justice of that city and demands a different type of city, namely a luxurious one with a fever. Consequently, in order for Socrates to fulfill his goal of the dialogue he must provide an image that better assists Glaucon in seeing justice. The image that ultimately achieves this goal is the Kallipolis. It is therefore consistent for Socrates to maintain that the First City is the true and healthy one, and nevertheless go on to construct a new city.²⁵

There are two ways in which the First City is pedagogically deficient: it does not provide a clear illustration of injustice, and it is convincing only to those already disposed to value justice properly.²⁶

Despite the progress it makes in evaluating the First City, the Educational View is not without its shortcomings, in particular about the role of Kallipolis. The main problem I see in the Educational View has to do with its analysis of the pedagogical role of Kallipolis. This reading alleges that the First City cannot be used to illustrate injustice, because there is no injustice to be found in it. Hence Plato constructs an inferior city, one which can be unjust, in order to show what injustice would look like, and therefore why justice is better than injustice. This is a very common observation in discussion of the First City; even views which evaluate the First City differently have made much of Socrates' concession to Glaucon that we may see the growth of both justice and injustice in the feverish Second City.²⁷

However, I think that this way of looking at the First City cannot possibly be right. As a purely textual matter, Socrates does concede to Glaucon that looking at a luxurious city "may not be a bad idea, for by examining it, we might very well see how justice and injustice grow up in cities." (372E3–6). But he says nearly the exact same thing to Adeimantus early, asking "where are justice and injustice to be found" in the First City (371E12). And when Socrates embarks on his discussion of the First City, immediately after noting the isomorphism between city and soul, he asks "[i]f we could watch a city coming to be in theory, wouldn't we also see its justice coming to be, and its injustice as well?" (369A6–8).

Socrates's claims notwithstanding, one might object that the First City cannot be used as a model for injustice since the resources needed to explain injustice are not available. But we need to distinguish the question of whether injustice is

²⁵ Jonas, Nakazawa, & Braun (2012), p. 336.

²⁶ Jonas, Nakazawa, & Braun (2012), pp. 337–38

²⁷ Annas (1981), p. 78; Barney (2001), pp. 214–15; Cooper (2000), p. 258; Deslauriers (2001), pp. 230–31; Devereux (1979), pp. 37–38; Jonas, Nakawaza & Braun (2012), pp. 336–37.

present in the First City from the question of whether we can learn about injustice *from* the First City. And the answer to the second question is, I think, 'yes'. As we saw in section 1, there are three properties that make a city just: specialization, moderation, and stability. Consequently, an unjust city will be one which fails to exemplify these properties. Plato may not have gone into the details to show what would make the First City become unjust, or what unjust citizens of such a city would be like, but he has given us the tools we need to make a straightforward inference based on his description of justice.

Moreover, the Educational View argues that the specific lesson Glaucon needs to learn is about the interdependence between moderation and justice.²⁸ But it is especially odd to think that the First City cannot be used to teach this lesson since moderation is its most notable feature. In fact, the First City looks much more moderate than Kallipolis due to the absence of unnecessary luxuries in the First City. Kallipolis is said to be purged of luxuries at 399E4–5 (cf. 416C–417B), but the context requires only that the Guardians do not partake of these luxuries, and it is unclear whether the same holds of the artisan class.²⁹ Even if we grant that the luxuries Glaucon insisted on are eventually removed from Kallipolis altogether (as 420E–422A perhaps suggests), it does not follow that Kallipolis is a better model of moderation. For, as we are told, it is better to live a healthy life than to be cured of disease (405C8–D4). The First City therefore looks better on this score than Kallipolis.

So even though the Educational View is correct about the quality of the First City, it does not successfully resolve the mystery of why Plato abandons it in favor of Kallipolis. But the failure of the Educational View does show us something important: the First City cannot be rejected on the grounds that it is too simple or too naïve to teach us about both justice and injustice. Plato must have had a more substantive reason to move from the First City to Kallipolis.

2.5 The Contingency View

The next view to consider, which we can call the *Contingency View*, holds that the First City is a true, complete, just city because it is unified, and in fact more unified than any city other than Kallipolis.³⁰ This is because the appetites of the city's inhabitants are moderated by calculations of self-interest that show that

²⁸ Jonas, Nakazawa, & Braun (2012), pp. 337–42.

²⁹ Cf. Peterson (2011), pp. 109–15.

³⁰ McKeen (2004).

cooperation is necessary if they are to survive and thrive. The problem is that the unity of the First City is contingent:

The unity in the [First City], I suggest, is contingent in the way that happiness is contingent for the person who is only instrumentally virtuous. For [the First City], unity is secured as long as, in general, acting in one's self interest conduces to acting in the interest of the community.

But citizens of the [First City] do not value civic unity, justice, or even the *polis* itself, for its own sake. Amicability among its citizens is valuable to residents of [the First City] insofar [as] it provides the benefits they enjoy...But things might go differently. Circumstances may change and individual interests might thereby diverge. If this happens, there is nothing that will secure the unity of the [First City] against these contingencies.³¹

On this view, the goodness of the First City is due to luck rather than the intrinsic nature of the city's arrangement or its citizens. A change in circumstance could easily disrupt the First City's unity, and this is a problem because

Unity in the [First City] depends overly on lucky circumstances which allow individual self-interests to coincide. But there is no mechanism in the [First City] to guard against changing fortunes, accidents and circumstances which would leave individual interests to diverge. To the extent that the [First City] depends on luck, it is unstable and insufficiently unified, and thus, is inferior to *kallipolis*.³²

The unity of Kallipolis, by contrast, is resistant to these contingencies. This explains why Plato would prefer Kallipolis but still have Socrates praise the First City.

There are two remarks to be made against the Contingency View. First, it sells short exactly how unified the First City actually is. As I argued in section 1, the First City is a stable city. This is true both synchronically (citizens live at peace with one another) and diachronically (citizens pass on their lifestyle to their children). And as I argued in section 2.3 above, inhabitants of the First City have a sense of justice based on the needs of others. There is nothing in the text to suggest that the First City would fall apart in different circumstances or be any more threatened by external changes than Kallipolis would.

Second, the Contingency View owes us an explanation of the mechanism by which the First City's unity would be lost and it is hard to see how this explanation could work. Socrates goes into considerable detail about how Kallipolis would degenerate through stages into eventual tyranny. There are two closely

³¹ McKeen (2004), p. 90. Note that McKeen refers to the First City as either 'Swillsburg' or '*huopolis*'; I have replaced these terms with 'First City' to keep the discussion consistent.

³² McKeen (2004), p. 71.

related causes of this devolution. One is “lack of likeness and unharmonious inequality” within and between political classes (547A3–4) and the other is wanting more than what is necessary, in particular more wealth and pleasure (547B–548C). These two causes result in the wrong people being in charge (e. g. money-makers rather than philosophers).

The First City, on the other hand, looks tailor-made to resist these problems. There are no political classes and so no worries that people will be put in the wrong class or that members of one class will meddle with the work of other classes. And, as we've seen, citizens of the First City are better at living moderately than the artisan class. The only excess profit from work mentioned in the discussion of the First City is stipulated to be used for trading (370E9–371A5) and currency is only mentioned as a necessity for the exchange of goods and services (371B4–10).³³ There is no hint of public offices in the First City which could tempt citizens to pursue the unearned public honor that corrupts lesser constitutions. Moreover, because the First City is a much smaller, more interconnected city of craftsmen, its inhabitants will be able to see the connection between their own good and the good of the city much more easily than the citizens of Kallipolis can. Given these facts, there is no indication that the inhabitants of the First City would abandon justice for their own self-interest. This doesn't mean that the First City could exist forever, any more than Kallipolis could; but it does appear to be more unified and more stable than Kallipolis.³⁴

The Contingency View, then, fails to adequately explain what problem Plato must have seen in the First City. However, we are getting progressively closer to the truth. Though the specific way the Contingency View approaches the topic does not quite work, the unity of the First City is an important feature to consider. There is one more rival view left to address, one which also deals with the unity of the First City.

2.6 The Unity View

Our final attempt at explaining the role of the First City can be called the *Unity View*. Like the Educational View and the Contingency View, the Unity View accepts that the First City is a true, just city. It agrees with the Educational View

³³ It is perhaps significant that the word used here is *σύμβολον*, which suggests a token with little instrumental value rather than gold or silver, which is only introduced in the feverish Second City (373A7–8).

³⁴ Smith (1999), pp. 40–41.

that the First City is better than Kallipolis while agreeing with the Contingency View that what makes a city good is its unity. The clearest explication of this view is probably from Don Morrison:

The interpretation I propose is even *more* favorable to Socrates's first city. On this reading, the city of pigs is perhaps as stable as Callipolis, but even more unified and better than Callipolis. Socrates' initial choice, his praise of the first city as "true" and "healthy" and his denigration of the second city that becomes Callipolis as "luxurious," receive a straightforward explanation: the city of pigs is the *Republic's* ultimate utopia, its best city. Callipolis, though better than any existing city, ranks second.³⁵

On this view, the puzzle that motivates the present paper is dissolved: there is no mystery as to why Plato would have Socrates praise the First City but then abandon it: it wasn't abandoned at all. The First City and Kallipolis are complementary parts of a single, continuous theory.

This approach to the First City is an ingenious way of making sense of the way Socrates praises it but then provides a new view as a result of Glaucon's prompting. On this view it is Glaucon who represents the true city of pigs, not Socrates and his First City. But unfortunately, I don't think this view can be right either. Whatever we think about the realizability of Kallipolis compared to the First City, it is clear from the text that Plato did not think of Kallipolis as only second best.

There are a number of examples where we see Plato describing Kallipolis in even better terms than the First City. Transitioning from discussing the city to the soul, Socrates says that "we have founded the best city we were able to" (434E1–2), and later calls it "good and correct" (449A1–2). In arguing that Kallipolis is possible he claims that it is the city closest to the theoretical ideal (473A5–8). The summary of Kallipolis that precedes the discussion of defective constitutions in Book VIII says that a city which intends to reach the pinnacle (ἄκρως) of governance must be organized like Kallipolis, in particular by being ruled by philosophers-kings (543A1–6). The discussion of constitutions culminates with Glaucon's verdict that Kallipolis is "the best, most just, and happiest" city in virtue of its being the "most kingly" (580C1–2). The First City, on the other hand, is never described in comparative or superlative terms: it is true, healthy, and just, but not necessarily best.

Glaucon's verdict reveals a second important point about how Plato thinks about Kallipolis. His evaluation is explicitly restricted to *five* constitutions: aris-

³⁵ Morrison (2007), p. 252. Rowe (2007a), pp. 180–84 gives a very similar argument, though from a different angle (to which I will return below); see also Rowe (2007b), pp. 43–44. De Lara (2018) is a more recent attempt to defend a similar position.

ocracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny (580B3; cf. 445D2, 449A2–5, 544A1–3). The First City, whatever its virtues, is not located on the same scale as these other options. This is because, as I argued above, the First City does not correspond simply to the artisan class, but is rather a distinct way of thinking of political classes. The other five constitutions, on the other hand, are all evaluated by how the same three classes relate to one another.³⁶ Since the First City doesn't line up neatly on this scale, it is misleading to suggest that Plato thought that the First City was not only part of this list, but at the top.

This disanalogy between the First City and the five tripartite constitutions reveals another problem with the Unity View, stemming from the view's explication of goodness in terms of unity. There are, broadly speaking, two ways of being unified: simplicity and harmony. A simple constitution, like the First City, is one where there is only one political class, which is unified because there is no other political class to cause internal conflict. This is not the way Kallipolis is unified; instead, Kallipolis's unity comes from a harmony between its three classes (430E–432A, 551D–E).³⁷ So while it is true that Kallipolis is the best constitution due to its unity, it is unified in a different way than the First City and, consequently, not directly comparable. In fact, simplicity can sometimes be a sign of badness in constitutions: one aspect of both democracy (557A, 560B–D) and tyranny (565E–566A, 567A–C) is that leaders expel their political opponents, i. e. the people who ought to be leading the city. To the extent that there are no guardians or auxiliaries in these constitutions, these cities are simpler but not better. Indeed, the fact that the First City and Kallipolis are good in different ways makes a 'better' or 'best' comparison between the two unhelpful; each should be evaluated on its own scale.

Therefore, I do not think that the Unity View succeeds in situating the First City in its broader context. But there is another way of defending the Unity View which merits discussion on its own terms. So far, we have focused almost exclusively on the First City as a political arrangement. But because city and soul are isomorphic in the *Republic*, we can take a more indirect route to defend the First City by thinking about the soul instead. Hence Rowe argues

³⁶ Plato does mention the possibility of other constitutions (544c7–D3), but it is clear that he thinks of these as further permutations of how the three classes are structured and how they relate to one another (cf. 445D4–E2).

³⁷ See Brown (2012), and from a different vantage point, Korsgaard (2009), Ch 7.

Socrates's preference, I take it, would be for a city of men and women each of whom would have a soul configured as much like soul 'in its truest nature' as possible. And that, I propose, is what the city which Glaucon dismisses as 'fit for pigs' would be; that is why Socrates is able to call it a 'true', 'healthy' city (372E6). The idea comes and is gone again so swiftly that interpreters tend either to ignore it or dismiss it... even while being, from Socrates' perspective, what a city truly is, just as the undivided soul represents what a human soul truly (is in its true[st] nature).³⁸

The idea that the human soul is truly undivided, not tripartite as Books II–IV and VIII–IX would have us believe, is grounded in a discussion that takes place near the end of the *Republic*, in Book X. There Socrates tells Glaucon

But to see the soul as it is in truth, we must not study it as it is while it is maimed by its association with the body and other evils – which is what we were doing earlier – but as it is in its pure state, that's how we should study the soul, thoroughly and by means of logical reasoning. We'll then find that it is a much finer thing than we thought and that we can see justice and injustice as well as all the other things we've discussed far more clearly. (611B9–C4)

This passage looks like Plato is complicating the tripartite model he had used in Books II–IX, suggesting that the true nature of the soul might be different.³⁹ Indeed, a few lines later Socrates says that if we studied the soul in this way,

Then we'd see what its true nature is and be able to determine whether it has many parts or just one and whether or in what manner it is put together. But we've already given a decent amount, I think, of what its condition is and what parts it has when it is immersed in human life. (612A3–6)

This passage suggests that the soul itself, in its true nature, might be simple rather than partitioned. In the same way that the simple First City is a true city but can be modified by grafting on the pursuit of unnecessary pleasures, the true nature of the soul might be simple but modified by grafting on unnecessary appetites arising from physical embodiment. If this is right, then the First City would be the best political arrangement after all, better than Kallipolis, because the First City would correspond to the ideal state of the soul.

A full response to this reading of the *Republic* is a larger endeavor than I can undertake here; it would require a close look at, *inter alia*, the language Plato

³⁸ Rowe (2007a), p. 180.

³⁹ M. Anagnostopoulos (2006), pp. 176–78. Guthrie (1971), Whiting (2012) and Woolf (2012) argue for this view of the soul in the *Republic*, but do not connect it to the First City. Smith (1999) argues that the *Republic* is not committed to either the simple or tripartite model but does suggest that the First City could correspond to a simple soul consistent with the Book X discussion.

uses in talking about the parts of the soul and the precise workings of *akrasia*.⁴⁰ For now I will only mention two reasons to hesitate adopting this reading; both undermine the likelihood that Book X supports a simple soul view.

First, the passage I've quoted above from Book X is less conclusive than it might appear at first reading. Above I gave only the beginning and end of the passage. In the middle are two claims that count against taking Plato to endorse a simple soul in this part of the *Republic*. First, Plato likens the embodied soul to the sea god Glaucus, who is covered by detritus such that his body cannot be seen. In particular, some of "the original parts of his body" (τά τε παλαιά τοῦ σώματος μέρη) have fallen off and others have been added (611C6–D12). The soul, we are told, is in a similar condition (611D5). This comparison implies that the original soul in this metaphor would also have parts, just like Glaucus's body does. If that is right, then the most natural reading is that the true soul in this passage would be structured like Kallipolis, while the soul beset by evil (611D6) would be like the tyranny that has expelled the philosophers and replaced them with drones. That is, the original soul would be complex, not simple, and hence would not correspond to the First City after all. Rather, the soul underneath the 'detritus of the body' would still be a partitioned soul, presumably one that corresponds to the tripartite model Plato has been defending all along.

The second claim is that the soul's true nature is revealed by examining its love of wisdom, whereby we learn that the soul is "akin to the divine (συγγενῆς οὔσα τῷ τε θεῷ) and immortal and what always is (ἀθανάτω καὶ τῷ ἀεὶ ὄντι)" (611E1–2). It is easy to see how this description applies to the rational part of the soul as depicted in Books V–VII, and we might infer that it is the only true part of the soul.⁴¹ But to connect this back to the realm of the political, (i) philosopher-kings cannot survive on their own since they are forbidden from doing the manual labor necessary for them to survive and because one cannot be a ruling class without having another class to rule; and, more importantly, (ii) the First City is a much more down-to-earth city than this elevated description of an immortal soul, firmly grounded in meeting the needs of the body, which is no surprise given that the simple soul corresponding to the First City would be embodied just like the tripartite soul corresponding to Kallipolis. The first point suggests that the rational part of the soul is both physically and conceptually connected

⁴⁰ Bobonich (2002), Chs. 3–4 and Lorenz (2006a), Chs. 1–4 both defend the traditional tripartite reading of Plato in considerable detail. See also Irwin (1995), Ch. 13. See Brown (2012), pp. 56–62, Woolf (2012), pp. 155–57, Shields (2011), p. 156 n. 24, and Whiting (2012), pp. 176–90 for a discussion of Plato's diction about the parts of the soul, and Shields (2011), pp. 146–47 on ways of thinking about parts.

⁴¹ As Guthrie (1971) does. See Reeve (2013) for a more extended defense of this reading.

to the rest of the soul. The second point suggests that, even if Plato had a simple, separable soul in mind in Book X, it is not one that corresponds to the First City because the simple soul corresponding to the First City would be much more than just intellect.⁴²

A look at the context of the Glaucus passage reveals another problem with the view that Plato is endorsing a simple soul in Book X. Plato's goal here is to argue that the soul is immortal. If the soul were simple, we would expect Plato to use an argument similar to the one he deploys in the *Phaedo*.⁴³ Conversely, he could take the immortality of the soul as a premise to show that the soul must be simple, in roughly the same way that the *Phaedo* takes the theory of recollection as a premise to argue that the soul is immortal.⁴⁴ But this is very conspicuously not what Plato does. Instead, he provides a different argument for the immortality of the soul (608E–611A), one arguing that, because the soul lacks the natural evils that are a necessary condition of destruction, the soul cannot be destroyed. This argument holds regardless of how many parts the soul has, and this seems to be the whole point of making it. If Plato wanted to argue for a simple soul in Book X, we would expect him to use an immortality argument that entails that the soul is simple.⁴⁵ Rather than simply contradicting the *Phaedo*'s position that only simple things are eternal, Book X appears to be consciously searching for a new way to secure this conclusion that is consistent with the composite psychology of the *Republic*'s preceding books.⁴⁶

However, Plato has Socrates go to say that we should not think that “the soul in its truest nature is full of multicolored variety and unlikeness or that it differs with itself” (611B1–3). He explains this remark by saying that “it isn't easy for anything composed of many parts (σύνθετόν τε ἐκ πολλῶν) to be immortal if it isn't put together in the finest way, yet this is how the soul now appeared to us” (611B5–7). But Plato's tripartite soul is put together in the finest way, which is what I take the final clause of the sentence to be saying and certainly what Plato's

⁴² Bobonich (2002), pp. 255–56; Lorenz (2006a), p. 38.

⁴³ Indeed, Rowe (2007a), p. 167 takes *Republic* X to endorse the view of the soul given in the *Phaedo*. See also Whiting (2012), pp. 207–208.

⁴⁴ If the *Republic* were written after the *Phaedo*, Plato could simply adopt this argument directly (much like how the *Phaedo* borrows explicitly from the *Meno*). But the point stands even if the *Phaedo* is contemporary with, or later than, the *Republic*: the main point here is the assumptions and implications of the Book X argument vis-à-vis a complex soul, not the relationship between the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*. See n. 62 below for more on this point.

⁴⁵ Lorenz (2006a), pp. 36–38 gives a similar reading.

⁴⁶ See Brown (1997) for a reconstruction and defense of Plato's argument that does not rely on the soul's metaphysical simplicity.

discussion of the just soul in the preceding Books suggests.⁴⁷ At least in the just soul (i. e. the soul that exhibits its true nature through its natural goodness) the parts of the soul are in harmony with one another. So this argument does not rule out the possibility that a tripartite soul could be immortal.⁴⁸ Plato's agnosticism at the end of the passage about whether the soul has one part or many reflects this fact: if Plato took his argument to rule out a composite soul, he could have said so while maintaining a need to investigate the true nature of the soul more philosophically.⁴⁹ We should read Plato's hesitation here not as taking back his view in preceding chapters, but rather as the standard non-dogmatic approach that he often exhibits when discussing the eternal, including not just the soul but also the Forms and the gods.

All this suggests that Plato does not clearly endorse a simple soul in Book X, and that he would not be committed to endorsing the First City as superior to Kallipolis if he had done so. The First City and Kallipolis are incomparable since they are unified in different ways. Even so, I think the Unity View makes an important methodological advance over the other views we have discussed. Focusing on the soul in addition to the city is, I believe, the key to explaining the First City's mysterious role. And the insight that the First City implies a corresponding simple soul is an important piece of the puzzle. In the final section of this paper, I will argue for how I think this puzzle can be solved.

3 The First Soul

Our investigation of the First City was prompted by the incongruity between Socrates's praise of the city and its rapid replacement by what would become Kallipolis. We have surveyed several views that I think do not solve this puzzle. This survey does more than just eliminate the competition: it shows what a successful explanation of the First City's role in the *Republic* must look like. Sections 2.1–2.3 show us that Plato's description of the First City as a true, healthy, just city along with his description of life in the First City must be taken seriously. In particular, we should note the relative professional and moral sophistication

⁴⁷ The Greek is ambiguous between 'it now appeared to us to be finely put together' and 'it now appeared to us to be immortal'. But I think it is slightly more natural to take the $\omega\varsigma$ to refer to the closer possible antecedent, which favors the former reading over the latter.

⁴⁸ As Woolf (2012), p. 162 notes in discussing the passage. See also Lorenz (2006a), pp. 161–62. Lorenz (2006b), pp. 38–39 argues that the *Timaeus* settles the issue that is left open in *Republic X*.

⁴⁹ Price (1995), pp. 73–74.

exhibited by the First City's citizens. Section 2.4 shows us the dangers of going too far in attending to the details of the First City at the expense of Kallipolis. Section 2.5 shows us that the First City is stable in a non-contingent way because of its simplicity and moderation. This in turn shows us that there are two ways for a city to be unified, which undercuts the approach discussed in section 2.6 stating that the First City is better than Kallipolis. Section 2.6 also suggests that we get closer to the right answer when we focus on the soul in addition to the city. In this section I will follow through on this suggestion. I argue that the First City is a viable political arrangement although it implies an inaccurate model of the soul. In other words, the grounds on which Plato abandons the First City are psychological, not political.

As we saw in section 1, the First City is a true, just, healthy city. The upshot of this claim is that the First City is a viable political arrangement. Hence whatever problem Plato saw in the First City would not have been a political problem. And if the problem isn't political, perhaps it is a matter of psychology instead. Why? Well, a central premise of the *Republic's* argument is that civic justice and psychic justice are similar states; hence we can learn about what justice is for individuals by looking at the easier case of justice in the state (368C–369A). This prompts us to ask what the soul that corresponds to the First City would look like, a 'First Soul'. Since Plato has Glaucon goad Socrates into focusing on what becomes Kallipolis instead, we never get a description or a model of the soul that would correspond to the First City. The most important point for our purposes is that the First Soul would be simple, like the First City, and, consequently, without the tripartite division of appetite, spirit, and reason found in the soul which corresponds to Kallipolis.

One might worry whether this arrangement is even possible in Plato's view. After all, if justice in Kallipolis and the tripartite soul are both relational, how could the First City or First Soul be just? Or, coming from the other direction, how could any just entity fail to be composite?

To answer this question, we need to distinguish two different ways of thinking about how the city and soul are related in the *Republic*. Though these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, let us stipulate that *analogy* and *isomorphism* are distinct relationships. The city and soul are *analogous* if they are just in the same way, i. e. by following the Principle of Specialization. The city and soul are *isomorphic* if they have the same internal structure. Kallipolis and the tripartite soul are isomorphic with each other, both having three parts with similar functions. The First City and simple soul are isomorphic with each other but they are not isomorphic with Kallipolis or the tripartite soul.

What is interesting, and perhaps surprising, is that analogy doesn't entail isomorphism on Plato's view, as evidenced by the fact that the First City and

Kallipolis are both just by following the Principle of Specialization, but they are not isomorphic.⁵⁰ So, at least in principle, a simple soul and a tripartite soul could also be analogous by both being just in virtue of following the Principle of Specialization. And it should be remembered, as we saw above, that, when Socrates explains the discovery of justice in the First City and points back to it in his discussion of justice in Kallipolis, it is the Principle of Specialization to which he points. Moreover, Socrates seems to take the Principle of Specialization to be a sufficient tool for discovering justice in the First City. The larger/smaller letter imagery, which begins the inquiry (368C–369A), relies only on analogy, and Socrates's assessment of the First City as complete (let alone the true, healthy, and just) never mentions the city's simple structure. It is only at Glaucon's urging that Socrates introduces parts into the city.

One might think that, once parts are introduced into the city, Plato could take for granted that the soul exhibits the same structure. Indeed, it is a common refrain that Plato introduced an unmotivated partition of the city in order to rely on it when explaining the soul. But Plato does not take the tripartition of the soul for granted in Book IV. Instead, he first notes that the isomorphism of city and soul is not guaranteed (434D–E), then goes to great lengths to prove that the soul has three parts using a new argument from opposition (435A–441C) not applied to the city. It is only after securing this result independently that he applies his analysis of the city's virtues to the soul (441C–444E).

What this tells us, I suggest, is that Plato did in fact think that the soul must be partitioned. But he did not think the same of the city, and for good reason: small cities can exist without political classes. In other words, the key difference between the city and soul is empirical: a simple city is a viable model of the city and therefore useful for discussing justice, while the simple soul is not a viable model of the soul, but rather one which must be rejected on its own terms.

Now, why would Plato think this? As commentators have long noted, Plato comes to see that a simple model of the soul is insufficient to explain the complexities of human moral psychology.⁵¹ Plato therefore posits a more complex model, one where the soul has parts that can conflict with themselves rather than just with the body. But given isomorphism, a complex soul would imply a complex city rather than the simple First City, hence the theoretical need for Kallipolis.

⁵⁰ Smith (1999) makes a similar case, using the label “3–3 specification” to refer specifically to a tripartite isomorphism.

⁵¹ Bobonich (2002), pp. 219–47; Brickhouse and Smith (1994), pp. 92–97; Lesses (1987); Klosko (2006), pp. 71–77; Lorenz (2006a), pp. 28–34; Mille (1999), pp. 90–100; Price (1995), pp. 33–57; Vasiliou (2012), pp. 26–30.

We can tell that Plato is concerned about getting the right model of moral psychology in addition to the right political model by the way he writes the transition from politics to ethics in Book IV. If he were taking for granted the city/soul isomorphism he could move directly from discussing the city to discussing the soul. But instead, we are told that this conclusion “is not yet wholly secure” (434D2), followed by an explicit discussion of why we shouldn’t infer the nature of the soul immediately (434D–435D). Plato goes to some length to give an independent argument to show that the soul is tripartite in a way that corresponds to Kallipolis (435E–444E). If he were simply assuming that a political model entails a psychological model, these arguments would be unnecessary. A second piece of evidence is Plato’s discussion of the soul’s immortality in Book X. As I argued in section 2.6, Plato comes up with an argument for the immortality of the soul that is compatible with a complex soul rather than applying only to simple souls as his argument from the *Phaedo* does. If the Book X argument supported a simple soul, we would expect an argument for the immortality of the soul to take account of that fact, as is the case elsewhere, but this is not what we see.

Is it feasible to think that the First City hints at the notion of a simple soul that Plato entertained at some point before writing the *Republic*? I cannot go into the many details of moral psychology in early Plato here, but these issues are sufficiently well-known that a quick survey should suffice. The simple soul occurs throughout Plato’s early work and indeed is suggested in Book I of the *Republic* (352D–353E).⁵² Here Socrates argues that the soul has a single function (living well) and a single virtue (justice), which suggests that the soul has only a single part (cf. 350B–C). This calls to mind the thesis of the unity of the virtues, which occurs frequently in early Plato (e.g. *Prt.* 329D–360D, *Phd.* 69B–C, *La.* 199C–E, *Chrm.* 88B–89A).⁵³ And as we saw above, Plato gives both epistemological and metaphysical arguments for thinking the soul must be simple in the *Phaedo* (78B–80E). In that work conflict occurs between the body and soul rather than within the soul (81B–84B, cf. *Chrm.* 156D–157C).⁵⁴ In other words, the First Soul that would correspond to the First City looks very much in line with the Socratic depiction of the soul we see in the earlier Socratic dialogues.

This doctrinal affinity is not the only way that First City is Socratic: the lifestyle of its citizens is a notably Socratic lifestyle.⁵⁵ Socrates is well known for his

⁵² Irwin (1995), pp. 169 and 199 also notes the connection between Book I and the earlier or Socratic dialogues.

⁵³ On which see, e.g. Devereux (2006) and Penner (1973).

⁵⁴ Bobonich (2002), pp. 24–31, 217–18; Lorenz (2006a), p. 37; Price (1995), pp. 36–40; Vasiliou (2012), p. 26.

⁵⁵ For more on this point, see Morrison (2007), pp. 252–55; Whiting (2012), 206–207.

physical moderation and hardiness, including avoiding drunkenness and foregoing shoes (e. g. *Symp.* 216D, 220A–C). He is constantly using the craftsmen as examples of real knowledge, even if their knowledge is limited (e. g. *Ap.* 22C–E). Plato constantly depicts him as pious, despite Athenian accusations to the contrary (e. g. *Phd.* 60C–61B), and as committed to the well-being of the community (*Ap.* 28D–33A, *Cri.* 49E–54C). The First City does not have a distinct class of politicians, against whom Socrates frequently argues (*Ap.* 21B–22A, *Grg.* 452D–455D, *Meno* 93A–95A, *Prt.* 319B–320B). As Klosko argues, in the Socratic dialogues “Socrates’s political practice amounts to a new kind of politics. Every individual has a rational soul, and so every individual can be awakened to become morally autonomous and to rule himself”.⁵⁶ The closest thing we get to rule in the First City is governance by private citizens who are experts in their fields, the only group to whom Socrates attributes any kind of wisdom (*Ap.* 22D–E).⁵⁷ Hence the First City reflects both theoretical and practical Socratic commitments but not necessarily Platonic ones.

There is one notable omission in Plato’s depiction of the First City, however: philosophy itself is never mentioned. If this omission indicates an absence of philosophy, then we might wonder how Socratic the First City really is.⁵⁸ In this case, however, I do not believe that the omission of an explicit reference to philosophy indicates an absence. Glaucon interrupts Socrates and diverts the conversation from the true city Socrates wanted to describe to the luxurious Second City Glaucon is more interested in (372E–373A). This means that the description of the First City we get is short and incomplete. While we cannot take for granted that Plato would have addressed the presence of philosophy in the First City had he written more about it (it was Plato’s choice as an author to create Glaucon’s interruption, after all), nor can we assume that a given feature would be absent from the First City purely on the grounds that Plato did not explicitly include it in the text.

Moreover, there are clues in what little description of the First City we do get that philosophy is present there, if only implicitly. First, recall that citizens of the First City engage in symposia: “reclining on beds strewn with yet and myrtle, they’ll feast with their children, drink their wine, and, crowned with wreaths, hymn the gods” (372B5–7). As we know from the dialogue *Symposium*, this venue is one place where philosophy can be practiced, and the fact that the First City

⁵⁶ Klosko (2006), p. 54.

⁵⁷ Brickhouse and Smith (1994), pp. 139–41, 164–66. For the importance of *technai* in early Plato’s ethical theory more generally, see Irwin (1977) (though see also Roochnik 1986).

⁵⁸ I am grateful to an anonymous referee for highlighting the importance of this point.

is quintessentially moderate suggests these events will not devolve into a kind of drinking party that would interfere with educated discussion.

Moreover, there are clues that philosophy may be present in the First City, despite its not being explicitly mentioned. The combination of hymns and hard physical labor suggests that citizens of the First City enjoy something akin to the psychological conditioning of the guardian-class, which is important in the cultivation of a philosophical soul (see especially 411E–412A). And to the extent that philosophy is a necessary condition for virtue, the fact that the citizens of the First City do seem to exhibit moderation and justice suggests that philosophy must be present in the city somehow, even if it is not explicitly alluded to. At the very least, the First City seems to be devoid of the kinds of things which might distract from philosophy or hinder its pursuit.⁵⁹

Finally, it is worth repeating the point that many of the citizens of the First City have sophisticated occupations. Some inhabitants have minds that are not sufficient for the task (371D9–E1), to be sure, but others occupy professions that require mathematical knowledge, such as navigators or merchants (371A–B). The fact that Socrates says the luxurious ‘Second City’ will have a greater need of doctors “than we did before” (373D1–2) implies the presence of physicians in the First City, a possibility corroborated by Socrates’s claim that its inhabitants will live to a ripe old age (372D2–3). Even the lowlier occupations like cobbler or farmer involve a kind of knowledge *qua* craft; these are among the few groups to whom Socrates is willing to attribute any kind of knowledge (*Ap.* 22D1–2). In Athens these craftsmen have the flaw of overestimating their own *moral* knowledge, but in the First City citizens are more virtuous and more aware of their own limitations and constraints. This is shown both by the line that they will “bear no more children than their resources allow, lest they fall into poverty or war” (372B8–C1) and by the more general arrangement of a sustainable, multi-generation system where each person limits herself to an occupation she is good at (rather than gravitating toward, say, easier or more prestigious occupations).

Taking these points together, we can put the point as follows: if Socrates is a philosopher and the citizens of the First City live noticeably Socratic lives, it is reasonable to infer that the First City has a place in it for philosophy, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. However, this raises the question of how exactly we

⁵⁹ It is noteworthy how closely the non-philosophers of the *Phaedo* correspond to the luxurious Second City, on which see Bobonich (2002), pp. 21–31, 36–39. Vasiliou (2012) makes a persuasive case that there is a kind of real wisdom that laypeople can attain through the upbringing and habituation of a moderate lifestyle; this so-called “Phd-philosopher” is strikingly similar to citizens of the First City.

should conceive of philosophy in the first place, for Plato gives more than one answer to that question. In the later books of the *Republic*, philosophy is its own unique profession with its own specialized and training-intensive craft which only a few special people with pure souls are capable of successfully practicing. The First City clearly lacks this conception of philosophy, and indeed Socrates himself would not count as a philosopher by these criteria.⁶⁰ But elsewhere in the Platonic corpus, we see a more pedestrian conception of how philosophy is practiced. In the *Phaedo*, for instance, philosophy is the much more mundane task of separating the soul from the body as much as possible by living a life that is not dictated by the demands of the body and by not fearing death (*Phaedo* 64A–66E, 84A–B).⁶¹ And in the early Socratic dialogues, Socrates himself is the philosophical exemplar, whose philosophical practice is the humbler task of asking questions in good faith while pursuing understanding, particularly of the moral virtues.⁶²

So rather than saying that philosophy is absent in the First City, we should conclude that there is room for a different kind of philosophy similar to that exemplified by Socrates in the Socratic dialogues. These conceptions are not wholly distinct but the differences are important. For instance, in the *Republic* knowledge of the Forms seems to require a life of philosophical training, whereas in the *Phaedo*, drawing on the *Meno*, knowledge of the Forms is present in even the lowliest uneducated slave.⁶³ This pattern matches what we see on the topic of the soul: in the *Republic*, Plato posits a tripartite model of the soul that is different from what we see in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere, and he posits a different conception of philosophy than what we see in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere.⁶⁴

60 Plato also describes philosophy as a love for learning in general (376B–C, 475B–E), whereas the Principle of Specialization in the First City suggests that each citizen only learns their own craft, not all of them.

61 Vasiliou (2012).

62 Something similar happens in the later sections of the Platonic Corpus. In the simple, rustic life of the Age of Kronos in the *Statesman*, the Stranger presents two options for how to use the leisure it provides: either (a) engage in philosophy, or (b) gorge yourself on food and gossip (272A–C). The First City clearly avoids the latter, which leaves the former as a live option. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for connecting the dots between these two passages. However, we should be careful to lean too heavily on this comparison since there are significant disanalogies between the situations of the First City and the Age of Kronos (e.g. no families in the latter and the ability to talk to animals).

63 See Dimas (2003) and Franklin (2005) for defenses of this reading of the *Phaedo*.

64 The easiest way to explain this disagreement is to claim that the *Republic* was written after many of these other dialogues, and in partial response to them. This is the view I prefer, though I cannot argue for it here (though see Mosimann 2010 and Young 1994). However, it is possible to

Returning to our main point, then, it is plausible to think that the reason Plato rejects the First City in favor of what becomes Kallipolis is because the First City would imply a simple soul of the sort alluded to in earlier Socratic dialogues and expounded in the *Phaedo*. This would not fit with one of the *Republic*'s primary goals of defending a tripartite soul model instead. After all, the two main projects of the *Republic* are politics and moral psychology;⁶⁵ if the First City avoids the first issue, then the second must be the troublemaker. This hypothesis does not answer the more literary question of why Plato as an author would choose to construct the dialogue in this way. But it does provide some explanation of why Plato as a philosopher would make the moves that he does.

This solution to the puzzle of the First City's role is dependent on a number of assumptions about the *Republic*, and about the Platonic corpus more generally, that are not universally endorsed and which need to be defended on their own terms. This is, admittedly, a theoretical cost to adopting the reading of the *Republic* I propose here. However, given that the other attempts to explain the First City's role in the *Republic* do not succeed, we are compelled to look for other solutions to the puzzle, even if they require us to work with a less-than-unanimous foundation. This is why it was important to investigate so many other attempts at explaining the First City's place in the dialogue first, thereby seeing how other, admittedly simpler and more natural explanations do not succeed, but also to learn from these attempts what the criteria for a successful explanation would be. Though the reading defended in this paper can only be put forward as a viable option, it is, I submit, our best shot at explaining an otherwise mystifying feature of Plato's *Republic*.

Conclusion

In this paper I've argued that we should take at face value Socrates's praise of the First City as a true, complete, healthy, just city. It satisfies the definition of justice which Plato himself uses for Kallipolis and serves an important role in his argument for political justice. Previous attempts to explain the First City have either failed to appreciate that the First City really is just or have failed to account for the

suppose that Plato is investigating different lines of thought in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* without presupposing any particular chronological relationship between these, or other, dialogues. All we need to assume is that there is a noticeably Socratic cluster of positions that Plato presents in different ways in the *Republic* compared to other works.

65 Annas (2000) *passim*.

First City's role in the larger context of the *Republic*. If the First City is an acceptable political arrangement, then we need some explanation of why Plato would both praise it and abandon it without explanation. I suggest that the answer lies not in political theory but in psychology. The First City implies that the soul is simple, and while Plato may have once entertained this model himself, by the time of writing the *Republic* he viewed it as unsatisfactory. Hence Plato goes on in the rest of the *Republic* to replace this first simple model of the soul with a more sophisticated, and to his mind more accurate model.⁶⁶

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⁶⁶ I am especially grateful to Paul Woodruff for extensive comments on multiple earlier versions of this paper, which developed from his course on Platonic ethics at the University of Texas at Austin. I am also grateful to the many colleagues with whom I discussed this project at UT and elsewhere in the intervening years, including my current colleagues at the University of Central Oklahoma. Special thanks are due to the exemplary service of an anonymous referee who evaluated the final version of this paper for *Rhizomata*.

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