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**Studies in Philosophy
and the History of Philosophy** **Volume 13**

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Platonic Investigations

edited by Dominic J. O'Meara

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS
Washington, D.C.

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PLATONIC PROVOCATIONS: Reflections on the Soul and the Good in the *Republic**

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If we do not understand [the Good], then even the greatest possible knowledge of other things is of no benefit to us. (505a)

The aim of this reflection is to explore the nexus of notoriously obscure notions that lies at the center of Plato's *Republic*. Anything like a complete discussion would be impossible in this short space. What I hope to do instead is to offer the initial sketch of a unified response to these perennial questions: What does Plato intend by his notion "the Good"? How does the properly metaphysical understanding of the forms and the Good fulfill the search for justice in the soul? And what, in light of this, is the ethical and political value of philosophical education as Plato understands it?

I. SOCRATIC AND PLATONIC PROVOCATIONS

To let these matters come to focus within the context and intention of the dialogue, it is best to begin with some observations on the way, to put it vaguely to begin with, the *Republic* "works." We get help from a strange source. In his eulogy to Socrates in the *Symposium*, Alcibiades offers this characterization of Socrates' "arguments" (λόγοι): like the songs of the satyr Marsyas, "whoever plays them, from an absolute virtuoso to a twopenny-halfpenny flute girl, [they] will still have a magic power, and by virtue of their own divinity they will show which of us are fit subjects for the rites of initiation (215c)."¹ The *Re-*

*This essay formulates ideas first presented in a symposium on Plato at Vassar College and in a lecture at Yale University. I am grateful to Michael Anderson, Jennifer Church, Charles Griswold, Drew Hyland, and David Lachterman for their critical comments on earlier drafts. I also owe special thanks to Ellen Handel for extraordinary help in completing the final version.

1. I have only slightly revised Michael Joyce's translation, *Plato's Symposium or the*

public, I suggest, is an extraordinary medley of such songs—and, most importantly, on two distinct, though coordinated, levels. First of all, there is a striking sequence of provocations *within* the dramatic action of the dialogue: time and again, Socrates offers his partner arguments whose real point appears to be to elicit a demand—often from someone in the audience who has been quiet until then—for deeper inquiry; thus Socrates awakens in his interlocutors, if not always a fully philosophical potency, at the least a genuine concern with philosophical proposals. Such provocations structure the phased ascent from Book I to Books II–IV to Books V–VII,² as well as the coming and going of interlocutors within each phase.³ To illustrate by citing only the most conspicuous instances:⁴ (i) by his rebuttal of Cephalus, Socrates provokes Cephalus' son Polemarchus to step in to defend the conventional notion of justice as "rendering to each his due" (331d ff.); (ii) by his subsequent interpretation of this to prohibit harming even one's enemies, he provokes Thrasymachus, there to sell himself as a teacher of political rhetoric, to burst in with a real-political defense of might as right (336b ff.); (iii) by refutations that defeat Thrasymachus more in word than substance,⁵ he then provokes Glaucon

Drinking Party (London, 1935), reprinted in E. Hamilton and H. Cairns' edition of *Plato, Collected Dialogues* (New York, 1961).

2. A full discussion of the dramatic structure of the *Republic* would of course include a thoroughgoing analysis of the dramatic setting, especially as this is sketched in the opening pages of the dialogue, and it would of course require an account of Books VIII–IX and X as parts within the whole. Both go beyond the scope of this essay, which is intended as a contribution to, not an attempt at, that larger discussion. For some general remarks on the structural rhythm of dialogue form and on its final third part, in particular, see the preface to my *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman* (The Hague, 1980).

3. Other middle dialogues that are structured in this way are the *Gorgias*, in which Socrates' strategy of provocation becomes an explicit topic at 482c ff., and the *Phaedo*.

4. For other instances, see, in particular, Socrates' extended and exaggerated praise of the rustic ways of the city of producers and the interruption (note *ὑπολαβών*, 372c) it incites from Glaucon at 372a ff.; his sweeping denial of anything private to the rulers and the interruption (note, again, *ὑπολαβών*) it incites from Adimantus at 416d–417b and 419a; and his extended recourse to a string of superlatives in describing the philosopher and the reaction it provokes in Adimantus at 481b–487a and 487b–d.

5. In particular, Socrates' key distinction between the arts of shepherding and money-making, decisive for the whole series of arguments he offers at 338c–347a, invites the cynical interpretation that the ruler practices his art as a means for succeeding in the distinct art of money-making; thus Socrates, while defeating Thrasymachus' formulation, does not defeat the latter's basic point. Again, Socrates' argument at 348b–350c leaves itself open to being interpreted as contradicting his earlier denial that the just man ever harms anyone (335d, e): a key premise is that the just man does try to "get the better of," *πλεονεκτεῖν*, the unjust man, and this expression implies aggrandizement at another's expense. And again, Socrates' argument at 351a–352b, when it shows that even a band of thieves derives its power from the justice with which its members treat one another, implies that justice is of value as a means for successful injustice.

and Adimantus to demand a deeper, more adequate defense of justice "for its own sake" (357a ff.); (iv) by his conspicuous failure to explicate his notion that the guardians "share women and children in common" (423e–434a), Socrates arouses the whole company to require him to explicate the notions of the equality of female with male and of the abolition of private families (449a ff.); (v) by *these* very notions, in turn, he provokes Glaucon, in particular, to insist (471c ff.) that he show how such a city might ever be actualized⁶—that is, in effect, that he offer the paradoxical notion of the philosopher-king (473c ff.);⁷ and, finally, (vi) by this very notion, he provokes *himself* to object to the inadequacy of the account of the soul and its education that he has offered so far (502e, 504b ff.)—and, so, to present the distinctively philosophical idea of the "conversion" of the soul to the forms and the Good (518c ff.). Now, all of this Marsyan singing is aimed at Glaucon, Adimantus, and the other interlocutors. By provoking them to ask to go deeper, even at the expense of all that is familiar to them, Socrates' arguments motivate and structure their own self-initiation into philosophy. There is, however, a second level of provocation and initiation as well: precisely by Socrates' exchange with his interlocutors, *Plato* challenges *us*, the listeners outside the dialogue.⁸ Moreover, the coordination of these levels is precise. It is, specifically, just where (as, for example, in [vi] above) the interlocutors fail to respond to Socrates, just where, that is, they prove not to be "fit subjects for divine initiation," that we are both most severely tested and most pointedly invited to show our fitness. In this sense, even as we witness Socrates' examination of his partners and, as witnesses, take their measure, the dialogue is examining us and taking our mea-

6. Note in particular how Socrates, having originally announced and postponed the question whether such a city might ever be actualized (457d–458b), first stalls for a while (464c–466c), then recalls the question (466d), only to resume stalling (466e–471b)—all, evidently to provoke Glaucon's impatient interruption and insistence on facing the question directly at 471c.

7. Such a city depends on its rulers, and the denial of all private property, the equality of the sexes in their qualifications to rule, and the abolition of the private family create, as tacit requirements for the rulers, indifference to wealth, sexual identity, and lineage. Who in the Greek world but the philosopher—exemplified especially, of course, by Socrates himself—meets these requirements? Thus the question of how to actualize the just city leads directly to the notion of the philosopher-king. See p. 174 below.

8. By "Socratic" I mean only to refer to the *persona* Socrates and the action *within* the drama of the dialogues. The historical relation of the actual Socrates and Plato is not at issue here. (Indeed, it seems to me in principle beyond the reach of interpretation. See E. Havelock, "The Socratic Problem: Some Second Thoughts," in J. Anton and A. Preus, eds., *Essays in Greek Philosophy*, 2 (Albany, 1983): 147–173.)

sure; its deepest function, if I am right, is to provoke us, to move us beneath and beyond its own explicit content into philosophical insight of our own.

In the list just given, I identified six major moments of Socratic provocation. What, then, are the major moments of *Platonic* provocation, the major points at which, by the interlocutors' failure, we are invited to inquire more deeply? I identify three: (i) When Polemarchus and Adimantus object at the outset of Book V and, again, when Glaucon objects at 471c ff., they all seem to have lost track of the point of the reflection on the just city; whereas Socrates initially proposed this reflection as a heuristic means of gaining insight into the just soul (369a, b) and, indeed, even after he later expresses serious misgivings about its adequacy for this (435d), the young men are absorbed almost exclusively by the work of political construction. It falls to us, then, to remember the original project and search out the reasons for Socrates' misgivings. (ii) In response to his own objection at 504b, Socrates introduces "the Idea of the Good" as "the greatest object of study" (505a); then, however, he insists that they "dismiss for the time being the question of what the Good itself is—for it seems to me that to reach what I now hold about it is beyond our present impetus (*ὄρμητιν*)" (506e), and he substitutes, instead, his images of the sun and the divided line and the cave. *That* these are images becomes striking precisely as we begin to understand them. All three announce the order of being that is prior to the physical-sensible—and yet rely on the physical-sensible to do so. At the close of his account of the stages of philosophical education, Socrates gives Glaucon an indirect explanation for the necessity of this procedure; at the same time, Plato seems to challenge us to overcome this necessity. Refusing to give an account of "the power of dialectic" (532d), Socrates says: "You would no longer be able to follow, my dear Glaucon—it is not that I am not eager [to go ahead]—for you would no longer be seeing an image of what we are discussing but, rather, the truth itself, or so it seems to me." (533a) Both in these lines and, generally, in the tension between form and content in the three images, we are challenged to overcome Glaucon's reliance upon imagery and the limitations it imposes on Socrates in order, in turn, to appropriate what Glaucon cannot—the genuine Socratic insight into the forms and, especially, the Good. (iii) At 519d ff. and again at 540a ff., Socrates puts the figure of the philosopher back into the political context of the just city. At 519d ff., Socrates tells Glaucon that once the philosopher has "seen" the Good "sufficiently," he must be required "to go down again to the prisoners in the cave" in

order to "care for and guard them." At 540a ff., he declares how, at the age of fifty,

those who have survived the tests and have excelled in everything, both in deeds and in studies, must at last be led to the goal. And once, having lifted up the beams of their souls (*τῆν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀυγῆν*) and looked upon that which provides light for everything, they have seen the Good itself, each in turn must be required (*ἀναγκαστέον*), taking it as a model, to bring order to the city and other individuals (*ιδιώτας*) and themselves for the rest of their lives. For the most part they spend their time in philosophy, but each when his turn comes trudges in politics and rules for the city's sake, doing this not as something splendid (*καλόν τι*) but as something necessary. And thus always educating other like men (*ἄλλους . . . τοιούτους*) and leaving them behind in their place as guardians of the city, they go off to dwell in the Isles of the Blessed.

Glaucon, like Adimantus much earlier (419a), objects: Socrates seems to make the philosophers, the paradigmatically just men, "live a worse life when [by keeping to themselves and their studies] they could live a better" (519d). Socrates' reply, even while it satisfies Glaucon, should move us to raise further questions. If we grant that he is right to be concerned with the happiness not of a select few but, rather, of all the citizens together (519e ff.) and that only a city governed by those "least eager to rule" will be free of internal faction (520c–521b), still we should want to learn more about the philosopher's disinterest. On the one hand, what does it suggest about the type of soul that Socrates puts forth as the paradigm of justice? If the philosopher does not want to take up the responsibility of "caring for and guarding" others, and if he does take it up only in an act of self-sacrifice, has Socrates really presented an alternative to the selfishness that Thrasymachus proclaimed as universal at the outset (especially 338d ff.)? However distinct in their actions, *at the level of inclination* the philosopher would seem convergent with the tyrant, and justice, as he embodies it, would seem to come only at the cost of his happiness. On the other hand, such a convergence would leave the central dramatic fact of the *Republic*, Socrates' presence in the Piraeus, a striking mystery. There is a conspicuous tension between what Socrates *says* at 519d ff. and 540a ff. and what he *does* in initiating and extending the inquiry in the first place; it is, if anything, with a characteristic zest that he himself has "descended" into the Piraeus (327a), seeking out others who are "like" him by his provocations and "educating" them (540b).⁹ In contrast

9. Is the point of the opening by-play at 327b ff. that Socrates is forced, against his will, to remain in the Piraeus? On this reading, that scene portrays the necessity, for the

to the too quickly satisfied Glaucon, we should remain puzzled and ponder this tension. Is Socrates' description of the philosopher veiled or ironic? Is there anything in what Socrates says about the philosopher that, properly understood and developed, could both undercut the appearance of inner selfishness and explain the extraordinary generosity of Socrates' own political-educative practice?

In the following sections we shall take up each of these Platonic provocations. Our aim shall be to let the provocations themselves lead us. Although the three sets of issues are, initially, apparently discrete, they will turn out to be closely interrelated, and the reflections they occasion will give us the elements for an understanding of the unspoken vision that lies at the heart of the *Republic* as a whole.

II. PROBLEMS IN THE ANALOGY OF CITY TO SOUL

"If you wish, first let us investigate what justice is in cities. Then afterwards let us consider it, in turn, in the individual, examining the likeness of the larger in the form of the smaller."

"What you say seems sound to me," he said.

"Well then, if we should witness in theory a city come into being, would we also see its justice come into being, and its injustice?"

"Probably, yes."

"And as the process went on, could we hope to see what we are searching for more easily?" (369a-b)

Given the explicitly tentative and heuristic nature of Socrates' initial proposal of the analogy of justice in the city to justice in the soul, it is

survival of philosophy, of some compromise between the philosopher and the many. See, e.g., Allan Bloom's commentary in *The Republic of Plato* (New York, 1968), pp. 310-312. Much of this reading is interesting and persuasive. In particular, it is sensitive to Plato's depiction of the rise of commercial culture and the attendant erosion of aristocratic values. But it is very implausible that Socrates does not want to remain. Note that he makes no effort to "persuade" Polemarchus against forcing him to stay; on the contrary, he encourages Polemarchus by showing interest in the torch race (328a). Moreover, as narrator he makes a point of reporting Polemarchus' mention of the prospect of later "conversation" (*διαλεξόμεθα*, 328a) with "many of the young." Most basically, however, this is just the battle—the effort to generate, in the youth, a spiritual resistance to Piraeic values—that Socrates joins with such zeal on so many occasions; one thinks especially of the *Gorgias*, the *Symposium*, the *Meno*, and the *Protagoras*. If anything, his making a show to Polemarchus of "hurrying off on [his] way back to town" (Polemarchus' words, 337b) may be designed to provoke the latter to come after him. (Compare the ruse of his late arrival at Agathon's party in the *Symposium*.) If so, this would be, as an opening dramatization, Plato's forewarning of Socrates' strategy throughout.

striking that later, when it comes time to look from the city to the soul, Glaucon seems to have granted the analogy the status of a positive truth. Thus when at 434c Socrates sums up the account of justice in the city, Glaucon gives his unreserved endorsement (434d); that Socrates must reply by reminding Glaucon that they have yet to "apply" this account to individuals (434d-435a) shows that Glaucon has no misgivings about the analogy. What is more, Glaucon is content simply to ignore the misgivings that Socrates goes on to declare he himself does have:

"But know well, Glaucon, that in my opinion we shall never get a precise grasp [of the inner order of the soul] by following methods of the sort we are now using in the argument. There is another longer and fuller path which leads to that. Perhaps, however, we can proceed in a way that is worthy of our statements and investigations so far."

"Mustn't we be content with that?" he said. "It would be enough for me at present." (435c-d)

Again at the close of Book IV when Socrates sums up the results the analogy has yielded, Glaucon shows the same complacency, failing to respond to Socrates' ironic indication of problems: when, for instance, Socrates calls the notion of justice derived from the city "a kind of phantom (*eidolon ti*) of justice" (443c), he merely agrees; and when Socrates confirms the claim to "have found the just man and city and what justice really is in them" by saying, "I don't suppose we seem to be completely deceived"¹⁰ (444a), Glaucon gives an almost comically hearty "By Zeus, no indeed!" This persistent lack of discernment is not really surprising. Socrates first proposed the analogy as a heuristic strategy precisely because Glaucon, Adimantus, and the others are, above all, men of the city. They are unaccustomed to the reflexive examination of the interior which their own demand for a defense of justice "for its own sake" requires. It is thus in character that their various objections all bear exclusively on Socrates' just city. To go back to Socrates' telling simile, they suffer a myopia that keeps them from "reading the small letters" (368d) of the soul. Unable to "see" (*ιδεῖν*, 369a) the soul except in terms of the city, they are bound to the analogy. Thus it falls to us, noting Socrates' own unease, to pursue its grounds by just the critical "examining" of the "likeness" which he originally called for.

We should establish the context by a synopsis of the well-known basic

10. οὐκ ἂν πάντῃ τι οἶμαι δόξαιμεν ψεύδεσθαι. Bloom, pp. 310-312, and Grube, *Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, 1974), both take ψεύδεσθαι as "to lie." Thus Bloom, in particular, accentuates the irony almost to the point of sarcasm: "I don't suppose we'd seem to be telling an utter lie."

structures. The city, first of all, is found to have three major parts, the class of producers and tradesmen, the warrior guardians, and the rulers; their names bespeak their functions: producing material goods, war-making and peace-keeping, and ruling. In the good exercise of these functions, finally, the four virtues come to light. Wisdom, consisting in giving "good counsel" concerning the city as a whole, belongs to the rulers; courage, consisting in unshakable true opinion about what is to be feared and what is not to be feared, belongs to the warrior guardians; temperance, since both the pursuit of material goods and the use of force need be kept within the limits set by the "good counsel" of the rulers, consists in letting "the better" rule and belongs to producers, warriors, and rulers alike. Justice, finally, is the precondition for temperance, the principle of distinction which the harmony achieved by temperance presupposes: it is τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν (433a), "minding one's own business," or, less idiomatically and more elaborately, ἡ τοῦ οἰκείου τε καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἕξις τε καὶ πράξις (433e-434a), "having and doing what is proper to oneself and is one's own." If each part of the city holds to this and, so, does not interfere with the work of any other, then in each case the work will be well done; and this assures, in turn, that when the producers and warriors defer to the rulers as "the better," the city as a whole will be well ruled and harmonious. Now, once all of this is established, it remains to apply it to the soul. The application reveals the soul as, firstly, tripartite like the city, with its appetites corresponding to the producers, its "spiritedness" (θυμός) corresponding to the warrior guardians, and its "thinking part" (τὸ λογιστικόν) corresponding to the rulers. Given these correspondences, the virtues seem also to carry over from city to soul. Wisdom, consisting in the "knowledge of what is beneficial for each part and the whole community of these three parts" (442c), belongs to the thinking part; courage, the steadfast conviction of what is and is not to be feared, belongs to spiritedness; temperance, consisting in the agreement to let the better part rule, belongs equally to the appetites and spiritedness, which thereby accept the governance of the thinking part, and to the thinking part, which accepts the task of ruling. Justice, in turn, emerges once again as "minding one's own business" (443b and c); and as before, it is because no part—now, however, of the soul—interferes in the work of any other that, given their shared temperance, the whole is well ruled and harmonious.

If, now, we follow Socrates' instruction to "examine" this "likeness" critically, at least two major difficulties come to light. They are distinct but coordinated. The first is implicit in the general strategy of looking at the soul as an analogue to the city; the second is a consequence of

the notion of justice that the strategy yields. If we pursue them, we find ourselves led, step by step, into new terrain.

(i) The first difficulty has a double aspect. (a) To begin with, by the strategy of analogy Socrates manages to change the basic context of the whole inquiry. When Glaucon and Adimantus insist on a defense of justice "for its own sake," they mean to focus on the intrinsic benefit of being just in distinction from the social rewards of appearing to be just. What justice itself is, however, they presume themselves to know from the outset; essentially, they accept the conventional notion of self-restraint, of not trying to "get the better" of one's fellows when not provoked to do so, that Socrates defends against Thrasymachus (cf. especially 349bff.). (See, e.g. 360b, d, and 366a.) Conceived this way, justice is social and external; it is a character of one's actions toward others. By beginning with the city, Socrates seems at first to respond in their terms, for justice is present in the city as the principle that regulates the way each man treats his fellow citizens. Precisely because of this focus on the relations internal to the city, however, the shift from city to soul brings justice into view as a regulative principle for relations *internal to the soul*, and so leaves the social context altogether.¹¹ (b) The point is not, of course, that the new intrapsychic conception of justice has no social implications. Just what these are, however, is in fact obscure. Socrates appears to acknowledge this (as well as to use it to force us to concentrate all the harder on the intrapsychic) when he pauses at 442d ff. to "reassure" Glaucon that the new "justice hasn't in any way been redefined (ἀπαμβλύνεται) so as to seem, now, to be something different from what it was seen to be in the city" (442d). His means of "reassurance" is to ask Glaucon whether the newly conceived just soul would commit any of the acts—sacrilege, theft, breach of oaths and agreements, etcetera—which the latter had earlier taken as clear cases of injustice. With each of Glau-

11. As Gregory Vlastos points out in his "Justice and Happiness in the *Republic*," in Vlastos, ed., *Plato* (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), 2:86-87, the key here is a shift from the sense "justice" has as a "relational predicate" naturally applied to individuals (this is what Glaucon and Adimantus have in mind at the start) to the sense it has as a "one-place group-predicate" (this is the sense Socrates introduces by his analysis of justice in terms of the city's whole-part structure). But whereas Vlastos sees an unwitting "equivocation" that vitiates Socrates' argument, I see an intentional play whose purpose is to disclose a terrain otherwise hidden. It would be presumptuous to do more than acknowledge the deep difference in ways of reading this represents. Vlastos honors one side of Plato (and of philosophy in general) by his press for argumentative rigor in the dialogues; the essay cited is a powerful example. The cost, however, may be the obscuring of what I have called the provocative function of Platonic argument; key psychagogic movements are brought to light as, instead, logical errors to be repaired by reconstructions that avoid the need for shifts of basic context.

con's denials (442e–443a), however, we can only ask: why not? That is, what is there to keep the wise, daring, and well ordered—that is, inwardly just—individual from outward actions that, judged by the conventional standards implicit in Socrates' list, would be unjust?¹² The difficulty becomes all the more pressing when we recall that the newly emerging just soul is thought on the analogy of a city which, though just in its internal relations, is a violent aggressor against its neighbors; the very need for a warrior class, we recall, stemmed from the city's act of "cutting off a piece of [its] neighbors' land" (373d) in order to possess surplus wealth. Seen in this light, Socrates' analogy risks not simply dissociating but, even worse, opposing the new intrapsychic and the conventional social conceptions of justice. If this is to be avoided, we must understand more about the new conception than Socrates has so far disclosed. What is there *internal to the soul*, we must ask, that will make the inwardly just individual not a particularly effective aggressor against his fellow citizens but, on the contrary, one who will take his place amongst them with self-restraint and responsibility?

(ii) Is the soul really like the city in the first place, however? Oddly, the conception of justice that the analogy yields serves to expose, in retrospect, an important problem with the analogy. So long as we restrict our focus to a city with a class defined by its function or work of ruling, it will be self-evidently just for this class to rule; for justice is "minding one's own business" and ruling is, by definition, the "own business" of this class. When, however, we turn from city to soul and, correlatively, from the rulers to the thinking part, the situation is suddenly not so self-evident. The "own business" of "the thinking part" should be (to follow the homonymy of "rulers" and "ruling") to *think*, and it is hardly obvious that thinking, in and of itself, will coincide with the practical work of caring for the needs and proper limitation of the appetites and spiritedness. At the very least, thinking is distinct

12. This is in essence the question raised by David Sachs in his widely discussed "A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*," *Philosophical Review* 72 (1963): 141–158, and much of the rest of my discussion constitutes a reply. But it should be clear in advance that there is an ineliminable ambiguity in the idea of judging actions by the conventional (or vulgar) standards (*τὰ φηρικὰ*, 442e). Who is to judge? And by reference to the spirit or the letter? If the many are to judge, the spirit may well be lost in the letter, and—to take the obvious example—no less than Socrates' own deeds in the course of this conversation with the young may appear indictable as "betrayal" of his city (442e) and "neglect of the gods" (443a). Thus the discovery of what keeps the inwardly just soul from unjust actions towards his fellows will not guarantee that the actions he does commit may not nonetheless appear to violate conventional standards. This is an issue that Plato treats generally in exploring the problematic relation between the being and appearance of the philosopher and of the statesman in the *Sophist* and *Statesman*, and I have discussed it in my *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, especially chaps. I and IVd.

from the business of ruling the other parts of the soul.¹³ Once this distinction becomes apparent, however, it becomes unclear why the work of ruling the other parts of the soul is not a violation, rather than an imperative, of justice. Insofar as it may be contrasted with thinking, ruling appears not as the "own" or "proper business" of the thinking part but, rather, as a reaching beyond its "own business" to attend to that of the other two parts of the soul. It might seem that Socrates' new notion of temperance—letting the better rule—can reverse these consequences. In truth, it only refocuses the basic question. Now that the thinking part can no longer be simply identified by reference to the work of ruling, it needs to be shown both that and how it truly is the better of the three parts. This, however, requires that we first understand it in its "own proper" nature and work, that is, in the thinking by which it comes to its "knowledge," and just such understanding is *blocked in advance* so long as we simply presume the truth of the analogy. If, that is, we conceive the thinking part from the beginning as ruling, we deny ourselves the occasion to investigate what, in its "own"-most activity of thinking, first makes it well suited to rule. Thus we come to an ironic state of affairs: the analogy of city to soul, it turns out, has concealed as much as it has revealed of the soul; now, precisely in order to pursue the notion of justice which reflection on the city has produced, we need to suspend that reflection and turn directly to the inner life of the thinking part of the soul.

On both counts, then, the analogy of city and soul leads us away from the context of the city. Even while Glaucon and the others, "seeing" only the city and not the soul, miss this and (to his ironic dismay) make Socrates go back to his elliptical comments on the "sharing" of women and children, we find ourselves pursuing Plato first from the social context to the interior of the soul and, secondly, from the "sociality" or "other-directed" life of the thinking part to *its* interior. Thus Plato manages to provoke us to ask for deeper inquiry. In what does the "own" and "proper" activity of the thinking part—that is, thinking itself—consist? Given this, why (if at all) should the thinking part rule the soul as a whole? And, even granting that it should,

13. Note the key passage at 442c, in which the soul is called "wise because of that small part which ruled in him and declared these things [i.e., instructions about what is and is not to be feared, to the spirited part of the soul], which has in itself the knowledge of what is beneficial for each part and the whole community of these parts." Though Socrates declares that the thinking part rules, it is not *by virtue* of its wisdom that it does so but, as his next speech (442c–d) declares, by virtue of the whole soul's temperance. Its wisdom consists only in its having the "knowledge" of what benefits each part, not in its doing the work of regulating the other parts on the basis of that knowledge.

why (if at all) will such a just soul make for a just life towards others, much less a life devoted to giving "good counsel" and entitled to rule in society?

III. THE OBSCURITY OF THE GOOD

That Socrates' dismay is indeed ironic becomes clear from his response to the demand to go back to the issue of women and children. Seizing on what (he says) he earlier sought to avoid, Socrates develops the notions of the equality of male and female and of the abolition of the private family. Such "sharing" amounts to purging from the idea of political leadership the qualifications of manliness and noble lineage, and this runs so deeply counter to Greek heritage that it seems to make Socrates' just city utterly implausible and impossible to actualize. Evidently, this is just what Socrates intends. To Glaucon's impatient question, how could such a city ever be made actual? (471c–e), Socrates responds by designating the one life-praxis that is genuinely disinterested in the contingencies of body and social prestige—philosophy. Of course, his famous assertion that the actualization of the just city requires the philosopher-king really only heightens the political implausibility of his proposal. But this too seems to be what Socrates intends. Glaucon and the others can now pursue their interest in his city only by demanding an explication of the nature of the philosopher, and it is here, finally, that Socrates sees the one true hope for an alternative to Thrasymachean self-seeking.

With these developments, the Socratic and Platonic levels of provocation converge, only to diverge again. On the one hand, Socrates' politically oriented interlocutors, aroused by the three waves of paradox (457b ff., 472a, 473c), and we, aroused by the difficulties in the analogy of the city to soul, now have joint occasion to explore the "proper" activity of the thinking part of the soul. On the other hand, thinking is least other-directed, most concentrated on what is "its own," when it is devoted to the "greatest object of study," the "form of the Good" (505a); yet it is just this, as we noted earlier, that Socrates declares "beyond our present impetus" (506e) because Glaucon and the others "would no longer be able to follow" (533a). Thus provoked, we must part company with them, searching beneath the surface of Socrates' presentation for a more adequate grasp of the Good.

As before, it is best to begin by synthesizing what Socrates makes explicit. The two key passages are his presentations of the similes of the sun (507a–509c) and the divided line (509d–511c).

507a–509c: Socrates begins by recalling the earlier agreement (at

475e–480a) that the forms—the beautiful itself or the Good itself, for example, each of which is one and is titled "that which is"—are to be distinguished from their many participants; whereas the forms are the proper subject matter for "intellection" (*νοεῖσθαι*), the many participants are subject matter for "sight" (507a–b). He then proposes that the Good plays epistemic and ontic causal roles "in the intelligible" (*ἐν τῷ νοητῷ*) precisely analogous to those which the sun plays "in the visible" (*ἐν τῷ ὀρατῷ*). As the sun provides the light which makes things visible and, so, empowers the eye to see them, so the Good gives to the objects of knowledge—that is, presumably, the forms—"the truth" (*τὴν ἀλήθειαν*) which first lets them be knowable and, so, empowers the soul to know them. It is important to note here that when he matches "truth" with light in the simile, Socrates characterizes it not as a property of the relation of the intellect and its object but, rather, as the precondition for such a relation; like light "in the visible," truth is what first lets the object-to-be present itself to, and so become object for, the intellect. It is as source for this precondition, in turn, that the Good plays an epistemic causal role. In addition, Socrates goes on, as the sun is the source of "the generation and growth and nourishment" of things, so the Good is the source of "the being" (*τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν*) of the objects of knowledge—again, presumably, the forms. This is its ontic causal role. Thus the Good is responsible for the being known and the being itself, as such, of what is known.

509d–511e: Once this is established, Socrates turns to the distinction between "the intelligible" and "the visible" and offers the figure of the divided line to explicate their relation. He proceeds by three steps. First, he distinguishes within "the visible" between sensible images (shadows, reflections, and the like) and the physical things of which they are images. Second, he makes use of this distinction, familiar in ordinary experience, to disclose the unfamiliar relation, hidden in ordinary experience, between things and forms: the objects of "opinion"—that is, natural and artifactual individuals—relate to the objects of "knowledge"—that is, forms—analogously as, within "the visible" or "opinable," likenesses relate to that of which they are likenesses. Finally, he distinguishes "the intelligible" or "knowable" into two sections. On the one hand, there is a sort of "reasoning" (*διάνοια*) typical of geometry; although the geometer's subject matter is forms, in his ordinary practice he relies on sensible things (drawn figures, for instance) to serve as images, and he takes his most basic notions for granted as "evident to everyone" (*παντὶ φανερόν*, 510d), treating them as "premises" (*ὑποθέσεις*, 510c) and giving no direct account of them.

On the other hand, there is the pure and critical "thinking" (*νόησις*) proper to philosophical dialectic; the dialectician dispenses with images, making use only of forms, and he treats what the geometer takes as premises as, instead, "springboards" for further inquiry, seeking their ultimate foundation. Thus Socrates sorts out the initial two types, "the visible" and "the intelligible," into a series of four: the awareness which has mere sensible images as its objects, the "trust"-ful (*πίστις*) or unsceptical perception of physical things, the "reasoning" typified by geometry, and the "thinking" typified by dialectic.

Socrates' similes work, in a sense, in two directions. As a first introduction to the notion of the purely intelligible, they are vivid and clarifying expositions of what is strange in terms of what is familiar. As we reflect upon them, however, we will also be struck by the provocative irony of this procedure; even as Socrates brings the strange down to the level of the familiar, he also incites us, by a series of coordinated problems, to re-ascend to the strange.

To begin with the simile of the sun: By first introducing the Good as "the greatest object of study" (504d ff.), then by his arguments showing that it is neither knowledge nor pleasure (505b ff.), Socrates raises and heightens the question, what *is* the Good? By his simile, however, he addresses the altogether different question, what does the Good *do*? Since the work that something does—its causal power—is a consequence of what it is, this is a provocative shift; like the geometers he goes on to criticize, Socrates appears to take what is basic for granted and to start, instead, from what really first follows from it.¹⁴ The effect of this should be to awaken a "dialectical" resistance in us; we will want to reverse Socrates' procedure, treating his account of what the Good causes as a "springboard" for just the inquiry he appears to drop. What must the Good *be*, we will ask, if by virtue of this it is to do the work of causing the being and the intelligibility of the forms? So soon as we raise this question, however, two further problems with the simile present themselves. First, Socrates tells us next to nothing about what the forms are; indeed, after beginning by recalling the results of the earlier account at 475e–480a, he does not even mention them explicitly by name again. But we can hardly understand what in the nature of the Good qualifies it to cause the being and intelligibility of the forms if we do not first understand what this "being" comes to and how, in it, the forms are "intelligible." Secondly, there is the tension we

14. For an illustration of such presumption in the ordinary routines of geometrical practice, see *Meno* 82a ff., together with R. M. Hare's comments in "Plato and the Mathematicians," in R. Bambrough, ed., *New Essays on Plato and Aristotle* (New York, 1965), pp. 24–27.

noted earlier between the form and the content of the simile itself. If we do not discover this for ourselves, Socrates' objection to the geometer's reliance on sensible images should alert us to it. What the simile reveals, on the one hand, is an order of being distinct from and somehow prior to sensible things; the way it makes this revelation, on the other hand, is by representing that order in terms of the relations between sensible things. Thus the content of the simile stands in tension with its mode. If we accept the simile as true, then we need to dispense with simile itself, reformulating our insight "without making use of anything visible at all, but proceeding by means of forms" (511c). We therefore come to the divided line passage with a complex task: to win a nonimagistic understanding of what the forms are, in their "being" and "intelligibility," in order, in turn, to understand what the Good is, such that it can be cause of these.

On first inspection, Socrates' presentation of the divided line appears only to reproduce the difficulties of the simile of the sun. Not only does he not explicate the Good—he does not even mention it. And though he does now turn explicitly to the forms, he interprets them by yet another sensible simile: sensible things relate to forms as shadows and reflections relate to the sensible things they are shadows and reflections of; thus things are like sensible images, and forms are like the originals or models 'imaged.' The strength of the simile is the clarity with which it expresses the notion of the responsibility of one sort of entity for the very being and recognizability of another. It is familiar to us from ordinary experience that shadows and reflections are—and, too, that we immediately recognize them as—what they are only by virtue of an essential relation to something both different in kind and prior. This very reliance on ordinary experience, however, also makes the simile dangerous. As with the simile of the sun, so here the content of Socrates' thought stands in tension with his mode of thinking. To suggest the insubstantiality of sensible things in relation to forms, he must appeal to our everyday "trust" in their substantiality in relation to shadows and reflections; to introduce us to the status of forms as models for things, he invites us first to think of things as models for forms. As before, therefore, the final effect of the simile is to challenge us to rethink it, to reappropriate its content in a non-imagistic way.

At just this point, however, Socrates offers something new and, potentially, decisively helpful. In his third step, he contrasts mathematical thinking with philosophical dialectic. Ironically, one of the major defects of the ordinary practice of geometry—its reliance on images—makes it a timely means beyond imagistic thinking and to-

wards the possibility of a more adequate grasp of the forms. Socrates stresses how geometers "use as images" just the sort of sensible things that, within "the visible," are "imitated" by shadows and reflections (510b); thus they "mold" three-dimensional structures and "draw" real figures (510e). At the same time, they "know" that the true referents of their thinking are not these but, rather, the forms—for instance, "the square itself" and "the diagonal itself" (510d)—that these merely "resemble" (*ἔοικε*, 510d). To be sure, this may be no more than tacit, practical "knowledge"; insofar as they do not step back to reflect explicitly on it, the geometers fall short of dialectic.¹⁵ If, however, we now let Socrates' criticism move us to step back, we can recognize the crucial philosophical notion to which geometry bears witness. By the nature of its concepts, geometry makes peculiarly clear the inappropriateness of thinking the forms imagistically: the exactitude of these concepts makes conspicuous the *imperfection* of every physical representation of geometrical form.¹⁶ Socrates will later point this out

15. Plato appears to offer a general presentation of this danger in his portrayal of the geometer Theodorus in the *Theaetetus*. For the way in which his antipathy for "abstract inquiries" (165a) keeps his mathematical insight from becoming knowledge in the Platonic sense, note especially 147d.

16. In "Plato on the Imperfection of the Sensible World," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975): 105–117, Alexander Nehamas argues against the traditional reading that takes sensibles, in general, to fall short of their forms by virtue of their being only approximately what their forms are exactly. He argues, instead, that forms are "essentially" what sensible particulars, since they "possess their properties only in an incomplete manner," are only "accidentally" (p. 116). Thus, the imperfection of particular equals would consist not in their not actually being equals but, rather, in their being "equal only to some things and not to others," while the form "equality is always equal" (p. 116). On the one hand, Nehamas' reading, although it is directed primarily to the *Phaedo*, provides a much better interpretation of *Republic* 475e–480a than does the traditional reading. After all, in what sense is a beautiful thing only "approximately" beautiful? The mathematical notions of exactitude and approximation simply do not apply to many sorts of form and instance. How, then, has the traditional reading arisen and taken hold in the first place? It would seem that it is an inappropriate generalization from what Plato has Socrates say about geometrical forms in *Republic*, VI–VII, especially at 529d ff. There (as quoted in my text) Socrates says explicitly that celestial phenomena, though "the most exact of visible things," still "fall short of true beings"; this is easily taken to imply that it is in respect of exactness that all visible things fall short of forms. The proper correction, I think, is to point out that (as Socrates' formulation at 530b—also quoted in my text—seems to indicate) the inexactness that makes celestial motions imperfect should itself be interpreted as a case of possessing properties "incompletely" and "accidentally": for the motion of a star to "deviate" at certain points from perfectly circular form is for it both to be circular (when projected from the non-deviant points through which it passes) and not to be circular (when projected from the points at which it "deviates"). Having said this in agreement with Nehamas, one should also say, in behalf of the (now refocused) tradition, that the contrast of exact and approximate is, as a species of the more general contrast of perfect and imperfect, particularly important at a certain stage of philosophical education. The thought of the perfectly beautiful, for instance, does not in itself force us beyond the sensible as a frame of reference; because beauty characterizes the sensible, it is easy (indeed, all too

when, discussing the educational value of astronomy, he stresses that even the heavens, "the most beautiful and the most exact (*ἀκριβέστατα*) of visible things, fall far short of true beings" (529d); just as "a man versed in geometry" would regard it as "absurd" to "examine" even the very best physical drawings "with any serious hope of finding in them the truth about equals or doubles or any other ratio" (529e), so "a real astronomer" (530a) would "consider it bizarre to believe that [celestial phenomena], since they are corporeal and visible, are always the same and do not deviate at all anywhere" (530b). Since such imperfection is a manifest feature of *every* physical representation, it is also manifest, conversely, that *the forms—precisely as, in each case, "the perfect" with respect to some geometrical character—cannot be or be thought as sensible things.* This negative insight, in turn, clears the way for a newly radical interpretation of the notion of the function of the forms as originals or models. Since it is now evident that "the square itself," for instance, cannot itself be a square thing,¹⁷ there can be no question of imagining that one "looks," in any sense requiring an image for an object, from the former to the latter or *vice versa*. Nonetheless, the geometer is able to "mold" and to "draw" his various sensible representations of "the square itself." To do this, it would seem, he must have "the square itself" in mind from the outset, as the principle of design according to which he constructs his sensible representations.¹⁸ It would also be the basis for his recognition of the figures others construct; that a certain range of drawings, however rough and ready, immediately present themselves as squares, indicates that the form is present from the beginning, serving as the criterion for the

easy) to fail to realize that we must now "convert" (518c) to "something" essentially non-sensible. With the notion of "the square itself," on the other hand, it is clear and striking that we cannot be referring to anything sensible in kind. This makes mathematical studies a timely occasion for philosophical reflection on the difference in kind between forms and sensibles, and the traditional reading, so far as it brings this out, is well oriented.

17. As already indicated in n. 16, geometrical examples have particular power. In terms of contemporary analysis of Plato, we might say that they enable us to distinguish a possible implication of self-predication that Plato consistently objects to—namely, thinking the forms as if they were spatially determinate beings—from self-predication itself: "the square itself," as perfectly square, *both* cannot be spatial (and so cannot be an instance or specimen of squareness) *and* is self-predicative. For a lucid formulation of the purely logical notion of self-predication this requires, see Alexander Nehamas, "Self-Predication and Plato's Theory of Forms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979): 93–103.

18. Thus, geometrical construction would make vivid the sense in which the form of a thing is (to borrow from the *Gorgias*) that principle of "order appropriate to [a thing]" that, "present in it, makes it good" (506c). For a statement of this same idea after the *Republic*, see (under the interpretation of "the One" in hypothesis III as a thing's defining form) *Parmenides* 158b–d.

geometer's spontaneous perceptual identifications. Forms function as originals or models, therefore, in the sense that, as a priori principles of structure for sensibles, they first enable these latter to be—and enable us to recognize them for—what they are.

Needless to say, there is much more that needs to be explicated before we will have given anything like a full articulation of the theory of forms.¹⁹ Nonetheless, we have won the basis for a first response to the complex task implied by the simile of the sun. The key is the concept of perfection. Because of the way it leads thinking beyond the sensible, it puts us in position to give a nonimagistic account of what the forms are, in their distinctive being and intelligibility; the implications of this account, in turn, serve as a "springboard" back to the prior question of the nature of the Good. (i) *The being of the forms*: To generalize from the geometrical cases, each form just *is* "the perfect" with regard to—or the perfection of—some definite character. Hence, it is that character καθ' αὐτό, "itself as it is in accordance with itself alone." To see this is to grasp the sense and the necessity of Socrates' earlier characterization of the form as τὸ παντελῶς ὄν, "what is [what it is]²⁰ fully" or "all-completely" (477a). As the perfection of a character, a form cannot be lacking in that character in any possible respect; it will be what it is "fully," with no restriction by any contrary or privative character. This, in turn, brings out the necessity for the difference in kind that Socrates ascribes to forms in making them the originals in

19. In fact, the *Republic* connects with the *Parmenides* in a way evidently designed to introduce such a full articulation in the latter dialogue. The pointedly Parmenidean accounts of the forms as "beings" (with no admixture of non-being) and as "ones" at the close of Book V and again in Book X suggest that the elder Socrates has benefited deeply from the exchange which, according to a Platonic fiction in the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides*, he had as a young man with Parmenides. When, accordingly, we trace "back" to the *Parmenides*, we find Parmenides, not limited by an unprepared and not-yet-philosophical audience (136d–137b) as the elder Socrates is in the *Republic*, providing guidance for a conceptual explication of the doctrine of forms. By setting aside the simile of likeness/original and distinguishing the precise senses of "is" and "being" proper to forms and to things, Parmenides leads, in the hypotheses, just the "conversion" of soul from things to forms for which the elder Socrates, given his audience, can only call in *Republic*. By connecting these dialogues in this complex way, Plato offers two beginnings—the *Republic* for thoughtful men still immersed in the everyday, the *Parmenides* for those who have made the first beginning—in understanding the forms. I have attempted to spell this out in detail in my *Plato's Parmenides, the "Conversion" of the Soul*, Princeton University Press, forthcoming.

20. Since the "all-complete" way in which, e.g., the Beautiful "is" is set into specific contrast with the partial way in which any beautiful thing "is beautiful" (479a), I take it that ὄν at 477a points back to a grammatically predicative use of ἔστι. Thus Socrates' talk of the "being" of the forms refers not to their existence, as such, but rather to their self-relation, that is, to the way in which each *is* itself, or *is* καθ' αὐτό ("in accordance with itself alone").

his second simile.²¹ Like shadows and reflections, sensible things are essentially dependent on a medium; to be a sensible thing is to be both spatially and temporally determinate and, as such, essentially subject to shifting spatial perspectives, to the changing phases of a history, and (at least for all terrestrial particulars) to eventual nonexistence. Such conditionedness gives rise to various respects in which the thing in question will lack the very characters that in other respects it has. As the perfections of these characters, the forms must therefore be different in kind from sensible things; they must transcend all spatial and temporal determinateness, being placeless and timeless. (ii) *The intelligibility of the forms*: Likewise, the intelligibility of the forms cannot be assimilated to that of their instances. Since it is only in—or strictly, as—their proper forms that characters present themselves perfectly, it is only as their forms that characters are παντελῶς γνωστόν, "fully knowable" (477a); hence the forms are the proper and preeminent objects of knowledge. The notion of "object" here, however, requires a distinction. As the geometrical case makes clear, we grasp forms for what they are when, stepping back from sensible objects, we reflect on what we have judged or recognized these to be. This suggests that

21. For powerful argument that Plato asserts between forms and their participants a difference not in kind but only in degree, see Gregory Vlastos, "Degrees of Reality in Plato" (in his *Platonic Studies*, [Princeton, 1973], pp. 58–75). By setting the participants into analogy only with what are distinctively "insubstantial images," however, Plato in the second simile does suggest difference in kind. (For the distinction between "insubstantial" and "substantial images," see Edward Lee, "On the Metaphysics of the Image in Plato's *Timaeus*," *Monist*, 50 (1966): 341–368, especially p. 353.) It is possible, of course, that Plato is inconsistent in the *Republic*. To argue this, we would oppose to the second simile's assertion of difference in kind a number of other passages' apparent assertion of difference in degree—e.g., the comparison of the "being" of participants and forms at 475e–480a, the setting of participants into analogy with "substantial images" in the allegory of the cave and again in the account of μίμησις in Book X, and the characterization of forms as μάλλον ὄντα, "more real," than their participants at 515d. On the other hand, it is also possible that Plato's talk of difference in degree is only a way of introducing the forms to minds long and deeply accustomed to thinking only of sensible things. How else than by comparison with the familiar can the radically strange be presented? On this possible line of interpretation we would need to distinguish two stages of philosophical formulation: that which is appropriate to the effort to break beyond the familiar, and that which, presupposing the success of that effort, is appropriate to the new context, no longer strange, that we have come to grasp. (For a distinction of this kind, see Lee, "Reason and Rotation: Circular Movement as the Model of Mind (Nous) in the Later Plato," in W. H. Werkmeister, ed., *Facets of Plato's Philosophy* [Amsterdam, 1976], pp. 70–102, especially pp. 90–93.) Plato's major effort to shift from the first to the second sort of formulation occurs, I will argue elsewhere (see n. 19), in the *Parmenides*. If, however, he already has the shift in view as the future task implied by the present of the *Republic*, then, since in the *Parmenides* he distinguishes form and participant as different in kind, the simile in the divided line passage may be interpreted as representing his deepest insight, truest to his conception of the forms, in the *Republic*.

forms are given to be known in two different ways. On the one hand, by trying to bring into focus that perfection that sensibles can present only in certain limited respects, we aim at explicit knowledge of the form; here the form is, as a distinct and explicit object, the goal of inquiry. The reflection by which we inquire, however, is itself first possible only if the perceptions upon which we reflect are already guided by the presence of the form. It is only by a tacit and implicit reference to the perfect that recognition of sensibles for what they imperfectly are is possible, and it is this tacit reference that reflection aims to bring into focus. Here the form is not the goal so much as the enabling condition for inquiry.²² (iii) *The nature of the Good*: Since it is by virtue of what the Good is that it is fit to be cause of the being and intelligibility of the forms, these reflections already imply a first specification of its nature. Just insofar as each form is the perfection of some one character, it is an instance of perfection itself; moreover, its intelligibility as a perfection presupposes the prior intelligibility of perfection itself. The nature of the Good, therefore, must be just this, perfection itself; the Good will be "the perfect" *as such*.²³ Note the remarkable self-consistency this gives the doctrine of forms as a whole. As each one form (the perfection of some one character) is responsible for what limited being and intelligibility its many sensible instances have, so the Good ("the perfect itself") is responsible for the "full" being and intelligibility of the many forms; likewise, as each sensible represents its form imperfectly, so each one form "imperfectly" instantiates the Good. This analogy must be qualified on two key points. First, the sort

22. These reflections appear to capture the epistemological point of the *ἀνάμνησις* myth. It is not just that inquiry has as its object that which, necessarily in some non-objectifying way, the mind already "knows." Also, the inner connection between sense-perception and the knowledge of forms now becomes clearer: in particular, it becomes evident why we can trust our perceptual identifications to remind us of the right forms—these identifications are intrinsically dependent upon, as deriving their orientation from, a nonperceptual tacit grasp of these very forms.

23. At this point my account dovetails in different respects with—and so binds together within itself—valuable reflections on the Good offered by Gerasimos Santas in "The Form of the Good in Plato's *Republic*," in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy* 2: 232–263 and R. M. Hare, pp. 24–36 (and underscored by N. White, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality* [Indianapolis, 1976], p. 101, n. 57). Hare observes how, for Plato, for a circle to "really be a circle" is for it to be "a good or perfect circle"; this is why, Hare argues, Plato thought of the Good as "the source of the being and reality of the circle—and of everything else likewise . . ." (p. 36). Santas makes an extended argument for why the form of the Good should be responsible for the "ideal attributes" asserted of the forms at *Symposium* 211a–b and *Republic* 475e–480a (pp. 235–252), that is, for the various characters implied by the placelessness and timelessness of the being of the forms. By interpreting the Good as "perfection itself," I mean to show what the nature of the Good's goodness is, such that it is "proper" (p. 236) to it that it give rise to the placeless and timeless—that is, "ideal"—"being and reality" of the forms.

of imperfection that applies to forms is *only* analogous, not identical, with that proper to sensibles. Since, as a perfection, a form cannot be a physical existent, it cannot fall short of the Good in any way sourced in spatial or temporal determinateness. Rather, it is because of its proper determinateness as the particular form that it is, that each form falls short. To reappropriate Socrates' language at 475e–480a: because each form *is* the perfection of some *one* character and *is not* the perfection of any other, it is only a limited instance, making only a partial presentation, of the Good. Second, the Good itself both does and does not transcend this determinateness. Here the distinction we drew with regard to the intelligibility of the forms applies, so to speak, at a higher level. On the one hand, Socrates insists that the Good can be made the object of reflective inquiry and "distinguished from all the other [forms]" (534b); but this is to single it out as a determinate being, as the perfection of some *one* character and *not* of any other. On the other hand, when we recognize that this character is just perfection itself,²⁴ it becomes evident that the Good must also transcend this determinateness. Like "the square itself" with regard to the drawn squares that we recognize in perception, the Good as perfection itself is already tacitly in play in our reflective inquiry, enabling us to recognize each of the various forms for what it is, and in this presence it can no more be reduced to the status of these forms than "the square itself" can be reduced to the status of the drawn squares. This is the sense in which it is "beyond being," that is, the being-what-it-is of each of the forms, "exceeding it in dignity of age and in power" (509b). Note, moreover, that insofar as—in making precisely this last observation—we distinguish the Good for what it is from the other forms, it must bear this relation of transcendence to itself. Like the sun, it cannot be "seen" except by virtue of the "light" that it itself provides; as perfection itself, it is already in play in—as that, tacit reference to which enables—our recognition of it *as* perfection itself. This is why, by contrast with the other forms, it is "unhypothetical" (511b); for its being and intelligibility it presupposes nothing other than itself.

IV. THE PARADOX OF SOCRATES' PRESENCE

These reflections carry us a significant part of the way towards meeting the second Platonic provocation, the challenge to appropri-

24. That is, for the Good to be "the perfect" as such is for it to be, as a form, a perfection. But of what? Of perfection itself. The Good is therefore perfectly perfect or, again, the most perfect perfection. The twofold consequence of this is developed below. First, it is a necessary condition for the Good's *both* being that from which "all" (cf. *τοῦ*

ate for ourselves the genuine Socratic insight into the Good. Moreover, since the Good and the forms are the "proper" concern for philosophical thinking, they also help us to continue our response to the first provocation, the challenge to "see into" the activity of the thinking part of the soul. At the same time, however, they seem incomplete and, on an important count, even unhelpful. In responding to the first provocation, we asked what real connection, if any, there is between thinking and the work of ruling, both within the soul and in the relation of the thinker to others in the city. The interpretation of the Good as perfection itself suggests, at best, why an accomplished philosophical mind might *qualify* one to rule. Both within (in the thinking part's relation to the appetites and spiritedness) and without (in the thinker's relation to nonphilosophers), understanding of the Good and the forms yields the fullest understanding of particulars as well; the accomplished thinker will therefore appreciate the objects of his own appetites and passions and the interests of his fellow citizens better, in each case, than these latter themselves do. (Socrates gives a version of this point at 520b-c and plays on it in many places.) Still, to be qualified to rule is quite different from being genuinely inclined or moved to do so; moreover, it is not yet clear how the desire to apply one's understanding in the work of ruling guarantees that one will strive to rule justly. If anything, these problems appear only more difficult in light of our reflections so far. If at first the Good had the look of moral significance, our present conception of its nature appears to lack this altogether. Perfection itself is constitutive as much for the form of injustice as for that of justice (475e ff.)²⁵ and, again, as much for "the square itself" and "the diagonal itself" (510d) as for either injustice or justice. Indeed, if we accept Socrates' account of justice as "minding one's own business," it is hard to see any inner link between what this means for the philosopher—a life devoted to reflective inquiry into perfection itself and its instances—and what it means in the context of the city—a life of self-restraint and social responsibility.

πάντος, 511b7) the forms derive their "being" as forms *and* being itself one of these forms. (See the close of section III.) Second, it will also turn out that, properly explained, it is a sufficient condition for the Good's being that from which "all" the forms derive their "being" as forms. (See section IV.)

25. One merit of interpreting the Good as perfection itself is that it allows us to make sense of the several striking passages in which Plato has Socrates refer to forms for vices, for instance, injustice and the bad (*Republic* 475e) and impiety (*Euthyphro* 5d, 6d). These may be understood as, in each case, the perfection of a character, even while the relevant character is a kind of moral deficiency in the person or act, etcetera, to which it belongs; if they are understood this way, they will be no less instances of perfection itself than the forms for the virtues that are their opposites. For a brief discussion of this, see White, *A Companion to Plato's Republic* (Indianapolis, 1979), p. 41.

That this difficulty presents itself here should not, however, be surprising. This is, in essence, just the substance of the third Platonic provocation, at 519d ff. and 540a ff. Socrates says that the philosopher descends to the "drudgery" and "necessity" of ruling only "for the city's sake"—not, by implication, for his own. But if this is so, we observed earlier, then the self-sacrifice of the philosopher-king's descent really masks just another variation on the split, accepted as a fact of nature by Thrasymachus, between self-interest and the interests of others. However admirable for setting aside what he desires for himself for the sake of the city, the philosopher will still be one victimized by internal faction. On the level of genuine inclination, he will represent only a variant of the all-too-familiar selfishness that makes the notion of the value of justice "for its own sake" seem so problematic; Socrates' defense of this notion, in turn, will continue to be, as in Book I, insubstantial.

With an eye to deepening our responses to the first two provocations, we should now turn to the third. As we also observed earlier, Socrates seems to contradict what he *says* by what he *does*.²⁶ The philosopher *par excellence*, he has spent his life going down into the cave—whether this be the marketplace, a Callias' or an Agathon's house, or the Piraeus—and seeking out his "likes" by relentless pro-

26. Discussions of the philosopher's motivation in face of the task of ruling generally focus exclusively on the express argument of the *Republic* (what Socrates says), ignoring its dramatic dimension and the portrait of Socrates as the exemplary philosopher that this contains. (On the importance of this portrait for understanding the moral psychology of the middle dialogues, see Charles Kahn, "Plato on the Unity of the Virtues," in W. H. Werkmeister, ed., *Facets of Plato's Philosophy*, pp. 21–39.) This portrait should bear on the issue in a number of basic ways. (i) The image of the philosopher as primarily contemplative and disinclined towards practical activity, when it is considered together with the portrait of Socrates, begins to look one-sided. Socrates is, of course, contemplative; his famous trance on the way to Agathon's party (*Symposium* 174d ff., see also 220c ff.) is a striking dramatic symbol of this. But Socrates chooses not to remain outside; he emerges from contemplation in order to join the party and play his characteristic role of critic and teacher. (ii) Moreover, there is no intimation that he sacrifices himself, acting against his own personal preference or interest for the sake of the distinct interests of others, in turning from contemplation to practical activity. (iii) Especially in light of Socrates' own description of his activity as "the practice of politics and the true political art" (*Gorgias* 521d, see also *Apology* 30e ff.), the portrait of Socrates should broaden our sense of what Plato intends by the notion of "ruling." Plato has in mind not just or even primarily the official tasks of government but, more generally, participation in the essentially social work of forming the character of the community as a whole. As his brief description at 540b confirms, to "rule" is, in essence, "to bring order to the city" by "education." (iv) Neither the activity of "ruling" in this sense nor the inner unity of the philosopher's psyche in giving himself over to this activity presupposes, as its enabling context, the actuality of the just city envisaged in Books II–IV. Socrates devotes himself to "bringing order" to Athens, and he does so with a passion and involvement that belie the image of the philosopher as "required" to act against his own personal self-interest.

vocative elenchus.²⁷ Moreover, Plato has him elsewhere call this educative work “the practice of politics and the true political art” (*Gorgias* 521d). Yet nothing external has either “compelled” or enticed him to this extraordinary generosity.²⁸ On the contrary, Plato portrays him as exceptional for his indifference to the praise and censure alike of his peers. His life thus bespeaks an *inner* source of motivation which, in the *Republic* at least, he chooses not to describe in the depiction of the philosopher that he gives to Glaucon. What is this inner source? Why, moreover, does he choose to keep silent about it?

Different kinds of indications suggest that we must think further about the Good.²⁹ Consider, in particular, the convergence of these three: (i) When Socrates tells Glaucon that the philosopher takes up the task of ruling “not as something splendid” (ὄχ ὡς καλόν τι, 540b), he undercuts the traditional image of the *καλοκαγαθός*, the heroic leader whose goodness (-αγαθός) consists in the strength for deeds that are grand and impressive to behold (καλο-). By denying that politics is anything “splendid” in itself, Socrates rules out the look of nobility and the recognition it brings as the philosopher’s motivation for ruling. This leaves open the very notion that Socrates’ life seems to

27. See, in this context, *Gorgias* 486d. That Socrates often seeks his “likes” amongst those seemingly most opposed to philosophy is explained by his remarks to Adimantus at *Republic* 489e ff. Those most vigorous and capable of greatness will almost inevitably be seduced by the cult of praise and honor away from philosophy and into the pursuit of political power. Callicles, Alcibiades, and Charmides are cases in point.

28. A recurrent theme in Alcibiades’ “eulogy” of Socrates in the *Symposium* is the latter’s freedom from needs, sexual, social, and material alike. As “unique” (221c) as this makes Socrates, however, it is only the surface of the mystery of his character. To go further, one must ask: *why*—and especially if eros stems from neediness, as Socrates argues—is he moved to devote his energies to Alcibiades? In the *Symposium* this question should turn the reader’s attention back to Diotima’s speech. At 210d she describes the φιλοσοφία of the one on the verge of “seeing” Beauty itself as ἄφθονος, “unjealous” or “generous” or (following Suzy Groden’s translation) “fruitful.” As Groden’s translation suggests, this generosity is to be connected with the power of generation; but note how, when Diotima turns explicitly to this in her closing lines at 212a, she leaves inexplicit just what it is that, by making Beauty itself “visible,” permits it, in turn, to inspire the thinker to become generative. Does φ at 212a3 refer to the Good?

29. Other approaches to the question of the philosopher’s motivation that focus on the Good are Raphael Demos, “A Fallacy in Plato’s *Republic*?” in Vlastos, ed., *Plato* 2: 52–56; John Cooper, “The Psychology of Justice in Plato,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977): 151–157; and Nicholas White, *A Companion to Plato’s Republic*, especially Introduction, Section 4, and pp. 190–196. All three stress the universality or unqualified character of the Good and find in this the key to why the philosopher who knows the Good will want to realize not just his own good but the good throughout the world, the good for everyone. So far as it goes, this seems correct; but in specifying the kind of action that knowing the Good motivates, it jumps over the question of what, in this knowing, causes it to be motivating of action in the first place. (Note, however, White’s “inclination” to reject this as a question, p. 49, and his speculative reflections on the Platonic conception of the soul, p. 193.)

attest, an inner motivation stemming from inner experience. (ii) *The* major moment of such experience that Socrates declines to go into with Glaucon, we have seen, is the experience of the Good. Within the constraints imposed by the limitations of the *personae* of the drama, Socrates must decline; Glaucon and the others have not yet embarked on the philosophical education, in particular the study of mathematics, that is necessary to get free of a reliance on imagery. That Plato, in turn, chooses such *personae* in the first place is part of his strategy of ‘Marsyan’ provocation: by having Socrates remain silent, he moves us to try to recover Socrates’ experience of the Good for ourselves. (iii) That this should be our focus appears to be confirmed by a series of important reflections Socrates makes on motivation and μίμησις.³⁰ In his reformation of traditional poetry and music in Books II–III, Socrates’ main concern is to eliminate various images of gods and heroes and various literary and musical modes that will be bad influences on the young souls of future guardians. The presupposition underlying all of his analysis is that the soul, impressed by these images and modes, will “assimilate itself” (ἐνδύεται, 377b) to them, taking on within itself the dispositions they express. Gods and heroes are models, so it is natural for the soul, presented with images of them, to take on the traits that these images embody. This is especially so when poetry is written in the “imitative” mode (392d), for this requires of those engaged in recitation, whether as performers or enthralled audience, that they “form themselves according to and fit themselves into the moulds of” (396d–e) the character-types the poetry presents. Now, the philosopher is a “lover” not of the “sights and sounds” provided by traditional poetry but, rather, of the inner spectacle of the forms (474c ff.); as different as his object is, however, he too is drawn to emulate it. As Socrates says at 500c, “he imitates (μιμείσθαι) and, as

30. Socrates’ comments on μίμησις in Books II–III and the extension of the notion to describe the philosopher’s response to experience of the forms (500c) and, in particular, of the Good take on a new forcefulness if, following H. Koller’s horizon-setting *Die Mimesis in der Antike* (Bern, 1954), we make the external notion of μίμησις as nachahmen or “imitate” (to wit, copying one existent thing by making another that resembles it in appearance) secondary to the richer notion of μίμησις as darstellen or “exhibit” (to wit, giving expressive form to . . . bodying . . . forth as . . .). Koller recovers this latter sense by discovering and reflecting on the fact that, for the Greeks, dance and musical performance are types of μίμησις prior to painting and its pursuit of likeness. In music and dance, μίμησις refers to the way the performer gives his body over as the medium in which the substance of the music is expressed and given form as melody and gesture. Here the performer—to bring out the sense of Plato’s expression at *Republic* 377b—“assimilates himself” to that substance, becoming in his own being as performer an expression of it. In the following paragraphs I will be exploring the possibility that an analogously mimetic relation holds between the Good and the philosopher’s soul.

much as possible, fashions himself after the model of (*ἀφομοιοῦσθαι*) [the forms]. Do you suppose one can keep company with what one admires without imitating it in one's own person?" Since, in turn, it is the Good that, of all the forms, is "the greatest object of study" (505a) for the philosopher, it is the Good, most of all, that he will "assimilate himself" to. "Keeping company with" it by means of persistent reflective inquiry into the perfections of various characters and into perfection itself, he will come to constitute, by his own character and comportment, a kind of analogue in the context of human being to the nature of the Good.

These observations bring us back once more to the question of the nature of the Good. Once again we are given a work—a causal power—of the Good and must use it as a "springboard" for inquiry into what the Good is. Now, however, the work is not ontological and epistemological so much as it is existential and ethical. What is it, we must ask, in the nature of perfection itself such that the philosopher—that is, Socrates as the exemplary philosopher—will be moved by the inner spectacle of it to his extraordinary generosity?

On reflection, it becomes evident that we must develop and deepen our preceding interpretation of the Good as perfection if we are to answer this question. On two related counts, "the perfect itself" as a model for *μίμησις* would seem likely to give rise to the philosophers Socrates talks about rather than to the philosopher he himself is—that is, to thinkers who are free of "envy and ill will" (500c) only because, having discovered something beyond the physical and social, they have little interest in the concerns of the human everyday. First of all, our interpretation so far leaves particularly obscure just that ontological aspect of the Good that would seem most relevant to the existential account we are seeking. If it is Socrates' generosity, his great-spirited interest in human affairs, that is an analogue to the Good, then the aspect of the nature of the Good most important to consider would be its "generosity" in giving rise to the other forms and, through this, to sensibles. Our interpretation in section III has indeed shown what the Good must be, and what the forms must be, if forms and sensibles, respectively, are to be instantiations; but it has not shown why there should be instantiations in the first place. We have shown about the nature of the Good only what is necessary, not what is sufficient, for it to be cause of the being and intelligibility of the forms and sensibles. This limitation is a reflection of the mathematical context from which we generalized. To grasp the forms as the referents of exact concepts is to make the concrete instances of the forms—in particular, the geometer's inexact physical representa-

tions—dispensable and, however subjectively useful, objectively unnecessary. Our whole stress is on the way the forms transcend, and in their own being are indifferent to the existence of, sensible particulars. As we have seen, this is of crucial value to the thinker who is trying to make the "conversion" of mind from sensibles to the Good—at the same time, however, it leaves quite mysterious what in the Good might move the same thinker to descend again, to a new interest in sensibles. Secondly (and this really just focuses the first count), the very nature of "the perfect itself"—as it emerges in the mathematical context—seems almost pointedly unhelpful. "The square itself," for instance, is that which, as perfectly square, lacks nothing of squareness; this is why it cannot be a square thing but, instead, just is squareness itself, "as it is in accordance with itself alone" (*καθ' αὐτό*). Perfection here comes to light as the lack of any deficiency in being such-and-such: "the perfect" will therefore be that which, being in no way needy, is "fully" (*παντελῶς*) sufficient to itself. Why would such a nature give rise to other forms and, through this, to sensibles? Correlatively, why wouldn't the philosopher, "assimilating himself" to such self-sufficiency as a spiritual model, live a life of inner detachment from others?

As so often in the *Republic*, putting the difficulty in the sharpest possible focus is itself the beginning of a way through. Our questions naturally provoke counterquestions. Does such detachment constitute the best expression of self-sufficiency? Or, to compress this into the relevant paradox, does that sort of self-sufficiency express the most perfect perfection? As we ponder this, the text of the *Republic* offers two striking figures. The first is political and occurs at 371e ff. By his first description of the just city, Socrates provokes Glaucon to object:³¹ a city that produces all that it needs *and nothing more*, which is, therefore, materially self-sufficient and so "complete" (*τελέα*), is really a "city of pigs" (372d) and not yet fully human. By the development he gives to Glaucon's objection, Socrates shows that the political sphere can provide only ambiguous evidence for the distinction Glaucon wants to make; surplus wealth requires the violent expropriation of neighboring lands, and this, setting the city against its neighbors and introducing internal faction, undercuts self-sufficiency. Nonetheless, Socrates accepts the distinction itself: having just enough and having more than enough are distinct forms of self-sufficiency, and in proportion as this "more" exceeds what is "enough," having more than enough is a higher form. If, now, we ask how this bears on the Good,

31. Recall n. 4, above.

the second striking figure, Socrates' simile of the sun, presents itself—and in an aspect that the mathematical context of our earlier reflections gave us no occasion to exploit. The sun is a precise figure for that which, needing nothing other than itself to be itself, has, as it were, more than enough of itself. Nor does it hoard this surplus; rather, as if by a generous treasurer, this is “paid out” (*ταμεινομένην*) in a sort of “overflow” (*ἐπίρρυτον*) as the light which enables sight (508b) and nourishes all living things (509b). Thus, the sun is precisely not “detached” from what is other than it; on the contrary, *in being itself it gives of itself unstintingly*, dispensing the light by which everything else can grow and become. To extend this now to the Good: for it to be itself as “the perfect itself” is for it to be what it is as “fully” or perfectly as possible, and this is for it to suffice to itself in the form of having more than enough of itself. From its very nature, therefore, the Good gives of itself. This essential “generosity” suffices for it to be cause of the forms (including itself) and of sensibles; it gives to the forms the perfection that each, to be itself, must have in its properly determinate way; and since each form thereby instantiates the Good, they too will be “generous,” giving to sensibles the characters that these, to be themselves, must have in their properly determinate ways.

That this recaptures, at least in outline, the vision ^{at} of the heart of the *Republic* seems indirectly attested by the way it responds to the three Platonic provocations. In making explicit the inner experience Socrates chooses to withhold from Glaucon, we open up for ourselves the “own”-most activity of the thinking part of the soul; and since this is the experience of the Good, we continue to deepen our penetration of Socrates' similes; finally, once we have penetrated to the present depth, we can see (in terms of the first provocation) the internal connection between thinking and ruling or (in terms of the third) why Socrates, the exemplary thinker, gives of himself so generously to others. Thinking comes most fully into its “own” when, by “dialectical” reflection on its own foundations, it “springs” (cf. *ὄρμάς*, 511b) “back to the source of the whole” (*ἐπι τὴν τοῦ παντός ἀρχήν*, 511b), that is, to the ultimate atemporal arisal, from “beyond being,” of the being and intelligibility of the forms. Here the Good shows itself to be perfection itself and, as perfection itself, the spontaneous gift of itself;³² thus philosophical

32. In the *Timaeus*, where Plato has not Socrates but a physical cosmologist present a “likely story” (29c–d) of not the “formal” but the “efficient” causal beginnings of the cosmos, we are given the following remarkable account of the demiurge's motivation in fashioning the world: “He was good, and the good can never have jealousy (*φθόρος*) of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be.” (29e–30a) In a similar vein, in the *Statesman* the Eleatic stranger

thinking culminates in an appreciation of the fundamental fact of the *givenness* of the determinate intelligibility of the world.³³ That the Good moves Socrates to his extraordinary generosity should now begin to make sense. In his repeated descents “into the cave,” Socrates “assimilates himself” to the content of the experience that is most of all his “own”: “imitating and fashioning himself after the model of” the Good, he gives of himself to others, seeking to enable in them, as fully as they are capable of it, the same insight that moves him. Here the motif of *μίμησις* expresses a deeply internal connection between soul and the Good. In the very passage at 540a ff. in which Socrates chooses to keep silent on the philosopher's motives for descent, he indicates this in a striking way by referring to the soul as an *αὐγή*, a “beam of sunlight.” If thinking is what is most of all “proper” to the philosopher's soul, the Good, in turn, is both the ultimate guide and the highest goal of thinking; in coming to the Good, therefore, the philosopher comes back to the basis of his own being. In this light, it is only fitting that Socrates chooses to “take the Good as a model” and, as a consequence, gives himself over to the task of ruling, that is, of “bringing order to the city and other individuals and himself.” He is only, as it were, “being what he is,” expressing in his deeds what he has come to know as his own substance. This is why, finally, his proposal of the philosopher as the just man does, after all, pose a radical alternative to Thrasymachean selfishness. If the surface meaning at 540a–b seems to praise the soul that overpowers its own selfish inclinations by accepting the need for self-sacrifice, beneath the surface he undercuts the static antithesis between self and other, inclination and duty, that this would imply. The thinker does indeed withdraw from others, and from his own physical and social dimensions, as he struggles to make

offers a mythical description of the “age of Cronus” when “the god” cared directly for the well-being of the cosmos; in that age, he says, the earth gave men “fruit without stint,” *καρπὸς ἀφθόρους* (272a)—that is, unjealously, without begrudging anything. If we read the second passage against the background of the association of divinity with goodness in the *Republic* (379b ff.), then it stands with the first as a linking, albeit in myth, of the good, freedom from jealousy, and the generous giving-of-self. The passages on the Good in *Republic* VI–VII, by contrast, are provocation to think this nexus directly, free of mythic imagery.

33. Cf. Edward Lee's penetrating remarks on the sense in which Platonism is “realism,” in “Plato on Negation and Not-Being in the *Sophist*,” *Philosophical Review* 81 (1972): 276ff., n. 14. Lee closes that note by saying, “for [Plato] the central fact—or wonder—in reality is precisely such determinacy of nature, which, rightly understood, encompasses all that there is to say and know” (p. 277). I would add that wonder, since it is precisely opposite to taking for granted, is the appropriate mode for appreciating the givenness, as *givenness*, of the forms. If I am right, Socrates' elliptical remarks on the Good in the *Republic* point back to the experience of coming to just this appreciation or wonder as the root of genuine *φιλοσοφία*.

the "conversion" of mind from sensibles to forms; the culmination of this process in the spectacle of the Good, however, motivates his return.³⁴ As Socrates' generosity displays, being true to one's "own" selfhood turns out to imply the gift of oneself to others.³⁵

V. POSTSCRIPT: THE GOOD AND PLATONIC DIALOGUE

In closing, it is worth noting how these reflections illumine not only Socrates' presence in the Piraeus but also Plato's very presentation of it. If we were correct at the very outset to take our bearings towards Socratic discourse from Alcibiades' remark in the *Symposium*, then its essence—as, of course, Plato represents it³⁶—is provocation towards deeper inquiry. And if, further, we were correct to distinguish between two levels of provocation in the *Republic*, the Socratic and the Platonic, then we may here be glimpsing one of the major respects in which Plato makes himself a true heir to Socrates. To put this in terms of the words Plato gives to Socrates at 540b, Plato tacitly claims to be one of those "like" men whom Socrates discovered and "educated" and "left behind in [his] place as guardian of the city." The dialogues

34. On this reading, therefore, we would not do justice to the philosopher's motivation to rule by characterizing it as egoistic or as unselfish or, indeed, as a coincidence of interest and duty. In different ways, the first two positions sustain the distinction between what I want just for myself and what I recognize others require, whether by seeing securing the second as instrumental to securing the first (see, e.g., the subtle version of this offered by Thomas Brickhouse, "The Paradox of the Philosophers' Rule," *Apeiron* 15 [1981]: 1–9) or by seeing the philosopher as willing to sacrifice something of the first in order to secure the second (an element qualifiedly present in White's account, p. 195). The third position, as it is usually maintained, preserves the distinction in principle but argues that, in the just city constructed in Books II–IV, there is no difference in content; the impetus for this position is given by what Socrates says at 412d ff. As observed in n. 26 above, however, Socrates himself lives and acts as he does in the far-from-just setting of Athens. What is decisive is not the contingent fact of the condition of his city but, rather—to recall a phrase from Vlastos, "Justice and Happiness in the *Republic*," as cited in n. 11—the "moral" "energizing" that results from his "unique intellectual experience" (p. 93).

35. Two remarkable studies by L. A. Kosman—"Platonic Love" (in *Facets of Plato's Philosophy*, pp. 53–69) and "Charmides' First Definition: Sophrosyne as Quietness" (in *Essays in Greek Philosophy* 2: 203–216)—have encouraged me to try to think into the extraordinary integrity that Plato puts before us in the *persona* of Socrates. The experience of the Good would be, on my understanding of it, that which unites the "two loves," of self and of other, that Kosman connects in the first essay (especially p. 66). The mimetic moment of that experience, in turn, is what makes the Socrates of the dialogues a "master," not a "journeyman"—that is, one who is "effortlessly" great-spirited, not willfully self-controlled—in his ethical disposition, as Kosman draws this distinction in the second essay (especially pp. 213–216).

36. As Havelock shows (above n. 8) with new forcefulness, the "Socrates" to whom Plato claims to be heir is impossible to distinguish from Plato's own creation in the dialogues. Recognizing this, however, should not prevent us from studying the figure of Socrates in the dialogues as a way of learning about Plato's self-understanding.

would be his own distinctive way of practicing Socratic guardianship. Our study points to the possible depth of this *μίμησις*. Socrates' generosity, we have seen, mimes the Good in its abundance. It is a distinctive mark of Socrates' teaching that he takes care not to eclipse the "original" by its "image." Because he recognizes that thinking itself belongs—like a "beam" to the sun—to the Good, he knows that he himself is not the source but only, at best, an occasion for the arising of insight in others. This is why he claims only to be a "midwife" (*Theaetetus* 119a ff.) and why, in one of the most striking aspects of his generosity, he often holds back at key moments, leaving his companions to have for themselves, as their "own," the insights he has prepared. Dialogue form, in turn, incorporates all of this within its own larger structure of provocation. The new elements it adds are the timely failure of Socrates' companions, as a way of giving us, as *our* "own," the insights they miss, and the constant portrayal of Socrates' generosity as a mimetic clue to what there is to be "seen." But this is to say that Plato too holds back; thus dialogue form is itself on a second level a mimetic clue. As a mode of provocation, it is itself generous in just the Socratic way that it depicts.

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