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THE MORAL VULNERABILITY OF PLATO'S PHILOSOPHER-RULERS

The ideal of moral perfection, that is, the idea of an agent whose moral virtue is not only beyond question but in whom no circumstance can come along and alter that state, has an established history in ancient Greek thought. Perhaps the first person we think of in this light is Socrates. His claim that, no matter what his accusers do, they cannot harm him (*Ap.* 30c8-d1) is generally taken to mean not that he is physically invulnerable (which he obviously isn't), nor that he possesses an immortal soul that will live on no matter what the fate of his physical being (Socrates characteristically proclaims his ignorance about the afterlife – see *Ap.* 29a4-b6 [1]). Rather, in making this bold claim, Socrates is claiming only that Meletus and company can never affect his moral virtue. Since this is the only absolute harm an individual can undergo, according to Socrates, Meletus cannot harm him [2]. Hence, Socrates is 'morally invulnerable. The concept of a morally incorruptible human agent likewise finds a proponent in Stoicism, where the unshakable virtue of the Stoic sage is attested to in numerous sources [3].

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[1] Scholars disagree about to which Socrates does or does not believe in an afterlife, McPHERRAN, for example, proclaims that "Socrates was himself an agnostic on the topic of immortality" ([1994], 21); a similar conclusion is reached by BECKMAN ([1979], 19-23). Others, however, have argued that even if Socrates would not claim to know hat there is an afterlife, this is nevertheless something that he believed in; see, for examples, Brickhouse and SMITH ([1994], 201-212), GUTHRIE ([1971], 160-162), VLASTOS ([1991], 54-55).

[2] The degree of invulnerability virtue gives to the virtuous erson, in Socratic philosophy, is a matter of controversy, however. IRWIN [1992] and VLASTOS ([1991], 214-231) argue that virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness; BRICKHOUSE and SMITH ([1994],

It seems natural enough to consider the philosopher-ruler of the *Republic* as yet another exemplification of moral perfection. Since the *Republic* itself is designed to portray the ideal state, it makes sense to conclude that the rulers of this state likewise embody perfection, morally and otherwise. Moreover, Plato seems to adopt the view of the philosopher-rulers as morally incorruptible agents. Comparing the education of the guardian to the dying of a wool fabric, Plato declares if the right fabric has been chosen and the preparation of the fabric has been correct "the color is fast; no washing.can take it away" (429e1-3). By analogy, we seem driven to conclude that, since the guardians have been rightly chosen and educated, no circumstances can erode their morality.

Accordingly, the claim that the philosophers of the *Republic* are morally perfect agents is often made by scholars. Annas, for example, claims that the "final moral perspective of the philosopher is inhuman" because their viewpoint has been so absolutely stripped of anything temporal or personal [4]. Cooper has called the ruler of Plato's polis a "high-minded fanatic" obsessed with moral action to the exclusion of his own well-being [5]. But perhaps the most thorough defense of the view that the philosopher-rulers of the *Republic* have reached moral invulnerability comes from Martha Nussbaum. In *The Fragility of Goodness*, Nussbaum declares that the philosophers of the *Republic* are "freed from contingent limitations of power" [6] by virtue of their

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112-134), on the contrary, argue that it was neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness.

[3] See, for examples, RIST ([1969], 16-17) and INWOOD ([1985], 109).

[4] ANNAS [1981], 333.

[5] COOPER [1977], 157.

[6] NUSSBAUM [1986], 5.

intense educational regime. Possessed of souls which are "unchanging and unchangeable", the philosophers embody a life of "goodness without fragility" [7]. As a result, they are morally incorruptible [8].

Despite all of this, we will argue that Plato's view of the moral capabilities of the rulers is neither so lofty, nor so unrealistic. Instead of viewing them as flawless and perfect moral agents, we will argue that, in fact, Plato recognized that they would still be vulnerable to moral corruption, though considerably less vulnerable to it than other human beings. If we are right, Plato's conception of the philosopher-rulers of the *Republic* is far more realistic and sensitive to human nature that scholars have supposed.

I. Philosophers and the Power of Knowledge

In Books V through VII, Plato explains and develops his idea that what especially qualifies philosophers as rulers is that they exercise the cognitive power (*dunamis*) of knowledge (*episteme*), rather than mere opinion (*doxa*) (see, esp. 477c1-480a13). Knowledge, we are told, is related to what is, whereas opinion is related to what is and is not. In recent years, scholars have debated exactly how we are to understand this distinction [9], but relatively little attention has been paid to what has to count as the main point of the distinction, which is to defend the claim that in the best city philosophers should rule [10]. It is at least clear that Plato intends us to understand that one of the important differences between knowledge and opinion is that the former does – and the latter does not – recognize Forms and take Forms into account in making judgments (see 476c2-d6). But this, certainly, is inadequate of itself to explain the superiority of the philosophers to the "sight-lovers" or "doxophilists" (see 476a10, 480a6) as rulers, since in ruling they will not be instituting laws or policies in the realm of Forms, but in the realm Plato characterizes as that of "becoming", or "generation and decay" (see 534a3, 508d7). Though there can be no serious doubt that Plato understands the philosopher-ruler's cognitive advantage over the "sight-lovers" or "doxophilists" in a way that has something to do with the differences between Forms and participants, it is at least clear that the effect of the relevant cognitive difference is that *episteme* is inerrant, whereas *doxa* is not (477e6-7). This is important for our problem, because it would seem obviously to follow that insofar as the philosopher-ruler employs *episteme*, he or she will not make mistakes. This would seem to strengthen the case of those who would argue for the moral invulnerability of the philosophers: precisely because they are set off from others in virtue of their possession and exercise of an unerring cognitive power, it would seem obviously to follow that they cannot ever fail to make the correct moral judgments, and, hence, to be invulnerable to moral corruption. Plato's whole point, in this argument, after all, would appear to be that philosophers won't make errors in their political judgments – and this is why they should rule.

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[7] *Ibid.*, 138.

[8] The most recent example of this view is expressed in ENGEL [1996]. In his response to his commentator, Engel claims that "nowhere does Plato say that those who have knowledge are still susceptible, and therefore must be kept away from temptation".

[9] VLASTOS [1981] argues for a predicative reading of "what is"; FINE [1990] and GOSLING [196] argue for different versions of a veridical reading.

A number of considerations count against this interpretation, however. To begin with, this view simply assumes that there is

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10. FINE ([1990], 86) calls attention to this element of the discussion, as evidence for her veridical reading of the "is" in "what is". Her intepretation, however, has not been universally accepted (see, e.g., Gerson [forthcoming]).

an absolutely direct correlation between the inerrancy of the power of knowledge and inerrancy in the judgments the philosopher-rulers will make in ruling. But this raises interpretative difficulties, not the least of which is its assumption that the inerrancy Plato gives to knowledge can apply to judgments in, and about, the realm of participants. Gail Fine is willing to make this claim, precisely because she denies that the arguments of Books V-VII rule out the possibility of knowing sensibles [11]. Those who insist that Plato must be understood as claiming that knowledge can only be applied to Forms, however [12], will argue, accordingly, that the philosopher-ruler's political judgments must not be products of knowledge. If so, there is no reason to suppose that these judgments would have the characteristic reserved for knowledge – inerrancy. This is hardly the appropriate place to attempt a full-scale interpretation of the connections between Plato's epistemology and metaphysics. It should suffice, however, for us to note that whatever cognitive power Plato wants us to think is at work, as the philosophers undertake to rule, the fact must be admitted that their rulings will govern the unstable and metaphysically ambiguous objects populating the realm of generation and decay. It is not just obvious, indeed, that Plato, of all people, would think that any judgment about an unstable object could be characterized by the kind of epistemic guarantee he has in mind in calling *episteme* "inerrant" at 477e6-7.

Aristotle characterizes the invention of the theory of Forms as motivated by the insistence that knowledge would have to be stable and unchanging:

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11. FINE [1990].

12. See, most recently, Gerson's criticisms of Fine's interpretation of the argument in Rep. V, in GERSON [forthcoming]. An older, and classic, example of this view may be found in Cross and WOOZLEY [1966], 180.

> The belief in forms came about in those who spoke about hem, because, in regard to truth, they were persuaded by the Heracleitean argument that all sensibles are always flowing, so that if knowledge and thought are to be of anything, there must, in their view, be some different natures, other than sensibles, which remain unchanged; for there is no knowledge of flowing things. (*Metaph.* 1078b12-32)

If Aristotle is right, then the advantage of the philosopher-ruler cannot be characterized as one of inerrancy of his or her judgments about sensibles, precisely because these judgments cannot be examples of knowledge – the only cognitive power that assures inerrancy.

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that Plato very much did wish to make the claim that the philosophers would be equipped to make the *best* and *most reliable* judgments that could be made about such things. As he assures his readers, at the end of the parable of the cave, those who return to the cave after their release and escape (through education) will "see ten thousand times better than the men there" (520c3-4). So, even if the philosopher's judgments of sensibles cannot be inerrant, given Plato's metaphysical scheme, we do not doubt that it is Plato's clear intention to argue that their judgments will be "ten thousand times better" than those of the "doxophilists".

There is a second reason to doubt that Plato would suppose that the philosopher-rulers could be invulnerable from moral corruption. Even if we suppose that there can be knowledge of sensibles, as Fine has claimed, and even if we go on to affirm that all knowledge – including knowledge of sensibles – must be inerrant, before we could conclude that the philosopher-rulers would be morally incorruptible, we would have to assume that, for Plato, those who know the good can never fail to do it. In other words, we would have to believe that it was a feature of Plato's moral psychology that, like Socrates, Plato did not recognize the possibility of moral weakness, or *akrasia*. But commentators are nearly unanimous in understanding Plato's introduction of the tripartite soul as a Platonic *departure* from Socratic intellectualism – a departure which was, in part, intended to rectify what Plato saw as a flaw in Socrates' account, namely, that it failed to recognize the possibility of *akrasia* [13]. Unless, therefore, we are to attempt a recharacterization of Plato's moral psychology, we must assume that even inerrant knowledge of the Good – or even inerrant knowledge of all instances of goodness – would not be, by itself, sufficient to ensure that one possessing such knowledge would always do what he or she knew was the good thing to do. To put the point in a more clearly Platonic way, we might assume that so long as the rational part ruled the soul, and so long as the inerrant power of knowledge was the one activated and maximally exercised by the rational part, it might be plausible to suppose that no moral errors would be made by the one whose soul was in that condition. But unless the rule of the rational part, and the exercise of the power of knowledge within it, bring guarantees against subversion by the lower elements of the soul, even the inerrancy of knowledge and the rule of reason do not assure moral incorruptibility. In the remainder of this paper, we will consider evidence that strongly suggests that even the philosopher-ruler needed protection against conditions that would put his or her soul at risk of corruption. If we are right, Plato recognizes a number of risks, which could potentially corrupt even what he calls "the best of men".

II. Money, Appetite, and Moral Vulnerability

Many restrictions are imposed upon the philosophers – restrictions in what they can do, what they can eat, and what they can watch. Most of these restrictions would appear to be made on the young members of the guardian class during their education and upbringing. If, however, major restrictions remain in place upon the fully developed philosophers, we will have a hard time ascribing any sort of moral incorruptibility to them. This is not to say that the fully developed philosophers ought to be able to do whatever they want. Plato tells us that the just man (and one assumes the rulers are just) will "have nothing to do with temple robberies, thefts, or betrayals, either of friends in his private life or in public life – he would in no way be untrustworthy in keeping an oath or any other agreement – adultery too, disrespect for parents, and neglect of the gods would suit his character less than any other man's" (443a3-10). But there is all the difference in the world between someone's not watching pornography, for example, because it disgusts or at least holds no interest for her, on the one hand, and not being allowed to watch pornography because someone else has determined that it is bad for her. For Plato, after all, "bad for one" *just means* morally corrosive to one (see 443e4-444a1). If the latter type of restrictions are in place – restrictions where the mature philosophers are protected from various bad influences for their own good – we will have a hard time ascribing any sort of moral incorruptibility, much less moral perfection, to them.

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[13] See, for example, MACKENZIE, [1981], 167.

Three notable prohibitions in the *Republic* involve sex, money, and (oddly) poetry. When a person may have intercourse and with whom it can take place are highly regulated in Plato's state. Plato declares that a woman is to bear children for the city from age twenty to the age of forty, a man will beget children from the time that he passes his peak as a runner until he reaches age fifty five (460e4-7). Anyone who procreates outside of these restrictions "is neither pious nor just" (461a4). Similarly, partners for intercourse are strictly limited. Quite simply "the best men must have sex with the best women" (459d7-8).

The monetary restrictions are even more sweeping. Speaking of the guardians, Plato declares that: "not one of them must possess any private property beyond what is essential. Further, none of them should have a house or a storeroom which anyone who wishes is not permitted to enter. They will have common messes and live together as soldiers in a camp. For them alone among

the city's population it is unlawful to touch or handle gold or silver; they must not be under the same roof with it, or wear any, or drink from gold or silver" (416d4-417a1).

Finally, Plato steadfastly refuses to admit poets and painters into the city (605b2-6), on the ground that their work is imitative and appeals to the lower element(s) of the soul (605a2-6):

> For he [sc. the poet] is like the painter in making things that are ordinary by the standard of truth; and he is also similar in keeping company with a part of the soul that is on the same level and not with the best part. And thus we should at last be justified in not admitting him into a city that is going to be under good laws, because he awakens this part of the soul and nourishes it, and, by making it strong, destroys the calculating part, just as in a city when someone, by making wicked men mighty, turns the city over to them and corrupts the superior ones. (605a9-b6)

The question that interests us here is whether any of these three restrictions are in place when the philosophers are in the final stage of their development and assume control of the state. The answer to the question of whether the sexual restriction is lifted is fairly clear-cut: "When women and men have passed the age of having children, we shall leave them free to have intercourse with whomever they wish" (461b9-c1). When is this? As we have seen above, for women it is age forty and for men it is age fifty-five, roughly the age when they take control of the state. But the release of restrictions is not quite right, for it is none the less true that some men will become rulers at age fifty, but will not be released from the sexual prohibitions for another five years. Accordingly, Plato's sexual prohibitions seem to have less to do with a recognition of at least the male philosopher-rulers' supposed moral incorruptibility, than with Plato's conception of human eugenics.

In any case, there is no indication that the monetary restriction is ever lifted. Nor do we need to rely on an argument from silence for this conclusion. The revision of the theory of the appetites that begins with in Book IX not only gives us every reason to believe that the monetary restriction is still in place, but in addition explains why this must be so. Early on in Book IX, Plato states "I do not think we have adequately dealt with questions of our appetites, their number and qualities". Nor is this a small oversight, for he declares that "if that subject is not adequately dealt with, our whole investigation will be obscured" (571a8-b1). As we hope to demonstrate, understanding what goes on in this revision of the theory of appetites is essential for understanding the moral state of the philosophers by the time they come to rule.

In Book VIII, Plato had argued for a distinction between the necessary and unnecessary appetites. Necessary appetites were "those whose satisfaction benefits us, for we are by nature compelled to satisfy them". Unnecessary appetites, on the other hand, were "those which one could avoid if one trained oneself to avoid them from youth, which lead to no good or indeed to the opposite" (558d11-559a5). The important claim here was that the bad desire could be rooted out if the proper steps were taken. What Plato tells us in Book IX, however, is that "there is a dangerous, wild, and lawless kind of desire in everyone, even the few of us who appear moderate" (572b4-6). In contrast to the earlier claim, then we find that an inherently morally corrosive desire exists in everyone.

Plato dubs this appetite *eros*. But it is not merely directed at erotic pleasure. The descriptions of those in the grip of this wild, lawless appetite include many more actions than those directed at satisfying the sexual urge. In fact, much of the description focuses on money. The person in the grip of eros spends all of his income, followed by borrowing and expenditure of capital (573e10). He looks to see who "possesses anything he could take" (573e7-8). He "must acquire wealth from every source" (574a3-4). He spends his father's wealth after he's spent his own share (574a9-10). If others do not give it to him, he takes it by force (574b4-5). When his parents' wealth is exhausted, he engages in private and then public theft, breaking into houses and eventually looting temples (574d1-5).

It is no surprise that so much of the ineradicable desire is connected with money, since Plato connects acquisitiveness in general with the appetitive part of the soul. Plato says that the appetitive part more correctly ought to be called "money-loving because such appetites are most easily satisfied by means of money" (580e5-581a1). Plato adds that "if we said that its pleasure and love are concentrated on profit, we would be mostly relying on one chief feature to clarify our meaning. So we would be right to call it (the appetitive part) the money-loving or profit-loving part" (581a3-7).

Since Plato views this part of the soul as extremely unstable, it makes sense that the restriction on the ownership of wealth remains in place throughout the philosophers' career. They, too, possess the "dangerous, wild, and lawless" desire, since it exists in everyone, even those who appear moderate. Given their position in society, it would be all too easy for the philosophers to acquire material goods. Hence, their ownership of wealth must be closely guarded, lest the tyrant lust rage out of control in them.

The revision of the theory of appetites, then, both confirms the restriction on the philosophers' ownership of wealth and explains why this restriction must remain in place. But with this kind of restriction in place, it is hard to see the philosophers as morally invulnerable. Indeed, it is clear that the reason the restriction remains in place is that they are all too open to the possibility of corruption, and so must be guarded for their own moral well-being.

The same conclusion can be drawn from Plato's discussion of the dangers of poetry. Lest his banishment of poets and poetry from his city be seen as too harsh, at 607c2-7, Plato invites the defenders of poetry to offer any argument they may have for regaining access to "a city with good laws", and says that "we should be delighted to receive them back from exile, since we ourselves are charmed by them", and he promises to "listen benevolently" (607d9-e1) to whatever they may say. But he warns that

> As long as it is not able to make its apology, when we listen to it, we will chant this argument we are making to ourselves as a countercharm, taking care against falling back again into this love, which is childish and belongs to the many. We are, at all events, aware that such poetry mustn't be taken seriously as a serious thing laying hold of truth, but that the man who hears it must be careful, fearing for the regime in himself. (608a2-b1)

Of course, Plato's Socrates and Glaucon account for their own weakness to the seductions of poetry, to their having been reared in an environment filled with its siren songs (607e6-608a1), and it might be supposed that the only real risk poetry poses to one's moral well-being are to those who are not fully developed, morally, or whose own development was to some degree damaged by exposure to poetry, as Socrates seems to think his own was. After all, at 606a7-8, Socrates seems to characterize the danger of poetry as at least partly the result of the fact that those who are damaged by it have not "been adequately educated by argument or habit" to resist its charms. And Socrates does seem to recognize that there are a certain "rare few" (see 605c7-8, 606b6) who can resist poetry, and we might suppose that he imagines that his philosopher-rulers would invariably be among these "rare few".

Were this true, however, there would be no need to extend the prohibition of poetry to the rulers themselves, for whom, we would have to suppose, it would have nothing of interest to offer. But Plato allows that poetry can maim "even decent men", and he regards this fact as "the greatest accusation" (605c6) to be made against it, no doubt because he sees the lure of poetry as dangerous to "even the best of us" (605c10). He never suggests that those who are raised in the proper way will become absolutely invulnerable to the corrosiveness of poetry; at best, he says, they might be capable of

> calculating that the enjoyment of other people's sufferings has a necessary effect on one's own. For the pitying part, fed strong on these examples, is not easily held down in one's own sufferings. (606b5-8)

As we found in the case of money, the root of the problem may be found in the fact that even the best of human beings, with even the best and most carefully designed education and nurturing, still is "not of one mind" (see 603c10), but has, within his or her soul, a part which responds to the lures of pleasure and pain (see 607a6). This part of the soul always has the potential to grow in strength and overcome the soul, "just as in the city when someone, by making wicked men mighty, turns the city over to them *and corrupts the superior ones*" (605b5-6). Philosophical training and moral development are no absolute proof against influences which can empower the lower element of the soul, though they are the best guarantees possible in a dangerous and ever-changing world.

Plato's divided soul has been rightly regarded as recognizing the phenomenon of akrasia, a moral failing that Socrates had declared impossible. But it has not been as widely or accurately perceived that the same theory leaves even the best of human beings vulnerable to moral corruption – another possibility Plato's teacher declared impossible, as our opening citation from the *Apology* showed. We argued above that serious questions can be raised about whether even the judgment of the philosopher-ruler can be regarded as inerrant, when it is applied to the world of change. But even if the philosopher did enjoy absolutely reliable judgment in such matters (which we have questioned) the rule of reason in his or her soul does not – even once established – bestow absolute indemnity against the overthrow of reason by eros. Good education and nurturing are the very best insurance we can have against such a moral disaster; but, because we are not "of one mind", even the "best of us" enjoys no absolute assurance that his or her virtue cannot be seduced away. This is why Plato institutes rules which restrict the access and exposure even philosophers have to certain dangerously corrosive inflences, and why even the "best of us" must fear "for the regime in himself". Psychic harmony, then, even for a philosopher, is not the same as moral invulnerability.

III. Two Additional Considerations: The Plant Analogy and the Metaphysics of Images

Further evidence that philosophers are not incorruptible comes from Plato's widespread use of a plant analogy. In discussing the corruption of human nature in Book VI (491b4 ff.) Plato appeals to an analogy from nature. Every seed, he declares, "must receive the nurture proper to it, its proper soil and season, and.a suitable environment" (491d1-4). The same is true, Plato declares, of souls. And "if it [i.e. a good nature] is sown and grows in an unsuitable environment, it will develop in quite the opposite way" (492a3-4). Plato follows this format in the theory of corruption in Books VIII and IX, where we see good souls destroyed by being subject to a bad environment.

But clearly, Plato must have realized that just as developing plants require good soil, so fully grown plants require certain conditions, as well, for maintenance. Just as a mature plant can be damaged by conditions turning bad, for example, by being deprived of water or receiving too much water, so will a mature human being – even a philosopher – be ruined by the wrong conditions. The plant analogy suggests so, and the fact that Plato maintains the restriction on the philosophers' handling money and being exposed to emotionally charged poetry confirms the fact that he realizes that certain conditions can undermine the philosopher's moral integrity.

One final consideration may be added to those we have already given. We have argued that Plato would not count his philosophers as morally invulnerable despite the fact that they are philosophers, and despite the fact that they have had the life-transforming "vision" of the Good their education has provided to them. It is worth noting, however, that if we situate Plato's

philosopher-rulers within the analogies on which the main argument of the *Republic* is based, and within Plato's metaphysics, we should not find this result particularly surprising.

Plato creates his *kallipolis* in order to provide an image of justice which can then be applied to a determination of what justice is within the individual (see 368e7-369a3, 435b1-2, 443c4-5). Much of the argument of Books II through IV relies directly on this analogy, and it is also clear that the analogy is also extensively in use again in Books VIII and IX. But if we apply this analogy to the soul of the philosopher-ruler, we will have still further evidence for the philosopher's moral vulnerability: surely Plato does not think that the kallipolis, despite its serving as the best possible manifestation of justice in a state, is immune from corruption. Indeed, Plato says quite clearly that he accepts that "for everything that has coming into being destruction is appointed" (546a2-3), and explicitly applies this metaphysical principle even to this best of states (545c8-546a4). Following Plato's analogy, if even the best of states can succomb, then surely so can even the best of men. After all, even the philosopher-ruler is something that must be brought into being – by eugenics and by an extensive educational regime. If all of Plato's political protections continue to serve the ruler well, only by death will the philosopher's virtuous activity come to an end. But even the philosopher-ruler is only an image of the Form of Justice. According to Plato's metaphysics, images are not and can never be purely and lastingly what they are. The Form of Justice would not need to be sustained by the preservative effects of a just social system. Philosophers, on the other hand, cannot be wholly self-sustaining. Even these "best of men", therefore, have no complete indemnity against moral decay.

IV. Summary and Conclusion

We have argued that Plato's philosophical rulers are represented as having prodigious cognitive advantages over their opinion-steeped companions, which will give them epistemological advantages that make them "ten thousand times better" than their rivals as moral and political experts. But despite these advantages, we have found reason to resist the claims, made by some commentators and accepted by most readers of the *Republic*, that Plato conceived of his philosopher-rulers as morally perfect or incorruptible. Even "ten thousand times better" is not, it seems, good enough for an absolute assurance against moral decay. Because even his philosophers are at risk – and even more so, "ten thousand times" more so, the other members of his *kallipolis* – Plato puts into place a number of institutions and prohibitions that are designed to protect the members of his ideal city, including most especially "the best of men", from those factors that Plato recognized as especially threatening to moral well-being. We have argued that a number of his prohibitions, especially those involving access to sex, money, and poetry, reveal even his philosopher-rulers to be susceptible to moral corruption. That Plato is a paternalist many will not find surprising. But that this paternalism extends to the rulers of his state is a conclusion, we believe, no less radical than the political proposals of the work itself. In another sense, however, this conclusion seems inevitable: Plato quite clearly reserves perfection for his Forms; and though they are undoubtedly the "best of mem", his philosophers remain earthbound and mortal, and possess psychic elements which pose an ever-present risk to their moral well-being. As god-like as Plato's philosophers may be, they none the less fall short of perfection.

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