

Division and Proto-Racialism in the *Statesman*

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Section 1: Introduction

In Plato's *Statesman*, the Eleatic Stranger applies a specialized method of inquiry—the “method of collection and division”, or “method of division”—in order to discover the nature of statecraft. This paper articulates some consequences of the fact that the method is both a tool for identifying *natural kinds*—that is, a tool for carving the world by its joints (*Phaedrus* 265b-d)—and *social kinds*—that is, the kinds depending on human beings for their existence and explanation. (This notion of “social kind” is drawn from Haslanger (2012a), which is meant to be intuitive, general, and compatible with acknowledging that there may not be boundaries between natural and social kinds as they are traditionally conceived.) The Stranger uses the method to identify the *natural* structure of *social kinds* in political society. This is significant, because it connects Plato to contemporary work seeking to articulate how blurred lines between nature and society can be the basis for pernicious social and political aims. I am guided by Haslanger's (2012b: 157) idea that a principle of feminist metaphysics is the question of how oppressive and exploitative social and political projects can claim to draw authority from the way the world is “by nature”.¹ One of my goals will be to illuminate the extent to which the method of division

¹ See Mills (1997) on “naturalizing” fictions about human origins used to justify racial systems. Conversely, Spencer (2014: 1036, cf. 2019: n.10) writes of his biological racial realism: “if individuals wish to make claims about one race being superior to another in some respect, they

allows us to identify Plato as an early historical forerunner of *racialism*, the construction of an ideology according to which humanity divides into races differentiated by heritable physiological, cultural, and intellectual traits, as a way of vindicating oppressive and exploitative social systems.² This is similar in spirit to contemporary work on Aristotle’s idea of a “slave by nature” (*Politics* I.2-7).³

My argument will attempt to balance two competing strands. On the one hand, Plato often thinks that aspects of society require fundamental re-thinking, reform, or rejection. On the other hand, his alternatives can be deeply worrying.⁴ I argue that the Stranger’s collections and divisions in the *Statesman* reflect each of these strands by constituting a *revisionary naturalizing project*.⁵ I defend an interpretation of the Stranger’s claim, much discussed in the literature, that the division of *humankind* into *Greek* and *barbarian* is unnatural (*Politicus* 262c-263a). I argue that, in the Stranger’s view, this division reflects subjective illusion and prejudice, rather than the fundamental, and teleological, structure of human social organization, which concerns how

will have to look elsewhere for that evidence.” See also Outlaw (1990: 61-68) and McCoskey (2012: 3-5).

² Cf. Appiah (1996: 54-5, 1990: 4-6), Haslanger (2012c: 236-8), Kamtekar (2002: 6), McCoskey (2012: 31-32), Robinson (1983), and Spencer (2019: 104), as well as the discussion below.

³ E.g., Kamtekar (2016), El Nabolsy (2019), and Rosivach (1999: 142-148).

⁴ This tension is a frequent theme in Annas (1981: esp. chapter 7). See also Kamtekar (2002: 5), Kasimis (2016), Sartorius (1974) & Zack (2018: 3-5). I aim to overcome some of the challenges raised for allegations of Plato’s elitism, for example, in Vlastos (1980). Cf. Mills (1990: 3-5).

⁵ Cf. the discussion of women’s natures in *Republic* V (452d-457d).

human beings *rationaly cooperate to self-produce as a species*. In this respect, I argue that the Stranger uses the method of division to reject common proto-racial ideology about human difference. Nonetheless, the Stranger's alternative, I suggest, is proto-racial in another way. Through a brief consideration of the Stranger's affirmative and complex division of kinds in the city, I argue that he re-introduces naturalistic foundations for unjust social hierarchies through his alternative theory of natural kinds and human social teleology.

Section 2: Greeks and Barbarians

The method of collection and division is a tool for producing taxonomies, such as the collections and divisions of “craft” in the first part of the *Sophist* (*Sophist* 218e-236d).⁶ The Eleatic Stranger divides “craft” into “productive” and “acquisitive”, and further subdivides “acquisitive craft” eight times in order to produce one complete division, for instance (218e-221c). Plato frequently emphasizes that part of the point of practicing collection and division is to keep clear the names, definitions, and organizational relations among kinds in a discussion, since we are liable to become confused, and fall into contention, if we do not keep clear *what* we're talking about (*Sophist* 218c-d, *Politicus* 262d-e, 275e, *Philebus* 15a, 15d-16a, *Phaedrus* 263a-b). He describes the full and expert practice of the method as “carving” kinds by their “joints”, like a skilled butcher (*Phaedrus* 265d-e), thereby introducing an idea of what would later be called a “natural kind”.⁷

⁶ Cf. Moravcsik (1973: 179), Henry (2011: 253)

⁷ The method involves “leading together into one form [μίαν ιδέαν] things seen at once scattered every which way” (*Phaedrus* 265d), and “dividing according to forms [κατ' εἶδη], the number

The distinction between skilled and unskilled division is important early in the *Statesman*, where the Stranger identifies several flawed divisions, such as the division between Greek and barbarian. The Stranger and his interlocutor, Young Socrates, agree to try to define statecraft by dividing knowledge (ἐπιστήμη, *Politicus* 258b) or craft (τέχνη, 258d), until they “locate” the statesman (258c). In this vein, knowledge divides into theoretical (γνωστικός) and productive (πρακτικός) (258b-e), and statecraft falls within the theoretical branch, which further divides into the purely discerning (κριτικός) and the directive (ἐπιτακτικός) (259e-260b). Statecraft is a “self-directive” kind of theoretical knowledge (260c-261a), which divides into those aimed at something inanimate coming into being (e.g., a house, a cloak) and something animate coming into being (e.g., grapes, a flock) (261b-c). Finally, the Stranger divides the animate-orientated knowledge into a kind that rears individuals (such as horse-grooming) and a kind that rears collectives (such as shepherding) (261d-e), and places statecraft within the latter kind.

This sets up the Stranger’s criticism of a significant mistake in the division, which is the basis for his claim that the division of humankind into Greek and barbarian is misguided. The mistake arises when Young Socrates proposes to divide collective-rearing knowledge thus:

there are by nature [κατ’ ἄρθρα ἧ πέφυκεν], and trying not to splinter any part, in the manner of a bad butcher” (265e). See Cohen (1973), Grams (2012), Henry (2011), Moravcsik (1973), and Muniz and Rudebusch (2018).

It seems to me that there is one sort of rearing of human beings [ἄνθρώπων],
another of wild beasts [θηρίων]. (*Politicus* 262a)

According to the Stranger, Young Socrates makes the mistake of separating “one small part from many great ones...separate from forms [εἶδος].” He recommends instead that “we should make the part [μέρος] at the same time a form [εἶδος]”, which constitutes division “according to forms” (262a-b). In order to expose Young Socrates’ mistake, the Stranger then compares the faulty division to two others, including dividing *humankind* into *Greek* and *barbarian*:

It’s like this: if someone tried to divide *humankind* [τάνθρώπινον γένος] in two in this way, he would divide like the way that the many people here divide, separating *the Greek* [τὸ Ἑλληνικὸν] as one apart from everyone else, while the collective of all the other kinds [γένεσιν], who are unlimited, not interbreeding, and not sharing the same language with each other, they call it “*barbarian*”, with a single name. On account of the same, single name, they think it is one single kind [γένος].

Or: if someone took himself to divide *number* according to forms and in two, by cutting off *10,000* from all the rest, distinguishing it as one form, and giving to all the rest one name, and on account of the name also thought that this kind came to be a separate one apart from that. (262c-e)

In the first comparison, the Stranger likens Young Socrates’ division to the way that “the people here” separate “the Greek” from the “barbarian”. In the same way that these people (mistakenly) think they divide according to forms because “barbarian” is a single name for what is treated as a single class of people, Young Socrates mistakenly thought that “wild beast”, because it named what he took to be a single class of animate beings, constituted a real kind (263c-d). In the

second comparison, the Stranger makes the same point, but in the case of dividing “number” into “10,000” and “not-10,000”. Both cases involve cutting off a “small part” in opposition to “all the rest”, and not dividing “according to forms”.

The central project of this paper is to offer an interpretation of the Stranger’s critique of the division of humankind into Greek and barbarian as a way of illuminating Plato’s relationship to proto-racialism. By “proto-racialism”, I mean identifying racist ideas in Plato while acknowledging the historical difference from modern racialism. On the one hand, I understand “racialism” as the construction of an ideology according to which, as Appiah (1996: 56) defines it,

...we could divide human beings into a small number of groups, called ‘races,’ in such a way that the members of these groups shared certain fundamental, heritable, physical, moral, intellectual, and cultural characteristics with one another that they did not share with members of any other race.

However, whereas Appiah distinguishes between *racialism* as a set of propositions and *racism* as the further practice of using them to uphold social hierarchies (Appiah 1990: 6-10), I will not make such a distinction. Rather, I will understand racialism as a theory about humankind in virtue of which it is seen appropriate for some of the racialized populations to be subordinate in society.⁸ It is in principle possible to identify racialism in this sense before the emergence of modern European colonialism. For instance, Robinson (1983: 83) details how,

⁸ Following Haslanger (2012c: 236-8) on racialization, cf. McCoskey (2012: 31-32).

At the very beginnings of European civilization...[was] a social order of domination from which a racial theory of order emerged; one from which the medieval nobilities would immerse themselves and their power in fictional histories, positing distinct racial origins for rulers and the dominated.⁹

In this way, we may engage in what Kamtekar (2002: 2) calls “cross-cultural comparison” with regard to us and Plato, in which we seek to determine how culturally distinct “concepts or social forms” are “closer to or more distant from each other”. Nonetheless, given the different human populations involved, the different forms of oppression and exploitation, and the distinctness of modern racial concepts (such as the significance of *skin color*), I will seek to identify *proto-racialism* in Plato.¹⁰ I will aim to locate ideas about *natural* difference—which likely involves heritability—to justify or explain oppressive and exploitative social hierarchies.¹¹

⁹ Robinson (1983: 81-84, 45-53, 116-122) locates racial ideas about “blood” and “origin” as ideological forces in European conquests, such as the English exploitation of Ireland. See also Appiah (1996: 56-61).

¹⁰ Cf. El Nabolsy (2019: 257-8) for a similar strategy.

¹¹ In this way, I hope to avoid the “anachronism” identified by Zack (2018: 3) of interpreting “earlier forms of human hierarchy or status, as racial systems, where and when there were not yet fully developed ideas of human races as hereditary physical systems.”

The division of humankind into Greek and barbarian is one of the most plausible claims to proto-racialism in the ancient Mediterranean world.¹² It emerged with the development of a Greek nationalist consciousness (“Hellenism”), as part of the anti-Persian propaganda resulting from conflict with the Persian empire.¹³ Moreover, the idea of the barbarian combined social subordination with a naturalistic account of difference. On the one hand, the peoples thought of as barbarians—such as Thracians, Lydians, Scythians, Phrygians, and others in West Asia and Eastern Europe—were seen as typical chattel slaves (a regular practice in 5th century Athens).¹⁴ On the other hand, this social and economic position was conceptualized within an ideology of natural barbarian “mental inferiority”,¹⁵ reinforced by an ancient “environmental theory”, according to which social traits varied according to climate.¹⁶ In *Airs, Waters, Places*, Hippocrates claims that the “temperate climate” of Asia causes its inhabitants to be “milder and gentler” (*Airs, Waters, Places* section 12), and the “more uniform” seasonal changes make Asians less “warlike” than Northern Europeans (section 16), where extreme seasonal changes,

¹² McCoskey (2012: 54) argues that the “collapsing of all human variation into a single racial opposition—Greek vs. barbarian – is the closest parallel in antiquity to the modern racial binary of ‘black’ and ‘white’”.

¹³ McCoskey (2012: 49-58)

¹⁴ So, Rosivach (1999: 129): “it is clear from our sources that when Athenians thought about slaves they habitually thought about *barbaroi*, and when they thought about *barbaroi* they habitually thought about slaves.”

¹⁵ Fisher (1993: 93, 86-87), cf. Rosivach (1999: 148-152, 157), McCoskey (2012: 54)

¹⁶ McCoskey (2012: 46-49)

and hotter and colder climates, instill “wildness, unsociability, and spirit” (section 23). Although the environmental theory does not seem to imply direct heritability (as opposed to region-specific causes), it captures something like heritability by supposing that the environmental causes of difference operate via internal physiological mechanisms (i.e., humors).¹⁷ Moreover, the purpose and function is similar to racialist attributions of heritable traits: Hippocrates seeks to explain why the non-Greek peoples are different from, and are inferior to, Greeks, in a way that captures an intergenerationally stable character.

Indeed, the proto-racialist nature of ancient environmental theory comes out clearly in Aristotle, who uses the theory thus:

The nations in cold regions, particularly Europe, are full of spirit but somewhat deficient in intelligence and craft knowledge. That is precisely why they remain comparatively free, but are apolitical and incapable of ruling their neighbors.

Those in Asia, on the other hand, have souls endowed with intelligence and craft knowledge, but they lack spirit. That is precisely why they are ruled and enslaved.

The Greek race, however, occupies an intermediate position geographically, and so shares in both sets of characteristics. For it is both spirited and intelligent. That is precisely why it remains free, governed in the best way, and capable, if it chances upon a single constitution, of ruling all the others. (*Politics* VII.7, 1327b19-38)

¹⁷ McCoskey (2012: 46)

As a consequence of natural human differences due to climate,¹⁸ Aristotle claims that Northern Europeans are “deficient in intelligence” and “full of spirit”, and so “free” but “apolitical”; Asians are “endowed with intelligence” but, lacking “spirit”, and so are “ruled and enslaved”; and Greeks are in the happy middle, endowed with both intelligence and spirit, such that they are “free, governed in the best way”, and capable of “ruling all the others”. Aristotle is also well-known for his defense of a “slave by nature” (*Politics* I.2-7), including his deliberations on the status of non-Greeks as fit for slavery (1252b5-8).¹⁹ Hence, because of how it uses ideas about human groups differing by nature in ways that explain intergenerational social patterns, especially to justify forms of political domination, it is reasonable to treat the Greek-barbarian distinction as proto-racial.

Moreover, the distinction is reflected in many Platonic texts (*Menexenus* 239b, 245d-e, *Laws* 692e-693a, *Republic* 469b-471b).²⁰ For example, Aspasia, the speaker of the *Menexenus*, explains that Greeks are “naturally inclined to hate the barbarians, through being purely Greek with no barbarian admixture [ἀμιγείς]. For people who are barbarians by nature [φύσει] but Greeks by law....do not dwell among us” (*Menexenus* 245d, modified tr.). In other words, Aspasia explains the social and political conflict between Greeks and non-Greeks as due to immutable physiological differences, including the idea of Greeks being pure of barbarian

¹⁸ See Leunissen (2017: 7-8) for discussion.

¹⁹ Cf. Kamtekar (2016), El Nabolsy (2019), and Rosivach (1999: 142-148).

²⁰ Kamtekar (2002: 3)

“admixture”.²¹ The Stranger’s targeted distinction between Greek and barbarian plausibly draws on this same tradition. Indeed, he proposes Lydians and Phrygians as possible kinds into which to divide humanity (*Politicus* 262e-263a). Moreover, his comparison of Young Socrates’ division to an intelligent crane exalting itself (263d) points to the common understanding of barbarians as mentally inferior and thus fit for enslavement.

Section 3: Some Other Intelligent Animal

My central goal is to articulate the Stranger’s critique of the division between Greek and barbarian in terms of the methodological and political aims of the *Statesman*. I argue that the critique illustrates the Stranger’s *revisionary naturalizing project*, which involves both rejecting elements of existing social arrangements (including distinctions like Greek-barbarian) while providing an alternative natural framework for justifying oppressive and exploitative human hierarchies.²²

Scholarship on the Stranger’s three examples of bad divisions (human-beast, Greek-barbarian, 10,000-not 10,000) focuses on how each division is not “according to forms” by identifying abstract, general rules of valid division. Many suggest that all three divisions are defective because at least one of the sub-kinds is “negative”, i.e., it lacks a “common character”

²¹ It does not matter whether Aspasia in fact endorses this view.

²² My proposal is meant to find a middle way between reductively sociological and overly decontextualizing readings of Plato. (Cf. Vlastos 1980). Thanks to Zeyad El Nabolsy for emphasizing this to me.

or an “inner affinity”,²³ “parity or internal coherence”,²⁴ a “positive determinate” feature,²⁵ a “natural property”,²⁶ or “a non-negative intension”.²⁷ Yet, this interpretation is challenged by the Stranger’s acceptance of negative kinds (e.g., the “not-large”) as genuine in the *Sophist*, and as we saw, the Stranger divides self-directive knowledge oppositionally, into the kinds set over the “animate” and the “inanimate”.²⁸ Instead, the Stranger clearly states that the methodological error in Young Socrates’ division is that he failed to recognize that collective-rearing was already concerned with only a sub-set of all animals. *Animal* had already been divided into *wild* and *domesticated* upon arriving at *collective-rearing knowledge* (263e-264a). Yet, I suggest, the same flaw is not obviously true of the two examples of unnatural divisions: the divisions of humankind into Greek and barbarian and of number into 10,000 and not-10,000 do not mistakenly divide an *already divided* kind.

I suggest that the common thread may be found in the Stranger’s allegation that the division between collective-rearing of humans and of beasts is based on psychological prejudice rather than methodological principle. For, the Stranger claims, it is just as open to another animal

²³ Miller (1980: 20-1)

²⁴ Franklin (2011: 10)

²⁵ Wedin (1987: 224)

²⁶ Moravcsik (1973: 171)

²⁷ Cohen (1973: 189), critically.

²⁸ The Stranger also seems to permit negatively defined forms at *Politicus* 258c.

possessing intelligence to distinguish themselves as a single kind set apart from other animals.

Yet, it is clear that would be a mistaken division that serves only to flatter the animal:

If there were some other intelligent [φρόνιμόν] animal, for instance as the crane appears to be, or some other such creature, by naming things, perhaps, on the same bases as you, it would posit cranes as one kind in opposition to all the other animals, and [thus] exalt itself; collecting all the other animals along with human beings into the same kind, it would name them nothing other than, perhaps, ‘wild beast’. (263d)

Like the crane, the Stranger implies that Young Socrates relied on an idea about mental capacity as the relevant difference for dividing their target—from a methodological standpoint, this explains the “rush” that led to dividing *animal* twice. Young Socrates attributed superior intellectual capacity to humans as opposed to non-human animals, thereby “exalting” his own kind, like the crane, and inducing a methodological error. In this respect, the Stranger’s critique echoes Appiah (1990: 5-6), who diagnoses racial prejudice as a “cognitive incapacity” and “lack of impartiality”, and who suggests that “one can be held responsible for not subjecting [such] judgements...to an especially extended scrutiny” (9).²⁹ According to the Stranger, judgements of intellectual superiority with respect to one’s own kind can give the false appearance of an oppositional division between that kind and an indiscriminate contrast seen as inferior in some way. By identifying *subjective illusion* as the cause of this division, the Stranger points to the irrationality of dividing a “small part” from “all the rest”.

²⁹ I am grateful to Fran Fairbairn for calling this to my attention. Cf. Franklin (2011: 10).

In the same way that the crane and Young Socrates propose divisions on the basis of a prejudice about the intelligence of their own kinds, it's plausible that the Stranger understands *Greeks* ("the people here") to "exalt" themselves as distinctive from non-Greek people ("barbarians"), implicitly or explicitly because of Greek mental superiority.³⁰ The Stranger thus undermines a prejudiced model of dividing humanity. Moreover, he provides an alternative theory of human division that reflects both his views about the metaphysics of natural kinds and his revisionary theory of social teleology. This can be seen in the Stranger's response to his own criticism, namely, that it is "safer" to divide "through the middle", which makes it more likely that one will divide "according to forms" (263b):

I suppose it is finer, more according to forms, and into two, if one were to divide number into odd and even, and in turn the kind of human being into male and female. (262e)

It is outside the scope of this paper to examine adequately the methodological and metaphysical advantages of so-called "dichotomous" division.³¹ Nonetheless, the Stranger later sanctions non-dichotomous division in the form of division "by limbs" (287b-c), which appears to divide

³⁰ Moreover, following Rosivach (1999: 147), the human-beast distinction may be related to the Greek-barbarian distinction, in that the ideology according to which non-Greeks are natural slaves placed them "between" human beings and domesticated animals.

³¹ Plato elsewhere emphasizes the importance of opposition as a specific form of difference (*Philebus* 12c-13d), and of difference as location on a range of opposites (*Philebus* 24c-d), which may help explain why dichotomous division locates real kinds that may then be naturally divided non-dichotomously (*Politicus* 279c-281a).

“small parts” off, not from an indiscriminate contrast, but from other, causally coordinate kinds in a teleological system of causes (e.g., 280a-283a, 287e-289c). Accordingly, I suggest that the Stranger’s lesson is not about abstract, general criteria of valid division (although he may gesture to some),³² but about the parts of the world the divisions access and represent.³³ The Greek-barbarian and human-beast divisions represent oppositional distinctions based on illusions of superiority. Yet, structurally similar divisions may be admissible, when they access and reflect the right parts of the world. I maintain that natural divisions identify *causally coordinated kinds in a teleological process*. The Stranger’s critique illustrates the need for this methodological principle, as well as a substantive human teleology, whose causal profile the division must capture.

Section 4: Dividing Humankind by Nature

I maintain that “safer” division captures causal relations in a teleological process, such as humankind’s internal relations of *rational cooperation as self-producers*. This analysis of human teleology is articulated, I claim, in the Stranger’s myth of human origins (269c-274e), which he provides after failing in the first attempt to define the statesman. According to the myth, there are two modes of cosmic generation or becoming (*γένεσις*), and correspondingly two modes of human social organization (271d-272d). In the first mode (the “age of Chronos”), humans are cared for by an overseeing god, who tends to their needs as a shepherd does their flock (271d-e), whereas in the second mode (the “age of Zeus”), we are no longer able to come to be “on

³² Young Socrates’ misstep (dividing animal twice) seems to violate a general principle of valid division.

³³ Cf. Moravcsik (1973: 179) & Henry (2011: 253)

account of another’s agency”, but must be self-controlling or autonomous (αὐτοκράτωρ) (274a).³⁴ Under the latter conditions, the Stranger describes how humans emerge from a pre-social state of suffering in which they lack “resources and expertise” (ἀμήχανοι καὶ ἄτεχνοι, 274c). Gifts from the gods allow humans to transition from this condition into the one observed today: “fire from Prometheus, crafts from Hephaestus...seeds and plants from others: all the things that have established human life came to be from these” (274c-d). This is the distinctive form of social organization partially constituting the distinctive mode of becoming of humanity, which is an imitation of the cosmos as a whole (273e-274a).³⁵ The Stranger describes several different ways in which all animate beings are autonomous in this way, which I discuss below. Nonetheless, I suggest that, as a whole, the distinctive mode of generation of human beings in the age of Zeus is a kind of *self-production*, in which human beings individually and collectively act to continue as a species through various forms of coordination, such as the crafts, agriculture, and education.³⁶

The myth’s emphasis on human self-production provides resources to explain the Stranger’s affirmative suggestions about how to divide humankind. I argued above that, based on the Stranger’s introduction of a non-dichotomous form of division, natural divisions access and represent the teleological causal processes structuring the world. Similarly, I have argued elsewhere that the division of *oral sound* into the letters identifies the causal kinds involved in

³⁴ See Lane (1998: 101-111) for discussion of other-rule and self-rule.

³⁵ Discussed at length in Gardner and Yao (2020).

³⁶ This is broadly consistent with the Marxist notion of production—see Wills (2018: 230-231).

the production of oral speech (*Philebus* 17b, 18b-d).³⁷ This partially helps to explain Plato’s analogy between kinds and bodies, which the Stranger highlights as dividing not “in two” but “according to the limbs, like a sacrificial animal” (287b-c). Indeed, he illustrates division “by limbs” with the example of dividing the kinds of crafts relating to clothing, which articulates how the crafts cooperate in a shared production process (kinds as “co-workers” or “cooperators”, σύνεργον, 280a-b), including which kinds are “contributory” or “co-causes” (συνάιτιος), and which are direct causes of the “thing itself” (281d-e). In the present context, I propose that the Stranger’s two examples of natural division—odd and even, male and female—divide kinds in their capacity as parts of a productive process, which the Stranger’s myth then articulates in the case of human beings.

For example, I suggest that the Stranger sees male and female as natural kinds of human because they causally coordinate in (at least) *reproduction*, which is part of the broader human activity of self-production out of which society emerges. As we saw, according to the myth, rather than being tended to and cared for by an overseer god, we engage in autonomous self-rule. The gods’ gifts (crafts, fire, and agriculture) are paradigm examples of how we engage in this mode of generation. But, prior to the intervention of the gods’ gifts, the Stranger claims that “pregnancy, birth, and rearing”, for all animals, came to conform to the mode of generation of the cosmos as a whole during this cycle (273e-274a). In this sense, reproduction and the social

³⁷ Proios (forthcoming). I believe that this model of division reflects the fundamentality of craft in Plato’s ontology, and specifically his conception of *intelligence* as the cause of *coming-into-being* (*Philebus* 23c-27c, 53c-54c).

function of rearing are kinds of the broader activity of human self-production. Indeed, Sara Brill (2016: 44) argues that reproduction is both an imitation of the cosmos and the conditions out of which political organization arises:

Alongside the resources for self-preservation provided by *techne*, human self-rule comes to expression in the act of generating ourselves from ourselves...sexual reproduction...is treated as a form of mimesis, an imitation of the self-rule of cosmos...it is from this form of generation that political life follows, as it is from this act that family, *politeia*, and the differences that make the Age of Zeus recognizable as our own emerge...

In other words, in the Stranger's view, reproduction is one way that human beings engage in self-production, as it is a form of reproducing humankind in socially coordinated ways.³⁸ This is not fundamentally different from how craft, agriculture, and politics constitute self-production. Different divisions of humankind should reveal these distinctions. But, following Brill, I maintain that reproduction is a distinctive form of self-production and part of the groundwork for political organization. As such, I suggest that the division of humankind into male and female is preferable because it identifies how human beings play distinct roles in the processes the Stranger identifies as forming the basis for human society.

An advantage of my interpretation is that it connects the Stranger's first critique, which prompts the analysis of the Greek-barbarian division, to his second critique, which prompts the

³⁸ I will not be able to examine the significance of the Stranger's naturalistic ideas about gender and sexuality, but I note that they are worth further analysis.

myth. According to the second critique, the previous divisions failed to identify the statesman uniquely, because they failed to distinguish the statesman's unique manner of rule from the external rule of a herdsman (267e-268c, 274e-275c).³⁹ On my interpretation, both critiques demonstrate that division must articulate and respect how human beings differ insofar as they engage in the distinctive mode of generation in our current cosmic cycle.

It also seems to me that the division of number into odd and even is preferable because an arithmetician must know these types in their capacity as making two different kinds of contributions to arithmetic operations. Indeed, in the *Philebus*, Socrates maintains a broad continuity between the productive and theoretical branches of knowledge (*Philebus* 55c-59e). Arithmeticians engage in the same practices of measurement that are essential to each branch of knowledge, including carpentry, as such (55e, 56c-57a). In this way, it's plausible that both number and humankind are divided "naturally" when the division proceeds according to teleological relations from the perspective of an intelligent agent. Sorting number into "odd" and "even" captures these relations.

Section 5: Division in the City

I have argued that according to the Stranger's method and metaphysics of natural kinds, dividing humanity into Greek and barbarian is flawed because it does not analyze us into our different cooperative kinds in the teleology of social organization. The common supposition that non-Greeks are mentally inferior is in error about what it means to engage in intelligent activity,

³⁹ Following the interpretations in Lane (1998) and Gill (2012).

which the myth articulates as collective self-production. Yet, I maintain that the Stranger's revisionary project is still proto-racial, insofar as it provides *naturalistic foundations* for oppressive and exploitative social hierarchies, which is an essential element of racialism.

This can be seen in his use of the non-dichotomous mode of division to identify the kinds in the city, and with them, the natural division of society. As we saw above, the Stranger articulates non-dichotomous natural division as *teleological*: it captures the relations of causal cooperation in the productive process of a craft. By using this method to divide the city, the Stranger identifies seven co-causal kinds of producers, such as those who produce food, vehicles, tools, and weapons (287e-289c). Among direct causes are different kinds of servants (289c-290d), including people who are bought and sold as possessions (289d-e), free merchants (289e-290a), day-laborers (290a), heralds (290b), and priests (290c). The Stranger's division proceeds in this hierarchical fashion, identifying more and more fundamental contributors to the city's organization, such as the generals, lawyers, educators, and judges (303e-305e).⁴⁰ The statesman is distinguished as the person in charge of determining the right time for setting craft in motion,⁴¹ thereby exercising a supervisory capacity over the city as a whole (305c-e).

At the end of the dialogue, the Stranger further claims that part of the statesman's job is to interweave two natural kinds of human being, the courageous and the temperate, who are distinguished by heritable traits (307e-308a, 310c-d) and naturally hostile to each other (306a-

⁴⁰ Cf. division as akin to sifting metals for gold, *Politicus* 303d-e.

⁴¹ The statesman's knowledge of "timing" is discussed at length in Lane (1998).

308b). Here Plato clearly invokes the ideological tradition we saw above, distinguishing naturally hostile social groups demarcated by traits typically associated with non-Greek barbarians (i.e., Northern Europeans and West Asians) (306c-308a). Moreover, the Stranger claims that *intermarriage* (i.e., socially coordinated reproduction) is necessary in order to appropriately weave the two kinds together in order to produce a happy city, repeatedly invoking ideas about heritable difference and the need to “mix” (310b-e). In this way, the Stranger re-introduces elements of the proto-racial ideas we saw above (e.g., politically significant heritable difference), but in a way that reflects the revisionary social teleology of the dialogue, including a rejection of the ethno-nationalist concept of a barbarian.⁴²

Nonetheless, these final divisions provide a new framework for naturalizing oppressive and exploitative social arrangements. We saw above that, according to the Stranger, the natural division of the city captures *hierarchical* causal relations, which is the framework for how he understands chattel slavery, among other kinds of labor in the city. In this sense, the Stranger portrays the natural structure of society such that there are always laborers and a variety of other kinds of producers supporting various kinds of elites, like generals, politicians, and lawyers. Moreover, in a disturbing part of the dialogue, the Stranger claims that the statesman must identify those who are incapable of natural courage or temperance, and execute, exile, or otherwise severely punish them, whereas he “subjects to the class of slave those rolling in stupidity [ἀμαθία] and baseness” (309a). The reference to stupidity illustrates how the Stranger has *co-opted* the ethno-nationalist charge of mental inferiority for his theoretically refined

⁴² I am grateful to Jeremy Reid for helpful discussion here.

justification for slavery.⁴³ In this way, while rejecting common proto-racial ideas about human nature and difference, the Stranger reaffirms the idea that chattel slavery is justified by the intellectual inferiority of the enslaved, and more broadly, that there is a natural, in some cases heritable, human hierarchy that should be enforced by state violence.⁴⁴ Hence, although I have suggested that the Stranger's claims reflect Plato's concern to revise our understanding of society as part of the world's natural structure, his alternative appears to re-introduce and preserve, rather than reject and root out, the naturalization of oppressive human hierarchy.

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⁴³ Hence, Rosivach (1999: 149) and Fisher (1993: 93) observe this passage as part of the Athenian ideological tradition of slavery.

⁴⁴ The issue is not, as Annas (1981: 171) puts it, that Plato “is assuming normal Greek life as his background (a life in which the need for slaves was not questioned)”, but that Plato has developed a theoretical and naturalistic justification for slavery and other forms of oppression and exploitation. Cf. Kamtekar (2016: 155).

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