

# An Argument Against Slavery in the *Republic*

JOSEPH GONDA *York University*

*ABSTRACT:* The *Republic* contains: (1) an implicit argument that slavery is unjust, (2) a bar against Greeks having Greek slaves that (3) allows barbarian slaves. The scholarship has failed to notice the first, that the second is a performative addressed to Greeks, and mistakes the third as explicit. Four passages are examined: (1) a catalogue of a Greek city's social classes (433d1–5); (2) a bar against Greek slaves, asserting the continuation of barbarian slavery (469b5–71c3); (3) an assertion that the Best City can exist at any time and any place (499c7–d1); and (4) a passage asserting the injustice of enslavement (615a6–b6).

*RÉSUMÉ :* La République comporte les trois éléments suivants : (1) un argument implicite à l'effet que l'esclavage est injuste, (2) une interdiction pour les Grecs de posséder des esclaves grecs, qui (3) admet cependant la possession d'esclaves barbares. Les commentateurs n'ont pas décelé le premier, ni remarqué que le second est un performatif adressé aux Grecs; ils ont tenu, à tort, le troisième pour explicite. J'examine ici quatre passages : un catalogue des classes sociales dans la cité grecque (433d1-5); l'interdit pesant sur l'esclavage des Grecs accompagné du maintien de l'esclavage des barbares (469b5-71c3); l'affirmation que la cité idéale est possible partout et en tout temps (499c7-d1); et l'affirmation que l'esclavage est injuste (615a6-b6).

## Introduction

The *Republic* contains three proposals concerning chattel slavery. The first is an implicit argument against slavery not reported by the scholarship. The second, which is widely discussed, proposes that Greeks should neither enslave nor own Greek slaves (henceforth, the Greek Reform). It has a feature that has

*Dialogue* 55 (2016), 219–244.

© Canadian Philosophical Association/Association canadienne de philosophie 2016

doi:10.1017/S0012217316000159



gone unnoticed. It is a performative injunction addressed to Plato's Greek audience. The third, which is included in the Greek Reform, allows Greeks to own barbarian slaves. While current scholarship takes this to be explicitly stated, this article demonstrates that it is implicit. Because of the controversiality of this article's thesis, some prefatory remarks are necessary.

Why would Plato not have made explicit an argument that condemns slavery? An answer is embedded in the logic of the text. It contains four passages staking out a position on slavery: (1) a catalogue of the social classes of a Greek city (433d1–5); (2) a passage containing the Greek Reform and the continuation of barbarian slavery (469b5–71c3); (3) a passage asserting that the Best City can be either Greek or barbarian and can exist at any time and any place (499c7–d1); and (4) a passage asserting the injustice of enslavement (615a6–b6). In combination they lead to unacceptable results such as the possibility that Plato would countenance philosopher-kings as slaves. These follow unless Plato allowed for: (5) an implicit argument against slavery.

No other surviving author of the Greek classical period contemplates the abolition of slavery. This suggests Plato cannot have entertained this possibility, thus making it implausible that the *Republic* contains an argument against slavery. But the *Republic* argues for three radical proposals concerning women, the family, and the question of who should rule. These proposals are found nowhere else in classical literature. Hence an assertion that Plato could not transcend his culture with respect to slavery should be dismissed.

Analogously, the scholarly consensus that none of Plato's dialogues consider the abolition of slavery does not preclude the possibility of a demonstration that one of the dialogues makes an argument against slavery. Nonetheless a starting point for reconciling the *Republic* and the *Laws* on slavery is suggested at an appropriate point in the argument.

This article appeals to a distinction between explicit and implicit arguments and propositions. A few words anticipating the distinction's use may help. Beginning with the explicit, the Greek Reform contains two grammatically conjoined Socratic statements, i.e., they share a sole finite verb that yields the proposition that 'slavery is unjust.' The two statements contain the words 'slavery' and 'justice' and affirm their incompatibility. Hence the proposition asserting their incompatibility is explicit. In the case of the implicit, Socrates is committed to something in virtue of what he states without explicitly stating it. The justification of barbarian slavery is implicit in this way. It employs three Socratic statements that yield a proposition affirming the compatibility of 'barbarian' and 'slavery.' Two are the statements that explicitly justify the proposition that 'slavery is unjust.' They contain the terms 'barbarian' and 'slavery' but not in a manner that affirms their compatibility. Rather Socrates offers a third statement that does not mention the terms, but which, in context, when conjoined with the two other statements, implies the compatibility of 'barbarian' and 'slavery.' Hence the proposition justifying barbarian slavery is implicit.

The *Republic's* treatment of slavery may be the original object lesson in not making the best the enemy of the good. There is evidence that it ties the fortunes of the Greek Reform, a meliorist goal available in Plato's day with respect to slavery, to the acceptance of barbarian slavery. This rules out the explicit affirmation of the injustice of slavery. Affirming it explicitly would compromise the Greek Reform's fortunes because an explicit affirmation is inconsistent with barbarian slavery. The argument for the injustice of slavery is different from the proposals about sexual equality and the abolition of the family, the *Republic's* other radical social reforms, which are explicit. There are no real-time meliorist goals put at risk through making them explicit. But, contrary to the view of current scholarship, the justification of barbarian slavery is implicit. The presence of an implicit argument against slavery provides an answer for why the text does not explicitly trumpet this justification. Faced with a choice between making it explicit or implicit, Plato offers the alternative consistent with an anti-slavery agenda.

This article is about chattel slavery, which involves the owning of human beings and buying and selling them as one does a horse or a car. Chattel slaves lose, in principle, all meaningful connection to present, past, and future kin. The interdependence of the three arguments about slavery—Greek, barbarian, and the universal issue—precludes isolating one while ignoring the others. The *Republic* is also rich with the metaphorical sense of slavery, for instance the power of the passions to overwhelm human beings so that they are said to be enslaved to them. The scholarship has run into problems keeping the two separate. For example Peter Garnsey, commenting on a passage in Book 9, mistakenly asserts that: "Plato had declared that certain individuals ... had an inadequate grasp of reason ... [making] ... their enslavement to the 'best men' necessary and advantageous for them ... (590 c8–d6)." <sup>1</sup> The passage's context is a comparison of these 'best men' with Thrasymachus' rulers. In it Socrates refers to Thrasymachus' statement in Book 1 that rulers enslave those they rule (344b3). Since Thrasymachus' claim was about rulers in democracies, tyrannies, and aristocracies whose subjects are not literally chattel slaves, he uses 'slavery' metaphorically (338d–e). Hence it must have this sense in this later passage. The metaphorical sense is all that Socrates needs. More than that would make Socrates' point irrelevant: comparing chattel with metaphorical slaves. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Garnsey (14, note 27). References to the *Republic* are to: *Platonis Respublica*, S. R. Slings, ed. Translations are my own.

<sup>2</sup> Hyde (7, 22) offers a *tertium quid*: The distinction between literal and metaphorical slave does not apply to the Best City. This formally implies it has no chattel slaves. Hyde combines formalism with an unjustified Athenocentric perspective that ignores the Hellenocentric Greek Reform. This is consistent with his disregard of the text's universal anti-slavery evidence, most importantly the City's universalism (499c7–d1) and the assertion of the injustice of enslavement (615a6–b6); see below note 7.

**I Examining 433d1–5**

[This] ... will do the city ... the most good ... the fact that every child, woman, slave, freeman, artisan, ruler and ruled minded his own business and wasn't a busybody ....

This article is controversial not because it joins an ongoing controversy but because it aims to reopen a closed book. It was closed by Gregory Vlastos' argument, based on this passage, that the *Republic* allows for slavery. Brian Calvert put it this way, "One might in fact say that so strong has Vlastos' argument appeared to subsequent commentators and scholars that it is simply accepted without question."<sup>3</sup> Because I am challenging a well-entrenched position, I cross as many t's and dot as many i's as are within my reach.

An examination of the terms in this passage shows that it does not imply that the Best City has slaves. Each undergoes major changes as the *Republic*'s argument progresses. 'Child' excepted, none is thematically discussed prior to this passage. Even in the case of children, the discussion of their education in Books 2-4 contains no hint of the change waiting in Book 5 where they are bereft of families.

'Freeman' names a social class, which in Athenian usage of the day included only those who only had their labour to sell and, as a result, was distinguished from 'artisan.'<sup>4</sup> The use of 'freeman' as the name of a social class goes unmentioned between the introduction of philosopher-kings and the end of Book 7 (473c11–e5). 'Artisan' becomes, on the one hand, the name of a class that is a permanent part of the Best City whose members instantiate the dominance of desire (434a9–b7, 443c9–444a2, 435a5–b7). On the other hand, the range of 'artisan' is extended to cover all three classes of the City, artisans, auxiliaries or guardians, and philosopher-kings and is thus co-extensive with its citizen body (395b8–c1, 500c9–d8). The elimination of the word 'freeman' from the Best City makes sense in light of Athenian usage.

The changes proposed for 'woman,' who turn out to be capable of ruling the City, are analogous to those proposed for 'artisan.' Both undergo radical change. Whereas the treatment of the pair 'ruler and ruled' is analogous to that of 'freeman,' neither appear from the introduction of philosopher-kings to the end of Book 7. Athenian usage, as with 'freeman,' explains the absence of the phrase 'ruler and ruled.' Its only uses in the *Republic* restrict it to democracies where the pair is interchangeable. This is implied by Glaucon and acknowledged

<sup>3</sup> Vlastos (292), Calvert (367), Annas (171), Reeve (216). Schütrumpf (250-1) is an exception.

<sup>4</sup> Raafflaub (531, notes 75, 76). 'Freeman' occurs twice between philosopher-kings and the end of Book 7, neither as a predicate of a social class (499a4, 536e1–2).

by Adeimantus (463a8–9; 557e2–3, 558a3). ‘Slave’ as the name of a social class receives the same treatment. It too vanishes from sight.<sup>5</sup>

There is evidence that the description of the Best City evolves just as these changes imply. Just before this passage, the City is said to be a “*young ... city* (νέαν, 431b4).” Many translations wrongly translate νέαν as ‘new.’ The word occurs 76 times in the *Republic*. Seventy times it means ‘young.’ Six times it means ‘new’; one is quoted from Homer and two refer to that quote. The other three are predicated of citizens or comrades, that is, as new cases of recurring kinds. The City is not a case of a recurring kind. ‘Καινόν’ is used for ‘new’ in the sense of novel, non-recurring (328a3).<sup>6</sup>

Because the depiction of Best City’s fundamental features is incomplete, at least until the inception of philosopher-kings, these lines (433d1–5) are about the City when it is in *statu nascendi*. Socrates’ initial assertion of the City’s justice occurs just before he introduces philosopher-kings (472c4–5). Since philosopher-kings are the Best City’s capstone, it follows that its description is a work in progress up to this point.

The logic is clear. If the passage (433d1–5) describes the social classes of the Best City, then it must incorporate ‘slave,’ ‘freeman,’ and ‘ruler and ruled.’ But it does not incorporate ‘slave,’ ‘freeman,’ and ‘ruler and ruled.’ Therefore the passage (433d1–5) does not describe the social classes of the Best City.<sup>7</sup>

## II The Greek Reform 469b5–71c3

The distribution of the word ‘Greek’ (Ἕλληνες) in the *Republic* is noteworthy. Some background information is needed. Subsequent to the discussion of the abolition of the family, Socrates presents the Rules of War, which discuss how sexual equality affects the City’s conduct in wartime (466e1–471c3). They end with a discussion of how the City’s soldiers deal with enemies and include the dialogue’s sole extended discussion of slavery. It will be called the ‘Coda for Enemies’ (469b5–471c3). The *Republic* uses the word ‘Greek’ 21 times. Eighteen are in Book 5. Seventeen of those are in the Coda for Enemies, which starts off with the Greek Reform. Slightly over 80 percent of the uses of the word occur in less than one percent of the book’s pages. This fact is revisited at this section’s conclusion.

---

<sup>5</sup> Both uses of ‘slave’ in this stretch of the text are metaphorical (494d6, 536e1.) Aristotle (*Pol*, 1275a20–25, b5–10) asserts the interchangeability of ‘ruler and ruled’ as the specific difference of a democratic citizen.

<sup>6</sup> Chantraine (745) confirms this. *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* was indispensable. <http://www.tlg.uci.edu>.

<sup>7</sup> Hyde (22) “easily” reconciles (433d1–5) with an anti-slavery agenda through a formal solution: Plato switches terminology after the three classes are instituted. This bypasses evidence of the universal argument, for example, that all three classes are called ‘artisan’ subsequent to this passage.

The Greek Reform addresses a real-time issue in Plato's day: the possession of Greek slaves by Greeks. Stephen Halliwell suggests that, since the City will have diplomatic relations with its neighbours, the Greek Reform will be promulgated through these encounters.<sup>8</sup> This leaves it to be actualized in some uncertain future. Plato provides a real-time solution. Understanding Glaucon's role in the discussion of the Greek Reform is key to grasping this solution.

Glaucon is Socrates' only discussant through the Coda for Enemies. An observation in Book 8 about Glaucon and slavery sheds light on his role. There Socrates touches on Glaucon's attitude to slaves when discussing a Timocratic youth's character (548d8–549a7, 549b9–10). This youth occurs in Book 8's account of the four defective polities, each more defective than the last, which follow on the failure of the Best City. At each stage Socrates describes a corrupt son of the polity under discussion who embodies its corruption and bears the name and character of the next polity. The Timocratic youth is the first example of this process. The discussion includes a detailed comparison of the youth and Glaucon, which concludes with a comparison of their respective attitudes to slaves:

... [the timocratic youth] ... would be brutal to his slaves rather than disdaining them as an adequately educated person does ... (549a1–2).

Of the two ways of treating slaves, the brutal belongs to the Timocratic youth while disdain characterizes Glaucon's attitude. This attitude is a function or a correlate of an 'adequate education.'

The use of the phrase 'adequate education' in other dialogues corroborates that it is predicated here of Glaucon. It also allows for an inference that Glaucon represents an extra-textual audience of Plato's contemporaries. The phrase occurs five more times and is invariably linked to convention, law, and habit (606a7, *Gorg* 487b6–7, *Meno* 96d6, *Laws* 658e9, 809a7.) In the *Meno*, its use includes a reference to contemporary Athens. In the *Gorgias*, it also refers to Athens. Socrates says, "... many Athenians say that Callicles has an adequate education." This shows that the phrase was current at a time that covers the dramatic dates of both dialogues. It indicates that the phrase was a commonplace, naming a property of male, upper-class Athenians. There is no evidence that the historical Glaucon and the possibly fictional Callicles were different with respect to their educations. Both, for example, are familiar with the doctrines of Sophists. Although Callicles is usually linked to Thrasymachus, his unease at the mention of conventionally deviant sexual behaviour and his concern about the fate of the just in an unjust world show that on one level he is quite conventional (*Gorgias* 494e, 511b6). The dialogues portray Glaucon and Callicles as having the "rhetorical" skills attributed to those with an 'adequate

---

<sup>8</sup> Halliwell (189) references 422d.

education' through their long speeches (ῥητορικόν, 548e5; 358b1–361d6; *Gorg* 482c4–486d7).

The reference to an 'adequate education' cements a connection between Glaucon and the issue of slavery. Its wider use implies that Glaucon represents a type. Insofar as Socrates' words about slavery are directed and appropriate to Glaucon, they are also appropriate to the type he represents, some of whom would have been Plato's early readers.

The Greek Reform is contained in statements (1) and (2):

Socrates: Now, what about enemies? How will our soldiers deal with them?

Glaucon: In what respect?

- (1) Socrates: First, as to enslavement, does it seem just for Greek cities to enslave Greeks, or that they, insofar as possible, not even allow another city to do it, and make it a habit to spare Greeks, as a precaution against being enslaved by the barbarians?

Glaucon: It's altogether ... best to spare Greeks.

- (2) Socrates: Therefore ... [does it seem just for them] ... not to possess Greek slaves, and to advise the other Greeks not to as well?

Glaucon: Certainly ... in that way they'd be more likely to turn against the barbarians and keep ... off one another (469b5–c7).

Statement (1) contains two proposals. First, it is unjust for Greeks to enslave Greeks. Second, "... insofar as possible ..." measures are needed to prevent this. Statement (2) alters the proposals. It states that the City should not have Greek slaves. It also enjoins the City to advise other Greeks to follow its example.

This modification bears scrutiny. The Greek Reform's first formulation raises a question. How will it be actualized 'insofar as possible?' Socrates operationalizes his solution by means of the City, enjoining it to advise Greeks to eschew Greek slaves. But the advice is *ipso facto* given. It does not wait for Halliwell's uncertain solution. The advice is a performative analogous to the words 'I pronounce you life partners.' Just as a certified officiant uses these words to unite at that moment a couple as life partners, so Plato's contemporaries, as of reading these words, were advised to desist from owning Greek slaves. The justification for inferring a performative prescription is straightforward. Other things being equal, none of Plato's Greek contemporaries could have read these words of the *Republic* and not acknowledge that they had been advised to eschew Greek slaves.

The Greek Reform emerges from a concatenation of factors. The phrase 'adequately educated' joins Glaucon to the issue of slavery. It thus identifies an extra-textual audience of Glaucon's peers, or early readers of the *Republic*, which makes sense of the use of the word 'Greek': 17 of 21 uses are within



approximately two Stephanus pages. The *Republic* contains no comparable normative recommendation, which addresses a real-time issue that is uniquely performative inasmuch as it is directed to a specific audience comprised of Plato's fellow Greeks. Schütrumpf concurs, "To work for a change in the attitude all Greek states had towards one another in wars was Plato's foremost interest in this passage."<sup>9</sup>

This portrayal of Glaucon provides a starting point for reconciling the *Republic* and the *Laws* on slavery. The *Laws* describes the second-best polity in comparison with the *Republic's* best.<sup>10</sup> *Republic* Book 8 introduces the first defective polity by calling it 'Cretan' or 'Laconian,' i.e., Spartan (544c, 545a). It is the only one of the four defective polities introduced as an example of extant polities. Only subsequently is it called 'Timocracy.' In the *Laws*, the Athenian stranger talks with a Cretan and a Spartan. But the Cretan and Laconian, that is, Timocratic disposition toward slaves is brutal. Hence the *Laws's* account of slavery warrants an examination from the perspective that it is second best to the *Republic*, whose discussion of slavery is directed to a more humane audience. This yields a clear starting point. The Greek Reform does not occur in the *Laws*. This confirms that Plato thought that it would fall on deaf ears to a Timocratic audience. Glenn Morrow provides a template for viewing the *Laws* on slavery in light of the difference between Timocratic brutality and relative Athenian leniency. However, he fails to note the absence of the Greek Reform. Hence his reading must be adjusted to reflect this absence. This can begin by paying more attention to Spartan practices as a focus of the *Laws's* discussion.<sup>11</sup> The *Republic* deals with the issue of the justice of slavery; the *Laws's* focus is reforming it in light of its almost certain prospects of a long survival.<sup>12</sup>

It is important to grasp that the two statements encapsulating the Greek Reform establish the injustice of slavery.

- (1) First, as to enslavement, does *it seem just* for Greek cities to enslave Greeks; or, that they ... not even allow another city to do it, and make it a habit to spare Greeks ... (δοκεῖ δίκαιον)?
- (2) ... Therefore ... [does it seem just for them] ... not to possess Greek slaves, and to advise the other Greeks not to as well? (469b8–9, c4–5).

These lines establish that the possession of slaves is unjust. This follows from the relation of the phrase 'it seems just' to the infinitives 'to enslave,' 'to

<sup>9</sup> Schütrumpf (253).

<sup>10</sup> *Laws* 739a–e.

<sup>11</sup> *Laws* 776c6–8.

<sup>12</sup> Morrow (186–201). For an example of this differential treatment of slavery, see below note 45.



possess,' and 'to advise.' In statement (1) the infinitive 'to enslave' depends upon the phrase 'it seems just.' In statement (2), Benjamin Jowett and Lewis-Campbell point out, the infinitives 'to possess' and 'to advise,' also "... depend on the δοκεῖ δίκαιον ... [it seems just] ..., from the previous question ...."<sup>13</sup> Thus statement 2 asserts, in effect, that, 'it is unjust' to possess Greek slaves .... The use of 'therefore' to connect the two statements establishes an inferential link between them (γὰρ c4). Any translation that fails to preserve in statement (2) the infinitives 'to possess' and 'to advise' and fails to provide an appropriate finite verb form to complement them fails to do justice to Plato's text. All readers must have access to the text where Plato asserts, however quietly, that slavery is unjust.

This raises a question: is this judgment limited to this context and reserved for Greeks? In other words, is there an example anywhere in Plato's writings of a claim that a particular injustice is limited to an ethnic group or, other things being equal, limited in its universality? Socrates illustrates the distorting effect of ethnic appeals by stipulating that Greek kinship is natural (470c5–8): "... we will say ... [Greek kinship is] ... by nature ..." (φήσομεν ... φύσει 470c6). What is 'by nature' is not a matter of stipulation for Plato. Hence the claims of ethnic appeals to naturalness are illegitimate. The two other uses of the phrase in the dialogues confirm this. Halliwell uses one to justify this use in the Coda or Enemies. But the *Menexenus* reference is in the encomia and a principle of encomia, which Halliwell fails to note, is to convert defects into virtues. For example, the cheapskate is praised as frugal.<sup>14</sup> The other includes a rationale for its use.<sup>15</sup>

### III Barbarian Slavery 469b5–71c3

The Greek Reform is consistent with Greeks owning barbarian slaves. However, the Coda for Enemies does not make it explicit. It does so implicitly by applying what will be called the 'Affinity Principle,' a principle that has so far gone unnoticed (470b4–9). Examining it follows a review of the scholarship on barbarian slavery.

Vlastos asserts that two statements by Glaucon justify barbarian slavery. Even if one assumes that Vlastos interprets Glaucon correctly, Socrates' agreement is a necessary condition for concluding that the *Republic* asserts this. Vlastos attends to this by stating: "... Socrates proceeds to make *clear* some paragraphs later (470b4–471a7) ... (emphasis added)" that barbarians are fair game for slavery. However, these forty some lines of text—Vlastos does not comment on them—contain no statement about barbarian slaves. Vlastos' treatment of the second statement repeats his treatment of the first (471b6–8). He concludes examining it by asserting "... with the same implications as

<sup>13</sup> Jowett and Campbell (245).

<sup>14</sup> Halliwell (191) refers to 245c–5 but compare 235a.

<sup>15</sup> *Epinomis* 989d2.

before ....” This implies, as matter of meaning and necessity, that he includes the suspect long passage as part of his argument for the second statement (470b4–471a7). In sum, Vlastos fails to show that Book 5 allows barbarian slavery.<sup>16</sup>

Halliwell also asserts that it is “clear” Plato allows barbarian slavery.<sup>17</sup> But he and Vlastos differ somewhat on which lines matter. Halliwell, too, offers no comment on the lines he references. Their common focus includes Glaucon’s statement, “Certainly ... in that way they’d be more likely ‘to turn against’ the barbarians and keep ... off one another (τρέποντο 469c6-7).” Vlastos interprets this to mean that Glaucon intends Greeks to ‘turn against barbarians’ for slaves. However, Glaucon can be interpreted as agreeing with a Socratic interest in Greeks defending themselves in order to focus on preventing barbarians enslaving them. The verb ‘to turn against’ allows for either interpretation (τρέποντο 469c7). The Platonic Corpus provides no guidance on the use of the verb that would settle things.

Eckart Schütrumpf also asserts that the Coda for Enemies justifies barbarian slavery. He writes that Socrates “... makes Glaukon agree with him that Greeks should not enslave fellow Greeks... *but instead turn for this purpose against barbarians. He predicts that in future Greeks will fight barbarians rather than Greeks since barbarians rather than Greeks will be their only source of slaves* (emphasis added).” All the statements contained in the italicized words are false. For example, Glaucon, not Socrates, talks of a ‘turn’ to barbarians; neither mentions barbarian slaves. It is also false that “Plato ... demanded that they ... [Greek cities] ... acquire ... [slaves] ... from barbarians.” The *Republic* contains no statement to this effect.<sup>18</sup>

Amidst the Coda for Enemies, Socrates asserts a generality about human behaviour: the Affinity Principle. It plays an important role in the argument for barbarian slavery. After presenting it in general terms, he instantiates it, thus implying the continuation of barbarian slavery. Because the Affinity Principle is formal, it is not limited to this instantiation and can be applied to the universal argument against slavery.

Immediately after the Greek Reform, Socrates proposes three more reforms: (1) enemy dead should not be despoiled, (2) enemy arms, especially those of Greeks, should not be used as votive offerings, and (3) during wartime the Greek countryside should not be ravaged nor Greek houses burnt (469c8–470b1). The second and third of these reforms treat Greeks and non-Greeks differentially; only Greeks benefit. Socrates then turns to the Affinity Principle to retroactively “justify” these reforms (ὄν ἔνεκα, 470b1). Socrates first states it as a generality (470b4–9):

<sup>16</sup> Vlastos (292-3).

<sup>17</sup> Halliwell (189) references 469b5–c7.

<sup>18</sup> Schütrumpf (251, 255). “Glaukon” is his usage.

... just as there are two names, *war* and *faction*, so there are two things ... [they] ... are what is one's own and what is akin, on the one hand, and what's foreign and strange, on the other. The name *faction* applies to hatred of one's own, while *war* to hatred of strangers (470b4–9, emphasis added).

The Affinity Principle appears to be a linguistic convention about political behaviour. Conflicts between communities are either factious, which applies to enmity between kin, or war, which applies to enmity between alien communities. Socrates next instantiates the Affinity Principle by calling Greeks 'kin,' and Greeks and barbarians 'alien' (470c1–3, c5–d1). He then completes this instantiation: Greeks fighting barbarians is war; Greeks fighting Greeks is faction (470c5–d1).

An implicit rationale for barbarian slavery can now follow from the Greek Reform. The Affinity Principle adds a formal element that is made relevant through the distinction between Greeks and barbarians. The Affinity Principle justifies extending the cover of kinship and its benefits to Greeks and, significantly, denying them to barbarians. It retroactively justifies that Greek votive offerings, countryside, and houses are treated preferentially, which entails that barbarians are justifiably deprived of these benefits. But the "first" of the benefits mentioned in the Coda for Enemies is a ban on the enslavement of Greeks by Greeks (469b7). The use of the cardinal 'first' indicates that the Greek Reform is the first item in the list of reforms to which, it follows, the Affinity Principle retroactively applies. This implies that barbarians, because they are not kin, are justifiably deprived of this benefit and are fair game for slavery.

In its first abstract formulation, the Affinity Principle uses 'faction' and 'war' to distinguish strife between kin from strife between foreigners. Later in the Coda for Enemies, Socrates proposes another reform. He repeats the ban against enslaving Greeks using the three words that mark the introduction of the Affinity Principle, 'faction,' 'war,' and 'own:'

Won't they consider their differences with Greeks—their *own* ... to be *faction*, not calling it *war* ... they'll correct their foes *humanely*, not punish them with slavery ... (471a1–6, emphasis added).

The first three italicized words, used when formulating the Affinity Principle, bring slavery under its rule (470b6–7). The fourth adds an affective element, characterizing kindness to kin as 'humane' behaviour (εὐμενῶς 471a6).

Since slavery is not explicitly mentioned at the Affinity Principle's introduction, its presence here justifies the Affinity Principle's earlier use to sanction barbarian slavery. This passage also sanctions barbarian slavery. By invoking the Affinity Principle to ban enslaving Greeks, it implicitly justifies enslaving barbarians.

This concludes the argument for barbarian slavery. It advances two implicit rationales, each combining the Affinity Principle and the Greek Reform.

Given the Affinity Principle, the assertion of the Greek Reform implicitly sanctions barbarian slavery. Greek Reform and barbarian slavery are in this respect logically inseparable. Through this connection, the *Republic* ties the fortunes of the Greek Reform to the preservation of barbarian slavery.<sup>19</sup> Regardless, it is also the way Plato subtly and successfully ratifies barbarian slavery. The fact that some readers are convinced, mainly by Glaucon's words, that the text explicitly justifies barbarian slavery is testament to Plato's success at conveying this justification through implicit means.

The discussion of barbarian slavery yields the minor premise of the argument against slavery: 'Those who possess kin as slave are neither just nor humane.' The Affinity Principle, because it is a formal principle as applicable in our day as in Plato's, will serve to establish the argument's major premise.

Calling on Greeks' 'Philhellenism,' Socrates points to their 'holy places' as warrant or evidence of their sense of being akin (470e9–10, 427b3–4). Shared 'holy places' is the only concrete rationale offered for the kinship that justifies the Reform. But the Coda for Enemies illustrates another basis for Greek kinship through the repeated use of the word 'Greek,' which links Greeks to a common language. Plato's use of 'to hellenize' (the word for speaking Greek), in several dialogues shows his familiarity with this fact. Edward Anson argues that a common language was an important basis of Greek ethnicity.<sup>20</sup> Thereby the Greek language, i.e., *logos*, is also a justification for Greek kinship.

The word 'humane' (εὐμενῶς) provides a finale rationale. It occurs four times in the *Republic*. (1) It characterizes the disposition of guardians when dealing with non-guardian fellow citizens (416b3). (2) It characterizes the disposition of kin towards kin that rules out kin as slaves (471a6). (3) It partially characterizes the attitude of a philosopher living in a non-philosophic city who, when old, contemplates her own death (496e2). (4) It characterizes the attitude philosophers take when listening to arguments that go against the grain (607d9). The word is used in the context of two themes of major importance in the *Republic*, the characters of guardians and of philosophers. The first, which characterizes the attitude guardians should bear toward citizens, is of a piece with the second. Each suggests that those wielding *force majeure* over defenceless, unarmed fellow citizens or kin should behave humanely towards them. This commonality dictates the choice of 'humane' as a translation. This is not to suggest Plato was a humanitarian in our sense of the word. After all, in extreme circumstances, the Best City allows unwanted infants to die (460c, 461c). The fourth serves as a wake-up call about the desirability for a mind open to unexpected arguments to bring generosity to the table.

<sup>19</sup> Jameson (140) looks at the evidence that Greek slavery was a minor aspect of slavery in Plato's day. (1) Assuming Plato sees slavery as a *malum in se*, the need to expunge it would not vary, no matter its magnitude. (2) As well, the good, in this case, becomes a stalking horse for the best.

<sup>20</sup> *Meno* 82b, *Charmides* 159a, *Alcibiades* I 111a. Anson (18).

#### IV The Argument Against Slavery 499c7–d1

This section sets out a valid, deductive proof that slavery is unjust, which entails that the Best City is slave free. This implies that a polity in the world that has slaves is unjust in this respect. This follows from the Best City's paradigmatic character whereby it serves as a standard for evaluating polities in the world. Socrates asserts an analogy between the perfectly just man and the perfectly just city that makes this point. It states that a chief purpose of the idea of justice is its utility in evaluating its worldly instantiations (472c4–e4).<sup>21</sup>

The Best City's paradigmatic character is consistent with its being a city in the world. The two are logically independent. There is no evidence in the *Republic* that undercuts the City's paradigmatic function. At 499c7–d4 Socrates establishes that it is not limited to Greeks:

Then, if in the limitless past, necessity forced those on the peaks of philosophy to take charge of a city or if there is now some such necessity in some barbaric region far beyond our ken or if it will happen later ... the city we've described has been, is now, or will be ....

With this Plato enlarges the reader's vision of the *Republic's* reach. It is comparable to Thucydides' claim that what he writes is "a possession for all times."<sup>22</sup> As to place and time, it is in principle ubiquitous. As to human beings, it includes all: Greeks and barbarians. The text prepares the reader to see the *Republic's* horizon enlarged. Twice it makes reference to philosophy's universality. First, when Socrates sources the three parts of the soul to Thrace, Greece, and Egypt, he states that learning, i.e., philosophy, is "most imputed to our region," it follows that it is not exclusive to 'our' region (435e1–436a3). This use of 'region,' qualified by a pronominal, is the first of two such uses in the *Republic* (435e7–a1). The other is this passage's "barbaric region" (499c7–d4). Since the first refers to Greeks who live in their region, it must be the case that 'barbarian region' refers to 'barbarians' in their regions. There is no evidence for supposing that 'barbarian' is a place name, e.g., Tiananmen Square, where Greeks may have philosophized, are now philosophizing, or may in the future philosophize. Plato extends the City's horizon to include barbarians. There is also evidence suggesting that Greeks are not coeval with the human race, which confirms that the City's diachronous dimension is not limited to Greeks.<sup>23</sup> Second, when Socrates

---

<sup>21</sup> The assertion that the Minimum City is the 'true' city, which is 'healthy,' is consistent with the City's paradigmatic status. The Best City is a paradigm for extant cities, i.e., for 'feverish' cities that follow after the 'healthy' Minimum City. Fully reconciling Best and Minimum cities requires spelling out in what respect the latter is 'true,' which is incidental to this article's argument (372c2–e6).

<sup>22</sup> Thucydides: 1.23.

<sup>23</sup> Morgan (101-4).

says that philosophy is a *rara avis*, he predicates this rarity of ‘human beings,’ he does not predicate it only of Greeks (491b1). A theme in recent scholarship on this passage needs to be considered.

Halliwell characterizes the passage as “incidental.”<sup>24</sup> However, there is evidence confirming its significance. Appreciating its significance has a clear starting point. Its claim of universality contrasts with the claim of particularity the Coda for Enemies raises. There Socrates elicits Glaucon’s agreement that the City will be Greek, “Won’t the city *you* are founding be Greek?” (470e4–5, emphasis added). Earlier Glaucon is called its “lawgiver” (458c6). There is no inconsistency. A Greek would found a Greek City just as an Etruscan would found an Etruscan one. However, Plato does not leave it at that. The ascription of Glaucon’s rule over a Greek version of the City occurs just before the introduction of philosopher-kings. But once they come into the picture, Glaucon is removed as ruler. From the introduction of philosopher-kings to the beginning of Book 8, which details the penultimate moments of the City’s corruption when it is no longer in safe hands, Socrates does not assign rule to Glaucon.

In this stretch of the text there are three exceptions to Glaucon’s demotion that are exceptions that prove the rule. They also account for his demotion. In the first Glaucon is called a ‘lawgiver,’ but in the past tense, which confirms he is no longer the City’s lawgiver (497d1.) The second and third exceptions account for this.

The second exception is the phrase, “your Kallipolis,” which, in assigning ownership to Glaucon, characterizes the City as *Kalon*, beautiful or noble (527c2). This is the first of two names given to the City. The second is Aristocracy. Settling on Aristocracy as the correct name is the first step in grasping the character of the second exception.

Kallipolis is a *hapax legomenon*, occurring nowhere else in Plato’s writings. The textual evidence favouring Aristocracy or Best City rather than Kallipolis as the appropriate name for the City is conclusive. Aristocracy is ascribed to the City directly three times, indirectly once and twice before the institution of philosopher-kings (544e7, 545c9, 547c6; 497b7; 427e7, 445d6). But the choice of Best City over Kallipolis is not only a function of numbers. It also reflects the greater importance of the Good, and thus of the *Aristos* or Best over the *Kalon* in the *Republic*. Socrates provides a decisive example of this superiority when he states that the Idea of the Good is ‘sovereign’ over all things and, of prime importance in this context, the ‘cause’ of the *Kalon* (517b8–c2). Aristocracy or Best City bears the name of a cause while Kallipolis bears the name of an effect of this cause. The names cannot be treated as equipollent. To do so would confuse cause and effect.

<sup>24</sup> Halliwell (192) brings to light an aspect of current scholarship. His bibliography lists three books on the *Republic*: Annas, Cross and Woosley, White. None refer to this passage. All treat it as ‘incidental.’

Since Kallipolis occurs only once, it can derive its significance solely from its context, which is the fact that it is a Kallipolis for Glaucon. 'Beautiful' or 'noble' are imputed to the City insofar as it answers to the character, needs, desires, aspirations or interests of Glaucon and of the type he represents.<sup>25</sup> Glaucon hits the ceiling set by the lower status of the *Kalon* when he balks at philosophers being compelled to go back down to the Cave (519c5, d8–9). He balks because, as Socrates points out, he operates within an experience of the *Kalon* that recoils at acts performed out of necessity or compulsion (540b2–5). Book 1 initiates this theme when, in answer to a question from Glaucon concerning what motivates rulers, he is told that the good will rule only because of 'necessity' (347c3).<sup>26</sup> The third exception completes the picture of Glaucon's ineligibility to be a philosopher-king by showing what lies beyond the ceiling set by the *Kalon*.

While discussing dialectic, Socrates appears both to deny and to grant Glaucon mastery of it (533a1–6, 534d3–535a2). The latter is conditional on a future Glaucon who rules and understands dialectic sufficiently to rank-order it with respect to other disciplines (534d3–535a1). The text contains nothing about this future Glaucon being different, for example, being more philosophical, that would account for this. A rationale is necessary since earlier Socrates denies that the *Republic* has an account of dialectic and adds that even if there were it would be inaccessible to Glaucon (533a1–6). The two passages can be reconciled. The earlier passage slights Glaucon by drawing attention to his limitations. The slight is real. There is no account of dialectic in the book and the historical Glaucon was not a philosopher; but it is pointless in the absence of the second passage. The latter passage implies that knowledge of dialectic is a necessary condition for being a philosopher-king; hence it makes sense of the first passage. The contrast between the two passages reveals what is at stake in denying Glaucon rule over the City: an aptitude for and a knowledge of dialectic. It follows that Glaucon cannot be a philosopher-king. Once the Best City becomes a philosophic city it is universal and no longer specifically Greek.

There is more evidence demonstrating the significance of the City's universality. The Greek kinship whereby Greeks treat Greeks humanely is based on shared holy places. In a move consonant with the elimination of a Greek thumb print on the City, Socrates takes the Greek gods out of the picture. From the introduction of philosopher-kings to the end of Book 7, the text contains no references to Greek holy places and Olympian gods other than oaths in the frame conversation (e.g., 489d). The only references to the gods in these pages, ascriptions of divinity to the Idea of the Good and the god as demiurge, maker

---

<sup>25</sup> Jowett and Campbell (35), followed by Adam, draw the connection between Kallipolis and Glaucon. Adam (119).

<sup>26</sup> Ferrari (52-7) unpacks this theme.



of the Ideas, suggest a universally accessible philosophical theology (508a–b, 530a, 597c). This signals that, once the Best City is universal, its bonds of kinship will not be local gods, even if it's a Greek city. Glaucon's demotion and the elimination of Greek gods are demonstrations of Socrates' commitment to its universality and proofs of this passage's significance.

Since the division of the *Republic* into books cannot be ascribed to Plato, 'the end of Book 7,' a refrain in these pages, literally means the end in an important respect of the account of the City's essential features. A reference to the Pythia marks this point (540c1). It is the first reference to Olympians since philosopher-kings were introduced. Post Pythia, just before Book 8, Socrates returns to the issue of sexual equality and offers the book's only practical advice for instituting the City, i.e., expel all over the age of 10. Socrates' pointed words to Glaucon—nothing in the context calls for this—that women are potential philosopher-rulers serves as a reminder that the argument for sexual equality, even though it may be ridiculed, is not a joke.<sup>27</sup> Allan Bloom offers guidance on the second issue. Socrates' assertion, when enlarging the City's horizons, that philosophers come to rule when 'necessity' intervenes appears to deny a role for human agency. The post Pythian advice, which, Moses like, looks to a new generation, suggests the necessity will be provided by orators with near omnipotent powers and thus is no solution. As Bloom points out, this undermines claims that Plato envisioned the Best City as a practical proposal.<sup>28</sup> However, since the Best City's role as a paradigm is not conditional on its coming into existence, this does not undercut its usefulness for evaluating extant polities in the world (472c4–e6, esp. d4–7). In this respect the post Pythian interlude adds nothing to the essence of the Best City, however much it may effect other aspects of the issue of justice. If the post Pythian horizon does not compromise the desirability of sexual equality, why would it compromise the argument against slavery's potential to point to a desirable outcome?

The City's universality in the absence of an implicit argument against slavery leaves some puzzles in its wake. Did Plato nod, allowing for barbarian philosopher-kings, allowing Greeks to enslave them but enjoining Greeks, because they worship Olympians, not to enslave each other, and then dismissing the Olympians when the City comes into its own? Was he devoid of a rationale when offering a justification for barbarian slavery that is implicit? On the other hand, the presence of an implicit argument against slavery brings into focus the City's failure in Book 8 (547b2–c4).

This failure leads to five changes. (1) Factions replace the rule of philosopher-kings; (2) private property replaces communism; (3) 'supporters' are enslaved. (4) Timocracy dedicates itself to war; and (5) it turns to

<sup>27</sup> (466c–d) asserts female and male can be members of the City's three classes. Mckeen unpacks this passage.

<sup>28</sup> Bloom (409-1), also Ferrari note 26 above.

‘guarding slaves’ (547b2–c4). The first two changes are of an essential character. They undo necessary conditions of the City’s realization (457d–466c, 477d). Leaving aside the third change, the fourth shares the same character. Dedication to war is the specific difference of Timocracy, marking it off from the City. If the Best City had slaves, the fifth—guarding slaves—would be an incremental change, out of step with the three fundamental changes just mentioned. More importantly, it would ignore the evidence in the *Republic* about the importance of guarding slaves. In a passage that scholarship has ignored, Socrates asserts that guarding slaves is a task for ‘the city as a whole’ because it is a matter of life and death (578d3–e4, d12). The peril of owning slaves is not particular to the *Republic*. It recurs in the *Laws*.<sup>29</sup> It is not credible that Book 8 of the *Republic* states this extreme peril alongside its solution, and that the peril exists in the City but Socrates fails to mention its solution. Since the City’s auxiliaries are not assigned the task of guarding its slaves, the assertion of the peril, of its solution, and of Timocracy’s adoption of the solution are evidence that the City has no slaves. In the absence of countervailing evidence, this justifies putting ‘the guarding of slaves’ on the same page with the three essential changes already noted.

This follows notwithstanding Vlastos’ strictures about this passage. In order to deny this passage is about the introduction of slavery, he plausibly states that the enslaved are fellow citizens. He just as plausibly states that this does not entail that slavery is a novelty.<sup>30</sup> But, since it is also true that the issue of who is enslaved is independent of the issue of whether slavery is a novelty, he should have noted, as he does not, that his reading of this passage does not entail that slavery is not a novelty. In sum, the entire passage, *pace* Vlastos, is not about who is enslaved and whether slavery is a novelty. It is about the changes that attend the transition from the Best City to Timocracy. Since four of the five changes are novelties, it plausibly follows that the third change, the enslavement of fellow citizens, is also a novelty, especially in light of the only countervailing evidence Vlastos offers, the discredited reading of 433d1–5.<sup>31</sup> The most plausible reading of this passage is that it describes the decline of Aristocracy into Timocracy and does so by spelling out the essential changes that mark that decline.

The Best City—the philosopher-kings, a philosophic education, the Idea of the Good—is a universal human possibility. Regarding slavery, the discussion concluded, on the basis of the Affinity Principle, that while Greeks will not enslave Greeks they can enslave barbarians. A barbaric Best City will have guardians who will absorb this lesson. Hence they will own neither barbarian slaves nor, *a fortiori*, slaves of any kind. The rejection of slavery follows from

---

<sup>29</sup> See note 45 below.

<sup>30</sup> Vlastos (292 and note 3).

<sup>31</sup> See above Section I Examining 433d1–5.

the Affinity Principle. The text laid the ground for its application by retroactively establishing that slavery falls under its scope (471a1–7). Stripped of the distinction between Greek and barbarian, Affinity is a formal principle that enjoins the treatment of kin as kin, which now must take in the universality of the Best City. Consequent on this universality, Greeks and barbarians must share some relevant commonality.

In the context of this discussion of slavery, two ways suggest themselves for grasping this commonality. One arises from Socrates' assertion that Greeks and barbarians live in political communities that have a potential for philosophy. It will be referred to as the 'political.' The other way arises from the connection of *logos* and art (*techne*). It will be called the 'anthropological' and will be considered first.<sup>32</sup>

Given that art (*techne*) is common to human beings, the characterization of each of the Best City's three classes as artisan was for me the initial textual suggestion of this commonality.<sup>33</sup> Socrates provides the City, through the argument for sexual equality, with a basis in human experience rooted in art (*techne*) for grasping it. We experience its key premise when calling for competence, based upon art, in choosing a surgeon for one's family or for oneself. The need for competence trumps the need to choose male over female surgeon, or Scythian over Greek. *Mutatis mutandis* Plato shared our situation. Sarah Pomeroy concludes that Plato rests "... his case ... [for sexual equality] ... on the actual existence of female physicians in the Athens of his ... day, when the profession of physician was ... an ... occupation available to women that was respectable ... and ... required advanced formal education."<sup>34</sup> Since *logos* is integral to acquiring an art, it emerges as a means for grasping this commonality (454c7–d3, 455b4–c2).<sup>35</sup> Because the argument for sexual equality must be imputed to the Best City as such it follows that *logos*, which appears in the Greek Reform through the medium of the Greek language, is present, through a logic internal to the *Republic's* argument, as a term for understanding what is common to humanity.

This provides an anthropological justification for applying the Affinity Principle universally, on an analogy with the Greek Reform where 'holy places' are a bond of Greek kinship. Socrates designates the combination of the arguments for sexual equality and the abolition of the family as the "complete female drama" (451c2). This 'drama' articulates an inclusive view of human nature. Its substance is found in the equality of the sexes, which is

---

<sup>32</sup> Other issues of human ontology raised by the distinction between the political and the anthropological are beyond the scope of this article, also see note 37 below.

<sup>33</sup> *Cratylus* 390a2; *Critias* 113a.

<sup>34</sup> Pomeroy (500).

<sup>35</sup> Forde (658–60) on medicine as the core of the argument for sexual equality. Franklin (248–9) explores medicine as a star instance of the link between *logos* and *techne*.

grounded on *techne's* connection to *logos*. Hence *logos*, in this respect, is a bond of human kinship.

In addition, the text provides direct evidence of a political commonality. In the absence of a Best City, such a commonality between human beings is a necessary condition for the emergence of philosophy and the Best City at any time and any place. Socrates' unambiguous assertion of the possibility of the emergence at any time or any place of a Best City out of a pre-existent political community is decisive textual evidence for the necessary existence at any time and any place of this commonality.

Moreover this political commonality points to the political's primacy as the mark of human kinship. It is primary because it is a precondition of important human pursuits. Among the *Republic's* chief examples of these are philosophy and the arts. The account of the Cave shows philosophy emerging out of the political (515c4–7).<sup>36</sup> The Minimum City shows the political as a condition of a central instance of the anthropological. Only within the *polis* do the arts come into their own through specialization (369a5–371e9). Neither philosophy nor the fruition of the anthropological is possible without the political.<sup>37</sup> This yields the political as the primary means of grasping humanity's kinship bond. In other words, Greeks and barbarians, female and male, are akin in a politically significant respect.

If the foregoing is joined with the proposition that emerged from the Coda for Enemies stating that the possession of kin as slave is neither just nor humane, an argument against slavery follows:

- (1) Barbarian and Greek women and men are akin in a politically significant respect.
- (2) Those who possess kin as slave are neither just nor humane.

Therefore barbarians and Greeks who possess slaves are neither just nor humane.

Given that the City's universalization generates the major premise of the argument, the conclusion applies to it. How does this impact the City? The argument against slavery requires that an Etruscan Best City enslaves neither

---

<sup>36</sup> No variant interpretations of the Cave known to me include synoptically: (1) that some are prisoners; (2) that some are free; (3) that some free bear artifacts; (4) the fire; (5) that the Cave egresses to an outside.

<sup>37</sup> The assertion of a quarrel between philosophy and poetry, and all that this entails in the *Republic*, implies that poetry also makes a serious claim to be the chief complement to politics (607b). Poetry's presence in the *Republic* from the first stirrings in Book 1, with Sophocles and Simonides, to the full-blown critique in Book 10, provides another entry into the relation of the anthropological, i.e., poetry and the political.

Etruscans nor Greeks. Analogously a Carthaginian Best City does not enslave citizens of Tyre—not because they worship Baal in common but because they share a common human kinship and have traded in their old gods for a theological perspective, which, however lightly touched on in the *Republic*, is accessible to all. The City must be seen in this new light. It is a requirement of its paradigmatic character. However unsettling it may seem initially, from our perspective it turns out to have been more achievable than the proposal that philosophers should rule.

An observation is necessary. The argument may appear invalid because ‘akin’ is ambiguous. For example, if it means ‘similar *simpliciter*,’ so that human beings and chickens are ‘akin’ since both are two-legged, then this is untenable.<sup>38</sup> Two terms characterize a relationship of affinity: “one’s own” and “kindred” (οικεῖον, συγγενές, 470b6–7). Each conveys a literal sense of communal connection. ‘Akin’ is a place holder for ‘being in a state of communal relation,’ which limits its sense to the connection these two words convey.

### V The Myth of ER 615a6–b6

For all the unjust deeds they had done ... they [the souls in Hades] ... paid the penalty. ... *if some ... caused many deaths, either by betraying cities or armies, and ... [if some] ... reduced many to slavery,* or were involved in any other wrongdoing, they received for each of these things tenfold suffering. (... οἷον εἴ τινας πολλοῖς θανάτων ἦσαν αἴτιοι, ἢ πόλεις προδόντες ἢ στρατόπεδα, καὶ εἰς δουλείας ἐμβεβληκότες ...).<sup>39</sup>

This passage, condemning enslavement as unjust, has not been discussed by the scholarship. It contains the dialogue’s last reference to slavery. It connects it to the issue of justice. It is an almost antiphonal response to the first reference of this sort in Book 1, which has also gone unnoticed, inasmuch as it answers a question raised there as to whether enslavement is unjust in all cases. This passage provides an answer: enslavement is unjust in all cases. Before exploring what these lines imply, some t’s and i’s need to be addressed.

Because this passage has gone unclaimed, it is necessary to nail down its meaning insofar as I can. First, some have read the clause about ‘reducing many to slavery’ as another example of a cause of ‘many deaths.’<sup>40</sup> This is syntactically unlikely because the clause is governed by a conjunction whereas the causes of death, the betrayal of either a city or an army, are ruled by disjunctions.<sup>41</sup> It is also historically implausible. Thucydides recounts the betrayal of a city involving the death of males and the enslavement of women and

<sup>38</sup> The Appendix contains a formal proof.

<sup>39</sup> The Italicized words translate the Greek.

<sup>40</sup> Sterling and Scott.

<sup>41</sup> Smyth (§ 2856–63, 2869a, 287).

children where the purpose of enslavement is acquiring slaves, not their deaths (Thuc. 5.116). The Mytelenean debate treats slavery and death as exclusive options (Thuc. 3.28, 47). In addition, the result of betrayal would have been known soon after its occurrence. But David Braund shows that the effect of enslavement on mortality rates would have been unknown because of the dispersion of slaves after sale.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, in the *Republic* slavery or death is an exclusive disjunction. Slavery is a means of escaping death (471a6–7, 386b6, 387b5). Second, arguably this passage's condemnation of enslavement allows that some cases of enslavement are not unjust. But this requires subsuming the phrase 'reducing many to slavery' to the participle 'betraying,' which would have it follow from the betraying of armies or cities. However, as James Adam notes the phrase is 'parallel' to 'cause,' i.e., the finite verbal phrase 'they were the cause,' and as he notes, not to 'betrayal.'<sup>43</sup>

This passage may tempt one to think that it entails that slavery is unjust. However, it is possible to hold that, while enslavement is unjust, slavery is not unjust in every case. It is clear why the text does not here state explicitly that slavery is unjust. To do so would compromise the Greek Reform and, after all, Socrates had quietly established that both enslavement and slavery are unjust (469b8–9). How does this passage impact on the issue of slavery?

In Book 1 Socrates asserts that "... a city is unjust that tries to enslave other cities unjustly ..." (351b1–2). He follows this up with, "... it's the work of injustice ... to implant hatred ... among the free and slaves ... [which] ... will also cause them to form factions ..." (351d9–11). Since this implies that 'some cases of enslavement are unjust,' it raises the possibility that 'some cases of enslavement are just.' However, it does not of itself imply that this is the case. The two propositions are sub-contraries: both can't be false, both can be true, but the truth of one does not imply the truth of the other. Still this passage in Book 1 does raise a question: are some cases of enslavement just? As we have just seen, the Myth of Er answers this question: enslavement is unjust. Hence it is not the case that 'some cases of enslavement are just.'

Since the injustice of enslavement is universal, it must in all likelihood affect the slave population of every slave-holding polity and will thus be the source of faction. In consequence the injustice of enslavement makes it inconsistent with the unity, the freedom from faction that is the defining element of the Best City (462a–c). What these passages in Books 1, 5, and 10 jointly imply about the injustice of enslavement must give pause to anyone entertaining the possibility that the Best City could have communal slaves, a sort of Fourth Class, and nonetheless maintain its character as a paradigm of political unity.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Braund (113).

<sup>43</sup> Adam (437); he adds that Schneider attests to this reading. Schneider, C.E.C., *Platonic Civitas. Platonis Opera Graece* vol. I-III, (1830-1833), Leipzig.

<sup>44</sup> Hyde (22-4) makes a case for this implausibility.

This closes the book on the issue of slavery in the *Republic*. In addition, Plato never lost sight of the risk in keeping slaves. But whereas in the *Republic* the issue of faction is treated as a question of justice, in the *Laws* it is a matter of finding a practical solution. He recommends slaves speak different languages, thus putting a roadblock against their forming factions. To the best of my knowledge this is the earliest mention of what became, according to Jerry Toner, a commonplace among Roman slave owners.<sup>45</sup> These remarks about slavery in Book 1, which are revisited in Book 10, have found no takers, as is the case for the passage in Book 8, which vividly portrays the perils of owning slaves (578d3–e4; d12). Allow me to close my commitment to deal with as many t’s and as many i’s as are within my reach with two final examples.

First, a slave boy “taking hold of ... [Socrates’] ... cloak” initiates the events recounted in the *Republic* (λαβόμενος του ἱματίου, 327b4). The phrase occurs only once more in the dialogues, at Book 5’s start where it signals a new beginning in the dialogue’s argument (449b3). If a practical issue is a condition precedent to the *Republic*’s discussion of justice, Socrates’ encounter with the slave boy suggests chattel slavery is that issue. It is the only practical issue for which there is a partial practical solution that is linked to an argument grounding it on universal principles. Second, Plato makes use of the *Republic*’s narrative structure at the first opportunity. Socrates summarizes his first words in the dialogue, which were directed to the slave. Plato’s portrayal of Socrates allows us to assume he rejected reporting his first words based on a calculation made in retrospect of yesterday’s events. It is as if he had settled on two propositions: ‘It does not matter what I said to the slave boy yesterday,’ and, ‘What was said yesterday about slavery matters.’ There is a calculus leading to this result, which seems to me both sober and humane. The central image of the *Republic* is the Cave. Its core message is conveyed through the book’s most encompassing metaphorical use of slavery: we all begin enchained by the beliefs or opinions of our cultures. It is entirely fitting that a reminder of the reality of slavery introduces the *Republic*.

## Conclusion

The proposition that Plato argued against Greeks owning Greek slaves but did not condemn slavery universally is a near absurdity. Plato inherited a distinction between the few and the many that distinguished between Athenians, dividing them, on one side, into upper class families or oligarchs and, on the other, into the many or the demos. The *Republic*, the *Apology*, and the *Gorgias* convert the distinction into one between philosophers and non-philosophers. In the *Republic*, for instance, the sole rationale for introducing the Ideas, the Idea of the Good, the Image of the Sun and the Divided Line is to clarify the “distinction” between philosophers and non-philosophers (474b5). This version

---

<sup>45</sup> *Laws* 777c–d; Toner (19).



consigned oligarchic and democratic luminaries, a Critias, a Pericles, to be in the same class as bakers and sailors. From this perspective, Athenian luminaries had more in common with Etruscan oligarchs and silversmiths than with Socrates and Plato. The dialogues allow for barbarian philosophers.<sup>46</sup> The winnowing is clear. An Etruscan philosopher is one of the few. Given Plato's sense of philosophy's worth, he would surely object to her becoming Critias' slave (540c3–7, 496d4–5).

The near absurdity is compounded on turning to the rationale for the Greek Reform. The rationale is that Greeks share holy places. But, when philosopher-kings enter the picture these gods are set aside. The *Republic* goes on to consider a demiurge who is at the centre of the *Timaeus* and present in the *Statesman*, *Philebus*, and *Sophist*. The *Laws* turns to cosmic gods. All of this is unambiguous evidence that Plato had as much allegiance to Zeus *et al.* as Amos did to Baal. Plato uses the Olympian gods to further the Greek Reform but he cannot be supposed to have privileged Greeks because of these gods. If Plato did privilege Greeks, their common language would have been the only rationale for which there is evidence. But since Greek is not a necessary condition for philosophy, language, from the perspective of the distinction between philosophers and non-philosophers, is irrelevant.<sup>47</sup>

Of greater importance is the substance of the *Republic's* objection to slavery. In the context of the Greek Reform, Socrates states that slavery is unjust and inhumane. This characterization of slavery recurs in a memorable way. Abraham Lincoln, in the Second Inaugural Address, branded slavery once and for all in this way: "... It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces ...," adding that slavery's injustice is inseparable from its inhumanity, which is evidenced by "... drop(s) of blood drawn with the lash ...." It is implausible that Plato would avert this evil only from Greeks when the vast majority of Greeks and barbarians were united, in virtue of being non-philosophers, on the same side of the only meaningful divide, in his eyes, between human beings.

## Appendix

The Argument Against Slavery: A Formal Proof:

- (1) Barbarian and Greek women and men are akin in a significant respect.
- (2) Those who possess kin as slave are neither just nor humane.

Therefore barbarians and Greeks who possess slaves are neither just nor humane.

---

<sup>46</sup> *Pheado* 78a.

<sup>47</sup> *Cratylus* 389d.

A formal version of this argument is available. The second premise can stand as it is. But the first needs to be tweaked. Since it is true that ‘All barbarians and Greeks are human’ and that ‘All humans are either Greek or barbarian,’ the first premise can be reframed as ‘Humans are akin.’ This restates the proposition drawn from the text in a manner that makes it more amenable to a formal proof while preserving its meaning.

- (1) Humans are akin.
- (2) Those who possess kin as slaves are neither just nor humane.

Therefore, those who possess slaves are neither just nor humane.

( $Kxy = x$  is akin to  $y$ ;  $Sxy = x$  possesses  $y$  as a slave;  $Jx = x$  is just;  $Gx = x$  is humane)

- (1)  $(x)(y)Kxy$
- (2)  $(x)[(\exists y)(Kxy \ \& \ Sxy) \supset (\sim Jx \ \& \ \sim Gx)]$

$\therefore (x)[(\exists y)Sxy \supset (\sim Jx \ \& \ \sim Gx)]$

The proof: suppose  $a$  holds  $b$  as a slave. By premise 1, they are kin. But then  $b$  is someone kin to  $a$  whom  $a$  holds as a slave, so  $(\exists y)(Kay \ \& \ Say)$ . Hence, by premise 2,  $a$  is neither just nor humane. But this reasoning is with  $a$  and  $b$  completely arbitrary; hence for any  $x$  and  $y$ , if  $x$  holds  $y$  as a slave, then  $x$  is neither just nor humane.

**Acknowledgments:** Anonymous reviewers, Tim Hyde, Doris Olin, Cliff Orwin, Kurt Raaflaub, Dan Schiff who has helped at every step of the way, Chris Turner for editorial guidance, and Chris Campbell for his acumen when needed including the logical wherewithal for the Appendix.

## Bibliography

- Adam, James  
1921 *The Republic of Plato* Vol. II, Cambridge University Press.
- Annas, Julia  
1981 *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Oxford University Press.
- Anson, Edward  
2009 “Greek Ethnicity and the Greek Language,” *Glotta* 5 (30): 5–50.
- Aristoteles Politica*  
1957 David Ross, ed. Oxford University Press.
- Bloom, Allan  
1991 *The Republic of Plato*, Basic Books.
- Braund, David  
2011 “The slave supply in classical Greece,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*. Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds. Vol. 1: 122–33, Cambridge University Press.

- Calvert, Brian  
1987 "Slavery in Plato's Republic," *Classical Quarterly* Vol. 37 (2): 367–72.
- Chantraine, Pierre  
1968 *Dictionnaire Étymologique de la Langue Grecque*, Tome 3 Editions. Klincksieck.
- Cross, R. C. and A. D. Woozley  
1964 *Plato's Republic: A philosophical commentary*, Macmillan.
- Ferrari, G. R. F.  
1997 *Strauss's Plato*, Arion, Third Series, 5 (2): 36–65.
- Forde, Steven  
1997 "Gender and Justice in Plato," *The American Political Science Review* 9: 657–70.
- Franklin, Lee  
2005 "Techne and Teleology in Plato's Gorgias," *Apeiron* 38: 229–55.
- Garnsey, Peter  
1996 *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine*, Cambridge University Press.
- Halliwell, Stephen  
1993 *Plato: Republic 5*, Aris & Phillips.
- Hyde, Tim  
2009 "Plato's Kallipolis: Reasonably Free," *The Classical Bulletin* 85 (2): 1–29.
- Jameson, Michael  
1977 "Agriculture and Slavery in Classical Athens," *Classical Journal* 73: 122–145.
- Jowett, Benjamin and Lewis Campbell  
1894 *Plato's Republic*, Vol. 3, Oxford University Press.
- McKeen, Catherine  
2006 "Why Women Must Guard and Rule in Plato's Kallipolis," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87: 527–48.
- Morgan, Kathryn A.  
1998 "Designer History: Plato's Atlantis Story and Fourth-Century Ideology," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 118: 101–18.
- Morrow, Glenn R.  
1939 "Plato and Greek Slavery," *Mind* 48 (190): 186–201.
- Platonis Respublica*  
2003 S. R. Slings, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B.  
1978 "Plato and the Female Physician (Republic 454d2)," *The American Journal of Philology* 99 (4): 496–500.
- Raaflaub, Kurt  
1983 "Democracy, Oligarchy, and the Concept of the 'Free Citizen' in Late Fifth-Century Athens," *Political Theory* 11 (4): 517–44.
- Reeve, C. D. C.  
1988 *Philosopher-Kings*, Princeton University Press.

Schütrumpf, Eckart

- 2003 "Slaves in Plato's Political Dialogues and the Significance of Plato's Psychology for the Aristotelian Theory of Slavery," in *Ideal and Culture of Knowledge in Plato*. Detlev and Becker eds., Franz Steiner Verlag, eds. 245–360.

Smyth, Herbert

- 1956 *Greek Grammar*, revised by G. M. Messing, Harvard University Press.

Sterling, Richard and William Scott

- 1985 *Plato: The Republic*, Norton.

Thucydide, *La Guerre de Péloponnèse*

- 1953 Louis Bodin, Jacqueline de Romilly, and Raymond Weil, eds. Les Belles Lettres.

Toner, Jerry

- 2014 *How to Manage Your Slaves*, Marcus Sidonius Falx with Jerry Toner, Profile Books.

Vlastos, Gregory

- 1968 "Does Slavery Exist in Plato's Republic?" *Classical Philology* 63 (4): 291–5.

White, Nicholas

- 1979 *A Companion to Plato's Republic*, Hackett.