

Philosophy and the Foreigner in Plato's Dialogues

By

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ABSTRACT

The place of foreigners in Plato's thought remains understudied despite the prevalence of foreign characters, myths, and practices throughout his dialogues. Attending to this gap in the scholarly literature, this dissertation challenges conventional depictions of Plato as hostile to diversity by showing that Plato makes a compelling case for why we should engage with foreigners: the epistemological benefits of cross-cultural engagement. Through exegetical readings of the *Republic*, *Laws*, *Phaedrus*, and *Menexenus*, I argue that Plato finds cross-cultural dialogue epistemologically beneficial owing to its ability to provoke us to philosophize together, an activity at once conducive to the quest for wisdom and generative of friendship. Put simply, conversations with foreigners perform the same role as the Socratic gadfly of stinging us into consciousness. This finding has major implications for the field of political theory and, specifically, for the role of the new subfield commonly referred to as comparative political theory. By demonstrating the centrality of cross-cultural dialogue to Plato's conception of political theory, this dissertation suggests that comparative political theory is not a deviation from the tradition of Western political theory, but a restoration of it. As such, reinvigorating the practice of political theory as a comparative enterprise may be more crucial than most political theorists think.

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DEDICATION

*To my Pa (1945-2011),
who showed me the value of compassion
towards others and oneself—
“I sure could use a hug”*

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CHAPTER 1: THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF COMPARATIVE POLITICAL THEORY

“Where then, oh Socrates,
will we find a good singer of such things,
when you leave us?”

“Hellas is large,” he replied,
“oh Cebes, and there are doubtless good men in it,
and many barbarian races (τὰ τῶν βαρβάρων γένη).
Among them all seek and examine such a singer,
sparing neither money nor toil,
as there is nothing on which
you could more favorably spend money.”

-Socrates, Plato’s *Phaedo*, 78a

Plato’s dialogues have long been a staple of survey courses in political theory and a major focus of political theory scholarship. Indeed, across the generations, so many prominent thinkers have engaged Plato in dialogue that Alfred North Whitehead once quipped, “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” To spend a lifetime teaching and writing about political theory without mentioning Plato would be absurd. Yet, as this dissertation will argue, Plato would find it equally bizarre that the vast majority of political theorists hold his work in great regard yet teach texts exclusively in the Western tradition.¹ For, against the common perception of Plato as hostile to diversity, I argue that Plato considers cross-cultural dialogue central to the activity of philosophy. Proponents of comparative political theory are thus not asking their peers to take the discipline in a new direction by encouraging engagement with non-canonical texts. Rather, they

¹ For instance, a 2008 survey of political theorists found that almost two-thirds do not regularly teach non-Western texts. Matthew J. Moore, “How (and What) Political Theorists Teach: Results of a National Survey,” *Journal of Political Science Education* 7, no. 1 (2011): 95-128.

are calling theorists back to an ancient mode of philosophizing that lies at the foundation of Western political thought itself.

Since its emergence over a decade ago, the subfield commonly referred to as comparative political theory has seen numerous justifications. Scholars frequently point to the need to challenge Western political theory's claim to universality, showing how non-Western forms of political theory offer compelling alternative frameworks for thinking about the political.² In many cases, this basis for turning to non-Western thought is connected with what Andrew March calls a "critical-transformative" motivation—a desire to fulfill a social responsibility to counteract Western hegemony and domination.³ In a related vein, some justify comparative political theory in terms of the role it might play in mitigating the tensions that tend to accompany globalization.⁴ Finally, many scholars have argued for the epistemological value of

² One of the earliest proponents of comparative political theory, Fred Dallmayr writes, "The point of comparative political theory, in my view, is precisely to move toward a more genuine universalism, and beyond the spurious 'universality' traditionally claimed by the Western canon and by some recent intellectual movements." "Beyond Monologue: For a Comparative Political Theory," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 2 (2004), 253. Also see, e.g., Anthony J. Parel, "The Comparative Study of Political Philosophy," in *Comparative Political Philosophy: Studies Under the Upas Tree*, ed. Anthony J. Parel and Ronald C. Keith (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1992), 11-28; Hwa Yol Jung, ed., *Comparative Political Culture in the Age of Globalization: An Introductory Anthology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002); Roxanne L. Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Farah Godrej, *Cosmopolitan Political Thought: Method, Practice, Discipline* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

³ See the thinkers cited above and Andrew F. March, "What Is Comparative Political Theory?," *The Review of Politics* 71 (2009): 540-41.

⁴ Dallmayr suggests that comparative political theorizing "may well be conducive to deeper cross-cultural sympathy and hence to peace in the global village." "Introduction: Toward a Comparative Political Theory," in *Border Crossings: Toward a Comparative Political Theory*, ed. Fred Dallmayr (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1999), 9. More recently, scholars have argued that comparative political theory may help deliberative publics grow across borders by facilitating intercultural translation. Melissa S. Williams and Mark E. Warren, "A Democratic Case for Comparative Political Theory," *Political Theory* 42, no. 1 (2014): 26-57.

cross-cultural engagement. One major impulse towards comparative political theory emanates from the work of Charles Taylor, who emphasizes the “fundamentally *dialogical* character” of human life, arguing that identity is always formed through dialogue with others and hence difference must be respected and engaged.⁵ Others have likewise stressed how encounters with alien texts can, in Farah Godrej’s words, “dislodge settled Western understandings of political theory” and thereby encourage more self-reflective practices.⁶ While Godrej and others tend to see such encounters as fundamentally transformative, scholars such as Bhikhu Parekh have argued they need not be. Facing challenges to one’s way of thinking may in some cases better secure one’s sense of moral certainty “by uncovering and reflecting on the grounds of [one’s] beliefs than by forcibly suppressing the inevitable doubts with all the attendant insecurity and anxiety.”⁷ These scholars concur, however, that engaging non-Western voices is vital to political theory because it deepens our thinking and allows us to step outside ourselves in a way that more culturally familiar texts sometimes cannot.

At the risk of reifying the dominance of the Western canon, I would like to suggest that a more persuasive case for comparative political theory can be made by demonstrating that such theorizing is nothing new, but rather a return to the origins of Western political theory as

⁵ Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition,” in *Multiculturalism and “The Politics of Recognition”*: An Essay, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 32.

⁶ Godrej, *Cosmopolitan Political Thought*, 61.

⁷ Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 171. Similarly, March contends that comparative political theory “must leave space for political theorists to critique and even reject some of the non-Western views and theories that we are trying to bring in without fear of necessarily reinforcing hegemony.” March, “What Is Comparative,” 563.

articulated through the dialogues of Plato.⁸ Proponents of comparative political theory usually trace its intellectual heritage back to the work of comparative philosophers such as Raimundo Panikkar and thinkers in the Continental tradition such as Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Mikhail Bahktin, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida, and Eric Voegelin. However, by locating the roots of comparative political theory in 20th century thought, comparative political theorists are underplaying the importance of such theorizing. In fact, comparative political theory can be traced back to the thinker to whom many turn to rediscover the character of philosophy: Plato.⁹ Though not all care to model their practice of political theory after Plato's, the form of philosophy to which Plato gave birth carries significant weight. Consequently, if engagement with the thought of other cultures is shown to constitute a major element of Plato's philosophy, then that should serve as a wake-up call to myriad theorists to reevaluate their tendency to engage exclusively with Western voices.

To be sure, a few scholars have harkened back to the ancient Greeks in justifying comparative political theory. In fact, one of the first advocates of comparative political theory, Fred Dallmayr, connects comparative political theory with Platonic philosophy in his influential work *Border Crossings*: "Faithful to the Platonic motto of 'wondering' (*thaumazein*), the reflective theorist in the global village must shun spectral allures and adopt the more modest

⁸ Turning to the canon to justify turning away from the canon (by which I do not mean abandoning the canon) is, admittedly, a strange and perhaps paradoxical move. On the one hand, this is yet another study of Plato and in that regard another brick in the wall shoring up the primacy of Western thought. However, if the effect it produces is to encourage more engagement with non-Western voices, then it seems to me the criticism stated above is mollified. Moreover, part of the argument of this dissertation is for a wider understanding of the "foreigner" such that Plato may be taken as more foreign than usually thought.

⁹ Catherine H. Zuckert, *Postmodern Platos: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Gadamer, Strauss, Derrida* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

stance of participant in the search for truth.”¹⁰ Roxanne Euben, similarly, draws on the ancient notion of political theory as travel, arguing that “theorizing is an inherently comparative enterprise, an often (but not inevitably) transformative meditation between what is unfamiliar and familiar and, by extension, between rootedness and critical distance.”¹¹ Though not in agreement that all political theory is comparative, Susan McWilliams likewise emphasizes the “enduring comparative legacy” in the history of Western political thought.¹² Yet, neither Dallmayr, nor Euben, nor McWilliams sufficiently engages Plato. Dallmayr makes only a passing claim to the ancient origins of comparative political theory, emphasizing instead the challenges posed by the rise of the global village and the problems of Western hegemony. Euben engages considerably more with the ancient Greek world, but her focus lies primarily with Herodotus. There may be good reasons to turn to Herodotus for thinking about comparative political theory, but to convince political theorists of the ancient roots of comparative political theory, a thinker more commonly at the core of scholarship and teaching in political theory must be evoked. Finally, though McWilliams devotes several pages to analyzing Plato’s *Laws*, she admits that her book does not offer a “total interpretation of the work at hand,” but rather “selective meditations” on images of travel in Western political thought.¹³ My dissertation can therefore be read as offering a more sustained engagement with the place of foreigners in Plato’s thought than has hitherto been undertaken by an advocate of comparative political theory.

¹⁰ Dallmayr, “Introduction,” 2.

¹¹ Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, 10.

¹² Susan McWilliams, *Traveling Back: Toward a Global Political Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

Though originally setting out to fill a lacuna in the scholarship on Plato by offering a full-length study of the treatment of foreigners in his dialogues, my research has led me to conclude that Plato's conception of philosophy centrally features cross-cultural dialogue and therefore does provide ancient grounding for comparative political theory. Like many modern-day comparative political theorists, Plato, I argue, finds cross-cultural engagement epistemologically beneficial. For Plato, it is not so much that foreigners—or those with cultural horizons different from one's own—have truths to impart to us or vice versa. Rather, it is that conversations with foreigners can provoke us to philosophize together, an activity at once conducive to the quest for wisdom and generative of friendship. By unsettling culturally conditioned beliefs and testing our commitment to communal ideals, conversations with foreigners perform the same role as the Socratic gadfly of stinging us into consciousness. Though, like the journey out of the cave, the experience may evoke anger in some, if conducted under the proper conditions (namely, in the presence of a philosopher) such exchanges can be highly salutary. This is not to say that Plato thinks the only way to stimulate people to philosophize is to put them in conversation with someone from a different cultural background. However, as my readings of the *Republic*, the *Laws*, *Phaedrus*, and *Menexenus* will show, cross-cultural dialogue figures as one of the most significant means of provoking individuals to philosophize. Even when engaging in conversation with a fellow citizen, what often provokes philosophic conversation is the ability to transcend the cultural horizon both interlocutors share. Hence, philosophy for Plato involves, *au fond*, engagement with the foreigner.

This brings me to what I mean, and what Plato means, by “foreigner.” Based on my analysis, Plato's understanding of philosophy as bound up with cross-cultural engagement not only lends substantial theoretical support to the movement to engage non-Western voices, but

does so in a way that challenges the simple classification of peoples that many comparative political theorists have been eager to resist. As will be discussed at length in subsequent sections of this introduction, Plato's dialogues often work to unsettle conventional understandings of the word "foreigner". While not abandoning the traditional association of foreignness with origin from another land, Plato plays with the "peoples by places" classification in a way that reveals its ultimate falsity. The division between Greek and barbarian, *xenos* and *barbaros*, turns out to be less clear than many of his contemporaries would think. For Plato, what truly distinguishes people is not their place of origin so much as their own personal *nomos*—a term to be discussed further, but which essentially means cultural horizon. Insofar as the *nomos* of most individuals overlaps considerably with the *nomos* of their native land, Plato maintains the conventional classification of peoples by places. Yet, by highlighting the possibility of travelling beyond one's native *nomos*, Plato undercuts the typical association of person and place. To be a foreigner in Plato's dialogues is not so much to be from another place as it is to possess a different cultural horizon. Ultimately, uncovering this understanding of the foreigner in Plato's thought allows us to discern the potential value of non-Western texts in a way that both encourages us to wrestle with the categories of Western and non-Western and that admits of the possibility of judging a Western text to be, in essence though not in legal-historical fact, foreign. The turn to Plato thus helps to bolster the insistence of comparative political theorists that we engage with non-Western voices, while also offering a new framework for thinking about the selection of texts—one that allows for the inclusion of both Western and non-Western thinkers.

In the remainder of the introduction, I unpack some of the terminology and background information the reader must know to comprehend the chapters that follow. This chiefly involves explicating Greek understandings and perceptions of foreigners, as well as the contours of Greek

engagement with foreigners. I then defend the project at greater length by placing it within the scholarly literature on Plato. Platonic scholarship, I argue, has long missed the connection between Platonic philosophy and cross-cultural dialogue owing to common methodological problems in the interpretation of the dialogues. Finally, I end the chapter by explaining and justifying the methods of analysis used in the dissertation before closing with a brief overview of the contents of each chapter.

I. Historical Context and Concepts

1.1: Xenoi and Barbaroi

Though we must avoid the trap of historicizing Plato's dialogues (as discussed in Section III of this chapter), it is helpful and necessary to understand the context in which Plato wrote, particularly as regards the treatment and perception of foreigners. First, we must identify who were considered foreigners in Plato's world. The general word for "foreigner" in ancient Greek is ξένος (*xenos*). While *xenos* can refer to either a Greek or a non-Greek, it typically applies only to other Greeks.¹⁴ To understand this, one must recognize that though people often speak of "ancient Greece," this is a modern term applied retroactively and it is somewhat misleading. In Plato's time, there was no such thing as a politically unified Greece. There were, instead, hundreds of independent, autonomous cities, each with their own systems of government, laws, and customs. While the cities sometimes created alliances with each other by forming into leagues or confederations, they also went to war with each other, as did Athens and Sparta during Plato's childhood. Members of different Greek cities did not, in other words, consider

¹⁴ Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self & Others*, 2nd ed. (1993; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 62.

themselves citizens of a single nation. As F.W. Walbank puts it, “The idea of a Greek nation is alien to the thought of most Greeks at most periods throughout Greek history.”¹⁵ To an Athenian, a Spartan was a foreigner, and vice versa. In other words, the concept of foreignness in Plato’s time was—and, arguably, throughout all times and places has been—relative, for who counts as a foreigner depends on who one asks.¹⁶ From the perspective of an Athenian, however, members of any city other than Athens were foreigners or *xenoi* (the plural of *xenos*).

Yet, members of the ancient Greek cities also could identify with some shared sense of “Greekness” based on a common linguistic, ethnic, and cultural heritage distinct from that of other parts of the known world. All Greeks spoke the same language (though in different dialects) and prayed to the same gods. Moreover, they believed they shared a common ethnic and cultural background, and a way of life distinct from that of other regions. While belonging to politically independent and in some ways culturally unique communities, individuals from the various Greek cities saw themselves as part of *Hellas*, or Greece, by virtue of a similar nature and education. According to Jonathan M. Hall, this sense of belonging to a wider community developed over time, transforming significantly during the Persian Wars as a result of the emergence of the notion of the “barbarian”:

The invention of a barbarian antitype provided a completely new mechanism for defining Hellenic identity. In the Archaic period, Hellenic self-definition was ‘aggregative.’ That

¹⁵ F.W. Walbank, “The Problem of Greek Nationality,” in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. Thomas Harrison (New York: Routledge, 2002), 254-55.

¹⁶ Thus “foreigner” is so difficult to define because it is a relative concept: “No entity is inherently foreign; s/he who is a foreigner in one place is at home in another; as the familiar is altered or a boundary redrawn, so too is the character of the foreign: it is a linguistic and conceptual container with infinitely variable contents.” Rebecca Saunders, “Instability and Discipline(s),” in *The Concept of the Foreign: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. Rebecca Saunders (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 3.

is to say, it was constructed by evoking similarities with peer groups which were then cast in terms of fictive kin relationships within the ‘Hellenic Genealogy’ [...] Now, Hellenicity was defined ‘oppositionally’ through differential comparison with a barbarian outgroup.¹⁷

The word for “barbarian”, βάρβαρος (*barbaros*), originally designated a linguistic distinction. Indeed, it appears only once in Homer (*Iliad* 2.867) in the form βαρβαρόφωνος, which roughly means “bar-bar speaker”—a term derived from the Greeks’ phonetic perception of non-Greek speech. By the fifth century B.C., the term *barbaros* was in frequent usage and carried a pronouncedly negative connotation. For this reason, most scholars agree that the Greek – barbarian division crystallized in response to the Persian invasion. Scholars debate, however, when exactly the classification was “invented.” While Edith Hall famously proclaimed that “the polarization of Hellene and barbarian was invented in specific historical circumstances during the early years of the fifth century BC,”¹⁸ numerous scholars have surmised that the often violent colonial experience of the Greeks during the Archaic period played a significant role in Greek self-definition against a non-Greek Other.¹⁹ It thus seems likely, as Irad Malkin attests, that “the Persians were the whetstone against which a common Greekness was sharpened. However, the development of oppositional or antithetical identities was probably a gradual process, building

¹⁷ Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 179.

¹⁸ Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 1.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Christopher Tuplin, “Greek Racism? Observations on the Character and Limits of Greek Ethnic Prejudice,” in *Ancient Greeks East and West*, ed. Gocha R. Tsetskhladze (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 55-56; Carla M. Antonaccio, “Ethnicity and Colonization,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, ed. Irad Malkin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 121-22; and Wilfried Nippel, “The Construction of the ‘Other,’” trans. Antonia Nevill, in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. Harrison, 279.

on precedents.”²⁰ Regardless of when it was first invented, it is indisputable that the conception of Greeks as embodying all the virtues that allowed for a free way of life, as against barbarians, who were everything the Greeks were not, did not take full shape in the Greek imagination at least until the time of the Persian Wars, 490-479 B.C.

In fact, a preponderance of the evidence supports the conclusion that the Greek – barbarian classification really only became salient *after* the defeat of the Persians. Scholars who contend that it arose during the Persian Wars often cite Herodotus’ portrait of the Greeks freely uniting in mutual defense against the slavish Persian invading force, which suggests that the Greeks’ encounter with the Persians gave rise to the Greek – barbarian division. However, as David Konstan points out, Herodotus’ account of the war was likely written after the fact, towards the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.²¹ Consequently, we cannot be certain that Herodotus’ account of the Persian Wars reflects the actual sentiments of the time, rather than those of the time in which it was written. As Paul Cartledge explains, it even seems more likely that the Greek – barbarian division arose after the fact:

The catalyst was the defeat of the Persian invasion of Greece in 480-479, upon the failure of which the Athenians grounded their anti-Persian empire. In cold historical fact the defeat had been effected by a shaky and improvised coalition of a mere thirty to forty Greek states—out of more than seven hundred in the Aegean world alone; and the Athenians’ alliance was not as Hellenic as Athenian propaganda maintained. But that of

²⁰ Irad Malkin, “Introduction,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, 7.

²¹ David Konstan, “*To Hellēnikon ethnos*: Ethnicity and the Construction of Ancient Greek Identity,” in *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, 33-34.

course was all the more reason for celebrating the feat precisely as ‘Greek’, indeed pan-Hellenic or ‘all-Greek’, *pour encourager les autres*.²²

The Greek – barbarian division may have developed, then, not so much to unite the Greeks in defense of their homelands, but to shore up Athens’ new imperial projects.²³ This is further confirmed by Hyun Jin Kim’s study of ethnicity and foreigners in ancient Greece and China, which offers evidence that Athenians were less afraid of, than envious of, the barbarians. Thus, he concludes, “The Athenian invention of the past and their attempts to seize for themselves the mantle of the civilizer of mankind reflect their sense of inferiority vis-à-vis their neighbours.”²⁴ The Greek – barbarian division may, in short, have been motivated less by the threat of Persian domination and more by Athenian desire to be the dominators.

Whenever the distinction fully emerged, by Plato’s period there existed in the Greek popular imagination the notion that Greeks were fundamentally distinct from, and superior to, non-Greeks. To elaborate on what has already been said, by Plato’s time barbarians were often depicted as being everything a Greek was not: “Since the Greek ideals were wisdom (*sophia*), manliness/courage (*andreia*), discipline/restraint (*sophrosune*), and justice (*dikaiosune*), barbarians were pictured as stupid, cowardly, cruel, unrestrained, and lawless.”²⁵ Prominent too

²² Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 54.

²³ Also see John E. Coleman, “Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism,” in *Greeks and Barbarians: Essays on the Interactions between Greeks and Non-Greeks in Antiquity and the Consequences for Eurocentrism*, eds. John E. Coleman and Clark A. Walz (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), 189; and Konstan, “*To Hellēnikon ethnos*,” 36.

²⁴ Hyun Jin Kim, *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China* (London: Duckworth Publishers, 2009), 58.

²⁵ Coleman, “Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism,” 202. For more on the antithesis as the Greeks understood it, see J.A.K. Thomson, *Greeks & Barbarians* (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1921).

was "...the stereotypical characterization of the barbarian as being slavishly obeisant to oriental tyrants."²⁶ The servile nature of barbarians was also often connected to their perceived effeminacy, as females were considered categorically inferior to males.²⁷ Such characterizations were common across genres and mediums, appearing in ancient Greek tragedy,²⁸ comedy²⁹, and art.³⁰ Only Spartans avoided using the term *barbaroi*, referring to all non-Spartans as *xenoi* (all of whom were generally regarded as inferior and sources of corruption).³¹ Whether the negative portrayal of barbarians stemmed from racist attitudes or was based purely on perceived ethical and cultural differences is a question beyond the scope of this dissertation.³² What is relevant for

²⁶ J. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 188-89. Hall argues that the depiction of barbarians was "Athenoconcentric": "While the invention of the barbarian antitype need not have been restricted to Athens alone, the specific circumstances of the resistance against Persia and the prominent role played by Athenians at that time made Athens a particularly fertile arena in which ideas about the relationship between Hellenes and barbarians could take root, and it was undoubtedly Athens that stood to gain the most through the perpetuation of such a negative stereotype. It is no accident, then, that the stereotypical characterization of the barbarian as being slavishly obeisant to oriental tyrants should have been developed in the city that proclaimed itself to be the most free, nor that the qualities supposed to be most lacking in barbarians were precisely those that were venerated most highly at Athens." Cf. E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 2, 16.

²⁷ See, e.g., E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*; and Cartledge, *The Greeks*.

²⁸ See, e.g., Helen H. Bacon, *Barbarians in Greek Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University, 1961); and E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*.

²⁹ See, e.g., Timothy Long, *Barbarians in Greek Comedy* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986).

³⁰ See, e.g., François Lissarrague, "The Athenian Image of the Foreigner," trans. Antonia Nevill, in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. Harrison, 101-124.

³¹ See Herodotus, *Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 9.11.2.

³² Benjamin Isaac argues that modern day racism can be traced back to a "proto-racism" developed in classical antiquity. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Isaac is responding to the common perception that racism did not exist in the ancient world. For proponents of that viewpoint, see, e.g., Frank M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press

our purposes is simply that the Greek – barbarian distinction informed the thinking of many in Plato’s time.

For the majority of Greeks, then, identity operated on at least two levels: that of the city and that of the Greek community. The relationship between these two identities remains a subject of debate. Many scholars, such as Robert Browning, argue that “the primary focus of a man’s identity was his city. [...] A man was an Athenian, a Spartan, a Corinthian, an Argive, and he could neither change his city nor could he [...] be a citizen of more than one city.”³³ Others contend that these assorted identities were neither exclusionary nor hierarchical. Konstan, for example, proposes that “rather than envisioning a struggle between an outmoded allegiance to a polis doomed to extinction and an embryonic, unachieved sense of nationhood, it may be preferable to understand both Greekness and local ethnic identifications as competing rhetorical strategies, in principle available to serve a variety of interests.”³⁴ Whatever the case may be, it is indisputable that during Plato’s time one’s identity as member of a particular city weighed heavily and that citizens of other cities were thought of as foreigners, even if those outside the Greek community were seen as even more foreign. The situation is comparable to some degree to the relationship today between the countries of Europe or European origin. Just like the ancient Greek cities, these nations are politically independent and autonomous, have different laws and customs, and, though they sometimes form into leagues or confederations (*e.g.*, NATO and the European Union), they have often gone to war with each other. Yet, just like the cities of

of Harvard University Press, 1970); Tuplin, “Greek Racism?”; and Frank M. Snowden, Jr., “Greeks and Ethiopians,” in *Greeks and Barbarians*, eds. Coleman and Walz, 103-126.

³³ Robert Browning, “Greeks and Others: From Antiquity to the Renaissance,” in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. Harrison, 258.

³⁴ Konstan, “*To Hellēnikon ethnos*,” 31.

ancient Greece, the nations of Europe or European origin share a common religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage. Therefore, we might imagine that, similar to how a modern German would view the people of France as foreign but less foreign than the people of China, an ancient Athenian would view Spartans as foreign but less foreign than Persians.

1.2: Greek Relations with Foreigners: Complex Ethnocentrism

The foregoing discussion of ancient Greek conceptions of foreigners is but a caricature of actual perceptions, however. Just as the aforementioned description of modern Western perceptions of the rest of the world lacks nuance, ancient Greek conceptions of foreigners were more complex than a simple classification of peoples by city and by “Greekness.” To be sure, such generalizations are useful in that they allow us to obtain a basic grasp of how the Greeks viewed their neighbors. Nonetheless, with this simplistic picture in mind, we must now try to apprehend some of the intricacies that eluded us before. As we do so, we must keep in mind that many details will still have to be omitted and that many, for that matter, can and will never be known.

Though it is fair to say that the vast majority of Greeks generally viewed foreigners in a negative light, the truth is more complicated. First of all, non-Greek speakers were not always lumped together as one homogenous mass. Rather, “persistent traits [were] often represented in conformity with specific stereotypes. Thus, Egyptians are typically portrayed as deceitful, Phrygians as cowardly, Persians as luxurious, Lydians as addicted to sex, Thracians as savage and polygamous and Skythians as crude and uncultured.”³⁵ To be sure, the associations tended to be negative. Nonetheless, this shows that the Greek – barbarian division was not always as stark

³⁵ J. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 180. Also see Long, *Barbarians in Greek Comedy*, 139-143; and E. Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*, 121-133.

as it might appear. This is further confirmed by references to the possibility of barbarians acquiring the traits of Greeks and Greeks becoming “orientalized” through contact with barbarians. Ultimately, it seems that Hall is right to describe the Greek – barbarian distinction less in terms of strict diametric opposition and more in terms of a spectrum allowing for more or fewer degrees of difference.³⁶

Second, there is evidence that if foreigners were not admired, they were at least regarded as useful. For instance, we know that Greeks traded with one another and with barbarians.³⁷ Indeed, trade with barbarians was a major source of the slaves on which Athens’ economy depended.³⁸ Greek cities were also known to form military alliances both with other Greeks and with barbarians when they deemed it advantageous. Another indication that the Greeks at least at times thought it beneficial to interact peacefully with foreigners is the institution of ξένια (*xenia*). Commonly translated as “guest-friendship,” this well-documented practice of formalized, individual relationships with people from other cities stretched back to the Archaic period, as seen in the works of Homer. In a relationship of *xenia*, both guest and host were obligated to extend hospitality to one another when visiting each other. To violate the expectation of hospitality was to commit an act of impiety, for Zeus, god of strangers, oversaw these relationships. Specifically, a host was expected to offer his guest a safe place to stay as well as

³⁶ J. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 180.

³⁷ This may not have strengthened Greek perceptions of foreigners. According to M.I. Finley, “trade tended to strengthen suspicion of the outsider, for all its indispensability.” *The World of Odysseus* (New York: New York Review Books Classics, 2002), 102. For more on Athenian trade with foreigners, see S.C. Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³⁸ On the importance of slave labor in ancient Athens, see Cynthia Patterson, “Other Sorts: Slaves, Foreigners, and Women in Periclean Athens,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Pericles*, ed. Loren J. Samons II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 156-59.

food and a warm bath, while his guest was expected to be courteous and give his host a parting gift upon leaving. In Plato's time, guest-friends were also important sources of wealth and political assistance, sometimes to the detriment of the city as a whole. Alcibiades, for example, engaged in intrigue by means of *xenia* connections. *Xenia* relationships were ordinarily formed only with other Greeks, but they were sometimes formed with non-Greeks as well, including Persians.³⁹ Though these relationships were established individually without government assistance, there also existed an officially sanctioned version of *xenia* known as προξενία (*proxenia*). A *proxenos* would host individual expatriates and try to promote the interests of the foreign city he represented, though his primary loyalty was to his native city. Much like a modern-day ambassador, a *proxenos* would encourage cooperation between the two cities and play a major role in peace talks if war broke out. These forms of interaction with foreigners suggest that, at the least, many Greeks thought it advantageous to form relationships and interact with foreigners.

Furthermore, some cities even incorporated foreigners into their societies. Athens offers an extreme example, but we are justified in focusing on it since it was a major cultural and trading center in Greece as well as the city in which Plato wrote. First of all, Athens had a large population of chattel slaves. Though Greeks sometimes enslaved other Greeks, the vast majority

³⁹ Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 12; Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 62-63; Lynette G. Mitchell, *Greeks Bearing Gifts: The Public Uses of Private Relationships in the Greek World, 435-323 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 46; and J. Hall, *Hellenicity*, 103. Another major source of information on guest-friendship is David Konstan's *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

of the slaves in Athens were barbarians, often from Thrace.⁴⁰ The consensus is that in Periclean Athens the slave population was most likely at least equal to the adult male population, with most citizen households owning at least one slave.⁴¹ Though their status as slaves likely helped to reinforce the Greek – barbarian distinction, this shows that barbarians were at least thought economically valuable and that most Athenians interacted with barbarians on a daily basis.

The presence of foreigners within Athenian society was also augmented through voluntary immigration. In fact, the economic and educational opportunities in Athens attracted so many voluntary immigrants that about half of its free population was composed of μέτοικοι (*metics*), or resident aliens.⁴² While some *metics* came from other Greek cities, barbarians figured prominently among the *metic* population of 4th century B.C.⁴³ Additionally, former slaves who were set free by their masters could acquire the status of a *metic*, adding to the number of *metics* in the city. *Metics* were free people, but enjoyed fewer privileges than citizens while sharing—and, generally, taking on more of—the burdens of citizenship. Unlike citizens, *metics* could not participate in political decision-making processes and could not own land except by special decree, yet like citizens were expected to serve in the military and pay taxes, usually beyond those paid by citizens.⁴⁴ Only in rare instances were they granted citizenship, and such

⁴⁰ Todd, *Shape of Athenian Law*, 184. Also see Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1988).

⁴¹ Patterson, “Other Sorts,” 156.

⁴² R.P. Duncan-Jones, “Metic Numbers in Periclean Athens,” *Chiron* 10 (1980): 101-9.

⁴³ Robert Garland, *Daily Life of the Ancient Greeks*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), 117.

⁴⁴ For more on the privileges and obligations of Athenian *metics*, see David Whitehead, *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Library, 1977). Also see Todd, *Shape of Athenian Law*, 167-200; and Patterson, “Other Sorts,” 162-167.

conferrals of citizenship were usually only honorary, extended to individuals with no intention of living in Athens.⁴⁵ *Metics* could not marry into citizenship either. In fact, Pericles' citizenship law of 451/50 B.C., which restricted citizenship to those not only born of an Athenian father, but also an Athenian mother, made it more difficult for outsiders to acquire citizenship or bestow it on their children.

Though *metics* could never be the political equals of citizens, they could, however, be their social and economic equals or superiors. As David Whitehead attests, “‘horizontal’ criteria were potent, and Plato had more in common with Cephalus than with many a citizen *banausos* [manual laborer or artisan].”⁴⁶ In fact, wealthy *metics* exerted a strong influence on the city. As one scholar reports, some “used their means to cultivate their native religions: the cult of the Thracian goddess Bendis was officially established in Athens already in 429/28 BC, and there is evidence for about 15 foreign cults (e.g. of Egyptian, Carian, Phrygian, Syrian, and Phoenician gods and goddesses) in Piraeus.”⁴⁷ *Metics* were also able to observe and participate in the city's festivals and, of course, to engage in commercial activities. Hence, while *metics* were not able to exert their influence directly through formal political channels, they contributed significantly to the economy and culture of Athens. Their strong presence shows that, at least in Athens, foreigners were welcomed for the benefits they could bring to the *polis*, especially insofar as these benefits could be acquired while denying foreigners equal status.

Yet, in addition to making use of foreigners, Greeks did sometimes admire them and incorporate foreign ideas and practices into their own lives. The prevalence in Athens of

⁴⁵ Todd, *Shape of Athenian Law*, 175.

⁴⁶ Whitehead, *Ideology of the Athenian Metic*, 19.

⁴⁷ Balbina Bäbler, “Metics,” in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece*, ed. N.G. Wilson (New York: Routledge, 2006), 470.

Laconophilia—a love of or admiration for Spartan customs and practices—is well known. Additionally, one might note the enthusiasm some young Greek men exhibited towards the sophists, travelling teachers and intellectuals who came from all over Greece, including the colonies. Respect for other cultures extended beyond *xenoi* and to *barbaroi* as well. Most notably, Erich Gruen has posited that “the expression of collective character in antiquity...owes less to insisting on distinctiveness from the alien than to postulating links with, adaptation to, and even incorporation of the alien.”⁴⁸ While Gruen tends to be too dismissive of scholarship that highlights the negative portrayals of foreigners frequently found in ancient Greek literature and art, his study makes a compelling case for the oft-overlooked expression of admiration for foreign cultures in antiquity. This admiration for foreign cultures extends beyond the common example of Herodotus, whom Plutarch dubbed *philobarbaros* (“barbarian lover”) because of his appreciation for the customs of remote lands like Egypt and Persia.⁴⁹ Rather, a wider respect for foreign cultures can be observed in ancient Greece. Egypt, in particular, was revered as a culture of especially ancient origin and wisdom.⁵⁰ Furthermore, numerous Greek cities took pride in their establishment by foreign founders.⁵¹ These examples of expressed admiration for foreign cultures, both Greek and non-Greek, caution against taking the Greek – barbarian division as wholly representative of Greek views.

⁴⁸ Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 352.

⁴⁹ Plutarch, *The Malice of Herodotus*, 857a.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Anthony Preus, “Greek Philosophy in Egypt: From Solon to the Arab Conquest,” in *Greeks and Barbarians*, eds. Coleman and Walz (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), 155-174; François Hartog, “The Greeks as Egyptologists,” in *Greeks and Barbarians*, ed. Harrison, 211-228.

⁵¹ See, esp., Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, chap. 9. For more on foreign founders, see Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

What is more, there is evidence of a long tradition of observing foreign cultures out of curiosity about how others live and out of interest in learning from them. Known as θεωρία (*theoria*), this practice originally referred to a journey outside the boundaries of one's city undertaken to observe and report upon the great spectacles. *Theoria* generally took one of three forms: oracular consultation, travel to witness a religious festival, or travel abroad in a private capacity for personal edification. According to James Redfield's study of Herodotus' *Histories*, *theoria* was undertaken so that the traveler could return home "with a new appreciation of the only place where he is not a foreigner"; travelling thus "becomes ethnocentric and serves to reinforce the tourist's own norms."⁵² However, Roxanne Euben has convincingly argued that Redfield's account of Herodotus overlooks important aspects both of Herodotus' own biography and his work that defy the conclusion that he was wholly ethnocentric.⁵³ Herodotus was, first of all, of mixed lineage and hailed from Halicarnassus, a cosmopolitan port city within the Persian Empire. Second, throughout the *Histories*, he undermines the supposed superiority of the Greeks—for instance, by uncovering the Greeks' religious debt to Egypt and by praising certain foreign customs as superior to those practiced in Greece. Furthermore, Euben points out that Redfield's evocation of Solon as the figure in the *Histories* who most embodies the Greek attitude towards *theoria*—that it revolves around teaching others, not learning from them—actually does learn from foreign cultures when at one point in the narrative Herodotus reports that Solon brought back to Athens a particularly wise custom he found practiced in Egypt.⁵⁴

⁵² James Redfield, "Herodotus the Tourist," *Classical Philology* 80, no. 2 (1985): 100.

⁵³ Euben, *Journeys to the Other Shore*, 60-63.

⁵⁴ The law was that of King Amasis, "who ordained that every year every Egyptian should divulge how he made a living to the governor of his province, and decreed the death penalty for anyone who failed to do this or who could not show that he made a living in an honest fashion.

This is not to say that Herodotus' work or the practice of *theoria* more generally is free from ethnocentric prejudice. Nevertheless, it seems likely that Andrea Nightingale's description of *theoria* offers a more accurate account:

This activity emphasizes "autopsy" or seeing something for oneself: the *theōros* is an eyewitness whose experience is radically different from those who stay home and receive a mere report of the news. The activity of *theōria* also emphasizes an encounter with something foreign and different. This encounter with the unfamiliar invites the traveller to look at the customs and practices of his own city from a new vantage point. The journey abroad may end up confirming the theorist in his own perspectives and prejudices, but it may also function to unsettle him and even to transform his basic worldview.⁵⁵

According to Nightingale, it is the practice of *theoria* on which fourth century B.C. philosophers grounded their conception of philosophy. The new intellectual practice they sought to legitimize, which she calls the "spectator theory of knowledge" or the notion of knowledge as "seeing" truth, required justification because it represented a radical departure from previous conceptions of truth as something that is heard or spoken, not something that is seen.⁵⁶ To defend the idea of the philosopher as a spectator, philosophers such as Plato thus turned to the long-standing practice of *theoria*. Such an appropriation of the term *theoria* implies that travelling and seeing

Solon of Athens took this law over from Egypt and made it part of the legal system in Athens, where they should let it remain in force for ever, because it is an excellent law." *Histories*, 2.177.

⁵⁵ Andrea Wilson Nightingale, "On Wandering and Wondering: 'Theōria' in Greek Philosophy and Culture," *Arion* 9, no. 2 (2001): 33.

⁵⁶ In a related vein, Jeffrey Edward Green argues that the ordinary democratic citizen is not one who voices opinions, but a spectator who observes and listens to those empowered to decide. *The Eyes of the People: Democracy in an Age of Spectatorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

the sights was not so much connected with teaching foreigners as it was with learning from them. Hence, the practice of *theoria* offers additional evidence that Greeks sometimes held more positive perceptions of foreigners than their general antipathy otherwise suggests.

Finally, it is important to note the raging debate in Plato's time concerning the *phusis* – *nomos* question. The debate centered on the contrast between φύσις (*phusis*) or “nature” and νόμος (*nomos*), a word with a broad set of meanings that is usually translated as “law,” “custom,” or “convention.” *Nomos* encapsulates both the official laws of a society and its undeclared rules of custom and habit. Unlike *phusis*, *nomos* is a matter of belief or opinion and is of human invention. As a famous passage from Herodotus illustrates, it therefore often varies by culture even though to its believers it has prescriptive force:

If one were to order all mankind to choose the best set of rules in the world, each group would, after due consideration, choose its own customs; each group regards its own as being by far the best. [...] There is plenty of other evidence to support the idea that this opinion of one's own customs is universal, but here is one instance. During Darius' reign, he invited some Greeks who were present to a conference, and asked them how much money it would take for them to be prepared to eat the corpses of their fathers; they replied that they would not do that for any amount of money. Next, Darius summoned some members of the Indian tribe known as Callataie, who eat their parents, and asked them in the presence of the Greeks, with an interpreter present so that they could understand what was being said, how much money it would take for them to be willing to cremate their fathers' corpses; they cried out in horror and told him not to say such

appalling things. So these practices have become enshrined as customs just as they are, and I think Pindar was right to have said in his poem that custom is king of all.⁵⁷

Though *nomos* is alterable and manmade, it exerts such a powerful hold over most men that to them it seems sacrosanct. To act contrary to the *nomos* of one's society is often unthinkable.

This is because *nomos* gives order to the world; it is a world-building activity. Carl Schmitt's philological study of *nomos* reveals its essentially spatial orientation. As he puts it, *nomos* is a "fence-word": it marks boundaries and localizes human communities.⁵⁸ One consequence of this, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann imply, is the division of people by places:

Participation in the social stock of knowledge thus permits the 'location' of individuals in society and the 'handling' of them in the appropriate manner. This is not possible for one who does not participate in this knowledge, such as a foreigner, who may not recognize me as poor at all, perhaps because the criteria of poverty are quite different in his society—how can I be poor, when I wear shoes and do not seem to be hungry?⁵⁹

Depending on where one is raised, one will be exposed to a different *nomos* and that particular *nomos* will shape one's understanding of the world. One might therefore translate *nomos* as "worldview" or "cultural horizon." This explains why the *phusis* – *nomos* debate commonly applied to questions related to foreigners. Are some people barbarians by nature, or merely by social convention? Is there something in Greek blood and physiognomy that makes Greeks

⁵⁷ Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.38.

⁵⁸ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950; New York: Telos Press, 2003), 75.

⁵⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 42.

superior to barbarians, or is that superiority grounded only in education and culture? The very fact that such questions were raised, and that sometimes the answers challenged the Greek – barbarian division, shows that it is too simplistic to accept the generalization that all Greeks subscribed to the Greek – barbarian dichotomy. At the same time, the prevalence of efforts to order the world this way cannot be ignored. Greek attitudes towards foreigners are thus best described as a complex version of ethnocentrism.

II. Plato and Foreigners

As we have seen, Plato composed his dialogues in a context similar to, but also quite different from our own. Just as in today's world, attitudes towards foreigners in Plato's time were complex: foreigners were simultaneously scorned and admired, rejected and included, with attitudes varying by individual. The complexity of Greek attitudes towards foreigners should caution us against leaping to any conclusions about a particular individual's views. What, then, were Plato's views? The general consensus among scholars is that Plato was xenophobic. This conclusion gained traction primarily with the publication in 1945 of the first volume of Karl Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Writing against the backdrop of World War II and the now well-documented Nazi appropriation of Plato,⁶⁰ Popper set out to expose Plato as the first totalitarian thinker. His argument rests largely on the system of eugenics proposed by Socrates in the *Republic*. He also mentions Socrates' description of Greeks and barbarians as natural enemies and his expressed sympathies for Pan-Hellenism. Explaining Plato's distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks as a reaction to a great egalitarian movement represented

⁶⁰ On the Nazi uses of Plato, see Melissa Lane, *Plato's Progeny: How Plato and Socrates Still Captivate the Modern Mind* (London: Duckworth Publishers, 2001), 121-28, 152, n. 43; and Simona Forti, "The Biopolitics of Souls: Racism, Nazism, and Plato," *Political Theory* 34, no. 1 (2006): 9-32.

primarily by the sophists, Popper insists any other reading is misguided by blind adoration of Plato: “I am unable to find anything but hostility towards the humanitarian ideas of a unity of mankind which transcends race and class, and I believe that those who find the opposite idealize Plato [...] and fail to see the link between his aristocratic and anti-humanitarian exclusiveness and his Theory of Ideas.”⁶¹

In the years since its publication, *The Open Society* has been both celebrated and attacked.⁶² Though it is true that few scholars today accept the portrait of Plato as a totalitarian,⁶³ it is not uncommon to find scholars who agree with Popper that Plato shared the common Greek belief in the superiority of Greeks over barbarians.⁶⁴ Indeed, in most studies of the Greek – barbarian distinction, Plato is cited, either explicitly or implicitly, as one of the main proponents

⁶¹ Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge, 1945), 239.

⁶² For an overview of this historical debate, see Kyriakos N. Demetriou, “A ‘Legend’ in Crisis: The Debate Over Plato’s Politics, 1930-1960,” *Polis* 19, no. 1/2 (2002): 61-91.

⁶³ Indeed, readings of Plato as democratic or at least more democratic than previously thought have become popular. See, e.g., Arlene Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); S. Sara Monoson, *Plato’s Democratic Entanglements: Athenian Politics and the Practice of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and David Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato’s “Republic”* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁶⁴ There are exceptions, of course. Most notably, Jill Frank presents Plato’s views on foreigners in a more positive light, arguing that, “Holding conflicting beliefs together in a harmony that depends on their differences, even as it mediates them, is the work the *Republic* sets for judgment and hence, for justice, both within souls and cities and between these.” Frank even presents evidence, in a short footnote, to counter the claim that Plato viewed non-Greeks as inferior to Greeks. “Wages of War: On Judgment in Plato’s ‘Republic,’” *Political Theory* 35, no. 4 (2007): 462, 463 n. 7. Mary Nichols’ work on the incompatibility of Platonic philosophy and imperialism is also a notable exception. Mary P. Nichols, “Philosophy and Empire: On Socrates and Alcibiades in Plato’s *Symposium*,” *Polity* 39, no. 4 (2007): 502-21.

of this classification.⁶⁵ Moreover, as regards political theorists, it is telling that Bonnie Honig's influential book *Democracy and the Foreigner* opens with the declaration that in ancient political thought foreignness is equated with corruption, a claim she supports by referring the reader to a line from Plato's *Laws*.⁶⁶ Prominent political theorist Judith Butler likewise bemoans the "xenophobic exclusion" on which Platonic discourse depends.⁶⁷ In subsequent chapters, we will see that many interpreters of Plato's dialogues tend to concur.⁶⁸ Their positions will later be examined in more detail, but the common interpretation of Plato as an upholder of the Greek – barbarian distinction is typically inferred from xenophobic statements made throughout his dialogues, such as those Popper cites.

This brings us to the first reason to be skeptical of the commonplace conclusion that Plato shares the Greek prejudice of barbarians as inferior: the xenophobic statements often extracted from the dialogues to support this conclusion are not the unmediated words of Plato. While authors who interpret Plato as xenophobic are right not to ignore the expressions of xenophobia in his dialogues, the problem is that in most cases these expressions are taken out of context. To treat the words of any character, including Socrates, as though they were a direct articulation of Plato's position overlooks the fact that Plato wrote dialogues, not philosophic treatises. This

⁶⁵ For instance, to support the notion that Greeks "would have been appalled [...] at the idea of society as a 'melting pot,'" John E. Coleman draws on Plato's *Laws* and *Republic*. "Ancient Greek Ethnocentrism," 191-93.

⁶⁶ Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, 1.

⁶⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex,"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 48.

⁶⁸ These interpreters include, among others, Ryan Balot, Leon Harold Craig, Susan Jarratt, Rory Ong, Stanley Rosen, Paul Shorey, and R.F. Stalley. Though their views are somewhat more nuanced, Michael Kochin, Thomas Pangle, and Eric Voegelin also come down on the side of Plato exhibiting a preference for Greeks.

means that we cannot read a Platonic dialogue properly unless we treat it as a literary work whose characters, setting, actions, and other dramatic features work together to convey the meaning of the whole. As Leo Strauss puts it, “If someone quotes a passage from the dialogues in order to prove that Plato held such and such a view, he acts about as reasonably as if he were to assert that according to Shakespeare life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”⁶⁹ Just because one of Plato’s characters expresses xenophobic sentiments does not mean that Plato himself is xenophobic. In fact, taking the statements of Plato’s characters as representative of Plato’s views leads nowhere. After all, though there are instances when a character affirms the Greek – barbarian distinction, there are also numerous examples of statements that directly or indirectly undermine this classification.⁷⁰ Are we to take as Plato’s views Socrates’ assertion in the *Republic* that Greeks and barbarians are natural enemies (470c-e), or the Eleatic Stranger’s claim in the *Statesman* that Greeks err by dividing the human race into Greeks and barbarians (262c-263a)? If we choose Socrates’ claim on the grounds that he was Plato’s teacher and the model philosopher of his dialogues, what then do we make of Socrates’ statement in the *Theaetetus* that philosophers think praises of lineage “betray an altogether dull and narrow vision on the part of those who utter them; because of lack of education they cannot keep their eyes fixed upon the whole and are unable to calculate that every man has had countless thousands of ancestors and progenitors, among whom have been in any instance rich and poor, kings and slaves, barbarians (βάρβαροι) and Greeks” (174e-175a)?⁷¹

⁶⁹ Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 50.

⁷⁰ H.C. Baldry notes these contradictory statements with puzzlement. *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 72-87.

⁷¹ Plato, “Theaetetus,” in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1921).

Which of Plato's Socrates' is his mouthpiece?⁷² How, too, are we to decide which of Socrates' words are really true to Plato's views when not only throughout the corpus, but within a single dialogue, Socrates contradicts himself? Can we accept Socrates' declaration in the *Republic* that barbarians are natural enemies when elsewhere in the dialogue he raises the possibility of his ideal regime arising in a barbarian land? What do we make, moreover, of the fact that Socrates sometimes seems to make bad arguments deliberately, that at times he attributes his arguments to his interlocutors, and that a common theme across the dialogues is the need to adapt one's speech to the needs of one's interlocutors? Taking any line of a Platonic dialogue out of its larger context is like capturing a sound bite: it can be misleading or inaccurate. Unfortunately, many scholars continue to approach Plato's dialogues as treatises, despite widespread acknowledgment that this poses problems.

A second reason to be skeptical of the conclusion that Plato is xenophobic is found in some of the details of his, admittedly sketchy, biography. On the one hand, it is true that Plato owned slaves⁷³ and that nothing in his personal letters indicates any questioning of the Greek – barbarian distinction.⁷⁴ Yet, there is also evidence that Plato spent a number of years travelling in

⁷² On the dangers of taking Socrates as Plato's mouthpiece, see Debra Nails, "Mouthpiece Schmouthpiece," in *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity*, ed. Gerald A. Press (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 15-26.

⁷³ In his will, Plato mentions five household servants, four of whom he leaves and one of whom he enfranchises. Debra Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 249.

⁷⁴ Plato's letters are of doubtful authenticity. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that in the letters sometimes ascribed to him, Plato does use the language of Greeks and barbarians. His use is mostly descriptive per the custom of his time, except for in the *Seventh Letter* when he mentions that if Dionysius followed his recommended course of action, he would become dominate over barbarians and double his father's empire (332e). This statement is made, however, just after the author admits that to reveal to Dionysius his deficiencies in virtue he had to present his admonition "in veiled terms." Moreover, his argument to Dionysius strangely resembles Socrates' argument to Alcibiades in *Alcibiades I* (now generally regarded as authentic). Like the

search of knowledge—*i.e.*, engaging in *theoria*. Following Socrates' execution, ancient sources report that Plato escaped with other followers of Socrates to Megara before embarking on an approximately twelve year voyage to Cyrene, Egypt, Italy, Sicily, and perhaps even farther east.⁷⁵ He apparently also wanted to travel to Persia, but was prevented from doing so owing to the worsening political situation there. Later in life, he returned to the Syracusean court in Sicily twice more on the invitation of his guest-friend Dion, who urged him to transform the new tyrant—his nephew Dionysius the Younger—into a philosopher king. Though Plato's travels cannot be confirmed (except perhaps those to Italy and Sicily, if one accepts the authenticity of Plato's letters), the extensive knowledge of non-Greek practices that Plato displays in his dialogues suggests there is some truth to these stories. Moreover, Plato's receptiveness to foreigners is shown through the fact that his Academy allowed both Athenians and foreigners to become members. Indeed, Plato's most famous student, Aristotle, was of mixed blood. Writing of Aristotle's experience of foreignness, Mary Dietz attests, "In Athens among Athenians, he is viewed as Macedonian and hence classified as a foreigner (*xenos*), if not (because of his lineage)

letter's author, Socrates promises Alcibiades that with his help he will be able to rule the world. Yet, all that Socrates helps him do is recognize his ignorance and thus the foolishness of trying to go to war when he does not know whom to war against or how or when. Plato's purported arguments to Dionysius could arguably be of the same nature. Finally, as Ruby Blondell points out, "even when an author speaks in her 'own' voice, questions of persona, voice and genre still arise. Plato's *Seventh Letter*, around which the discussion usually hinges, is not an intimate personal confession but a polished, highly polemical piece, intended for public distribution, with its own authorial persona and rhetorical agenda." *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 38.

⁷⁵ For an excellent account of Plato's travels (and the problems with relying on the anecdotal record for information about Plato's life), see Alice Swift Riginos, *Platonica: The Anecdotes Concerning the Life and Writings of Plato*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill Press, 1976), chap. VI-VII.

a barbarian (*barbaros*).”⁷⁶ If the *Apology* suffices as evidence, Plato’s engagement at the Academy with foreigners, Greek and non-Greek, followed his mentor Socrates’ habit of questioning anyone he happened to meet, “both foreigner and townsmen” (30a). Likewise, if the *Phaedo*’s account of Socrates conversing on his deathbed with Athenians and foreigners alike is believed, Plato may have also followed Socrates in this regard, for various ancient biographers claim that on his deathbed Plato received Persian *magoi*, who presumably attempted to cure him with music. Whether true or not, the existence of the story nonetheless suggests “those associates of Plato who inherited the Academy considered the thought of practitioners of wisdom from the east, especially Zoroastrian *magoi*, to reflect something of the ‘truth’ of Plato’s thought.”⁷⁷ While such biographical details cannot be taken at face value, the portrait that ancient biographers paint of Plato provides significant enough reason to hesitate to accept the conclusion that Plato was xenophobic. After all, even if these stories about Plato’s life are not true, the fact that members of the early Academy and other ancient scholars found them compelling suggests that they resonated with what was known of Plato and his philosophy.

The final and most significant reason to question the tradition of Plato as xenophobic involves the countless linkages between philosophy and the foreigner across Plato’s corpus. These will become more apparent in subsequent chapters, but here I would like to offer an overview of some of the most prominent examples. First of all, without exception, all of the philosophers who lead Plato’s dialogues are either—from the Athenian viewpoint—foreigners (Parmenides, Timaeus, the Eleatic Stranger) or, to some extent, presented as such (Socrates and

⁷⁶ Mary G. Dietz, “Between Polis and Empire: Aristotle’s *Politics*,” *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 278.

⁷⁷ Phillip Sidney Horky, “Persian Cosmos and Greek Philosophy: Plato’s Associates and the Zoroastrian *Magoi*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 37 (2009): 98.

the Athenian Stranger). For proof that Socrates is on more than one occasion presented as a foreigner we need look no further than the *Apology*, where he asks the jury to sympathize with him just as if he were a foreigner (ξένος) being asked to speak in another dialect, or the *Phaedrus*, where he describes himself as a foreigner in need of a guide (ξεναγουμένω). There is also Socrates' paradigmatic expression "by the dog," which connects Socrates with the Egyptian god Anubis who, like Socrates, can discern the true nature of souls. Thus Jacques Derrida writes, "Sometimes the foreigner is Socrates himself."⁷⁸ While none of the philosophers that lead Plato's dialogues are barbarians, the existence of barbarian philosophers is alluded to in the *Republic* (499c-d), the *Laws* (951b), and the *Phaedo* (78a). Moreover, in the *Cratylus*, the word σοφία (*sophia*) or "wisdom" is said to be ξενικώτερον, "of foreign origin" (412b).⁷⁹ Additionally, philosophy is presented in dialogues such as the *Republic* as involving a kind of metaphorical travel away from one's native culture.⁸⁰ Finally, readers should note the tendency throughout Plato's dialogues to draw on the practices of other Greek cities as well as barbarian cultures. If Plato is as hostile to foreigners as Popper maintains, how do we explain these frequent positive linkages between philosophy and the foreigner? What could Plato be trying to communicate in casting philosophers as foreigners and the thing they love—wisdom—as foreign?

⁷⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 13.

⁷⁹ To be sure, the attribution of words to foreign cultures often seems to function in the dialogue as a convenient escape from having to explain why the word is appropriate for the thing it describes. Nonetheless, many of Socrates' explanations for the names of things are such a stretch that it seems strange that with a word as central as "wisdom" Plato would not take pains to have Socrates invent an explanation.

⁸⁰ See Nightingale, "On Wandering and Wondering," esp. 33-39; and Silvia Montiglio, *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), esp. chap. 7.

Providing an in-depth examination of the treatment of foreigners in Plato's dialogues, I aim to give an account of the relationship between philosophy and the foreigner in Plato's thought. As stated earlier, my central argument is that Plato appreciates the epistemological benefits of cross-cultural engagement. While he does not regard cross-cultural dialogue as a panacea and, like any activity, recognizes that under improper conditions it can cause harm, Plato envisions philosophy as fundamentally bound up with engagement with the foreigner. To philosophize is, metaphorically, to travel away from one's native land and this often takes place through conversation with someone whose cultural horizon diverges from one's own. Though sometimes such divergences lead to conflict, under the right conditions a clash of cultural horizons can serve as the spark to philosophy. When this happens, cross-cultural engagement occasions a mutual search for truth that helps to bring about greater wisdom and friendship. Moreover, sheltering oneself or one's polity from foreigners is also attended by dangers. Consequently, Plato falls on the side of encouraging cross-cultural engagement because of the major role it can play in inciting individuals to philosophize. I arrive at this interpretation of the treatment of foreigners in Plato's dialogues by interpreting each part in view of the whole rather than in isolation from the larger context. The next section addresses in more detail my approach to the various methodological challenges that confront any interpretation of Plato, elaborating on what my exegetical method entails.

III. Methodology and Chapter Overview

One cannot interpret Plato's dialogues properly without contemplating a host of methodological issues. First, one must consider, in interpreting any object, whether there is a single meaning to be sought (the "author's intent") or whether the object permits of multiple

meanings depending on reader and context. On the one hand, I do not want to deny the potential value of creative readings, nor ignore the phenomenological insight that meaning is never formed “objectively” but rather is always bound up with the interpreter’s subjectivity. That said, I take it for granted that few writers write without a purpose and that few would be content if their readers did not strive, even if ultimately unsuccessfully, to understand them as they understood themselves. The care that Plato took in crafting his dialogues, as evidenced by his careful wordplay and use of dramatic details, suggests he wished to convey something. Indeed, it is from Plato’s *Phaedrus* that we derive the idea of “logographic necessity,” a principle of composition according to which every part of the text has a function in communicating the meaning of the whole.⁸¹ While a given reader’s interpretation may equal or even surpass Plato’s intended message, to ignore the intent of the author—especially one who has earned the admiration of readers across vast times and places—would be to do Plato, and likely ourselves as well, a great disservice. We must assume, therefore, that Plato has something important to communicate and that he wants readers to try as best they can to understand his message.

Nevertheless, the search for authorial intent must always meet the objection that Plato’s use of the dialogue reveals his aversion to the transmission of doctrines. Though Plato has traditionally been read as a Platonist, or as possessing a systematic philosophy, in recent decades numerous scholars have demonstrated how his dialogues often undermine the dogmatic views presented on the surface. Leo Strauss and his students, for instance, have shown how clues in the

⁸¹ Socrates introduces the idea of logographic necessity at *Phaedrus* 264b: “And to pass to other points, doesn’t his matter strike you as thrown out at haphazard? Do you find any cogent reason for his next remark, or indeed any of his remarks, occupying the place it does? I myself, in my ignorance, thought that the writer, with a fine abandon, put down just what came into his head. Can you find any cogent principle of composition (ἀνάγκην λογογραφικὴν) which he observed in setting down his observations in this particular order?” It was Strauss who first made a compelling case for interpreting Plato’s dialogues according to the principle of logographic necessity. See, *viz.*, *City and Man*.

dialogues can help the careful reader uncover messages that subvert the dialogues' superficial teachings.⁸² Others read Plato as even less dogmatic. Ruby Blondell, for example, argues that the dialogue form reproduces the Socratic pedagogical practice of inducing *aporia* in the reader by leaving all ideas open to discussion, thus “allowing Plato himself to escape the charge of dogmatism.”⁸³ Likewise, Diskin Clay contends that by refusing to speak in his own voice, leaving questions “flapping in listless suspense,” and filling his dialogues with obviously flawed arguments and slow-witted interlocutors, Plato incites readers to philosophize.⁸⁴ These deliberate attempts to obscure the author's own views accord with the critiques of lecture-style education offered throughout Plato's corpus. Rather than promote passive reception of information by writing treatises, Plato wrote dialogues to encourage active engagement on the part of readers. This is more in line with the nature of Platonic philosophy, which, as Peter Euben argues, entails

⁸² To be sure, Strauss' interpretation tends to give the impression that, underneath the exoteric surface of the dialogue, one can find Plato's esoteric teaching—a perfected doctrine of thought meant only for the few. There are indications, however, that Strauss himself did not see philosophy as compatible with dogmatism. Consider, for instance, this passage: “What Pascal said with anti-philosophic intent about the impotence of both dogmatism and skepticism, is the only possible justification of philosophy which as such is neither dogmatic nor skeptic, and still less ‘decisionist,’ but zetetic (or skeptic in the original sense of the term). Philosophy as such is nothing but genuine awareness of the problems, i.e., of the fundamental and comprehensive problems. It is impossible to think about these problems without becoming inclined toward a solution, toward one or the other of the very few typical solutions. Yet as long as there is no wisdom but only quest for wisdom, the evidence of all solutions is necessarily smaller than the evidence of the problems. Therefore the philosopher ceases to be a philosopher at the moment at which the ‘subjective certainty’ of a solution becomes stronger than his awareness of the problematic character of that solution.” *On Tyranny*, rev. ed., eds. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth (1961; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 196.

⁸³ Blondell, *Play of Character*, 42. Also see Hannah Arendt, on how the “two-in-one of the soundless dialogue” provokes thinking. “Thinking and Moral Considerations: A Lecture,” *Social Research* 38, no. 3 (1971): 417-446.

⁸⁴ Diskin Clay, *Platonic Questions: Dialogues with the Silent Philosopher* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 90-91.

eternal questioning and a deeper sense of confusion than of clarification.⁸⁵ In sum, by composing dialogues rather than treatises, it seems that Plato wishes to stimulate readers to independent thought and to avoid dogmatism.

While Plato's use of the dialogue makes it impossible to locate in his corpus any clear set of doctrines, this does not mean his dialogues never elevate some ideas over others. Indeed, when scholars support the idea that all of Plato's are designed to be aporetic by drawing on the theory of education presented in the *Republic*, they are supposing that Plato found this theory compelling. His dialogues thus at least seem to convey support for one form of education over another, as gathered through the confluence of his characters' ideas about education and Plato's decision to write dialogues. In a similar way, other views emerge from the corpus. One of these, arguably, is the notion that if through repeated tests an idea is demonstrated to be true, then we can assert it positively even while holding out the possibility that it may later be disproven.⁸⁶ This is akin to a mathematical theorem: a statement that has been demonstrated to be true using rigorous mathematical and logical reasoning. Theorems are built on axioms, or self-evident truths that are exempted from the necessity of independent proof. A theorem may be so widely accepted that it is effectively taken as axiomatic and used as the building block for another theorem. However, a theorem is ultimately only an assumption and can be challenged at any time. This is the nature of the truths to be found throughout Plato's dialogues. That is, there are

⁸⁵ Peter Euben, *The Tragedy of Political Theory: The Road Not Taken* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁸⁶ See, e.g., *Phaedo* 100b-102a, where Socrates explains that a philosopher will cleave fast to the principles that seem higher to him and not let those who attack these principles mix him up with specious arguments, but will rather perform a sufficient examination of the ideas before giving up their defense. Similarly, in the *Crito* at 46b-d, Socrates asserts that one must live by the principles found to be true through repeated examination, and only abandon them when a better argument overthrows them.

certain ideas that Plato elevates above others, the truth of which he wishes to persuade his readers. These truths should not be confused with doctrines, however. They are not beliefs to be uncritically adopted, but rather views that the reader should examine for him or herself; the dialogue form helps to discourage passive acceptance of any Platonic theorems. Though I reject the use of the word “doctrine” to describe Plato’s views, I am in agreement with Holger Thesleff that “[a] reasonable criterion for a Platonic ‘doctrine’ is to be repeatedly, in different reasoning contexts, brought forward by Plato’s Philosopher. But a Platonic doctrine need not be more than a theory or a thought experiment.”⁸⁷ To be sure, the search for authorial intent in Plato’s dialogues is complicated by the fact that he wrote dialogues rather than treatises. However, if one reads carefully, it seems reasonable that one will discover certain ideas elevated above others even if Plato presents them in a way that encourages readers to judge the truth for themselves.

This brings us to another issue that the search for authorial intent in the works of Plato raises: the relationship between dialogues. If we assume that Plato has a message, however provisional, to relate to readers, then where is this message to be found? Is there a consistent message across the corpus, or did Plato’s views change over time? On this matter, I tend to side more with the advocates of unitarianism than developmentalism. The developmentalist position maintains that the dialogues can be ordered chronologically and grouped into “early,” “middle,” and “late” periods, with the early dialogues presenting a more historically accurate portrayal of Socrates and the middle and late works showcasing the evolving philosophy of Plato himself.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Holger Thesleff, “The Philosopher Conducting Dialectic,” in *Who Speaks for Plato?*, 61.

⁸⁸ The modern developmentalist position can be traced back to Friedrich Schleiermacher in the early nineteenth century. It is more popularly associated, however, with Gregory Vlastos. Other proponents of developmentalism include W.K.C. Guthrie, Terence Irwin, and Richard Kraut, to name a few. For an account of the history of Platonic interpretation, see E.N. Tigerstedt, *Interpreting Plato*, Stockholm Studies in History of Literature, vol. 17 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1977). Cf. Alan C. Bowen, “On Interpreting Plato,” in *Platonic Writings*,

Without rehashing in full the arguments against the developmentalist position, let me highlight a few key points.⁸⁹ First, even adherents of developmentalism contest the order in which the dialogues were written. This is, critics argue, in part because even the so-called “aporetic” dialogues contain references to theories supposedly only developed in the later period (e.g., strong allusions to the theory of Forms in *Hippias Major* and *Euthydemus*). Nor has stylometric analysis solved the problem, not the least because it is possible that Plato was working on several dialogues at the same time and, as a master craftsman, could have employed different styles at will.⁹⁰

These problems with the developmentalist approach do not necessarily lead us to the unitarian position that Plato displays continuity of purpose throughout the corpus.⁹¹ However, on

Platonic Readings, ed. Charles L. Griswold Jr. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 49-65.

⁸⁹ Seminal works challenging developmentalism include Holger Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1982); Jacob Howland, “Re-Reading Plato: The Problem of Platonic Chronology,” *Phoenix* 45, no. 3 (1991): 189-214; and Debra Nails, *Agora, Academy, and the Conduct of Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995). It has been said that Catherine H. Zuckert administered the *coup de grâce* to the developmentalist position in *Plato’s Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009). For this assessment of Zuckert’s work, see Dustin A. Gish, “Platonic Dialogues, Socratic Inquiries: A Symposium on *Plato’s Philosophers*,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 40, no. 4 (2011): 181.

⁹⁰ See, esp., G.R. Ledger, *Re-counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato’s Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); and Leonard Brandwood, *The Chronology of Plato’s Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). Critiques of the stylometric approach can be found in most of the works critical of developmentalism cited above, but also see Debra Nails, “Platonic Chronology Reconsidered,” *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 3 (1992): 314-27; T.M. Robinson, “Plato and the Computer,” *Ancient Philosophy* 12 (1992): 375-382; and Charles M. Young, “Plato and Computer Dating,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philology* 12 (1994): 227-50.

⁹¹ Prominent advocates of the unitarian position include Paul Shorey, Francis Macdonald Cornford, and Harold F. Cherniss. For alternatives to both the strict developmentalist and strict unitarian approach, see Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Francisco J.

the whole I find the unitarian thesis convincing because of the careful construction that the dialogues exhibit. When reading a Platonic dialogue, details that initially seem trivial later reveal themselves to be significant⁹² and what often seems contradictory appears, on further reflection and in view of the whole, to be consistent.⁹³ If Plato took such great care with each individual dialogue, it seems likely he did so on a larger scale as well.⁹⁴ Indeed, for the interconnections between dialogues to be accidental does not accord with Plato's usual meticulousness. This is not to deny the possibility that Plato's views may have changed over time; he is a human being after all. Nonetheless, the consistency of references to certain ideas convinces me that there are at least some common threads linking the various dialogues.⁹⁵ Discrepancies are often explained by differences in the dramatic circumstances of a dialogue, so to fall back too readily on the explanation that Plato must have changed his mind is to risk misunderstanding him. Readers

Gonzalez, ed. *The Third Way: New Directions in Platonic Studies* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995).

⁹² For instance, upon first reading, the opening conversation of the *Republic* may seem like a mere artistic device for initiating the real conversation that occupies the remainder of the dialogue. However, once the reader reaches Socrates' description of democracy in Book VIII, Polemarchus' threat to overpower Socrates using the force of greater numbers takes on greater significance. This is but one illustrative example.

⁹³ This is harder to demonstrate satisfactorily with a single example. Suffice it to say that recognition of Plato's use of the technique of irony is but one well-known means of resolving what seems to be a contradiction in the text. Other examples will be presented through the course of this dissertation.

⁹⁴ According to at least one ancient source, Plato revised his dialogues continuously throughout his life. Dion. Hal. *De Comp. Verb.* 25.

⁹⁵ The fact that some dialogues contain only passing allusions to a certain idea (or no reference at all) while other dialogues present this idea in a more developed form does not negate this conclusion. After all, if Plato were following the mathematical model, we would expect each theorem to receive its own proof, but then to be used axiomatically in constructing the proof for another theorem. Thus, for example, the *Republic* offers a proof of the hypothesis that the just life is the best life, a truth that is treated almost as axiomatic in a number of other dialogues.

should thus assume a unity of the dialogues and only conclude that Plato changed his mind if no persuasive account of an apparent contradiction can be offered after numerous attempts.

To summarize my general approach, I assume that the search for meaning in the work of Plato is of primary importance owing to indications that Plato wrote with a purpose, as well as personal observation that most writers write to communicate something to their readers (even knowing that meaning is inevitably lost in translation to some extent). I further assume that though the dialogue form leaves Plato's views uncertain and thus indicates his unwillingness to transmit doctrines, it is possible to discover certain theorems that emerge from close readings of the dialogues. These are ideas that Plato generally found to be true, but that he did not wish to set in stone or simply "transfer" to the passive reader. The dialogue form helps to maintain the provisional nature of these theorems, while also provoking readers to philosophize and hence, perhaps, to arrive at these truths themselves. Finally, I assume that these theorems are consistently held across Plato's corpus. This is precisely why they are theorems. The discovery of a theorem in Plato's work may prove illusory, but I read the dialogues, at least initially, with a view to uncovering these theoretic truths even when the texts appear incongruent. In the next section, I explain the method of interpretation I use to discover what Plato generally held to be true regarding how one should treat foreigners. That method is best described as close textual reading grounded in the principles of Gadamerian hermeneutics.

3.1: Method of Interpretation

Plato's decision to write dialogues poses serious challenges to any interpreter wishing to grasp his meaning. Unlike with a treatise, where the author communicates his thoughts directly, a dialogue offers only an indirect expression of the author's views. Consequently, to uncover

Plato's intended message, we must treat his dialogues like works of literature subject to literary analysis.⁹⁶ This entails paying attention to dramatic details such as the setting, characterization, narrative frame, structure, and action. The arguments are important, of course, but they must be understood in relation to the dialogue's dramatic features. Moreover, we must not assume, as previously argued, that any particular character serves as Plato's mouthpiece. It is not far-fetched to suppose that Socrates figures as the hero of Plato's dialogues, but his words must still be interpreted within the larger context of the work. Additionally, even heroes have their tragic flaws. Interpreters must therefore be prepared to encounter Socrates' humanity, which is to say they must be open to the possibility that the dialogues reveal discrepancies between Socrates' example and the philosophic life.

Although my method involves textual exegesis based on the techniques of literary analysis, in my view no literary interpretation of Plato's dialogues can afford to ignore the historical context in which they were written. After all, if undistorted translations are of necessity to the close textual reader, then one must grasp—as best one can—what certain words in Plato's dialogues would likely have signified to Plato and his contemporaries.⁹⁷ I have thus examined in

⁹⁶ Scholarship focused on the literary elements of Plato's dialogues has proliferated in recent years. See, e.g., Strauss, *City and Man*; James A. Arieti, *Interpreting Plato: The Dialogues as Drama* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991); Kenneth M. Sayre, *Plato's Literary Garden: How to Read a Platonic Dialogue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); R.B. Rutherford, *The Art of Plato: Ten Essays in Platonic Interpretation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Albert Cook, *The Stance of Plato* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996); Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*; Blondell, *Play of Character*; Christopher Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*.

⁹⁷ The word ποίησις (*poesis*) serves as a prime example. When translated as “poetry,” *poesis* signifies to most modern readers a fairly unpopular form of literature incorporating rhythm and meter. However, the word “poetry” had a much more expansive definition for the ancient Greeks, encompassing oral storytelling, music, and dance. Moreover, the centrality of poetry to ancient Greek culture cannot be overemphasized. To transpose our own understanding of poetry onto an ancient Greek text would thus result in misunderstandings.

the original Greek every passage cited in this dissertation, including the Greek in text wherever relevant to my argument, as well as philological information on especially significant words. Furthermore, I have consulted scholarship on Greek history to help uncover the significance of various dramatic details. For instance, information on what a particular site meant to most ancient Greeks can help elucidate why Plato chose it as the setting for a specific dialogue. The same applies with his choice of characters. Since Plato often models his characters on real-life people, consulting historical research on these individuals can supplement our understanding of his dialogues, for, if one knows nothing about, say, Alcibiades, then much of the intended meaning of any dialogues in which he figures will be lost.⁹⁸ In a broader way, familiarity with the events and daily experiences of the ancient Greek world—particularly in Plato’s time—is indispensable to grasping Plato’s meaning. Ultimately, though it is important to ground one’s interpretations in the text itself, an awareness of the historical environs in which Plato wrote can make a literary interpretation of his dialogues more fruitful. I have therefore chosen to give attention to the historical dimensions of Plato’s work.

Whenever one attends to the fact that a text was produced in a particular time and place, one risks historicizing the work. The danger of historicizing lies in rendering the text a dead artifact, a relic of the past embedded in its own narrow timeframe and unable to speak to other generations. Here I draw on Hans-Georg Gadamer, who recognizes the importance of understanding a text in terms of the specific situation in which it was written, but warns against becoming so fixed upon the historicity of a text that one fails to give it the opportunity to say

⁹⁸ In addition to primary sources, key resources to which I turn for this kind of information include Nails, *The People of Plato*; and Betty Radice, *Who’s Who in the Ancient World: A Handbook to the Survivors of the Greek and Roman Classics* (1971; repr., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1982).

something that is true today. From his perspective, separating the past from the present in this way robs the claims of the past of any legitimacy:

The text that is understood historically is forced to abandon its claim to be saying something true. We think we understand when we see the past from a historical standpoint—i.e., transpose ourselves into the historical situation and try to reconstruct the historical horizon. In fact, however, we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves.⁹⁹

Not only does a strictly historical approach foreclose the possibility that the text may be able to speak to questions we too ask, but it also prevents us from uncovering the presuppositions that guide the way we view the world. Though when we read the ancients their ideas may seem alien to us, Gadamer is right to contend that we must recognize their influence on the present. As he explains, “We remain embedded in the social structures and the normative perspective in which we were reared and must recognize that we are part of a development that always proceeds on the basis of some preshaped view.”¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, it would be a mistake to treat Plato’s world as so divorced from our own that his thoughts are unintelligible to us today. While Plato’s texts may have been composed in response to specific problems, at their core many of these problems possess eternal relevance. To believe we have transcended the problems of Plato’s world is a modern prejudice that this dissertation tries to overcome.

The difficulty lies in navigating between one’s own horizon and Plato’s. On the one hand, one must avoid treating the text as so removed from oneself that it is only of historical value. Yet, at the other extreme, one must beware of falling into the trap of forgetting the inevitable

⁹⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 1994), 303-04.

¹⁰⁰ E.L. Fortin, “Gadamer on Strauss: An Interview,” *Interpretation* 12 (1984): 13.

distance between reader and text. Gadamer's approach helps interpreters navigate this tension by emphasizing that one should treat a text as a legitimate partner in conversation—that is, as something that speaks to us today—all the while insisting that a key element in this process is recognizing the historicity of the text. Gadamer advises readers to seek to converse with the text and in doing so to reach an agreement with its writer about the truth being disclosed. This does not, however, involve simply leaving one's horizon and entering into that of the author or, conversely, forcing the author to abandon his or her horizon and assimilate to one's own. Rather, both writer and reader always bring their own horizons to the conversation. As Gadamer explains, "If we put ourselves in someone else's shoes, for example, then we will understand him—i.e., become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person—by putting *ourselves* in his position."¹⁰¹ Even when one strives to be objective or to get into the head of another, one can never fully escape oneself. Gadamer therefore shares the deconstructionist insight that meaning is always lost in translation. In arguing that "[t]he real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and his original audience [...], for it is always codetermined also by the historical situation of the interpreter," he makes clear that two horizons can never become one, that the distance between the reader's horizon and Plato's can never be completely bridged.¹⁰² It is impossible to think exactly as Plato thought and to understand his intentions fully. This is true even when we are not considering a text written in a different time period and in a different language; it is also true of conversation with one's best friend. Gadamer insists that we not lose sight of this inevitable distance between the text and ourselves, for trying to merge horizons yet failing to do so completely can be just as

¹⁰¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 296.

revealing of one's identity and of the author's as the shared understandings that arise from a successful merging of horizons.

My method of interpretation relies on these principles of Gadamerian hermeneutics. I do not claim that the readings presented in this dissertation map perfectly on to Plato's own understanding of his dialogues. To deny one's subjectivity is foolish. Nonetheless, to the best of my ability, I have let Plato speak and have sought awareness of my own suppositions and prejudices. As evidence of this, let me attest that at various points throughout the writing of this dissertation I had to revise my projected expectations. The process was, in Alexander Nehamas' words, "circular, beginning with provisional hypotheses about the nature of the texts and the author we are reading and concluding with further, sometimes less provisional hypotheses about them, hypotheses that will guide further attempts at interpretation, which will sometimes become parts of new interpretations and will sometimes be rejected once new hypotheses have been reached by their means."¹⁰³ What I present here are the results of this on-going process, and should be taken in that spirit. To close this chapter, I will now explain the selection and ordering of the dialogues analyzed in the dissertation, offering therein a brief overview of the contents of each chapter.

3.2: Dialogue Selection and Order

Close exegetical readings place such strenuous demands on an interpreter that all but the most seasoned scholars must limit the number of dialogues analyzed. As such, the exclusion of certain dialogues from the present work is not easily justified. No doubt a number of worthy dialogues have been omitted. I can only hope that readers respect my decision to pursue quality

¹⁰³ Alexander Nehamas, *Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), xxi.

over quantity and appreciate that I attempt wherever possible—namely, the footnotes—to suggest possible connections to dialogues not analyzed in this work. Nonetheless, I will briefly explain my selection strategy so as to demonstrate that the dialogues left standing at least satisfy what I take to be the most important element of any treatment of a particular topic in Plato: its faithfulness to or representativeness of what is found throughout the corpus.

An analysis of foreigners in Plato's dialogues that ignores the dialogues most often cited as the loci of Plato's views on foreigners would be highly suspect. For this reason, the *Republic* and the *Laws* were necessary inclusions. The *Menexenus* was also a natural choice, given that it focuses more than any other dialogue on foreign policy and contains some of the most brazenly xenophobic statements. Furthermore, since Vlastos and others generally classify it as an early dialogue, including it in my analysis helps to counter any objections that my findings apply only to later stages in the development of Plato's thinking. Moreover, the *Menexenus* is one of the two dialogues in the Platonic corpus that features the speech of a foreign woman. The addition of the gender variable is pertinent to the present inquiry due to the close relationship in the Greek popular imagination between barbarians and the feminine. The *Menexenus* offers an opportunity to bring this variable into consideration. Finally, the *Phaedrus* struck me as useful because it pairs well with the *Menexenus* and emphasizes the themes of boundary crossing and cross-cultural communication. Additionally, insofar as this dissertation is a reflection on the kinds of sources we should be reading and how we should engage with writings culturally distant from us, the *Phaedrus* figures as an important resource. After all, it is the central Platonic dialogue that discusses the art of writing. That it does so through the telling of an Egyptian myth makes it doubly significant for my purposes. I trust that this sample of four representative dialogues

suffices to present, if not a conclusive, then at least a highly compelling case in favor of my thesis that Plato saw cross-cultural dialogue as central to the practice of philosophy.

The ordering of the dialogues takes its cues from the model of Socrates' anthropologic principle in the *Republic*: from city to soul. Chapter 2 on the *Republic* appears first because it offers the clearest presentation of Plato's understanding of the relationship between wisdom and place. Though often read as a meditation on justice within the soul and within the city, I argue that the dialogue contains a less explored layer, that of justice between cities and towards individual foreigners. Read with close attention to this relatively unexplored layer, the *Republic* emerges in large part as an attempt to educate the multicolored city of democratic Athens on its treatment of foreigners. Though the democratic regime gives the illusion of allowing for the peaceful co-existence of a variety of ways of life, the *Republic* shows how a democratic people's relativism ultimately allows for the very domination it sought to escape. At the same time, Plato reveals his appreciation for the openness to alternative ways of life that democracies cultivate, demonstrating through the conversation that philosophy requires the ability to adopt a sense of critical distance towards one's native *nomos*. Against both the excessive tolerance of the democratic regime and the excessive intolerance of the so-called just city, Plato recommends what the dialogue itself models: the open-minded, yet discerning practice of dialectic conversation. Approached through the art of dialectic, cross-cultural engagement can play a fundamental role in facilitating the philosophic enterprise and is therefore encouraged by Plato.

From the culturally open city of Athens in Chapter 2, I turn in Chapter 3 to the culturally closed communities of Sparta and Crete in the *Laws*. Whereas the *Republic* focuses on uncovering the dangers of the democratic city's extreme openness towards foreigners, the *Laws* reveals more fully the dangers attending a city that approaches foreigners only with hostility. It

does so by depicting a rare conversation with a foreigner visiting Crete. Though the *Laws* is often read as Plato's most political work, I argue that the dialogue does not in fact offer a blueprint for a city, but rather depicts one man's attempt to unsettle a pair of individuals from what he calls an "armed camp" (στρατόπεδον), a place in constant preparation for war against foreigners. Through this depiction, Plato makes clear that without cross-cultural dialogue no community can flourish. While the *stasis* characterizing a regime isolated from the outside world seems to allow for the protection of its good elements, such isolation stifles the spirit of learning and thus detracts from the regime's goodness. In such cases, it takes the voice of a foreigner to awaken the dormant passion for wisdom. While this may effect a substantial shift in one's beliefs, it may on the contrary deepen one's confidence in one's beliefs by forcing one to give a conscious defense of them. Either way, if approached with the help of dialectic, cross-cultural engagement emerges as epistemologically beneficial, with the potential benefits outweighing the risks.

While the chapters on the *Republic* and the *Laws* concentrate on interactions between cities and between members of different cities, Chapter 4 on the *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus* shifts the focus from city to soul. Here it is shown that the cultural clash between individuals that stimulates philosophy reflects a similar experience in the soul of an individual undergoing a philosophic journey. For Plato, there exists one true self, a properly ordered soul in which all of the parts work together in harmony. All mortals are alienated from the true self, however, because their souls are disordered, primarily as a result of improper cultural conditioning. The *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus* show that to move *closer* towards the true self, the soul must be turned such that one's *nomos* appears to be the *nomos* of a foreigner. Put differently, one must come to see the "foreigner within," *i.e.* to see oneself as a foreigner. Cross-cultural dialogue facilitates

this self-discovery. This is shown first in the *Phaedrus*, where by mirroring Phaedrus' interaction with the *metic* Lysias' speech, Socrates helps Phaedrus see a major aspect of Athenian culture—the emphasis on the quest for glory—not as familiar and natural, but as foreign and strange. Likewise, in the *Menexenus*, Socrates helps Menexenus see the Athenian cultural horizon as foreign by presenting it through the voice of Aspasia, a foreign woman. Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus* thus mirror each other, showing how the voice of a foreigner can generate greater self-knowledge by allowing one to consider oneself from an outside perspective. Moreover, I contend that this dislocation of perspective involves engagement with a more feminine mode of discourse, which looks foreign in a city like Athens where manly speech dominates. As such, there exists a fundamental unity between the philosopher, the foreigner, and the female, who all speak a language not of but outside of the city and, in so doing, help to provide perspective to those citizens willing to engage them.

Chapter 5 offers an overview of the project along with some concluding reflections. In particular, I return to the question of expanding the political theory canon. Given Plato's thoughts on cross-cultural engagement, what guidance can he offer political theorists on the role of foreign texts in political theory? Returning briefly to the *Phaedrus*, I show how the discussion on writing near the end of the dialogue underscores the interconnectedness of the world by reminding Athenians that their very letters and the papyrus on which they write them are a product of cross-cultural engagement. The same can be said of Plato's writings themselves, which not only make use of the Phoenician-derived alphabet and Egyptian manufactured papyrus, but also heavily incorporate foreign ideas and practices. Thus, while Plato's dialogues are often heralded as a unique legacy of the Western world, in truth they weave together a variety of cultural influences. Heirs of Plato's legacy are hence not as intellectually pureblooded as often

believed. To appreciate Plato's thought is to appreciate a bringing together of diverse *nomoi*, a unique cultural horizon forged out of engagement with peoples of various backgrounds and origins. In reflecting on the art of writing, Plato thereby encourages readers to look beyond the attributed origin of a text and to reconsider any conscious or subconscious aversion to the foreign, for the foreign is all too often part and parcel of the seemingly native. Uncovering the place of foreigners in Plato's thought thus has implications for how we do political theory today.

CHAPTER 2: THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGING FOREIGNERS (*THE REPUBLIC*)

“You don’t get harmony when everybody sings the same note.”

-Doug Floyd

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides
and my windows to be stifled. I want all the cultures
of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible.
But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

-Mohandas K. Gandhi

“Let music sound while he doth make his choice;
Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music.”

-Portia, Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Scene 2

We begin our investigation of the place of foreigners in Plato’s thought with his most famous dialogue, the *Republic*. Though the *Republic* is often read as a meditation on justice within the soul and within the city, the dialogue also contains a less explored layer, that of justice between cities and towards individual foreigners.¹ This chapter argues that, read with attention to this relatively unexplored layer, the *Republic* reveals the close relationship between philosophy and the foreigner. This emerges specifically from Plato’s understanding of interpolity relations as grounded in the notion that each *polis* or political community constructs its own unique version

¹ Oddly, the layer of interpolity justice often escapes the notice of readers. It is rarely the subject of scholarship. In some cases, scholars go so far as to note the absence of any treatment of the issue of foreign affairs (despite, as we will see, explicit statements on foreign policy). For instance, in the introduction to his translation, Robin Waterfield notes the “lack of mention of foreign policy” in the dialogue. “Introduction,” in *Plato: Republic*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), xvii-xviii. Likewise, Mary Margaret Mackenzie writes of the city in speech that, “this state, apparently, has no foreign policy.” *Plato on Punishment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 152-3.

of the cave. The cave is the political community's *nomos* or way of viewing the world, which, however useful, is imprisoning if not consciously accepted. Philosophic education allows one to transcend the cave by making visible the contradictions in one's *nomos* and by forcing one to contemplate these tensions. While sometimes these contradictions can come to light without the help of an outsider, in most cases the impetus to philosophize arises due to an encounter with someone distanced from one's *nomos*. This person, who does not share the *nomos* of one's *polis*, is a foreigner. Such a person can arise from anywhere, including one's own *polis*; that is, for Plato, a fellow citizen can effectively be a foreigner because foreignness is a matter of mindset, not place of origin. Nonetheless, insofar as members of the same *polis* are likely to receive similar upbringings, foreigners are most often those reared in other political communities. Additionally, foreignness lies on a spectrum, as Plato recognizes that individual experiences vary and more cultural interaction and exchange takes place between some political communities than between others. However foreign the person in question, the *Republic* reveals that philosophy is often occasioned by engagement with such a foreigner. The dialogue itself depicts such an encounter, showing how out of cross-cultural engagement can spring a mutual search for truth that, with the help of the philosopher's art of dialectic, can generate greater harmony both within the city and between cities.

This conclusion flies in the face of the commonplace assumption that in the *Republic* Plato treats foreigners (if not *xenoi*, then at least *barbaroi*) with hostility and advocates the politics of a society closed to outside influences. As discussed in Chapter 1, Karl Popper famously articulated this reading of the *Republic* in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, and it has since gained traction among scholars of various methodological backgrounds.² Several take it for

² Popper, *Open Society*.

granted that Plato shares his fellow citizens' prejudice that only a Greek city is capable of complete and rational life, *i.e.* that barbarians are inferior beings.³ Others see Plato as promoting Pan-Hellenism, an alliance of Greeks against non-Greeks. For Stanley Rosen, this is “not simply a matter of philhellenism in a cultural or political sense,” but “an expression of the blood.”⁴ Put simply, it is in human nature to love one's own more than what is alien. Eric Voegelin, on the other hand, argues that Plato supports Pan-Hellenism for practical political reasons. Though the order he evokes is that of the *polis*, he was aware that “[f]rom the point of view of practical politics, in the face of the Persian danger and of the rising power of Macedonia, this insistence on the small size of the polis was fatal....” As such, he took steps to ensure that the rules of war would encourage the kind of union of Greek cities needed to withstand the barbarian onslaught.⁵

³ See, *e.g.*, Paul Shorey, “Introduction,” in *Plato: The Republic*, vol. I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), xxviii; Kochin, “War, Class, and Justice,” 421-22; Ryan K. Balot, *Greed and Injustice in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 245-6; and Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 196-7.

⁴ Rosen, *Plato's Republic*, 197.

⁵ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Vol. 3: Plato and Aristotle*, in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. 16, ed. Dante Germino (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 174. Voegelin also discusses this issue in *Order and History, Vol. 4: The Ecumenic Age*, where he balances his more pragmatic reading of Plato with the acknowledgment that Plato's view of history reveals him to be a thinker with a comparatively open consciousness. First of all, though Plato views the emergence of noetic consciousness as more favorable in certain contexts than others, his conception of the inevitable decline even of the ideal state suggests that we cannot hold up any existing civilization as a sort of final model. Furthermore, Plato's “equanimity” is also shown through his insight that every culture is always attuning itself to the order of the cosmos “regardless of its position in the pattern of civilizational ‘advance,’” meaning that there is always a balance of good and bad in each society. Finally, Voegelin notes that since Plato did not, as Hegel later did, view any particular event as a sort of *telos* of human history to which mankind had been moving from its conception, he could “acknowledge the plurality of parallel civilizations in the field of history.” Voegelin tempers this claim by admitting, “It is true, he could rank the Hellenic variety of the historical course he had outlined highest, because it had flowered in the luminosity of consciousness” (287). Voegelin's ultimate conclusion thus seems to be that Plato had a comparatively open consciousness in that he recognized the intellectual accomplishments of foreign cultures and the impossibility of a perfect society, but that he

In a similar vein, some argue that the policies of the ideal city aim at preparing it for war because of an understanding that no city can survive without successful external aggression. As Leon Craig puts it, “the well-ordered regime is but an island of peace and friendship and decency, the better to survive and prosper in a sea of war.”⁶

In recent years, some scholars have challenged the reading of the *Republic* as promoting a foreign policy of simple hostility towards foreigners. The earliest scholar to do so is Allan Bloom, who argues that Socrates has the intention “of bringing men closer together and removing the obstacles which prevent the recognition of a common humanity, without at the same time undermining the principles which make political life possible.”⁷ More recently, Claudia Barrachi has also found some ambiguity in Socrates’ position, observing that he oscillates between the ideal city’s dependence for unity on opposition towards foreigners, and the injustice of a peace that cannot be shared and that requires acts of injustice towards outsiders.⁸ Jill Frank goes even further, viewing the *Republic* as revealing “the inadequacy of rules to constrain the *pleonexia* characteristic of war.”⁹ According to Frank, the dialogue reveals the

nonetheless saw the Greeks as ahead of others. This chapter challenges Voegelin on the point about the Greeks’ superiority.

⁶ Leon Harold Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato’s Republic* (1994; repr. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 17. Also see Balot, *Greed and Injustice*, 243. Along similar lines, Thomas Pangle argues that, in Plato’s view, the best regime would evaluate human beings “on an equal basis, regardless of nationality,” but that a sensible statesman must put the safety and welfare of his people first. Pangle, “Justice Among Nations,” 393-4; Pangle and Ahrens Dorf, *Justice Among Nations*, 48-49.

⁷ Allan Bloom, “Interpretive Essay,” in *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 388-89.

⁸ Claudia Barrachi, *Of Myth, Life and War in Plato’s Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 159-165.

⁹ Frank, “Wages of War,” 454.

problems with hard-and-fast rules such as treating Greeks as allies and non-Greeks as enemies, and therefore the necessity of developing certain virtues and the capacity for judgment when it comes to questions of interpolity justice. Frank even presents evidence, in a short footnote, to counter the claim that Plato viewed non-Greeks as inferior to Greeks.¹⁰ Finally, scholars such as Arlene Saxonhouse, Sara Monoson, and David Roochnik have argued that the *Republic* reveals Plato to be much more open to diversity and multiculturalism than previously thought.¹¹

Contributing to these recent efforts to read the *Republic* as a work of greater complexity than what appears on the surface, I argue that the *Republic* is not just a meditation on justice at home, but on interpolity justice. I argue in favor of this reading of the *Republic* by first identifying the various ways Book I impresses upon readers the dialogue's concern with the treatment of foreigners. Next, I bring to light Plato's vision of the world as consisting of nothing but feverish cities striving to conquer one another or avoid being conquered, and doing so through the construction of *nomoi*. In such a world, the democratic regime appears most attractive because it seems to allow for the peaceful co-existence of a variety of ways of life. Yet, as Plato seeks to demonstrate, this is merely an illusion, for a democratic people's relativism ultimately allows for the very domination it sought to escape. The ideal city also fails to provide an adequate model for interpolity justice, however, for it too offers only an illusion of freedom. For Plato, the just treatment of foreigners involves neither the tolerance of the democratic city nor the intolerance of the ideal city, but rather the willingness to engage foreigners in the open-minded yet discerning practice of dialectic conversation as modeled in the *Republic*.¹² Analyzing

¹⁰ Ibid., 463, n. 7.

¹¹ See chap. 1, n. 59.

¹² Of course, the conversation of the *Republic* is not fully dialectical; it also contains the telling of myths. What I mean to suggest by the phrase "dialectic conversation" is conversation that

the theme of music to develop this point further, I show how cross-cultural engagement as practiced using the art of dialectic fosters harmony and friendship. Finally, I conclude that, despite its flaws, the democratic regime best prepares citizens for the ascent out of the cave that philosophic education initiates.

I. Beginning with Foreigners

I.1: Socrates' Visit to the Piraeus

According to ancient sources, Plato took care throughout his life to revise his writings, and none more so than the beginning of the *Republic*, which “was found several times revised and rewritten.”¹³ Moreover, in the *Republic* itself Plato writes, “the beginning is the most important part of every work” (377a-b).¹⁴ One is therefore justified in supposing that the dialogue’s opening contains a clue to interpreting the meaning of the whole. In what follows, I argue that Plato’s framing of the dialogue signals to readers that in the *Republic* he will explore questions of justice towards foreigners. By depicting a conversation between citizens and foreigners in a *metic*’s home in the Piraeus—a place of intense cross-cultural interaction—against the backdrop of a multicultural festival in honor of a foreign goddess, Plato calls attention to interactions with foreigners. The definitions of justice presented in Book I then make clear that one of the dialogue’s central aims is to reflect on questions of interpolity justice.

involves, primarily, the use of dialectics—the art of question and answer to arrive at the truth. Such conversation may also include other forms of speech, but dialectic remains central.

¹³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, trans. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), III.37. Also see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition*, being the Greek text of the *De Compositione Verborum*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (London: Macmillan, 1910), 264-65.

¹⁴ All quotations from the *Republic* come from Allan Bloom’s translation unless otherwise noted.

Ultimately, by permeating the beginning of the *Republic* with encounters with foreigners, particularly ones that showcase Socrates' friendliness towards them, Plato invites readers to contemplate how the search for justice might be occasioned by cross-cultural engagement and what this means for interpolity relations.

Plato opens the *Republic* by nearly hitting the reader over the head with depictions of cross-cultural encounters. This is evident from Socrates' famous first words: "I went down to the Piraeus yesterday..." (327a).¹⁵ With the exception of Socrates' venture outside the walls of Athens in the *Phaedrus*, Plato always depicts Socrates in the city of Athens proper. It is thus already unusual to find Socrates not at one of his customary haunts in town, such as the Lyceum, but in the Piraeus.¹⁶ Developed as Athens' principal port under Themistocles' recommendation, the Piraeus served primarily as a base for the Athenian fleet, with its docks, warehouses, arsenals, and over 300 shipsheds. It also functioned as a major Mediterranean trading center, attracting such a wide range of merchants that it was reputed to be a place where one could find exotic goods of all kinds. The Piraeus was thus a place of both war and commerce, a symbol of the decadence of Athenian imperialism. The port was, moreover, home to the highest concentration of Athens' sizeable *metic* population, lending it an even more cosmopolitan character. At the time of the Peloponnesian War, about 6,000 *metics* lived in the Piraeus, the only

¹⁵ Various scholars have connected the dialogue's first word, *κατέβην* (*kateben*), with the descent into the cave and the descent to Hades in Book X. On this reading, Socrates' journey to the Piraeus dramatizes his metaphorical descent into the underworld. See, e.g., Jacob Howland, *The Republic: The Odyssey of Philosophy* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), esp. 43-55; Voegelin, *Order and History*, esp. 106-116; and Eva Brann, *The Music of the Republic: Essays on Socrates' Conversations and Plato's Writings* (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2004), esp. 116-122.

¹⁶ Indeed, Cephalus complains that Socrates does not visit the Piraeus very often (328c). Yet, as Demetra Kasimis argues, "...the point is that Sokrates does go to Peiraias." "Drawing the Boundaries of Democracy: Immigrants and Citizens in Ancient Greek Political Thought" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2010), 95.

area where they could legally own property.¹⁷ It is here that we find Socrates—in a site filled with diversity, innovation, and movement, a site evocative of the pluralism of the democratic regime.¹⁸ This is the first indication that the *Republic* deals with encounters with foreigners.

The second indication comes through the purpose for Socrates' visit—the witnessing of the first-ever Bendideia. Celebrated for the first time in Athens in 429 B.C., the Bendideia was a festival honoring Bendis, a Thracian goddess distinct from, yet often identified with, the Greek goddess Artemis. Imported into Athens by Thracian immigrants, the cult of Bendis quickly gained popularity among Athenians despite the fact that in most Athenian discourse Thracians, sometimes even more so than other barbarians, were “reviled, mocked, and even feared as a primitive and backward society of fierce fighters” whose “[b]elligerence was matched only by rapacity, perfidy, and drunkenness.”¹⁹ Though much speculation surrounds Athens' motivation for officially sanctioning the Bendideia, the decision was likely in large part political. After all, in the face of a war with Sparta, the Athenians hoped to acquire in the Thracians powerful allies abroad, and honoring a Thracian goddess would have furthered that mission. They also may have hoped to secure the loyalty of the large Thracian population residing in Athens, many of whom were probably serving in the Athenian military. Whatever the cause for the importation of this new goddess, Plato portrays Socrates as taking an active interest in the festival honoring her. Not only does he make a rare trip down to the Piraeus to witness the Bendideia, but he expresses approval of her worship by professing that his chief reason for going was “to pray to the goddess

¹⁷ Robert Garland, *The Piraeus: From the Fifth to the First Century B.C.* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 61.

¹⁸ For the Piraeus as a democratic stronghold, see Garland, *The Piraeus*.

¹⁹ Matthew A. Sears, *Athens, Thrace, and the Shaping of Athenian Leadership* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 147.

(προσευξόμενός τε τῇ θεῷ)” (327a). Furthermore, he praises the procession of supposedly war-like, drunken Thracians: the procession of the native inhabitants seemed to him “beautiful (καλή),” yet that of the Thracian visitors did not appear inferior (327a). Plato thus shows us from the beginning of the *Republic* a Socrates who (1) willingly enters a place abounding with foreigners, (2) worships a foreign goddess, and (3) applauds barbarians.

A final way Plato underscores the *Republic*'s focus on interactions with foreigners is by bringing Socrates into conversation with a mixed group of Athenians and foreigners in the home of a *metic*. This cross-cultural encounter is initiated with the help of Polemarchus' slave boy, who most likely would have been a barbarian.²⁰ It is significant that, in Socrates' narration, it is this slave who delivers the dialogue's first words. Here again Socrates is portrayed interacting with a foreigner, and not unkindly. Through the slave's intervention, Socrates and Plato's brother Glaucon are brought into contact with the *metic* Polemarchus and his company. Just as Polemarchus had ordered his slave to hail down Socrates, he now gives Socrates an order: prove stronger than he and his men or stay in the Piraeus. He threatens, in a way, to make Socrates his slave using the power of numbers. Yet, though this scene has often been read as foreshadowing the critique of democracy in Book VIII, the weakness of Socrates' protests should not escape notice. Are combat and persuasion really his only means of escape? Is there not also subterfuge? What about the quintessential act of the coward—running away? Could he and Glaucon not at least try, however in vain, to persuade Polemarchus to let them go? Could they not have ignored the order to wait in the first place, and proceeded on their way? Socrates not only easily yields to Polemarchus' request, but he even expresses interest in staying when Adeimantus mentions there

²⁰ Ironically, it is even possible he is Thracian, for Thracians comprised such a large proportion of Athens' slave population that they came to represent the very stereotype of a slave. See Vincent J. Rosivach, “Enslaving ‘Barbaroi’ and the Athenian Ideology of Slavery,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 48, no. 2 (1999): 129-157.

will be a torch race on horseback for the goddess and Socrates replies, “On horseback? [...] That is novel (καινόν)” (328a). However coy Socrates acts in this scene, in the end he is willing to engage anyone, citizen or foreigner, in conversation.²¹ The cast of characters whom Socrates identifies by name as being present at the conversation that unfolds at Polemarchus’ house further emphasizes this point: five Athenians (Glaucou, Adeimantus, Niceratus, Charmantides, and Cleitophon) and five foreigners (Polemarchus, Lysias, Euthydemus, Thrasymachus, and Cephalus).²² Through both the setting and assemblage of characters in the *Republic*, Plato thus brings cross-cultural engagement to the forefront while also portraying Socrates as more welcoming of, than hostile towards, such mingling.

1.2: A Conversation on Interpolity Justice

In the remainder of Book I, Plato makes even clearer the dialogue’s concern with issues of justice towards foreigners. He does this by presenting the reader with three definitions of justice, all offered by foreigners: Cephalus’, Polemarchus’, and Thrasymachus’. Careful examination reveals that the sequence of definitions follows a pattern found elsewhere in the corpus: from soul to city to cities.²³ Each definition of justice ultimately runs into the same problem, but with each new definition the magnitude increases such that for Cephalus’ definition the problem involves a lack of harmony in the soul, for Polemarchus’ definition a lack of

²¹ Cf. Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*, 30a.

²² Cephalus was a *metic* from Syracuse who earned his immense wealth by establishing a successful shield factory. Polemarchus, Lysias, and Euthydemus were his sons. Thrasymachus was a sophist from Chalcedon, a Greek colony on the eastern shore of the Bosphorus (in close proximity to Thrace).

²³ In particular, this pattern plays a prominent role in the discussion that takes place in the *Laws*, as analyzed in Chapter 3.

harmony in the city, and for Thrasymachus' definition a lack of harmony between cities. Plato thus effectively anticipates the city-soul analogy that Socrates proposes in Book II, while extending it to a third level of analogy, that of interpolity relations. In this way, Plato conveys his interest in justice not only as it appears in the soul or in the city, but also as it is manifested in interpolity relations.

Let us begin with Cephalus' definition of justice. Defining justice as telling the truth and paying one's debts, Cephalus elicits the objection from Socrates that everyone would agree that, if one had borrowed weapons from a friend and the friend demanded them back when he was mad, one should not return the weapons nor tell the friend the entire truth. Though not made explicit, the psychology developed in later books of the *Republic* allows us to make better sense of this scenario. Unlike the soul of the "prudent and quiet character, which is always nearly equal to itself (παραπλήσιον)" and therefore displays a consistent disposition, the soul of a friend in a rage (μανείζ) lacks harmony or a proper ordering. Such a friend is not predominantly led by reason, but rather the various parts of his soul are in conflict. Cephalus' definition of justice might hold with regard to a harmonious soul, but the inconsistency observed in human nature renders it problematic. One cannot tell the truth and pay one's debts without considering whether the recipient of these truths and repaid debts possesses harmony in his soul. For if he does not possess harmony in his soul, then telling the truth or repaying debts may do harm rather than good. As such, Cephalus' definition is not universally valid.

Through Polemarchus' definition of justice, Plato transfers the problem of discord from the soul to the city. Inheriting his father's argument, Polemarchus defends it by evoking the

authority of Simonides, who says that justice is giving to each what is owed.²⁴ In response, Socrates presses Polemarchus to consider whether justice requires us to give back what we have borrowed “to any man whatsoever (ὅτσοῦν)” (331e). With this, Socrates steers Polemarchus towards thinking about *which men* are owed justice. Eventually, at Socrates’ prodding, Polemarchus admits that justice is nothing other than benefitting one’s friends and harming one’s enemies. This is an appropriate definition for Polemarchus, whose name means “chieftain” or “war lord.”²⁵ By “enemies,” Polemarchus does not mean foreigners, however. The word he and Socrates use throughout this section of the dialogue is ἐχθρός (*echthros*), which is commonly contrasted with another word for “enemy,” πολέμιος (*polemios*). Typically, the distinction revolves around whether the enemy is a fellow citizen or a foreigner: “Whereas *polemios* clearly indicates an enemy from without—a public enemy—*echthros* connotes an enemy within; an *echthros* is a private enemy, more akin to a rival in the affairs of a private citizen than a hoplite on the other side of a battlefield.”²⁶ In fact, when Polemarchus talks about doing good to friends and harm to enemies, he is referring to a well-established code of conduct in Athenian politics that involved giving political support to a particular cluster of “friends” while opposing political

²⁴ On the significance of Polemarchus invoking the authority of Simonides, see H.S. Thayer, “Plato’s Quarrel with Poetry: Simonides,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 1 (1975): 3-26.

²⁵ Interestingly, though the original function of the πολέμαρχος was to command the army, by the late 4th century B.C. his duties largely involved overseeing the trials of *metics*, a duty stemming from an earlier role as protector of the interests of *metics*, much as the *archon* was the protector of citizens. See A.R.W. Harrison, *The Laws of Athens*, 2nd ed., vol. I (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 193-96, and A.R.W. Harrison, *The Laws of Athens*, 2nd ed., vol. II (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 9-11.

²⁶ Richard Avramenko, “Of Firemen, Sophists, and Hunter-Philosophers: Citizenship and Courage in Plato’s *Laches*,” *Polis* 24, no. 2 (2007), 217. Cf. Mary Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies: A Study in Sophocles and Greek Ethics*, first paperback ed. (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 39.

rivals through verbal attacks in the assembly, legal action, ostracism, and other such means.²⁷

Polemarchus' definition of justice thus concerns not the defeat of foreign enemies, but of personal enemies within the city—*i.e.*, fellow citizens. Plato makes this clear when he later has Socrates attribute the definition to “Periander, or Perdiccas, or Xerxes, or Ismenias the Theban”—all powerful leaders notorious for showing themselves intolerant of internal political rivals (336a).²⁸

Just as Socrates sought to show Cephalus that his understanding of justice does not hold when the friend receiving the truth or repaid debts lacks harmony in his soul, he seeks to show Polemarchus that his definition does not hold when the city lacks harmony. For, as Socrates points out, humans often make mistakes about who is truly a friend (someone good) and who is truly an enemy (someone bad). As we begin to learn by Book II, this is the fundamental problem with cities that lack harmony. In a properly ordered city, those with wisdom rule over the rest with the help of the auxiliary soldiers. Yet, in a city that lacks harmony, those with the means of

²⁷ Lynette G. Mitchell and P.J. Rhodes, “Friends and Enemies in Athenian Politics,” *Greece & Rome*, Second Series 43, no. 1 (1996): 11-30.

²⁸ Herodotus' story of Periander is particularly illustrative: “Periander was less violent than his father, but soon surpassed him in bloody-mindedness and savagery. This was the result of a correspondence which he entered into with Thrasybulus, the tyrant of Miletus. He sent a representative to the court of this despot, to ask his opinion on how best and most safely to govern his city. Thrasybulus invited the man to walk with him from the city to a field where corn was growing. As he passed through this cornfield, continually asking questions about why the messenger had come to him from Corinth, he kept cutting off all the tallest ears of wheat which he could see, and throwing them away, until the finest and best-grown part of the crop was ruined. In this way he went right through the field, and then sent the messenger away without a word. On his return to Corinth, Periander was eager to hear what advice Thrasybulus had given, and the man replied that he had not given any at all, adding that he was surprised at being sent to visit such a person, who was evidently mad and a wanton destroyer of his own property—and then he described what he had seen Thrasybulus do. Periander seized the point at once; it was perfectly plain to him that Thrasybulus recommended the murder of all the people in the city who were outstanding in influence or ability. Moreover, he took the advice, and from that time forward there was no crime against the Corinthians that he did not commit.” *Histories*, V.92F-G.

force no longer listen to the rulers, but rather carry out acts of hostility on the very people they are supposed to protect. Polemarchus' definition of justice might hold for a harmonious city, where the distinction between friend and enemy is clear because all citizens are ultimately friends.²⁹ However, if applied in the context of a city lacking harmony, it would surely result in the harming of innocent civilians because, in such a city, the friend-enemy distinction is inherently confused. This is made especially poignant by Plato's decision to set the dialogue during the Peloponnesian War, for readers would have known that Polemarchus, Niceratus, and possibly Euthydemus later died at the hands of the Thirty Tyrants. Just as Cephalus' definition of justice could not hold universally owing to the tendency for a single soul to be ridden with conflict, Polemarchus' definition falls short because of the city's tendency to lack harmony.

It is with Thrasymachus' definition that the problem of discord *between cities* is brought into view. Plato directs the reader to issues of interpolity justice by first having Thrasymachus bring to speech what Socrates' encounter with Polemarchus and his men already dramatized: the necessity to prove stronger or give way. Interjecting into the conversation like a wild beast on the attack, Thrasymachus contends that justice is the advantage of the stronger or, more precisely, "in every city the same thing is just, the advantage of the established ruling body" (339a). Those who rule possess the power to declare what is just (which, of course, is whatever is in the ruler's interest) and to punish those who break their laws. Justice, then, is not a universal principle, but a social construct—a means by which the stronger dominate the weaker. As such, it is "really someone else's good, the advantage of the man who is stronger and rules, and a personal harm to the man who obeys and serves" (343c-d). Therefore, one should prefer perfect injustice to perfect

²⁹ Socrates questions even this, however, on the grounds that harming someone makes them more unjust and the just man could never make someone unjust through justice (335b-d).

justice, for the man who dominates others and gets away with it receives great rewards, while those who do not suffer.

Thrasymachus makes clear, however, that he is not interested in small acts of injustice, but in the largest of all—conquering entire cities. Consider his response to Socrates’ inquiry of whether the unjust are good as well as prudent: “Yes, those who can do injustice perfectly [...] and are able to subjugate cities (πόλεις) and tribes of men (ἔθνη) to themselves. You, perhaps, suppose I am speaking of cutpurses. Now, such things, too, are profitable [...] when one gets away with them; but they aren’t worth mentioning compared to those I was just talking about” (348d). He later echoes this sentiment when Socrates asks, “would you say that a city is unjust that tries to enslave other cities unjustly, and has reduced them to slavery, and keeps many enslaved to itself?” to which Thrasymachus responds, “Of course. [...] And it’s this the best (ἀρίστη) city will most do, the one that is most perfectly unjust” (351b). Thrasymachus is not just interested in defeating internal political rivals; he is interested in world domination. His ideal city is the Athens of the Melian dialogue, and it is such conduct he has in mind when he proclaims his definition of justice.³⁰ Yet he has only said what perhaps everyone was thinking—that given the difficulty of discerning friend from enemy, the proper response is to treat everyone like an enemy. In a dog-eat-dog world in which the stronger make all the rules, one must get the better of others and a city must get the better of other cities before others do the same to it. Conquer or be conquered, this is the Thrasymachean mantra.

³⁰ Stephen A. White makes a persuasive case in favor of Thrasymachus being in Athens as a diplomat on behalf of Chalcedon, which mounted an unsuccessful revolt in 407 B.C. An extant speech of Thrasymachus’, along with other testimony, suggests he was a virulent critic of Athenian imperialism. White contends that at no point in the *Republic* does Thrasymachus express clear approval of self-seeking by the strong. Rather, he is best seen as a realist reporting his observations of how the world works and decrying this state of affairs. “Thrasymachus the Diplomat,” *Classical Philology* 90, no. 4 (1995): 307-27.

Whatever we think of Thrasymachus for advising those present to be the conquerors rather than the conquered, Plato makes it clear that he has struck upon a real dilemma. Indeed, Plato's brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus, regard this as the key problem to which they have no adequate response, as attested by their repeated insinuations that, presented with the opportunity to do whatever he wishes and get away with it, virtually every man will choose to do injustice because he fears others will do the same and that if he is just he will therefore suffer (359c, 360d, 361e-362a, 365b). As Adeimantus argues, had they been educated to believe justice is the greatest good, then they "would not keep guard over each other for fear injustice be done, but each would be his own best guard" (367a). However, as it is, people will always choose to get the better of others. As such, one would be foolish not to try to gain an advantage whenever one can. This would include, presumably, belonging to the strongest *polis* of all. Glaucon and Adeimantus are the sort of people who do not want to get the better of others, but find themselves at a loss when confronted with arguments such as these. In fact, having been raised to believe it is crucial at least to appear just, both are uncomfortable even making such controversial arguments in public. Were it not for the foreigner Thrasymachus' willingness to speak boldly, the conversation would likely have taken a different turn.

The task that Glaucon and Adeimantus pose for Socrates—to show that justice is good not merely for its consequences, but for its own sake—can thus be read, at least in part, as a challenge to refute Thrasymachus' realist approach to interpolity relations. Why should a city not seek greater and greater power over other cities, considering that other cities will do the same? As the Athenians told the Melians, if they possessed the same power as the Athenians, they

themselves and everybody else would do as the Athenians have done.³¹ History itself lends much credence to this claim. Why, then, should one wait to be enslaved rather than enslave the rest of the world first? Is life in a city that dominates others not to be preferred to life in a dominated city? What even constitutes a just city? Is there even such a city, objectively speaking, or is it all relative, as Thrasymachus and other sophists suggest? Plato, by opening the dialogue with multiple layers of cross-cultural engagement (Socrates in the Piraeus, praying to a foreign goddess and witnessing a multicultural festival, having his cloak pulled by a barbarian, then conversing in the home of a *metic* with citizens and foreigners, about friends and enemies and the best city as one that subjugates other cities, during the Peloponnesian War) indicates that the *Republic* is not just a meditation on justice at home, towards one's fellow citizens. It is also a meditation on justice abroad, towards *xenoi* and *barbaroi*. As we will see, Plato begins to address Thrasymachus' vision of interpolity relations by acknowledging the dilemma he has raised—conquer or be conquered—and by analyzing the roots of that dilemma. Locating the source of the problem in *pleonexia*, the desire for more, Plato shows how this natural human tendency leads to the creation of a world in which the search for justice is all but extinguished, replaced by the indoctrinating force of *nomos*.

II. Plato's Vision of the World: Defying the Greek – Barbarian Division

2.1: The Root of Interpolity Political Realism in Pleonexia

To defend justice as good in itself, Socrates suggests they first consider justice not in a man, but in a city. He defends this move on the grounds that justice in the city may in fact be a larger version of justice in the man, yet easier to see because it is larger. Though Socrates makes

³¹ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1998), 5.105.

this move with the ultimate intention of understanding justice in the man, in the process he validates (which is not to say justifies) Thrasymachus' dog-eat-dog conception of interpolity relations, while also shedding light on the origins of this way of the world. To speak anachronistically, political communities find themselves in a Hobbesian state of nature, a war of all against all, because of the human tendency towards *πλεονεξία* (*pleonexia*), the desire for more. Thrasymachus alludes to this when distinguishing the just and the unjust. Drawing on the root word and verb form of *pleonexia*, he traces the distinction to how much one gets: "the just man everywhere has less (ἔλαττον ἔχει) than the unjust man" (343d); "the just man does not have more (πλέον ἔχοντα) than the unjust man, but less (ἔλαττον)" (343d); or, again, the unjust man "is able to get the better (πλεονεκτεῖν) in a big way" (344a).³² Thrasymachus' understanding of justice intrinsically involves getting more than others. In his estimation, the one who gets the more *par excellence* is the conquering tyrant. *Pleonexia* attends the tyrant's erotic appetites, driving him to limitless acquisition.³³ In fact, *eros* itself, the controlling force in the tyrant's soul, "is characterized by *pleonexia* and connected with fever."³⁴ Thus, already in Thrasymachus' conception of justice there are hints that war stems from the desire for more, or *pleonexia*.

While for Thrasymachus *pleonexia* is particularly bound up with monetary goods, *pleonexia* is not restricted in Plato's thought to a desire for greater wealth.³⁵ In fact, for Plato

³² Cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, 483c.

³³ The fact that *pleonexia* conveys the sense of defying the limits or reaching interminable heights is why it is often closely connected with *hubris*, an attitude of being equal to or superior to the gods.

³⁴ Howland, *Republic*, 92.

³⁵ Howland, *Republic*, 71. Cf. Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), esp. chap. 6; Kimon Lycos, *Plato on Justice and Power: Reading Book I of Plato's Republic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 120-136; and Frank, "Wages of War," 473.

pleonexia can be applied to anything capable of being desired beyond the necessary or proper bounds, as it simply means to seek “the more (πλέον).” That *pleonexia* can be applied to non-material goods is evident, first, from Glaucon’s use of the word in his discussion of justice. According to Glaucon, it is human nature to “desire to get the better (τὴν πλεονεξίαν)” and nothing illustrates this better than the tale of Gyges, who used the power of an invisible ring to commit adultery with the king’s wife and to seize control of the kingdom (359c).³⁶ *Pleonexia* thus extends beyond greed for material possessions; it can involve a craving for sex or power. This is confirmed by Socrates’ use of *pleonexia* in Book IX, where he describes the many who “after the fashion of cattle, always looking down and with their heads bent to earth and table, they feed, fattening themselves, and copulating; and, for the sake of getting more (πλεονεξίας) of these things, they kick and butt their horns and hoofs of iron, killing each other because they are insatiable; for they are not filling the part of themselves that *is*, or can contain anything, with things that *are* (τοῖς οὐσίῳ)” (586a-b). By the “things that *are*,” Socrates means the eternal, unchanging Forms. Only the Forms do not generate *pleonexia*, for only they satisfy. Anything else leaves one wanting more. This is most obvious with desires such as those for food, sex, or wealth, but, as the *Republic* demonstrates, it is also true of other desires, including the desire for power and the desire for honor or reputation.³⁷ As Christina Tarnopolsky argues, it is perhaps

³⁶ Interestingly, Gyges is a Lydian, which means that Glaucon’s prime example of the unjust man is a barbarian. This accords with Glaucon’s assumption that the just city will be Greek. On the other hand, in suggesting that anyone in Gyges’ position would take the opportunity to commit injustices, he (or this passage at least) might be seen as undermining the traditional view of Greeks as ethically superior to non-Greeks. Moreover, his tale suggests that, without the ring, Gyges is as subject to the rules of civilization as is any Greek man.

³⁷ That honor can be desired too much is suggested at least three times. First, in the Cave Allegory, Socrates avers that the man who returns to the cave would rather be a slave and undergo anything whatsoever than win “honors, praises, and prizes” for being the best among the prisoners at predicting what shadows will pass (516c-d). This is again reiterated in Book VIII,

true even of the desire for knowledge, given Socrates' description of himself at the end of Book I as a glutton.³⁸ Any desire incapable of being completely and permanently satisfied can generate *pleonexia*. *Pleonexia* can hence be directed at a wide range of things, both material and immaterial.

As the dialogue proceeds, it becomes clear that Plato sees *pleonexia* as the foundation of the war of all against all that Thrasymachus described. We see this first through Socrates' imagining of the development of a city. Born out of the need men have for one another, the "healthy" city is marked by a simple division of labor, with some building houses, others farming, others producing clothing, and so on. This division of labor applies to the city's relations with other cities as well, for the healthy city produces more goods than it needs so that it can trade with other cities and thereby acquire what it lacks. What is more, the healthy city is conscientious of its limitations. The citizens of the healthy city limit the number of children they have so as to not stretch the state's resources and consequently encourage poverty and war. There is no worry this city will try to conquer its neighbors, because its citizens are content to live a simple life supported by their own industriousness and the consensual help of foreigners. By contrast, the "feverish" city—developed in response to Glaucon's complaint that the healthy city is a "city of sows"—must take some of its neighbors' land to support its ever-increasing

when Socrates presents the timocratic man as above all an honor-lover, ranking him second among the five types of men, below the aristocratic man who "flees the honors" (549c). Finally, in the Myth of Er, having "recovered from love of honor," Odysseus' soul chooses the life of a private man (620c-d). Honor is not a desire that can yield permanent satisfaction because it depends on the judgments of humans, who, as we have seen, are often conflicted and therefore inconsistent. Plato's use of *pleonexia* challenges Ryan Balot's contention in *Greed and Injustice* that, throughout Greek writings, *pleonexia* and honor are depicted as in a dichotomous relationship. This may be the case in other Greek works, but it is not true of Plato's *Republic*.

³⁸ Christina Tarnopolsky, "The Bipolar Longings of Thumos: A Feminist Rereading of Plato's *Republic*," *Symposium* 11, no. 2 (2007): 297-314.

population. This, naturally, results in war. Yet, in detailing the feverish city's expansion, Plato subtly hints at the impossibility—or, at most, short-lived existence—of the healthy city: “Then must we cut off a piece of our neighbors’ land, if we are going to have sufficient for pasture and tillage, and they in turn from ours, if they let themselves go to the unlimited acquisition (κτῆσιν ἄπειρον) of money (χρημάτων), overstepping the boundary of the necessary (τὸν τῶν ἀναγκαίων ὄρον)?” (373d). Though the word *pleonexia* does not appear here, the same concept is captured by the notion of unlimited acquisition and of overstepping the boundary of the necessary. As Frank argues on the basis of this passage, “*Pleonexia*, the desire for more—more territory, more goods, more power—is the origin of war. [...] With both an aggressive and a defensive aspect, *pleonexia* generates the rule ‘take from another before another takes from you,’ a rule characteristic of ‘apprehensive’ states of war of all kinds.”³⁹ Even the healthy city cannot escape this rule. For if other cities might overstep the boundaries, then the healthy city cannot long remain—either it will be taken over by a neighbor or it will require an army to defend itself and thus will grow.

Plato gives other hints that he agrees in a descriptive sense with Thrasymachus’ conception of the world, viewing it likewise as consisting of feverish cities all at war with each other. First of all, in an effort to purge the feverish city in speech of its luxuries, Socrates takes away the very sweets that gave rise to it in the first place. In so doing, he identifies some of the existing areas that, in possessing culinary reputations, exhibit the qualities of a feverish city: Syracuse, Sicily, Corinth, and Attica (404d). We should note that Socrates mentions both non-Greek *and* Greek places, including Athens. A bit later in the discussion, Socrates suggests that not a single city in existence is healthy. Contending that the purged city, because it is not divided

³⁹ Frank, “Wages of War,” 443.

into many competing factions but rather is a unity, will be “truly biggest” whatever its size, Socrates argues, “You’ll not easily find one city so big as this, either among the Greeks (Ἕλλησιν) or the barbarians (βαρβάρους), although many seem to be many times its size” (423a-b). Further into the discussion, after pronouncing that the cities will have no rest from evils until philosophers rule them, Socrates affirms that, “no one who minds the business of the cities does virtually anything sound” (496c). Then, when Adeimantus asks with regard to philosophy, “But which of the current regimes do you say is suitable for it?” Socrates responds, “None at all [...] but this is the very charge I’m bringing; not one city today is in a condition worthy of the philosophic nature” (497a-b). As these passages attest, in the *Republic* Plato envisions *all* existing cities—Greek and non-Greek—as feverish, which is to say, consumed with *pleonexia*.

Though Glaucon thinks the ideal city must be Greek (470e), Plato gives no reason to believe it could or should be founded among the Greeks, whom he groups together with barbarians in multiple places throughout the dialogue. Rather, Greek and non-Greek cities alike are cast as feverish, infertile growing grounds for philosophy. In fact, when Plato has Socrates speak of the possibility of a philosopher coming to power, Socrates suggests that this could be about to happen “in some barbaric place (τινι βαρβαρικῷ τόπῳ) somewhere far (πόρρω που) outside of (ἐκτὸς) our range of vision” (499c-d). This assertion not only contradicts Glaucon’s assumption that the ideal city will be Greek, but also Socrates’ pronouncement that the love of learning is most connected with Attica (435e-436a).⁴⁰ Contrary to Popper’s claim that one cannot find in the *Republic* “anything but hostility towards the humanitarian ideas of a unity of mankind

⁴⁰ The passage attributing the love of learning to Attica, spiritedness to Thrace and Scythia, and love of money to Phoenicia and Egypt occurs in the context of introducing the three parts of the soul. Here, as elsewhere, Socrates arguably uses an idea familiar to his interlocutors to help them understand the unfamiliar. This model of teaching in the *Republic* is analyzed and recommended in Peter Lindsay, “Abstract Teaching for a Concrete World: A Lesson from Plato,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 44, no. 3 (2011): 605-610.

which transcends race and class,” one finds a world of men united in their susceptibility to *pleonexia* and a hope that the few able to discern this—wherever they might live—might be able to help them tame this human tendency.⁴¹ Of course, Popper may still find offensive the distinction Plato draws between the philosophic few and the un-philosophic many, but the evidence suggests this distinction is not racially or ethnically based. All existing Greek cities resemble barbarian cities in their domination by un-philosophic souls, and a philosopher may just as well come into being in a barbarian city as in a Greek city.

2.2: *A World of Caves*

This does not mean that Plato perceives no differences at all between existing cities. Rather, he makes clear that each city develops its own laws and customs in response to the *pleonexia* lying at the core of human nature. For the ideal city, this involves the creation of *nomoi* designed to protect it from *pleonexia* from within and without. In degenerate forms of the ideal regime, these *nomoi* take on other shapes and hues: in a timocracy, *pleonexia* emerges as an obsession with honor; in an oligarchy, as an endless desire for wealth; and in a democracy, as an unbridled love of the freedom to enjoy life’s many pleasures. In a tyranny, *pleonexia* develops in its fullest expression. Each of these regimes is founded on a desire that can never be satisfied. It is not that honor, wealth, freedom, or *eros* is bad in itself, but that each is craved to excess by one of these regimes. Each regime is therefore characteristically *pleonectic*, though the object of desire differs by regime.⁴² Furthermore, there are other regimes whose character fits somewhere

⁴¹ Popper, *Open Society*, 239.

⁴² To be sure, when Plato discusses the greed that accompanies each of these regimes, he often uses the word ἀπληστία (*aplestia*) rather than *pleonexia*. However, these words are synonymous. Proof of this is found in a work heavily influenced by Plato’s writings, where ancient

between the five regime forms that Socrates identifies, and “one would find them no less among the barbarians (τοὺς βαρβάρους) than the Greeks (τοὺς Ἕλληνας)” (544d). In fact, there are “as many forms (εἶδη) of human characters as there are forms of regimes” (544d). Although all regimes are driven by *pleonexia*, the desire for more manifests itself differently in different cities. One can detect broad patterns, but each regime constructs its own unique constellation of *nomoi*, which may, moreover, change over time.

Given the rarity of philosophers and of philosophic regimes, we might extrapolate Plato’s cave allegory—which describes the state of affairs prevailing in a city hostile to philosophy—to the arrangement of the entire world. Portraying the process of education as the turning of the soul, the cave allegory tells of how most people spend their lives unaware that the only reality they have ever known is in fact but an illusion of true reality. For most, the only life they will ever know is like the life a prisoner in a cave in which “reality” consists of shadows cast on the wall by people carrying objects over a road set between the prisoners and a fire burning above and behind them, a road along which there is a wall “like the partitions puppet-handlers set in front of the human beings and over which they show the puppets” (514b). Who are these puppeteer-like individuals projecting images on the wall? Though many commentaries pass over

philosopher and physician Galen, speaking of the cause of all grief, writes, “The Greeks sometimes call it insatiate desire (ἀπληστίαν) and at other times covetousness (πλεονεξίαν). They call it insatiate desire (ἀπληστίαν) from the greediness with which one yearns, <and covetousness (πλεονεξίαν) because> the greedy always desire <to grasp a larger share (πλεονεκτεῖν)> of what lies before them.” Galen, *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 63. Translation verified by consulting the Greek version in *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum V.5, Galeni: De Propriorum Animi Cuiuslibet Affectuum Dignotione et Curatione / De Animi Cuiuslibet Peccatorum Dignotione et Curatione / De Atra Bile*, ed. Wilko de Boer (Leipzig and Berlin: In Aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1937).

the reference to puppeteers, in others they have been variously identified as poets,⁴³ legislators,⁴⁴ or sophists.⁴⁵ Yet, why should we not take them as “the stronger” of Thrasymachus’ definition of justice? After all, they are apparently free to walk around the cave, or at least part of it, and must therefore be able to see the people enchained. Given that someone is said to be responsible for releasing the prisoner and dragging him out of the cave, it seems reasonable that the puppeteers too could release the prisoners if they wished. What else can we assume, then, except that these puppeteers like, or at least accept, the fact that these people are shackled? If these assumptions about the allegory are correct, they point towards the puppeteers being “the stronger,” those who are able to take advantage of others by duping them. By keeping the prisoners in chains and distracting them with the shadows of objects, the puppeteers are able to keep the enjoyment of the actual objects all to themselves. Of course, the irony lies in the fact that the puppeteers are themselves unaware that the objects they possess are no match for what lies outside the cave. Interpreting the puppeteers as “the stronger” allows us to incorporate into this category people of various professions, so long as they recognize the existence of both the prisoners and the puppeteers and make themselves one of the puppeteers. One may thus imagine a whole spectrum of individuals—legislators, poets, and sophists alike—duping the rest.

Yet, if each city is configured differently, each with its own set of *nomoi*, then the cave is not really one cave, but many caves. In his analysis, Allan Bloom alludes to this possibility:

⁴³ Bloom, “Interpretive Essay,” 404; Howland, *Republic*, 141-144; and Asli Gocer, “The Puppet Theater in Plato’s Parable of the Cave,” *The Classical Journal* 95, no. 2 (1999-2000): 119-129.

⁴⁴ Bloom, “Interpretive Essay,” 404.

⁴⁵ Howland, *Republic*, 137-141; and Marina McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 130-132.

...the cave is the city and [...] our attachment to the city binds us to certain authoritative opinions about things. We do not see men as they are but as they are represented to us by legislators and poets. A Greek sees things differently from the way a Persian sees them. [...] Legislators and poets are the makers of these horizons; or, to use the symbols of the cave image, they are the men who carry the statues and the other things the reflections of which the prisoners see. These objects are not natural; they are themselves images of natural objects produced with cunning art so as to look like their originals, but are adapted to serve the special interests of the artists. In other words, we do not see things directly, but through the opinions we are taught about them. Those opinions are not accurate reflections of nature but are adapted to serve the needs of the city. They are designed to make a man love his city, and therefore they have to invest the city with all sorts of special significance and have no basis in nature.⁴⁶

As Bloom suggests, the world as envisioned in the *Republic* consists of a multitude of caves—as many caves as there are cities. The education we receive as a city prevents us from seeing the truth. It is not controversial to say that, in Plato’s view, convention makes possible a whole way of life yet at the same time entraps people. Even a society ruled by good conventions imprisons people, for true understanding of the Good emerges not out of habit and blind acceptance of ideas from others, but out of personal discovery and knowing reception of the Good. What is less well recognized, however, is how this translates to Plato’s understanding of foreigners. If every existing city is but a variation on the cave, then every culture—whether Greek or non-Greek—in some way inhibits its citizens’ access to the truth. A timocracy may be better than an oligarchy which is better than a democracy and so on, but in the end no existing society can rightfully

⁴⁶ Bloom, “Interpretive Essay,” 404.

claim what many societies do claim—that their way of life is *the* right way. This is also true of the aristocracy described in the *Republic*. Not only is this city subject to decline, but, like the other regimes, it depends to some degree on the blind obedience of most of its citizens, as few will be philosophically minded. Accordingly, the average citizen of Kallipolis who thinks his city is perfect is necessarily basing his opinion on second-hand knowledge. Furthermore, were one of its rulers to be certain that their city practices the right way of life, he or she would also be mistaken, given the emphasis that Plato places on the *zetetic* or perpetually inquiring nature of philosophy. As Diskin Clay argues, “In Kallipolis the guardian class is educated. But, when the philosopher of Socrates’ city returns to the cave of his youth, ‘he will distinguish the *images* of virtue—of things fair, just, and good—and this will be a city of waking consciousness and not a dream.’ So there is a cave even in Kallipolis.”⁴⁷ In the end, if the prisoner who has ascended out of the cave has not learned to keep questioning what he thinks is true, has he learned anything at all? After all, had he stopped after seeing the fire in the cave, he would never have seen the sun.

Plato even illustrates at multiple points in the dialogue the ridiculousness of believing one’s culture to be flawless, or even just perpetually ahead of other cultures. Take, for example, the following exchange in Book V. Challenged to prove the possibility of educating both men and women to be guardians, Socrates first tackles the claim that it would be ridiculous for the sexes to exercise naked together. As he argues, those who would view this proposal as preposterous must be reminded “that it is not so long ago that it seemed shameful and ridiculous to the Greeks—as it does now to the many among the barbarians (τοῖς πολλοῖς τῶν βαρβάρων)—to see men naked; and that when the Cretans originated the gymnasiums, and then the Lacedaemonians, it was possible for the urbane of that time to make a comedy of all that” (452c-

⁴⁷ Clay, *Platonic Questions*, 239.

d). Conventions, in short, can change. It once seemed absurd for men to be seen naked, but now the Greeks find it perfectly acceptable. How, then, can we make tradition or convention the standard for good and bad, when conventions sometimes change? Furthermore, how can we be assured of the complete perfection of our culture while knowing that our ideas about what is and is not shameful change over time?

Socrates not only wants to throw out convention as the standard for judging right and wrong. He also wants to throw out the connected reasoning that we can use what has been done by a particular society as our standard for distinguishing right and wrong. On the one hand, one could read the aforementioned passage as indicating that the Greeks are ahead of the barbarians; whereas the Greeks have moved forward and now accept nakedness in gymnasias, barbarians are still stuck in the dark ages thinking that public nakedness is always shameful. Yet, notice to which ancient Greeks Socrates attributes the creation of the practice of nakedness in gymnasias: the Cretans and the Spartans. If the Greeks are ahead of the barbarians, then the Cretans and Spartans must therefore be ahead of the Athenians. What a bold insinuation to make to a people currently at war with Sparta and its allies. Perhaps, though, Plato really believes Spartans are superior to Athenians. After all, numerous aspects of Kallipolis resemble the timocratic Spartan society, given the significant overlap between aristocracy and timocracy. We are cautioned against this conclusion, however, by the fact that the Spartans were notorious for their reverence of tradition. Indeed, Plato portrays the Spartans this way in dialogues such as the *Laws* and *Hippias Major*. Yet, in the passage at 452c-d, Socrates critiques the inability to let go of convention in the face of reason. Thus, in Socrates' view, the Spartans cannot be considered more advanced than the Athenians just because they were the first to allow nakedness, for their general obedience to tradition opposes the notion of listening to reason above all. Likewise, the

Greeks cannot be considered more advanced than non-Greeks just because they were the first to allow nakedness. We cannot, in short, use what is done by a particular society as our standard for distinguishing right and wrong because no society has it completely right. How can we believe in the intrinsic superiority of our culture if even our worst enemies sometimes recognize what is good before we do?

From Plato's perspective, people not just in non-Greek regions, but throughout the world, live trapped in metaphorical caves. It is this one must understand to comprehend in full the dilemma Thrasymachus' notion of justice raises. Thrasymachus' view of the world as a place where one either conquers or is conquered is the wisdom of the puppeteer who sees this reality, but not the higher reality. That is to say that, in a sense, Thrasymachus' understanding is an accurate assessment of the world in which we live. The world is indeed composed of cities striving to conquer one another, feverish cities dominated by *pleonexia*. The problem is that each of these cities has its own cave with its own set of puppeteers and images, with some overlap as puppeteers travel farther down the road towards their neighbors—for surely this road leads somewhere. We should not take the image too literally, but we should recognize that it offers a helpful illustration of the difficulty of overcoming the dilemma Thrasymachus identifies. To create a world in which one did not have to choose to conquer or be conquered, one would not only have to transform a single city, but all cities. Otherwise, like the healthy city, one will always face enslavement or extinction at the hands of other cities. The exhausting depiction of turning a single individual's soul towards the truth warns, however, against any such attempts to educate all of humankind. What we are left with is the realization that Thrasymachus has told some measure of truth, and the question of whether there is any way out of this dilemma.

III. Democracy: Cave of Caves

Though classified almost last among the feverish regimes, one regime seems to offer an escape from either conquering or bowing down to others: democracy. The regime that looks “the fairest (καλλίστη),” democracy is just like “a many-colored cloak (πεποικιλμένη) decorated in all hues” and “all dispositions” (557c). A place where freedom reigns, the democratic regime “contains all species of regimes” (557d). To use our earlier imagery, democracy is like a cave of caves. One finds in it a variety of cultures from which one may pick and choose, as though it were a “general store of regimes,” a marketplace of *nomoi* (557d). The attraction of democracy lies in this very co-existence of different and even competing worldviews. In a democracy, one can seemingly escape the necessity of conquering or being conquered, if one so chooses, without having to succeed in taming all of humanity’s *pleonexia*. Put simply, a democracy seems to allow one the freedom to participate in the domination game or to withdraw from it:

And the absence of any compulsion to rule in this city, [...] even if you are competent to rule, or again to be ruled if you don’t want to be, or to make war when the others are making war, or to keep peace when the others are keeping it, if you don’t desire peace; and, if some law prevents you from ruling or being a judge, the absence of any compulsion keeping you from ruling and being a judge anyhow, if you long to do so— isn’t such a way of passing the time divinely sweet for the moment? (557e-558a)

In the democratic city as Socrates here describes it, Aristophanes’ character Dicaeopolis (who in *Acharnians* successfully negotiates his own private peace with the Spartans) can indeed pursue his private interests unencumbered by the interests of his fellow citizens. Conversely, if a small portion of the population wishes to make war, in a democracy they can. The democratic regime thus, at least on the surface, solves the Thrasymachean dilemma by simultaneously fulfilling the

desires of both those who wish to avoid being conquered and those who wish to conquer. Yet, as Plato reveals through the discussion of democracy and through myriad clues contained in the dialogue's dramatic context, the escape democracy provides is but an illusion, a glittering shadow of freedom.

As Socrates describes it, democracy is a paradoxical regime wherein mastery over others is both forbidden and permitted. Notably, the transition from oligarchy to democracy sometimes occurs—unlike with transitions to other regimes—thanks to outside forces. For instance, men might be “brought in as allies from outside (ἔξωθεν), from a city under an oligarchy, by the members of one party, from a city under a democracy by the members of the other,” leading the city to fall into civil war (556e). Democracy emerges when the poor win the war, killing or casting the rich out and sharing control of the regime with those who remain. Yet, so committed are democratic people to throwing off the yoke of domination that they shrink back even from imposing penalties on those who violate the laws. As Socrates asks, “Isn't the gentleness toward some of the condemned exquisite? Or in such a regime haven't you yet seen men who have been sentenced to death or exile, nonetheless staying and carrying on right in the middle of things; and, as though no one cared or saw, stalking the land like a hero?” (558a). Democratic people are so committed to the maintenance of individual liberty that they almost cease to care what anyone does. They are content to live their private lives and, likewise, to let others do as they please—apparently even commit the sort of acts for which one would normally be sentenced to death or exile. Living in a pure democracy is, in short, like possessing Gyges' ring.

To understand the democratic regime better, one might imagine the sort of individual it would resemble. If democracy were a man, it would be like someone who “[goes] back again to those Lotus-eaters (τοὺς Λωτοφάγους) and openly [settles] among them” (560c). As depicted in

Homer's *Odyssey*, the Lotus-eaters were a foreign people who subsisted primarily on the fruit and flowers of the lotus, a plant with narcotic properties. Though a harmless people, the Lotus-eaters could unwittingly have a major negative effect on the lives of any visitors to the island, for, "Whoever ate that sweet fruit / Lost the will to report back, preferring instead / To stay there, munching lotus, oblivious of home."⁴⁸ However desperate a man was to return home, if he ate of the lotus he would fall prey to its soporific effects and become just like the Lotus-eaters, lying around day in and day out in a peaceful daze, completely apathetic. This powerful image supplies us with a better understanding of the democratic regime. As Socrates earlier remarked, such a way of life is "sweet for the moment" (558a). The problem is that the democratic regime is easily carried away, easily led to forget what it truly cares about. Setting out to create a land of freedom, it ends up with anarchy because it "[dispenses] a certain equality to equals and unequals alike" (558c). Given the freedom to indulge their own unnecessary appetites, a democratic people will tolerate almost any behavior—good or bad—from others. Political leaders can thus do as they please, so long as they "say (φῆν)" they are pursuing the interests of the many (558b-c). The bulk of people in a democracy will accept such promises, as they are inclined not to "meddle in affairs" (565a). In fact, "they aren't willing to assemble very frequently unless they get some share of the honey" (565a). Since the masses tend not to be vigilant and are placated by small rewards, the leaders are easily able to manipulate the people into using their power to "[take] away the substance of those who have it," distributing some of that wealth among the people while the leaders "are able to keep the greatest part for themselves" (565a). Democratic people thus end up committing the injustice of taking wealth from the hard working—"not willingly but out of ignorance and because they are deceived by the

⁴⁸ Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 9.94-96.

slanderers”—and putting it into the hands of the idle (565b-c). Consequently, they are unknowingly both the victims and perpetrators of domination.

However blissful life in a democracy seems, it is built, Plato suggests, on an illusion of having escaped the “conquer or be conquered” dilemma. Through their apathy and ignorance, the citizens of a democracy both aid and abet those who conquer others and are themselves the victims of domination. Though some may pat themselves on the back for not infringing on the freedom of others while still maintaining great freedom themselves, in truth they are both the conquerors and the conquered. Their openness to all ways of life and unwillingness to restrict the actions of anyone is to blame, for it allows all kinds of injustices to be committed. Moreover, their kaleidoscopic, “many-colored” lifestyle distracts them from pursuing the wisdom they need to be the sort of mindful citizens who are not regularly duped by their leaders. In sum, though believing they have escaped the necessity of choosing either to conquer others or be conquered, democrats in fact do both.

As democracy transitions into tyranny, it becomes even clearer that the democratic regime offers only an illusion of escape from the Thrasymachean dilemma. Developing a “greediness (*ἀπληστία*)” for freedom, democratic people eventually set up as their leader a man who promises to increase their standard of living even more by leveling the possession of property and wealth (562b). Before they know it, the man has plunged them into war so as to shore up his own power (566e-567a). From there, matters become worse as he becomes a full-blown tyrant, so hated by his people that only former slaves and foreign drones will do his bidding (567d-e). Moreover, with the help of the tragedians, he sets about “going around to the other cities, gathering crowds, and hiring fine, big and persuasive voices” to “draw the regimes toward tyrannies and democracies” (568c). By this point, if the people who set him up as leader

demand he leave the city because they did not intend to become slaves to their own slaves but rather to be freed from the rich and the gentlemen, they will, as Adeimantus proclaims, finally come to realize that “they are the weaker driving out the stronger” (569b). What looked to be a regime that would allow one to avoid conquering or being conquered, turns out to be the regime that leads one straight into an extreme version of both—being enslaved to a tyrant and forced to assist him in conquering other cities.

The dramatic context of the *Republic* itself bears witness to this. Set in democratic Athens during the Peloponnesian War, the impending rise of the Thirty Tyrants looms over the dialogue. As aforementioned, some of the victims of this tyranny figure as participants in the dialogue. Plato thus invites readers to consider the link between democratic Athens and the Thirty. However prosperous life may have seemed at the height of Athens’ empire, the specter of tyranny lingered nearby. Through Socrates’ depiction of democracy as paving the way for tyranny, Plato suggests the rise of the Thirty is owing to the *pleonexia* of Athenians—not to the influence of Socrates, as many supposed. Believing they could create a state of complete freedom by letting individual liberty run loose, the Athenians ended up throwing out even the good conventions—those that restrained domination. When a state gives some the freedom to abuse and dominate others, and others the freedom to remain apathetic, tyranny readily ensues. Democracy thus thrives on a mere illusion of freedom from the Thrasymachean dilemma. In reality, in thirsting after freedom, democratic people end up almost least free of all.

IV. Kallipolis’ Cave and Plato’s True City

Though one might imagine that Socrates’ ideal city would provide an escape from conquering or being conquered, even this city succumbs to the rule. Kallipolis is founded, first of

all, on an act of imperialism (373d). However, as Balot argues, “Presumably, once the city has been ‘purged’ of its harmful desires [...] and the Guardians educated, the Callipolis will stop pursuing imperialism.”⁴⁹ Indeed, this assumption is borne out by Socrates’ injunction that the rulers must bound off enough land to support the city, but “they must let the rest go” (423b). Yet, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that, even after the purging, Kallipolis depends for its welfare not merely on successful self-defense, but on wars of aggression. First of all, when Socrates stipulates that Kallipolis must take only the land it needs and no more, he follows this with the command that the guardians must “guard in every way against the city’s being little or seemingly big” (423c). This suggests that if the city becomes too small, further acts of imperialism may be justified. What is more, when later discussing the place of war in Kallipolis, Socrates insists on the necessity of children watching their fathers and mothers fight in war, so as to prepare them for the job they must one day perform (466e-467e). Hence, the education of young guardians requires regular warfare. Yet, Socrates never addresses what will happen if the city ever finds itself free from the aggression of other cities. This seems to be a distinct possibility, however, as Glaucon believes that such a city would be “unbeatable” in war (471d), suggesting Kallipolis might ward off many enemies merely with its reputation. Socrates himself admits that if they promised another city the spoils in war, then none who heard that would “choose to make war against solid, lean dogs rather than with the dogs against fat and tender sheep” (422d).⁵⁰ Implied here is that Kallipolis will engage in wars of aggression (against sheep no less). Even if they are not the initiators of such wars, the inner peace of Kallipolis “rests on an

⁴⁹ Balot, *Greed and Injustice*, 243, n. 23.

⁵⁰ For more on the animal imagery in the *Republic*, see Arlene Saxonhouse, “Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the Republic,” *American Political Science Review* 72, no. 3 (1978): 888-901.

aggressive relation to the outside, indeed, on the very positing of its own interiority and of exteriority as such.”⁵¹ If the natural kinship of Greeks requires that they seek friendship with one another, what does the natural enmity of Greeks and non-Greeks require? For Glaucon, at least, one benefit of emphasizing the friendship between Greeks is that Greeks will “be more inclined to turn to the barbarians” for slaves (469c). While this does not prove the existence of slavery in Kallipolis, it gestures towards the city’s role in assisting its Greek allies with the domination of barbarians. Taken together, all this implies that Kallipolis cannot be purged enough to rid itself entirely of the need to engage in wars of acquisition.

Determining whether or not Plato upholds Kallipolis as the ideal model to follow is a complicated matter. In what follows, I will first present the points that seem to place Plato in alignment with Thrasymachus’ imperialistic notion of justice. I will then show how various clues in the dialogue undermine the model Kallipolis provides and point towards a different model—one of friendly cross-cultural engagement. As foreshadowed through Socrates’ initial encounter with Polemarchus and his men, one need not understand the compulsion to conquer or be conquered as an action-centered, zero-sum game, but rather as an exchange of words involving the transformation of both parties. Seen in this light, cross-cultural engagement becomes an impetus not to war, but to philosophy and thereby to harmony. It is this kind of cross-cultural engagement that Plato recommends as an alternative to the excessive tolerance of democracy and the excessive intolerance of the so-called ideal city.

Three main passages seemingly place Plato in agreement with Thrasymachus’ view that the ideal city should get the better of other cities. First, when detailing the education of the guardians, Socrates asserts that they must be made to be like noble dogs who are “as gentle as

⁵¹ Barrachi, *Of Myth*, 169. Cf. Balot, *Greed and Injustice*, 243.

can be with their familiars (τοὺς συνήθεις) and people they know (γνωρίμους) and the opposite with those they don't know (ἀγνωῶτας)" (375e). Otherwise, they may act savagely towards each other and the citizens they are supposed to protect. Echoing Polemarchus' notion of justice as doing good to friends and harm to enemies, this pronouncement on the guardians' education implies that foreigners will be viewed with suspicion and hostility. A later passage confirms and clarifies this:

I assert that the Greek stock (τὸ μὲν Ἑλληνικὸν γένος) is with respect to itself its own (οἰκεῖον) and akin (συγγενές), with respect to the barbaric (τῷ δὲ βαρβαρικῷ), foreign (ὄθνεϊόν) and alien (ἀλλότριον). [...] Then when Greeks (Ἕλληνας) fight (μαχομένους) with barbarians (βαρβάρους) and barbarians (βαρβάρους) with Greeks (Ἕλλησι), we'll assert they are at war (πολεμεῖν) and are enemies (πολεμίους) by nature (φύσει), and this hatred must be called war (πόλεμον); while when Greeks do any such thing to Greeks, we'll say that they are by nature (φύσει) friends (φίλους), but in this case Greece is sick and factious, and this kind of hatred must be called faction (στάσιν). (470c-d)

Assuming the ideal city is Greek, it is not against all foreign cities that it should wage war, but only barbarian cities. By nature, Greeks and barbarians are enemies and thus Kallipolis must unite with fellow Greek cities to fight barbarians, rather than be conquered by them. A final passage supports the conclusion that Plato concurs with Thrasymachus' vision of the ideal city as one that engages in wars of aggression against barbarians: the passage in Book VIII where Socrates intimates that the equalization of foreigner, *metic*, and citizen is one negative facet of democratic rule (562e-563a). This too suggests Plato thought citizens and foreigners should be treated differently, presumably in accordance with the ideal of treating Greeks with friendliness and barbarians with hostility.

On the one hand, Kallipolis' insistence on a rigid distinction between Greek and non-Greek seems consistent with other ideas presented in the *Republic*. First of all, it agrees with the notion emerging from Socrates' critique of Cephalus' definition of justice—that justice sometimes requires different treatment of different people. It also agrees with the theory of Forms sketched out in Book VI. As Saxonhouse argues, the theory of Forms "...is in part the basis for our capacity to categorize—to recognize similarities and differences so that we can distinguish one person or object from another and recognize as well what unites them. [...] Democracy in its openness in Book 8 lacks this capacity for adding and for discriminating and thus lays out the tensions and dangers inherent in regimes founded on formlessness and on principles of equality."⁵² Foreigners are different from citizens, if only because they have been educated in a different version of the cave. To erase the meaningfulness of difference, as democracy threatens to do, is to ignore the reality that people are not the same and that this matters in considerations of justice. Democracy essentially would give weapons to both the sane friend and the madman, just as it would to someone conditioned from childhood to love the city and someone with professed ties to another city. The distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks on which Kallipolis rests thus accords with an insistence throughout the *Republic* on recognition of difference between people.

Yet, on the other hand, Plato gives us several reasons to question the classification of people into the categories Greek and non-Greek. To begin with, we cannot forget that the *Republic* opens with Socrates praying to a barbarian goddess and commending the procession of non-Greeks. For someone who supposedly believes Greeks and non-Greeks are natural enemies, Socrates' actions do not demonstrate this. Even if they did, to make derogatory remarks about

⁵² Arlene W. Saxonhouse, "Democracy, Equality, and Eidê: A Radical View from Book 8 of Plato's *Republic*," *The American Political Science Review* 92, no. 2 (1998): 273-4.

barbarians before an audience that accepts the worship of a foreign goddess on their shores is almost as tasteless as making an offhand comment on the inferiority of *metics* before an audience of *metics*. Albeit, no barbarians are part of the conversation. One imagines, however, that with so many guests at the house of a wealthy *metic*, barbarian slaves would have been passing in and out of the room. At the least, by opening the dialogue with a vivid scene depicting the conversation's participants as eager to take part in the Thracian festival, Plato underscores the disjunction in their apparent acceptance of a foreign policy of hostility towards barbarians.

In various other ways, the hostility towards foreigners advocated in the ideal city is contradicted by the text of the *Republic*. First of all, it seems odd that Plato would have Socrates defend at length the equality of men and women in Book V only to bemoan the equality of the sexes three books later. This blatant contradiction raises the possibility that Socrates' tirade against the equalization of society in a democratic regime—including the equalization of foreigner, *metic*, and citizen—is not entirely serious. Again, given the audience, the evidence weighs heavier in favor of the non-serious reading. It is also contradictory for Socrates to claim Greeks and non-Greeks are natural enemies, yet later admit the possibility of a philosopher coming to power in a barbaric land. If Socrates cares about philosophy and nurturing the rare possibility of a philosopher coming to power, why should he advocate the decimation of the very people among whom such a philosopher may arise? We should not forget that the philosopher Socrates was himself a soldier and could have died at battle.⁵³ Finally, citing passages such as those at 470d-e and 521a, Barrachi notes that, “Socrates ‘himself,’ interestingly enough, despite his insistence on the necessity of distinguishing war from faction (470b, 471a), seems to become

⁵³ For more on the significance of this aspect of Socrates' identity, see S. Sara Monoson, “Socrates in Combat: Trauma and Resilience in Plato's Political Theory,” in *Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks*, eds. Peter Meineck and David Konstan (Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

confused and easily to lose sight of this distinction.”⁵⁴ Given the care with which Plato wrote his dialogues, these contradictions are too numerous to indicate anything other than a deliberate attempt to undercut Socrates’ xenophobic recommendations for Kallipolis.

If we read Kallipolis not as an actual blueprint for Plato’s ideal city, but as an educational tool through which Socrates aims to help his interlocutors better understand the nature of justice in the soul, then we are pointed in a different direction for insight into Plato’s thoughts on interpolity justice. The purpose of the city-soul analogy has been the subject of much debate and there is not space to give a complete account of this debate. Suffice it to say that, on the one hand, scholars such as Leo Strauss, Arlene Saxonhouse, and David Roochnik make a strong case in arguing that Plato presents the ideal city as not only impossible, but also undesirable.⁵⁵ After all, various aspects of the ideal city come into conflict with the construction of the *Republic* itself. To give but one example, the mixed narrative style of the *Republic* directly conflicts with the strict regulation of imitative poetry in Kallipolis. This would suggest that Socrates’ aim, as explicitly stated at the beginning of his investigation, is to discover what justice is in the individual and that we thus should not treat the construction of the city in speech as anything other than a useful educational tool. Yet, one cannot shake the sense that G.R.F. Ferrari may be right when he argues that “it is very, very difficult to believe that political institutions and reforms so intricately developed as those of Callipolis appear in the *Republic* for no other reason than comparison with the inner mechanism of the virtuous soul.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Barrachi, *Of Myth*, 164.

⁵⁵ Strauss, *City and Man*, 50-138; Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity*, 132-157; Roochnik, *Beautiful City*.

⁵⁶ G.R.F. Ferrari, *City and Soul in Plato’s Republic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 59.

The compromise between these two positions best supported by the text entails regarding the construction of the city in speech primarily as an investigation into the nature of justice in the individual, but one that offers a guide for determining for ourselves what the just city might look like. Plato unveils this guide through Socrates' declaration that "in truth" the definition of justice they discovered by constructing the city in speech applies "not with respect to a man's minding his external business, but with respect to what is within, with respect to what truly concerns him and his own" (443c-d). Comparing the parts of the soul to notes in a harmonic scale, Socrates follows this by insisting that the just man seeks to bring these parts together in harmony:

Then, and only then, he acts, if he does act in some way—either concerning the acquisition of money, or the care of the body, or something political, or concerning private contracts. In all these actions he believes and names a just and fine action one that preserves and helps to produce this condition, and wisdom the knowledge that supervises this action; while he believes and names an unjust action one that undoes this condition, and lack of learning, in its turn, the opinion that supervises this action. (443e-444a)

According to this passage, harmony in the soul produces just actions and just actions, in turn, "[help] to produce (συναπεργάζηται)" or, more precisely, help to complete the harmony in the soul. In short, the harmony of the soul should guide a man's actions anywhere, including the political sphere. If one wants to understand, then, what a perfectly just city would look like, one must consider what sort of city an individual who minds the harmony in his or her soul would create. Would a policy of equality towards the sexes destroy or fortify said harmony? What about the holding of wives and children in common? How about going to war with barbarians? However difficult a determination to make, this passage suggests we must evaluate the proposals regarding the ideal city in light of their effect on the harmony in the soul of their creator.

Evaluating the ideal city's treatment of foreigners on this basis, it is evident that the simple equation of Greek with friend and non-Greek with enemy would upset rather than sustain the harmony of the legislator's soul. First of all, as the critique of Polemarchus' definition of justice implies, this equation would only work if all Greeks were truly friends and all non-Greeks enemies. Yet, as aforementioned, not only does Plato describe Greek cities as just as feverish as barbarian cities, but he also raises the possibility of a philosopher existing in barbarian territory. Consequently, the blanket categorization of Greeks as friends and non-Greeks as enemies is not rational—a conclusion explicitly reached in Plato's *Statesman*.⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the midst of the discussion of fighting against Greeks, Socrates notes that his guardians will not agree “that in any city all are their enemies (ἐχθροὺς)—men, women, and children—but that there are always a few enemies who are to blame for the differences” (471a-b).⁵⁸ Though by “any city,” Socrates means any Greek city (as ἐχθροὺς indicates), he nonetheless concedes that to paint in as broad a stroke as the *polis* is to risk mistaking friends for enemies and vice versa. Even in the midst of war, one may find friends cloaked as enemies. Hence, reason cannot rule in the mind of someone who makes such sweeping generalizations.

⁵⁷ Plato, *Statesman*, 262c-d.

⁵⁸ This is an early articulation of the distinction between combatant and civilian. According to Helen M. Kinsella, there is a tradition in Western thought of sparing “innocents”—namely, women and children. Yet, alongside this, one also finds a practice of revoking the status of innocence from those deemed “uncivilized” or “barbarian.” It is possible, therefore, that Plato's use of *echthroi* (internal enemies) as opposed to *polemioi* (external enemies) is deliberate and suggests he would not spare any barbarians. However, one implication of this would be the advocacy of the potential killing of a barbarian philosopher. Would Plato really agree it is just to kill the most just person of all? This seems odd given the rarity of philosophers, as professed throughout the corpus and demonstrated by the relatively few philosophers depicted in the dialogues. *The Image before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction between Combatant and Civilian* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Some might object that Plato explicitly casts the philosophic mindset as hostile to foreigners. After all, he has Socrates assert that the nature of a noble dog, which is friendly towards those it knows and hostile towards those it does not, is “truly philosophic (ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφον)” (376b). For, Socrates asks, “how can it be anything other than a lover of learning (φιλομαθῆς) since it defines what’s its own (τό τε οἰκεῖον) and what’s alien (τὸ ἀλλότριον) by knowledge (συνέσει) and ignorance (ἀγνοία)?” (376b). Barrachi responds best to this point when she writes, “How is one to consider this—philosophy? [...] For does the love of learning not entail an attraction to the unknown, rather than a fondness for (contentment with) the known? [...] Socratic pedagogy in its entirety (the movement meant to turn the soul toward the unknown, to make the unknown not simply the object of hostility, to overcome such resistance) represents a fundamental questioning of the logic of the guardian-watchdog.”⁵⁹

It makes more sense to read Socrates’ assertion that lovers of learning define what is their own and what is alien by knowledge and ignorance not as pertaining to people, but to pleasures. Consider this remark on the parts of the soul: “And, therefore, when one of the other parts gets control, the result is that it can’t discover its own pleasure (τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἡδονήν) and compels the others to pursue an alien (ἀλλοτριάν) and untrue (μὴ ἀληθῆ) pleasure” (587a). Followers of “knowledge (τῆ ἐπιστήμη)” and “argument (λόγῳ),” on the other hand, “take the truest (ἀληθεῖς) pleasures [...] and those that are most their own (ἑαυτῶν οἰκείας)” (586d-e). In short, a lover of learning is like a noble dog because it welcomes what is friendly to it while rejecting what is alien to it, but for the lover of learning these are different kinds of pleasures, not people.

In fact, taken as a whole, the *Republic* demonstrates that the lover of learning, one who follows knowledge and argument, will not reject those he or she does not know, but rather will

⁵⁹ Barrachi, *Of Myth*, 161. Cf. Bloom, “Interpretive Essay,” 350.

engage with them. This is because those who love learning find that learning is stimulated by encounters with the strange and unknown. As Socrates argues in Book VII, objects that strike the senses in contradictory ways summon the intellect (523b-524d). For instance, when one feels that a finger is both hard and soft, one is compelled to ask how this is so, for nothing can admit of contradiction. Though Socrates initially applies this idea only to opposing sensory experiences, he later applies it to objects of intellection, such as numbers not attached to visible or tangible bodies (525d-526b). Surely justice counts as one of these objects of intellection. As such, encountering a view of justice that conflicts with one's own can stimulate learning. One may, of course, find fellow citizens who think differently from oneself, but if Plato's image of the cave is correct then it is outside one's own polity that one will most likely find different conceptions of justice. The conversation of the *Republic* itself illustrates this: the *metics* Cephalus and his son Polemarchus share very similar ideas on justice; so too do the Athenians Glaucon and Adeimantus, whose thoughts on justice are noticeably less pious than those of the *metics*, who perhaps cannot afford to present themselves as anything less than upstanding members of society; the foreigner Thrasymachus, by contrast, views justice in a radically different manner. It is the clash of these various perspectives—a clash wrought from cross-cultural engagement—that stimulates the search for knowledge in the *Republic*.

This clash is of an altogether different kind from that promoted by Thrasymachus in the face of the dilemma of conquering or being conquered. It is one that leads not invariably to war, but sometimes to philosophy. It appears as the alternative foreshadowed by Socrates in his response to Polemarchus' request that he prove stronger or yield: persuasion. Specifically, the kind of persuasion Glaucon wants—true persuasion, which emerges only from the test of dialectic (533b-d; 534b-c). Though not a “practical” solution to the dilemma—one may still, like

some of the participants in the conversation, find one's body at the mercy of others—the test of dialectic offers a new way of thinking about the Thrasymachean dilemma. One need not face the either – or of conquering or being conquered, for dialectic effectively turns the battle away from one's interlocutor and towards the argument itself. Whether the argument ultimately favors or challenges one's beliefs, one benefits from the knowledge therein gained. Far from the intolerance towards foreigners exhibited in the ideal city, dialectic conversation, in requiring each party to test the other in common, opens up possibilities for mutual transformation. Yet, unlike the kind of cross-cultural engagement Plato believes one commonly sees in a democracy, dialectic conversation does not as a matter of course result in the throwing out of one's own culture and the welcoming of any novel way of life to which one is introduced. Rather, sometimes it encourages the defense of one's way of life. So long as it provokes thought and reasoned judgment rather than dogmatic acceptance of all ways of life (the practice which leads the democratic city straight into war), such conversation with foreigners proves epistemologically beneficial.

The conversation of the *Republic* itself bears witness to the benefits of the dialectic approach to cross-cultural engagement. This becomes manifest when we consider the alternative modes of interaction with foreigners that the dialogue presents as possibilities. First of all, in the so-called “ideal” city, the conversation of the *Republic* would not have taken place. A festival honoring a barbarian goddess would be unheard of in Kallipolis, and hence the participants in the conversation would not have been brought together by such an event. In fact, with the tight restriction on which outside voices are permitted, a friendly conversation with foreigners under any circumstances seems impossible. Kallipolis actively drives out any influences it deems inappropriate; in a world filled with feverish cities, this includes virtually everyone not sprung

from the city's soil. As for the democratic model of cross-cultural engagement, clearly Plato thinks a conversation such as that depicted in the *Republic* is possible in a democracy, seeing as he sets it in democratic Athens.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, this does not seem like a typical democratic exchange. Per Plato's description of democracy, one would expect the participants to value freedom over truth and virtue. Guided by such motivations, they would not have accepted those aspects of Kallipolis which "[smack] in any way of slavery" (563d). Moreover, if the democratic soul follows one pleasure after another equally, then how long before the "conversation" would yield to other pursuits, like banqueting and watching novel horse races? A democratic soul would likely not be able to endure a conversation as long as that depicted in the *Republic*. One is thus left with the conclusion that the participants at Polemarchus' house are not truly democrats, a fitting conclusion given their backgrounds. Consequently, it seems that the conversation of the *Republic* could happen neither in Kallipolis nor in a room composed only of democratic souls.

Contrary to both of these models of cross-cultural engagement, the dialectic model uses conflicting cultural horizons to spark a mutual search for the truth—a journey that, if properly undertaken, can bring about harmony and friendship. Though it is difficult to determine definitively whether any of the participants are truly changed by the conversation, scholars have noted the transformation that seems to occur in Thrasymachus. Once "hunched up like a wild beast" and unable to restrain from "[flinging] himself at us as if to tear us to pieces," by about midway through the conversation Socrates asserts that he and Thrasymachus have "become friends" (336b, 498d). Indeed, Thrasymachus' more or less complete silence after their heated

⁶⁰ This is corroborated by Socrates' description of the democratic man as "sometimes spending his time as though he were occupied with philosophy" (561d). The "as though" is likely included because the man truly occupied with philosophy takes it so seriously that he can scarcely stop to do anything else; a matter of such importance is certainly not an occasional pastime. Nonetheless, the freedom of the democratic regime makes philosophic conversation possible, at least to some extent.

exchange in Book I suggests he has learned something—if only how better to tame his *thumos*.⁶¹ Yet, arguably, all of the participants have learned something. In encountering a compelling presentation of the sophistic teaching on justice—a view on justice literally brought in from abroad—Socrates and his fellow citizens have been forced into wakefulness, into consciously evaluating their beliefs. Contrary to the democratic soul’s tendency to accept anything novel, dialectic encourages open-minded yet discerning exploration of different cultural horizons. It thus allows for an escape from being “compelled—because of a shortage at home—to use a justice imported from others who are thus masters and umpires” (405b). Rather than simply marveling at and adopting Thrasymachus’ clever notion of justice, Socrates and his friends put his understanding of justice and their own to the test. From this, they derive the benefit of being forced to think actively about their beliefs. Whether in the end this results in a rejection or a renewal of their original beliefs, the philosophizing that this cross-cultural encounter provokes is itself beneficial. For, however right one’s way of life, a life without self-examination is not a life worth living. It is a life perhaps of right opinion, but not of true knowledge. The dialectic method of cross-cultural engagement allows foreign ideas to be given due consideration, while at the same time guarding against the attraction that new ideas sometimes hold owing to their novelty.

V. The Multicultural Music of Dialectic

If the conversation of the *Republic* itself does not strongly suggest that Plato thought a dialectic form of cross-cultural engagement could be epistemologically beneficial, then we might look to the theme of music for additional evidence. After all, Socrates calls dialectic “the song

⁶¹ For more on the friendship between Thrasymachus and Socrates, see Catherine Zuckert, “Why Socrates and Thrasymachus Become Friends,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43, no. 2 (2010): 163-185.

itself which must be learned” (531d). If dialectic is a song, what kind of song is it? Is it one that might be called multicultural, or is any sort of engagement with foreigners absent from this song? The “prelude” to the song supplies an image of the song that dialectic performs. As outlined in Book VII, the prelude consists of the guardians’ educational training, which involves various mathematical studies, as well as the study of astronomy and harmony. The final subject before dialectic, harmony, builds on all the other studies. It is related to mathematics in that all music can be expressed mathematically. As for the relationship between astronomy and harmony, Socrates explicitly remarks that “these two kinds of knowledge are in a way akin, as the Pythagoreans say and we, Glaucon, agree” (530d). Plato alludes here to Pythagoras’ famous theory of the harmony of the spheres, which holds that the heavenly bodies are separated from one another by intervals corresponding to the harmonic length of strings and that the movement of these bodies produces a celestial music audible only to those who escape the bondage of the sensory world. Though it would be fruitful to consider the prelude in full (*i.e.*, to investigate the role of mathematics and astronomy, as well as harmony), if we wish to understand what kind of song dialectic is, the study of harmony offers a promising starting point as it encompasses the other subjects in the guardians’ education.⁶² Accordingly, in what follows, I trace the treatment of harmony in the *Republic* to ascertain whether or not for Plato dialectic involves cross-cultural engagement. As my investigation will show, the song of dialectic is in fact multicultural, for harmony can only come about through the confluence of different notes.

⁶² Though a full examination of the prelude cannot be carried out in the present work, it is worth noting that numerous scholars have argued for the Babylonian origins of Plato’s nuptial number. Hence, there is reason to believe that the foreign influences in the music of the *Republic* identified in this chapter can also be found in the mathematics of the dialogue. See, *viz.*, George Aaron Barton, “On the Babylonian Origin of Plato’s Nuptial Number,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 29 (1908): 210-219.

5.1: Harmony: The Bringing Together of Diverse Notes

Though giving a comprehensive account of the role of music in Plato's *Republic* lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, highlighting a few relevant points will help support the thesis that Plato sees dialectic as a kind of multicultural song, one that can produce greater harmony in the soul, the city, and between cities.⁶³ Surveying the references to "harmony" throughout the dialogue, one common theme emerges: harmony is about bringing together disparate yet symbiotic things. For instance, with regard to the soul, harmony results when the spirited and the philosophic parts of our nature are "tuned to the proper degree of tension and relaxation" (412a). If the spirited part is tuned too high, then the philosophic part is drowned out and the person will be savage and cruel. If the philosophic part is tuned too high, then the person will be soft and weak-willed owing to a lack of spiritedness. Brought together in the proper relation, however, the spirited and the philosophic parts will produce a moderate and courageous soul. Here, harmony is a matter of two opposing impulses coming together in such a way that the soul is made better than it would be if just one part dominated while the other was silenced. Later, Socrates extends this understanding of harmony to include more than two parts when he speaks of how the just man "becomes his own friend, and harmonizes (ἀρμονία) the three parts, exactly like three notes in a harmonic scale, lowest, highest and middle. And if there are some other parts in between, he binds them together and becomes entirely one from many, moderate and harmonized (ἡρμωσμένον)" (443d-e). Similarly, he describes the lawgiver's concern with

⁶³ For more extended analyses of Plato on music, see, e.g., Edward A. Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); M.L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Francesco Pelosi, *Plato on Music, Soul and Body* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a collection of all of Plato's writings on music, with notes and commentary, see Andrew Barker, *Greek Musical Writings: Volume 1, The Musician and his Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and *Volume 2, Harmonic and Acoustic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

“harmonizing (συναρμόττων) the citizens by persuasion and compulsion, making them share with one another the benefit that each is able to bring to the commonwealth” (519e-520a). The common denominator in all these references to harmony is that harmony involves creating one from many. Whether within a soul or a city, harmony is achieved when a *diversity* of parts are brought together into a whole that is more than the sum of its parts, a whole beneficial to all of the parts that comprise it.

Harmony also appears in Plato’s vision of the cosmos in the Myth of Er, where it again signifies a curative union of diverse parts.⁶⁴ In Plato’s image of the cosmos, there exists a “spindle of Necessity” whose whorl, like a nesting doll, contains eight whorls of varying colors lying within one another. From above, the rims of these whorls look like circles and “on each of its circles, is perched a Siren, accompanying its revolution, uttering a single sound (φωνήν μίαν), one note (ἓνα τόνον); from all eight (ὀκτώ) is produced the accord of a single harmony (μίαν

⁶⁴ Various scholars have noted the strangeness of Plato’s decision to end the *Republic* with the Myth of Er. Most puzzling is the question of whether the myth closes off philosophic discussion in favor of poetic mimesis (see Lars Albinus, “The *Katabasis* of Er. Plato’s Use of Myths, exemplified by the Myth of Er,” in *Essays on Plato’s Republic*, ed. Erik Nis Ostenfeld [Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1998], 91-105; and Ronald R. Johnson, “Does Plato’s ‘Myth of Er’ Contribute to the Argument of the *Republic*?,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 32, no. 1 [1999]: 1-13). Additionally troubling is that the myth seems to regress to the consequentialist understanding of justice proposed by Cephalus and dismissed by Socrates in Book I (see Julia Annas, *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981], 349). Ultimately, the Myth of Er seems fit to persuade only those like Cephalus, who are practically minded or traditional. It is, in other words, an enactment of the philosopher descending back into the cave to help those who remain unconvinced (see Voegelin, *Order and History*, 106-116; Bloom, “Interpretive Essay,” 434-36; Luc Brisson, *Plato the Myth Maker*, trans. Gerard Naddaf [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998], 11, 87; and Francis Stephen Halliwell, “The Life-and-Death Journey of the Soul: Interpreting the Myth of Er,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, ed. G.R.F. Ferrari [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 445-473). My own analysis of the Myth of Er proceeds on the assumption that, like any fable, the myth is true in some sense, but not completely true. Plato may not literally believe in the existence of cosmic harmony, and the message of the story may be idealistic. However, the parallelism between the image of cosmic harmony and the images of harmony in the soul and the city suggests that Plato is using the medium of myth to communicate something that he thinks may not have been grasped through the *logos* of the *Republic*.

ἁρμονίαν)” (617b). Around the whorl and equidistant to one another sit the Fates—Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos—who “sing to the Sirens’ harmony (ἁρμονίαν)” (617c). Drawing on Pythagoras’ harmony of the spheres, the eight whorls on the spindle of Necessity represent the eight notes of the diatonic scale. The highest of all harmonies in the *Republic* thus brings together a series of distinct notes that, played together, make up a single, beautiful chord.

Moreover, this cosmic harmony is, literally, multicolored. The connection between music and color can again be traced back to Pythagoras.⁶⁵ One possible explanation for the theory is offered by Aristotle:

Such, then, is a possible way of conceiving the existence of a plurality of colours besides the White and Black; and we may suppose that [of this ‘plurality’] many are the result of a [numerical] ratio; for the blacks and whites may be juxtaposed in the ratio of 3 to 2 or of 3 to 4, or in ratios expressible by other numbers; [...] accordingly, we may regard all these colours [viz. all those based on numerical ratios] as analogous to the sounds that enter into music, and suppose that those involving simple numerical ratios, like the concords in music, may be those generally regarded as most agreeable.⁶⁶

As Aristotle describes it, colors can be understood mathematically in a way comparable to the sounds in music. Just as the vibrations of strings on a musical instrument produce a pitch

⁶⁵ On the theory of music-color harmony, see, e.g., John Gage, *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 55-56; and Rolf G. Kuehni and Andreas Schwarz, *Color Ordered: A Survey of Color Systems from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8-10. The idea that music and color are associated still exists. For instance, researchers at UC-Berkeley recently demonstrated that individuals tend to associate classical compositions with the same colors, regardless of their native country. Stephen E. Palmer et al., “Music-Color Associations Are Mediated by Emotion,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 110, no. 22 (2013): 8836-8841.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *On Sense and the Sensible*, trans. J.I. Beare, The Internet Classics Archive, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/sense.html>.

inversely proportional to their length, so do vibrations of light produce certain colors. The diatonic scale thus represents a correspondence not simply of sounds, but of colors. Put differently, sound and color are linked as different sensible expressions of the same mathematical harmony underlying the universe. That Plato conceives of the harmony of spheres in terms of color is also suggested by Robert Brumbaugh's finding that the Myth of Er points to an order operative in the relation of the colors and distances of the planets, as confirmed by comparison with the color theory presented in Plato's *Timaeus*. From this, Brumbaugh concludes that Plato wishes to show that the justice of the world is "at least in part evident to every man who will take the trouble to inspect the appearance of the heavens. The very colors of the planets constitute an empirical argument for the justice of the world order."⁶⁷ Color is therefore as much a part of Plato's conception of the harmony of the spheres as is music; the two are but different sensible manifestations of the universe's mathematical harmony. Cosmic harmony is thus both multi-noted and multicolored. However, unlike the multicolored music of the democratic city, the cosmic harmony of the eternal city possesses order and balance. From many notes, it produces an accord, unlike the cacophony of sounds that the democratic city emits.

It takes only one further step to identify the connection between harmony and knowledge. The close relationship between the two is indicated in the Myth of Er's account of the cosmos through the dual images of the Sirens and the Fates. In Homer's *Odyssey*, the Sirens boast, "For we know everything / that the Greeks and Trojans / Suffered in wide Troy / by the will of the gods. We know all that happens / on the teeming earth."⁶⁸ The Sirens are therefore connected with a kind of immortal knowledge. Likewise, Plato portrays the Fates as having complete

⁶⁷ Robert S. Brumbaugh, "Colors of the Hemispheres in Plato's Myth of Er (Republic 616 E)," *Classical Philology* 46, no. 3 (1951): 173-76.

⁶⁸ Homer, *Odyssey*, 12.197-199.

knowledge of everything that has passed, is passing, or will pass. Knowledge and harmony are consequently linked. In this way, Plato indicates that the theme of music offers a way of thinking about the search for knowledge. The image of perfect cosmic harmony—arrived at through the bringing together of various sounds and colors—symbolizes the final destination of the dialectic journey. Though only an image, the spindle of Necessity suggests that complete knowledge of what *is* resembles a harmonious synthesis of difference.

Various clues in the *Republic* elucidate what these cosmic notes symbolize: different *nomoi*. Music and *nomoi* are of course connected in that *nomos* is a musical term denoting a class of traditional melodies,⁶⁹ but the political connection between music and *nomoi* understood as laws is made explicit in Book IV:

So therefore, to put it briefly, the guardians of the city must cleave to this, so that they are not corrupted unawares but may in every way be on guard against it: not to allow innovations concerning gymnastics or music contrary to the established order. [...] For one must be aware of changes to a new (καινὸν) form (εἶδος) of music, taking it to be a danger to the whole. For nowhere are the ways of music (μουσικῆς τρόποι) moved without the greatest political laws (πολιτικῶν νόμων) being moved, as Damon says and I am persuaded. (424b-c)⁷⁰

Drawing on the work of Damon—an Athenian music theorist considered the leading authority on the moral effects of music—Socrates makes the bold claim that music is not mere

⁶⁹ On *nomos* as a musical term, see West, *Ancient Greek Music*, 215-217.

⁷⁰ Here I depart from Bloom's translation and offer my own. Bloom's translation of "παρὰ πάντα" as "against all comers" (instead of "in every way") wrongly gives the impression that Socrates is emphatically railing against foreigners. Bloom's translation of "καινὸν" as "strange" rather than "new" has the same effect. Finally, he translates "οὐδαμοῦ" as "never," whereas the more common translation of the word as "nowhere" better captures the overall meaning of the passage as suggesting a link between music and place.

“entertainment,” but rather the foundation on which the entire social order rests.⁷¹ If people are not exposed to the right music, their society will develop bad *nomoi*. As Wallace explains, “in Damon’s view (as Plato represents it), musical styles not only ‘fit’ behaviour, they also determine or shape it, both for individuals and for society.”⁷² The closest Plato comes to explaining the mechanisms by which music influences society is through Adeimantus’ comment that music “flows gently beneath the surface into the dispositions and practices, and from there it emerges bigger in men’s contracts with one another; and it’s from the contracts, Socrates, that it attacks laws and regimes with much insolence until it finally subverts everything private and public” (424d-e). This statement accords with Plato’s anthropological principle that the city is man writ large. Individual education matters because individuals are responsible for making and practicing the rules of their society, and they bring their education to bear on these political

⁷¹ In Plato’s time, this view would not have sounded bold so much as antiquated: “With the Sophists, relativism could easily lead to a discard of music as an ethical force; in the world of dialectics and oratory that they created it was to be retained only as an emotional and technical aid to the speaker. But the renewed faith of Socrates and Plato in an absolute moral standard brought with it a belief in the older ethical values of music and in musical value in general. Yet the nature of music was changing, and as the old unity fell apart the educational ideals and curriculum based on it changed also; political and social changes were a counterpart—or a result, as Damon and Plato believed; the logical outcome was the destruction of the polis and the growth of the cosmopolitan city, a process accompanied by an equivalent disruption of music.” Lippmann, *Musical Thought*, 63.

⁷² Robert W. Wallace, “Damon of Oa: A Music Theorist Ostracized?,” in *Music and the Muses: The Culture of ‘Mousik-e’ in the Classical Athenian City*, ed. Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson (Oxford University Press, 2004), 258. Though much of what we know about Damon comes from references in Plato’s dialogues, various sources confirm that he was not just a music theorist, but also an important political advisor. According to Aristotle, Damon “was believed to suggest to Pericles most of his measures, owing to which they afterwards ostracized him” “Athenian Constitution,” in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, vol. 20, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1952), 27.4. It is interesting that Plato has Socrates recommend the ideas of an ostracized music theorist, given that the ideal city will banish any poet who does not make the right kind of music (398a). Could this be another indication that the Athenians have cast out and let in the wrong influences?

activities. Hence, if music plays a central role in character formation, it follows that music will shape the character of a society.

One implication of the close relationship between music and *nomoi* posited in the *Republic* is that if we want to understand the nature of any given society, we can discover clues to its identity in its music. In essence, music can serve as a proxy for the general character of the whole society. A timocratic regime, we might imagine, would emphasize spirited melodies and rhythms more so than the aristocratic regime with its harmonious balance of spiritedness and moderation. The music of the democratic regime would be panharmonic, reflecting the multicolored dispositions of its citizens. After all, democratic people are the most likely to enjoy sweets from a variety of different lands and, according to Socrates, “In likening such food and such a way of life as a whole to melodies and songs written in the panharmonic mode and with all rhythms, we would make a correct likeness” (404d-e). Regime types, in other words, can be translated into correspondent musical modes. Those that incorporate more foreign influences would be more panharmonic, while those that shut out foreigners would be more monoharmonic. In short, the music of a place offers a reflection of its *nomoi*, which may be more or less multicultural.

If this is the case, then the cosmos itself is a multicultural place in which different ways of life are threaded together such that each is improved by belonging to the whole. After all, Plato imagines cosmic harmony as consisting of eight different notes joined together in a single accord. He did not need to specify that there were eight different notes; it would have sufficed to mention that the Sirens and the Fates sing in harmony. As aforementioned, the detail that eight different notes produce the cosmic harmony most likely serves as an allusion to the diatonic scale. This scale consists of seven different modes and a repeated octave. The name of each

mode strikes home the point: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. These are the names of various Greek and non-Greek ethnic groups. From this it is hinted that Plato imagines cosmic harmony as consisting of some harmonious blend of diverse *nomoi*.

5.2: Kallipolis' Multicultural Music

Yet, one might object that the ideal city sketched out in the *Republic* seems anathema to such cosmic harmony, as it specifically forbids innovation in music. There are two responses to this. First, as we have seen, Kallipolis is not always the model of justice that Socrates describes it as. It would be a mistake, then, to rely on Kallipolis for insight into the kind of music that dialectic performs. Nonetheless, when examined closely, the form of music from which Kallipolis demands no deviation is, ironically, a multicultural music. To bring this to light, let us examine the education of the guardians, where the connection between music and interpolity relations in Kallipolis appears. As discussed earlier with regard to the noble dogs passage, the guardians must be spirited enough to defend the city when it is at war, yet gentle enough to restrain from acting violently towards each other or the citizens they are supposed to protect. To this end, Socrates proposes that the guardian class receive a dual education consisting of “gymnastics for the body, and music for the soul” (376c). He prescribes music for the soul owing to the observation that the “tales (μύθους)” one hears as a child shape the soul and thereby exercise a strong influence on the kind of person and citizen one will become (377a-c). Consequently, since poets are the primary transmitters of tales, their music must be strictly regulated so that the guardians will come to possess the right *ethos*, or moral character. Again, that *ethos* is one that will motivate boldness towards enemies and gentleness towards friends

who—at least *prima facie*—are foreigners and fellow citizens, respectively. Music thus lies at the foundation of Kallipolis’ treatment of foreigners; it helps put the guardians in the proper state of mind when at war with foreigners, and afterwards.

As is evident from the above discussion, to understand the role of music in Kallipolis, we must first understand music’s relationship to poetry and myth. Note, first of all, that music (μουσική) is noticeably less present in the *Republic* than poetry (ποίησις). The subject of music occupies only about four Stephanus pages, while the topic of poetry arises across Books II and III and reappears as an extended discussion on *poesis* in Book X. As Malcolm Schofield notes, “It is hard to avoid concluding that whatever the importance Socrates is made to claim for music, poetry is a more significant preoccupation in the *Republic*.”⁷³ Indeed, astute readers might observe that almost as soon as Socrates brings up the musical education of the guardians (at 376e), he and his interlocutors are off on a discussion of poetry (at 377d). What is the connection? Moreover, why, in between the mention of music and of poetry, does Socrates start talking about myth (μῦθος, at 377a)?

The answer is that there was a close relationship between music, poetry, and myth in the Greek world. Whereas today we tend to think of poetry as written or spoken word, perhaps rhythmic but still distinct from what we would call “music,” the Greeks understood poetry as something that included not only speech, but typically music, drama, and dance. This is intimated by the first line of Homer’s *Iliad*, which asks the Muse not to speak but to “sing (ᾄδειν)” of the wrath of Achilles. Homer’s portrayals of bards singing to musical accompaniment the stories of famous heroes are likely an accurate depiction of how Homer’s works themselves

⁷³ Malcolm Schofield, “Music all pow’rful,” in *Plato’s ‘Republic’: A Critical Guide*, ed. Mark L. McPherran (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 239.

were passed down through the age of oral culture, or perhaps even created, as the verses are composed in dactylic hexameter.⁷⁴ Even with the growing popularity of written work in Plato's day, many poems were still sung in public, performative contexts, such as at *symposia* or festivals.⁷⁵ Of course, purely instrumental music did exist, often accompanying libations, sacrifices, supplications, religious processions, and other ceremonial rites. However, music was often thought of in conjunction with poetry. As one scholar attests, "In its commonest form, *mousikē* represented for the Greeks a seamless complex of instrumental music, poetic word, and co-ordinated physical movement."⁷⁶ Moreover, performed poetry had a major influence on Greek society: "Singer-composers, who set great numbers of poetic texts to song, which they then performed from memory to the accompaniment of wind and stringed instruments, were esteemed as repositories of knowledge."⁷⁷ Consequently, when Greeks thought of music, they inevitably thought of the performance of famous poems. In this context, Plato's decision to focus on poetry when discussing music makes sense.

The relationship between poetry and myth is similar to the relationship between poetry and music: distinct yet deeply intertwined. To be sure, just as music sometimes existed apart

⁷⁴ I am referring to the famous Homeric question, which concerns who composed the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and the related questions of when and how the texts became formalized. The debate chiefly revolves around whether there was a single author named Homer whose work has been transmitted to us in roughly the same form as that in which it was composed, or if the works are the result of multiple authorship over generations.

⁷⁵ Indeed, even works of prose—perhaps Plato's dialogues included—were typically read aloud in a public setting. For more on the relationship between music and poetry, see John G. Landels, *Music in Ancient Greece and Rome*, (London: Routledge, 1999), esp. chap. 1.

⁷⁶ Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson, "Introduction: *Mousikē*, not Music," in *Music and the Muses: The Culture of Mousikē in the Classical Athenian City*, eds. Penelope Murray and Peter Wilson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1.

⁷⁷ Flora R. Levin, *Greek Reflections on the Nature of Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), xiii.

from poetry, myths were sometimes conveyed in contexts other than professional poetry performances. Indeed, oral storytelling was popular at dinner parties and sometimes even arose in the midst of intellectual debates, as illustrated by Protagoras' creation myth in Plato's *Protagoras*.⁷⁸ Myths were also transmitted through images on vases, sculptures, monuments, and other physical works of art.⁷⁹ Yet, by far the primary means through which myths were communicated was poetry. In fact, the Greek myths are thought to have originated with the poets, as popular storytelling typically involved retelling the myths of the poets, and artists too worked within the framework of well-known poetic myths. As Luc Brisson attests, for a long time, "the poet held a monopoly of the transmission of the memorable and thus of 'education'...."⁸⁰ Indeed, in the *Republic*, Plato calls the poets "myth makers (μυθοποιούς)" (377b). In sum, it is not unusual that in discussing music Plato has Socrates turn to an investigation of which myths are appropriate for poets to tell, for poets were the most celebrated makers of myth and music.

Strangely, however, Socrates' search for the appropriate music for the guardians leads him away from Greek poetry and towards foreign poetry. The *Republic's* condemnation of Greek poetry is well known. In brief, the critique runs that, rife throughout the work of Hesiod, Homer,

⁷⁸ On the sources of myth, see Lowell Edmunds, "Introduction: The Practice of Greek Mythology," in *Approaches to Greek Myth*, ed. Lowell Edmunds (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 1-25.

⁷⁹ The literature on ancient Greek art and myth is voluminous. See, e.g., Warren G. Moon, ed., *Ancient Greek Art and Iconography*, Wisconsin Studies in Classics (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Myths in Images: Theseus and Medea as a Case Study," in *Approaches to Greek Myth*, 395-445; Judith M. Barringer, *Art, Myth, and Ritual in Classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Luca Giuliani, *Image and Myth: A History of Pictorial Narration in Greek Art*, trans. Joseph O'Donnell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

⁸⁰ Luc Brisson, *How Philosophers Saved Myths: Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology*, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 7.

and other prominent Greek poets are scenes that glorify violence and deception by depicting the gods engaging in such behavior, even towards each other. Such anthropomorphizing of the gods lends unwarranted justification to the evil deeds of humans and encourages the imitation of unjust behaviors. Put simply, no young person should hear that “in doing the extremes of injustice, or that in punishing the unjust deeds of his father in every way, he would do nothing to be wondered at, but would be doing only what the first and the greatest of the gods did” (378b). The poets fail, in other words, to guide Greek youths towards the right ἔθος (*ethos*) or character. In Kallipolis, their poetry would not further the mission to use music to cultivate a proper balance of spiritedness and moderation in the guardians; it would actively work against that mission. As Socrates maintains, “*Above all*, [...] it mustn’t be said that gods make war on gods, and plot against them and have battles with them—for it isn’t even true—provided that those who are going to guard the city for us must consider it most shameful to be easily angry with one another” (378c, emphasis added). If they aim to produce citizens who do not do to their friends what they do to their enemies, then they will have to look beyond the traditional Greek myths.

Against the Greek model of unrestrained violence, Socrates recommends a foreign tale of brotherhood, a tale he calls a “Phoenician thing” (414c).⁸¹ Is it not curious, first of all, that the myth designed to educate the guardians is not Greek, but foreign? When we recall that the

⁸¹ The Phoenician Tale is not usually regarded as part of the musical education of the guardians. However, Socrates explicitly links the tale to the discussion of music when he precedes it by referencing “those lies that come into being in case of need, of which we were just now speaking, some one noble lie” (414b-c). Justification for these lies appears in two places prior to the telling of the Phoenician Tale: just after Socrates introduces the subject of music, where such tales are explicitly cast as one form the speech content of music might take (377a) and, again, in the midst of their discussion of what the poets should and should not say (389b-d). Though midway through Book III Socrates claims that “it’s likely we are completely finished with that part of music that concerns speeches and tales” (398b), he continues in Book III to discuss what is right and wrong in the content of Greek poetry and to quote from it (404b-c, 408a, 408b-c). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the Phoenician Tale is one of the stories to be sung as part of the musical education of the guardians and, indeed, the education of the whole city.

purpose of the myth is to educate the souls of the guardians so that they will act boldly towards the city's enemies and gently towards their fellow citizens, the irony of the myth's foreign origins becomes clearer. How can all non-Greeks be natural enemies, yet the very myth that fosters brotherhood in the ideal city be derived from non-Greeks? The harmony of the ideal city depends, it seems, on a story borrowed from the enemy foreigner. In fact, the musical training of the guardians can be said to be "foreign" not only in terms of its speech content. The elements of ancient poetry that modern readers would likely recognize as more strictly "musical"—the harmonic mode and rhythm—also incorporate the foreign, as will soon be discussed at greater length. First, however, it is worthwhile to consider why, of all foreigners, Plato chooses to attribute the noble lie to the Phoenicians, as this will help us understand why Plato makes the harmony of the ideal city depend on a foreign tale.

Many scholars have speculated on the significance of the noble lie's Phoenician origins. One possible explanation involves the Phoenicians' reputation for dishonesty. The phrase "Phoenician lie" was proverbial and elsewhere Plato plays with the popular association between the Phoenicians and lying.⁸² The mention of the Phoenicians could therefore simply be a clever joke. Alternatively, it could signify the satirical nature of the noble lie. As Voegelin explains, "The heavy accent on the incredibility of brotherhood underlines the unbrotherliness of the Athenian brothers."⁸³ Some scholars have found it fruitful, however, to consider the only other mention of Phoenicians in the *Republic*, at 436a, where Socrates remarks that the love of money

⁸² In the *Laws*, the Athenian Stranger speaks of the Phoenicians' "capacity for what is called mischief-making (πανουργίαν) rather than wisdom (σοφία)" (747c). On the stereotype of the Phoenicians as liars, see James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1992), 18; and Issac, *Invention of Racism*, 328.

⁸³ Voegelin, *Order and History*, 106-7.

“is to be found not least among the Phoenicians and those in Egypt.”⁸⁴ Based on this passage, Carl Page argues that the tale is labeled “Phoenician” to signify that the noble lie serves as a remedy for materialistic self-interest, a natural human tendency that can conflict with the good of the regime.⁸⁵ This interpretation carries with it the added benefit of explaining the coinage metaphor evoked in the Myth of Metals, as the Phoenicians are associated with money.⁸⁶

While the text supports these interpretations, the unmistakable allusion to the myth of Cadmus that other scholars have noted nonetheless weighs heavily.⁸⁷ According to Greek mythology, while wandering around in search of his sister Europa, the Phoenician king Cadmus consulted the oracle at Delphi, who instructed him to follow a cow and found a city wherever it lay to rest. He thus famously founded the ancient Greek *polis* of Thebes, but not without the loss of all his companions, who were devoured by a dragon while on a mission to collect water from the spring it guarded. After slaying the dragon, Cadmus planted its teeth in the ground and from thence sprang a race of fierce, armed men called *Spartoi*. Since these men posed a danger to him,

⁸⁴ The greediness of the Phoenicians also appears in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where the swineherd Eumaeus describes the arrival of a group of “greedy” Phoenician traders who kidnapped him and sold him into slavery (15.455-527). For more on Homer’s depiction of the Phoenicians, see Irene J. Winter, “Homer’s Phoenicians: History, Ethnography, or Literary Trope? [A Perspective on Early Orientalism],” in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule*, eds. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 247-71. For a response to Winter, see Carol Dougherty, *The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer’s Odyssey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁸⁵ Carl Page, “The Truth about Lies in Plato’s *Republic*,” *Ancient Philosophy* 11, no. 1 (1991): 1-33.

⁸⁶ The Myth of the Metals also recalls Hesiod’s ages of man. See Voegelin, *Order and History*, 106; and Jon Hesk, *Deception and Democracy in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 161.

⁸⁷ Plato, *The Republic of Plato: Introduction and Books I-V*, trans. James Adam, 2nd ed. (1902; repr., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 195; and W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 4, Plato: The Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 462.

Cadmus threw stones at them until—each thinking a fellow *Spartoi* had hit him—they began fighting each other. The five who survived the slaughter helped Cadmus establish the city. The story is one of conflict and loss—hardly a fitting source for a myth designed to promote social harmony and communal salvation.⁸⁸ Even stranger is Plato’s decision to allude to this myth rather than the Athenian myth of autochthony. After all, such myths were popular during this time; Plato’s dialogue *Menexenus* even offers its own presentation of the standard Athenian autochthony myth.⁸⁹ Given the prevalence of stories about the Athenians’ autochthonous origins, why does Plato have Socrates proclaim that such myths do not exist in their time and that he must therefore draw on an old Phoenician tale?

To understand Plato’s turn to the Theban instead of the Athenian myth of autochthony, we must consider the function of myths of autochthony in Athenian society. The most popular version of the Athenian myth of autochthony posited that all Athenians were descendents of Erichthonios, who miraculously sprang from the soil of Attica. This myth lent a sense of naturalness to the city. Less obviously, it also bolstered the citizens’ sense of belonging to a democratic regime. To be sure, myths of autochthony did foster aristocratic boasting over the antiquity of one’s lineage. Nonetheless, they played a major role in advancing the idea of a natural equality of birth among citizens.⁹⁰ Ultimately, all pure-blooded Athenians could trace

⁸⁸ Even more telling is the term “Cadmean victory” (also known as a “Pyrrhic victory”), which refers to a victory attained at as great a loss to the victor as to the vanquished—a term evoked in Plato’s *Laws* (641c). Might this suggest that the founding of Kallipolis is but a Cadmean victory, *i.e.* not a true victory?

⁸⁹ This dialogue will be analyzed in Chapter 4. I will argue that Plato uses the dialogue form to subvert the meaning of the traditional myth of Athenian autochthony, thereby calling into question the Athenians’ sense of superiority over foreigners.

⁹⁰ Nicole Loraux, *Born of the Earth: Myth and Politics in Athens* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000); and Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity*, 112.

their ancestry back to a single man, a man born of the soil—unlike the foreign founders often celebrated in other cities such as Sparta or Thebes. The Athenian myth’s focus on the origination of the same from the same, on the lack of foreign blood in the Athenian genealogical tree, points to one of the myth’s central functions: assuring the Athenians of their superiority over foreigners. Other Greeks embody the barbarian; the Athenians alone are wholly themselves.⁹¹ From this it should be clear just how scandalous it is that Socrates recommends that the ideal city—which Glaucon assumes will be Greek—draw on the Phoenician myth of autochthony, rather than the customary Athenian myth. Through the device of literary allusion, Plato reminds his fellow Athenians that they are not the only ones who believe they are indigenous to the land, and that such myths are mere social constructions not to be taken as literal truth.⁹² More importantly, he undercuts the purpose of the guardians’ education by basing a central aspect of their communal identity on a foreign tale. The noble lie is adopted to convince the guardians, and later the rest of the city, that “as though the land they are in were a mother and nurse, they must plan for and defend it, if anyone attacks, and they must think of the other citizens as brothers and born of the earth” (414e). Yet, the genesis of the tale reveals that Kallipolis cannot thrive without the influence of foreigners, thus calling into question the assumed division between citizens and foreigners on the basis of which the educational model develops. Who can justly be excluded

⁹¹ A quote from the myth of autochthony delivered in Plato’s *Menexenus* provides but one example of how the Athenians conceived of other Greeks as containing barbarian blood: “As you well know, the nobility and freedom of our city are this firm and sound, and we are by nature (φύσει) Barbarian-hating (μισοβάρβαρον) because, unmixed with Barbarians (ἀμιγεῖς βαρβάρων), we are purely (εἰλικρινῶς) Greek” (245c).

⁹² Kasimis sees this as one positive aspect of Plato’s myth of autochthony in the *Republic*. Plato’s version of the myth does not say that the citizens *are* brothers born of the earth, but that they should regard each other as such. She argues, further, that the possibility of social mobility expressed in the Myth of Metals illustrates the progressive dimensions of Plato’s thought. “Drawing the Boundaries,” 98, n. 152; 105; 112, n. 173.

from the brotherhood of Kallipolis, if the founding myth itself can be traced back to foreigners? Might other aspects of the city's identity be of foreign origin? If so, in fighting foreigners, are the guardians of Kallipolis in some sense fighting themselves? How can one divorce Kallipolis from other cities if its founding relies on them?

That Plato connects Kallipolis' myth of autochthony with the founding story of Thebes is even more illuminating. In Greek drama, Thebes serves as an "anti-Athens" or "mirror opposite of Athens," a place where disorder and tragedy reign.⁹³ Thebes is the land of Dionysus, descendent of Cadmus. Typically presented in the Greek pantheon as a foreign god, an outsider from the east, Dionysus brings chaos everywhere he goes. Nothing illustrates this more palpably than Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Dionysus' arrival occasions the destabilization of a formerly well-ordered society. By the end of the play, everything the city considers sacred comes undone. The old become young, men transform into women, and mothers kill their own young.⁹⁴ Like wine, of which Dionysus is the god, the foreigner Dionysus breaks down all boundaries, making the impermissible permissible. Plumbing the depths of Socrates' seemingly off-handed remark that the noble lie is in fact a "Phoenician thing" we thus discover the personification of barbarism at the heart of Kallipolis' educational project. The music used to educate Kallipolis' guardians to act boldly towards foreigners and gently towards fellow citizens draws for its content from the

⁹³ Froma I. Zeitlin, "Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama," in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, eds. John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 144.

⁹⁴ For an excellent analysis of these transformations, see Arlene Saxonhouse, "Freedom, Form, and Formlessness: Euripides' *Bacchae* and Plato's *Republic*," *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 1 (2014): 88-99.

mythology of a place that epitomizes foreignness. In this way, Plato subtly implants discordance into the founding of Kallipolis.⁹⁵

What is more, the music of Kallipolis blends the sounds of the Greek world with those of the non-Greek. Concluding the discussion of “that part of music that concerns speeches and tales,” Socrates turns to the other element of music: “the manner of song and melody” (398b-c). Specifically, he considers the proper harmonic mode and rhythm, which he says must fit with the speech. Given the kind of character the music must help to inculcate, Socrates eliminates the “wailing” modes—namely, the “mixed Lydian” and the “tight Lydian”—and the “soft” modes “suitable for symposia,” among which are included the Ionian and some Lydian modes. Left are two modes: the Dorian and the Phrygian. According to Aristotle, the Dorian mode is “specially calculated to produce a moderate and collected temperament,” while the Phrygian mode is “held to give inspiration and fire.”⁹⁶ Put differently, the Dorian is a grave and serious mode typically associated with military music, whereas the Phrygian is a wild and playful mode commonly associated with orgiastic ecstasy.⁹⁷ Aristotle critiques Socrates’ decision to include both modes, rather than the Dorian alone, on two counts. First, he contends that the effect of the Phrygian

⁹⁵ This is not the only instance of Plato building dissonance into the ideal city. The city develops as a result of the desire for luxuries, a desire Socrates immediately critiques for spawning the need for things “whose presence in cities most of all produces evils both private and public” (373e). How can Kallipolis be the “ideal” city if it is founded on injustice?

⁹⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), VIII.5, 1340a38.

⁹⁷ Though most commonly associated with flamenco music, the Phrygian mode is also found in many rock songs. One hears in Allan Bloom’s discussion of modern rock music echoes of the worries shared by Plato and Aristotle, though in my view Plato is more appreciative of music than Bloom realizes. Moreover, as argued in this dissertation, Plato would not share Bloom’s hostility to cultural diversity, though he too would find the prevalence of cultural relativism troubling. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

mode corresponds with that of the flute; it thus makes no sense for Socrates to allow the Phrygian mode yet forbid the flute. Second, Aristotle argues that the proper mode for education is the Dorian, which is “most expressive of a manly character,” unlike the Phrygian mode, which promotes “religious excitement” and “Dionysiac frenzy.”⁹⁸ The mode is aptly named, as Phrygia is often considered the other birthplace of Dionysus. Despite Aristotle’s critiques, Plato’s ideal city integrates rather than suppresses the Dionysian impulses present in mankind. Just as the speech content of the music of Kallipolis drew on a non-Greek myth, the melody incorporates a harmonic mode associated with non-Greeks. The music of Kallipolis is thus multicultural.

Whether we examine harmony in the abstract, in the cosmos, or in Kallipolis, it turns out to be a unity wrought from difference. Remembering that the study of harmony comprised part of the “prelude” to the song itself that dialectic performs, this suggests that the song of dialectic is not exclusively Athenian, nor exclusively Greek. Dialectic helps to bring together different cultural horizons and from them produce a harmony reminiscent of the cosmic harmony underlying all of creation. The *Republic* offers a vivid demonstration of dialectic in action. Presenting the reader with a variety of culturally informed views on justice, Plato shows how with the intervention of an expert dialectician like Socrates diverging perspectives can lead not to war, but to harmony. The art of dialectic helps to harmonize all these different perspectives, which means relaxing certain elements and heightening the pitch of others. As the attentive

⁹⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, VIII.7, 1342a28. This attitude is shared in Plato’s *Laches* by the character Laches, who rejects all modes including the Phrygian, in preference for the Dorian—the “sole Hellenic harmony” (188d). Plato’s inclusion of the Phrygian mode is so strange that scholars have debated why he included it. Some offer the explanation that, in theory, there is a close structural similarity between the Dorian and Phrygian modes, and that Plato may simply have ignored current practice. Others contend that, by Plato’s time, performances in the Phrygian mode were more solemn and dignified than in earlier times. For a survey of these positions see Warren D. Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music: The Evidence of Poetry and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 107-109.

reader will note, none of the perspectives on justice are ever wholly dismissed. Rather, they are all brought into harmony with one another. This is what dialectic attempts to do, to make sense of premises that seem valid, but contradict one another—hence the preparatory training in mathematics. Consequently, the song of dialectic cannot be performed without the discord of horizons. While such discord can occur between members of the same political community, it is more likely to happen between members of different communities owing to the greater likelihood that they possess conflicting beliefs. Hence, if approached with the aid of dialectic, cross-cultural engagement can prove a most fruitful resource for fostering greater harmony.

VI. Leaving the Cave: The Benefits of Democracy

To close the chapter, I would briefly like to discuss what seems to be the biggest caveat to the argument made here. Thus far, the art of dialectic has been presented as something capable of bringing together seemingly discordant notes to make harmony, or a soul/city that is friends with itself and others. One might object that this is too idealistic. Indeed, the friendship with Thrasymachus that Socrates forges out of the conversation seems almost too good to be true. How good is dialectic, really, at bringing about harmony? To what extent can the philosopher in fact successfully mediate cross-cultural encounters? Returning to the Cave Allegory, I will end the chapter by arguing that Plato presents this process as, unfortunately, the best means of cultivating harmony, yet one with great challenges to overcome. This is because harmony can only be brought about by travelling out of the comfort of the cave—a long and painful journey most will only take kicking and screaming. Ironically, however, the democratic regime creates the best conditions for initiating such a turning from one's home. For though the love of freedom

may inspire tyranny, in encouraging experimentation with different ways of living democratic life helps individuals prepare for the experience of leaving the cave.

Insofar as harmony involves the bringing together of diverse perspectives, it requires an openness to sympathetic consideration of alternative cultural horizons and a willingness to detach oneself from the beliefs inculcated by one's own political community, should those beliefs prove unreasonable. Plato's depiction of the transcendence of the *nomoi* that imprison us like people chained in a cave emphasizes the difficulty of detaching oneself from the opinions of one's society. As Heidegger, Voegelin, and others have proposed, the essence of the Cave Allegory is that it reveals the nature of παιδεία (*paideia*) or education. Education emerges in the allegory as a long and painful journey we must be forced to take despite our natural resistance to it. The prisoner who is released must be "compelled (ἀναγκάζοιτο)" to stand up and look around and, "moreover, in doing all this is in pain (ἀλγοῖ)" (515c). With the light now hitting his eyes for the first time, he is unable to make out the shadows he formerly saw and consequently resists his liberation, believing that what he saw before was truer than what he sees now (515d). When then "compelled (ἀναγκάζοι)" to look at the light itself, his eyes "hurt (ἀλγεῖν)" so badly that he tries to "flee (φεύγειν)" (515e). If someone then "dragged him (ἔλκοι) away from there by force (βίᾳ) along the rough, steep, upward way and didn't let him go before he had dragged him out into the light of the sun," he would be "distressed (ὀδυνᾶσθαι) and annoyed (ἀγανακτεῖν) at being so dragged" (515e-516a). All this suggests that leaving the cave, or detaching oneself from the *nomoi* with which one was raised, is a long and painful experience that humans are inclined to resist and run away from because it involves a complete reorientation of one's view of the world. As Socrates puts it, it entails a "turning around (τῆς περιαγωγῆς)" (518d).

Plato's decision to cast this experience in terms of movement or travel from one realm (the cave) to another (the region above the cave) warrants further scrutiny. Though the allegory imagines the experience of education as the body's literal movement from a static condition inside the cave to one of roaming outside it, the allegory is explicitly designated a metaphor for "the soul's journey up to the intelligible place" (517b). What must be moved, then, is the soul. Nonetheless, the movement of the soul can be understood as movement *out of* the place in which one was raised—again, not a literal movement of one's body, but a metaphorical movement of one's soul. That Plato conceives of education in terms of travel is conveyed not only by the image of the prisoner's body ascending from one place to another, but also by the language Plato uses to describe this ascent. According to Socrates, philosophers must be forced to go back down into the cave because otherwise such individuals could not be good stewards of the city, for "they won't be willing to act, believing they have emigrated (ἀποκίσθαι) to a colony on the Isles of the Blessed while they are still alive" (519c). The word translated as "emigrated" comes from ἀποικία (*apoikia*), a word that literally means "a home away from home" and which is usually translated as "colony". As one scholar explains, unlike colonies which were set up as mere trading sites, *apoikia* "were settlements which were, from the time of their very foundation, always destined to be new communities in their own right, with their own territory and urban centre, their own citizens and laws."⁹⁹ In evoking this language, Plato thus means to convey that the experience of education is like the experience of settling in a far away land. One might be reluctant at first to go to and to accept the new place, but eventually it comes to feel like home. Ultimately, however, one's home is still in the city; the colony is but a home away from home. One must go back and share what one has seen with one's fellows. This description of education

⁹⁹ James Whitley, *The Archaeology of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 124.

as an experience of emigration is further confirmed by Plato's use of the word *theoria* a bit earlier when Socrates describes the returned philosopher as someone who has “come from acts of divine contemplation (θείων θεωριῶν)” (517d). *Theoria*, recall, refers to the ancient practice of travelling to another land and returning to report on what one has observed. By evoking the notion of *theoria*, Plato implies that philosophic education entails metaphorically travelling away from the *nomoi* of one's native land. The journey is difficult, however, and its harshness tempts us to run right back into the comforting womb of our motherland.

The Myth of Er further confirms the Cave Allegory's image of the philosopher as a traveler who returns to report what he has seen. Closing the *Republic*, the myth tells of the death of a soldier named Er, who returned to life twelve days later to convey what he had seen during his time in the afterlife. As Barrachi argues, Er is a warrior but he is also “an other image of the philosopher,” for like the philosopher he brings to his fellows a message of striving to learn what makes a good life and to develop the virtues such a life requires.¹⁰⁰ Plato's philosophers derive from the class of soldiers who protect the city, so there is nothing unusual about this image of a warrior-philosopher. In the manner of the *theoros* who travels to another land and comes back to his own people to report on the strange sights he has witnessed, or the former prisoner who descends back into the cave to tell his fellows about the strange sights above, Er travels to another realm and returns to communicate his journey to those who have not experienced it. In relaying what he witnessed in the afterlife—from the gathering of souls to the multicolored spindle of Necessity to the souls choosing lots and drinking from the river of Forgetfulness—Er provides the living with valuable information meant to instruct the way they live. The information he brings may justify certain aspects of one's manner of living, while challenging

¹⁰⁰ Barrachi, *Of Myth*, 139.

others. It may even assail one way of life more so than another. The point, however, is to encourage reflection on oneself and one's understanding of the world so that one will make, if not the best, at least a better choice of lives. Accordingly, Er serves the same function as the philosopher of awakening people and prodding them to reflect consciously on their lives.

Plato's casting of the warrior-philosopher Er as "by race a Pamphylian" further emphasizes and clarifies the relationship between the philosopher and the foreigner. The name "Pamphylian" is derived from the Greek words $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$ —the neuter form of the word meaning "all"—and $\varphi\upsilon\lambda\acute{\eta}$, which means "race" or "tribe." Er therefore comes from a place of "all races." Why does Plato specify Er's origins? What is symbolized by the meaning of the name Pamphylia, a region not in Greece proper but rather in Asia Minor? Does it represent the ultimate equalizing of mankind that takes place in death?¹⁰¹ Could it signify that Er's myth is a tale for all mankind?¹⁰² Both of these interpretations suggest a fundamental unity among the world's myriad cultures, a common humanity. This summons another possibility. Could Er be the embodiment of the cosmic harmony that out of many notes forms one beautiful chord? If so, then the philosopher is a mortal composer who seeks to approximate in his song the multicolored, many-noted harmony of the spheres.

The Myth of Er is, however, only a myth. In fact, as John Seery observes, Plato's writing of the myth "constitutes a mode of art *at fifth remove* from the truth."¹⁰³ For Seery, this sends a

¹⁰¹ Patrick J. Deneen, *The Odyssey of Political Theory: The Politics of Departure and Return* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 102.

¹⁰² Barry Cooper, "'A Lump Bred Up in Darknesse': Two Tellurian Themes of the *Republic*," in *Politics, Philosophy, Writing: Plato's Art of Caring for Souls*, ed. Zdravko Planinc (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2001), 121.

¹⁰³ John Seery, "Politics as Ironic Community: On the Themes of Descent and Return in Plato's *Republic*," *Political Theory* 16, no. 2 (1988): 242-43.

strong signal that the myth should not be taken literally, *i.e.* as offering a real representation of the afterlife. Rather, the strategy of irony Plato employs in the Myth of Er invites readers to participate in dialogue with the text. Only through active engagement can readers discover what the book aims to teach. In Seery's words, "The book cannot just tell us what it is trying to tell us—for in a sense, an imitated thought is no thought at all."¹⁰⁴ The tension between fate and choice pervading the Myth of Er speaks to this point. On the one hand, the harmony of the spheres denotes a sense of divine order underlying the universe, of everything having its proper place and purpose, of cosmic *nous*. On the other hand, the selection of lots indicates a role for human choice, action, and responsibility. This tension in the Myth of Er forces readers to engage in individual reflection, to wonder about the webs of meaning into which one is born and the extent to which one can transcend these patterns. More importantly, it raises the question of *how* one can escape the blind obedience to instincts that some of the characters in the selection of lots display. What raises a human to contemplation? What allows him to see his life as a series of choices rather than habits unconsciously obeyed, and to weigh these choices appropriately? How is the image of the philosopher transformed, at least in part, from word to flesh?

The *Republic* answers only by gesturing towards the possibility of establishing the ideal regime from within the regime that functions as a marketplace of *nomoi*—that is, from within a democracy. As Socrates asserts in Book VIII, "it is probably necessary for the man who wishes to organize a city, as we were just doing, to go to a city under a democracy" (557d). Whether we take this literally as a statement on the foundation of a city wherein philosophers rule or metaphorically as speaking to the possibility of educating someone to be a philosopher, Plato's image of the democratic city and soul is of a place brimming with diversity. In proclaiming the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 243.

possibility of establishing the ideal from within a land of diversity and in envisioning the afterlife as a place where a variety of souls meet and choose from among a wide range of future lives, Plato suggests that the democratic way of life may help prepare one for the philosophic journey in search of the good life. To be clear, in various ways throughout the *Republic*, Plato conveys the potential dangers of the democratic *nomos*—namely, that it might invite tyranny.

Nonetheless, of all regime types, democracy emerges as the most capable of preparing individuals for philosophy insofar as it encourages experimentations in living. That is, if philosophic education requires metaphorically travelling away from one's native *nomos*, then the democratic regime most prepares one for this by allowing and encouraging one to take up other ways of life. As Roochnik argues, the Myth of Er invites us to ask the question, "What does it mean to be a human being?" The answer, he says, "cannot be given simply through mathematical formulas or only by staring at the heavens. It requires wandering, familiarity with human paradigms. It requires freedom and diversity and so is 'probably' best found in a democracy."¹⁰⁵

This appreciation for the heterogeneity of the democratic regime is reflected, Elizabeth Markovits argues, in the very diversity of voices and perspectives found in the *Republic*: "The use of both abstract argument and myth in the *Republic* helps us appreciate the multiple perspectives that constitute our reality; not only is there no Archimedean point of view from which to see reality, there are various modes of discussing that reality. By appreciating the multiplicity of the *Republic*, we are better poised to appreciate the multiplicity of the actually existing democratic city."¹⁰⁶ Like the *Republic* itself, the democratic regime confronts us with difference. If nothing else, it seems reasonable to suppose that, in some cases at least, the

¹⁰⁵ Roochnik, *Beautiful City*, 131.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Markovits, *The Politics of Sincerity: Plato, Frank Speech, and Democratic Judgment* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 155.

democratic citizen's everyday experience of difference might make it a little easier to adopt the critical distance towards one's native *nomoi* that philosophic education requires. Put differently, the transition from the pan-harmonic (all-harmonic) to the multi-harmonic (several-harmonic) may be easier to initiate than the transition from the mono-harmonic (single-harmonic) to the multi-harmonic.

In the next chapter, we will test this by seeing the art of dialectic in action again, but in quite different circumstances. Often read as a companion piece to the *Republic*, Plato's *Laws* depicts a philosopher's encounter not with primarily young men of varying origins who are accustomed to diversity, but rather with a pair of old Dorian men habituated to a homogenous, militaristic way of life. As we will see, when one spends one's life listening not to the multicultural song of dialectic but to a mono-harmonic song, one cannot flourish either as a human being or as a city. Just as the clash of various cultural horizons stimulated the philosophic search for justice in the *Republic*, it takes engagement with a foreigner to shake the old Dorians of the *Laws* out of the hypnotic lock-step into which habituation to the Dorian song has lulled them. Yet, for these men, the journey out of the cave is even longer and steeper than it was for the interlocutors of the *Republic*.

CHAPTER 3: THE DANGERS OF EXCLUDING FOREIGNERS (*THE LAWS*)

“Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilised by education: they grow there, firm as weeds among stones.”

-Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

“Only the dialectical way of inquiry proceeds in this direction, destroying the hypotheses, to the beginning itself in order to make it secure; and when the eye of the soul is really buried in a barbaric bog (βορβόρω βαρβαρικῷ), dialectic gently draws it forth and leads it up above, using the arts we described as assistants and helpers in the turning around.”

-Socrates, Plato's *Republic*, 533c

In the last chapter, we found ourselves down in the Piraeus, a major center of cross-cultural engagement. There we learned that democracy provides one of the necessary conditions for dialectic conversation, for in bringing together a diverse assortment of cultural horizons democracy supplies the contradiction that fuels dialectic inquiry.¹ In turn, dialectic helps to tame the democratic soul's tendency towards cultural relativism and away from truth seeking. As we saw, while the tendency to accept various ways of life might seem to promote harmony, it actually fosters discord by allowing some members of the polity to dominate others. Dialectic, by contrast, promotes open-minded consideration of diverse viewpoints while encouraging one to

¹ To be sure, dialectic inquiry can arise without cross-cultural engagement. Per the example given in the *Republic*, it might stem from the observation that a physical object is simultaneously hard and soft. It could even, as the *Phaedrus* suggests, develop from the discovery that there is more than one beautiful boy in the world (contrary to how one once felt about a particular boy). There are many paths leading to dialectic, but cross-cultural engagement seems the most likely to provoke thinking on subjects related to political life. As such, it is one of the pathways to dialectic that must be cultivated.

take a stand against ways of life that breed injustice. Cross-cultural engagement therefore emerges in Plato's *Republic* as epistemologically beneficial. Put simply, the clash of cultural horizons stimulates dialectic inquiry, which in turn helps to foster greater wisdom and friendship.

In this chapter, we leave the diverse environs of democratic Athens and of the Piraeus, and instead find ourselves in Crete, the land of *xenelasia* or the exclusion of foreigners. Whereas the *Republic* uncovers the dangers of the democratic city's extreme openness towards foreigners, the *Laws* reveals the dangers attending a city that approaches foreigners only with hostility. Stated in terms of the musical analogy employed in the previous chapter, the *Laws* brings to light the limitations of the monoharmonic regime. It does so by depicting a rare conversation with a foreigner visiting Crete. Through this conversation, Plato makes clear that without cross-cultural engagement no soul or community can live well. Though the *stasis* characterizing a regime isolated from the outside world seems to allow for the protection of its good elements, such isolation stifles the spirit of learning and thus detracts from the regime's goodness. In such cases, it takes the voice of a foreigner to awaken the dormant passion for wisdom. While this may effect a substantial shift in one's beliefs, it may on the contrary deepen one's confidence in one's beliefs by forcing one to give a conscious defense of them. Either way, if approached with the help of dialectic, cross-cultural engagement proves salutary.

Just as my interpretation of the *Republic* challenged the widespread view that the dialogue has little to offer on issues related to interpolity justice because it so strongly promotes Pan-Hellenism, my reading of the *Laws* counters the general consensus that it too betrays Plato's hostility towards non-Greeks. As with the *Republic*, Popper's criticism of Plato has influenced

readings of the *Laws*.² Most notably, R.F. Stalley contends that Popper could have lent stronger support to his charges against Plato had he focused more on the *Laws* than on the *Republic*:

Once it is appreciated that the *Republic* is not a political programme and that one must look to the *Laws* for Plato's practical proposals, these charges lose most of their force. But this does nothing to undermine Popper's fundamental contention that Plato is an enemy of the open society, and a reading of the *Laws* may even strengthen Popper's case. By now no argument should be needed to show that the city of the *Laws* will be a closed society in that it severely limits personal freedom and initiative. As evidence, one could cite the tight restrictions on the mode of life of the citizens, including the prohibition of trade and commerce, the rigid control of music and the other arts, and the law against atheism. The city will be almost literally a closed society in the sense that foreign contracts will be curtailed so far as possible (704d-705b, 950d-953e).³

Other scholars tend to agree with Popper and Stalley that the *Laws* propagates derogatory views of foreigners. For example, on the first page of *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Honig states, "In classical political thought, foreignness is generally taken to signify a threat of corruption that must be kept out or contained for the sake of the stability and identity of the regime."⁴ In support of this claim, she refers the reader to a line from Plato's *Laws* in which the leading protagonist remarks that proximity to the sea "infects a place with commerce and the money-making that

² Though Popper focuses primarily on the *Republic*, he sometimes buttresses his views by drawing on the *Laws*. For instance, he notes that the treatment of barbarians advocated in the *Republic* "is further corroborated by the contents of the *Laws*, and the most inhumane attitude towards slaves adopted there." Popper, *Open Society*, 47.

³ R.F. Stalley, *An Introduction to Plato's Laws* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 180.

⁴ Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, 1.

comes with retail trade, and engenders shifty and untrustworthy dispositions in souls.”⁵ The idea here is that one should build one’s city at a distance from the sea so that foreigners cannot corrupt it by introducing the degrading spirit of commerce. Owing to lines like these, scholars conclude that Plato displays hostility towards foreigners in the *Laws*.

This chapter not only challenges readings of the *Laws* that cast Plato as xenophobic, but argues that the dialogue in fact contributes to our understanding of the *value* of cross-cultural engagement and, indeed, cannot be properly understood without an awareness of this. In contrast to the traditional interpretation of the *Laws* as Plato’s most political work—in which he departs from the imaginative abstractions of the *Republic* and instead offers his more sober reflections on the proper political framework for a real city—I argue that the *Laws*, like the *Republic*, is primarily about soulcraft or character education.⁶ As such, we cannot look to the city in speech of the *Laws* for clues as to Plato’s thoughts on domestic or interpolity affairs. That is, the city in speech of the *Laws* provides no more accurate a representation of Plato’s plans for a real city than does the city in speech of the *Republic*. In both cases, the city in speech functions as a heuristic device. This becomes apparent when one attends to the dramatic elements of the dialogue. While some scholars have offered a literary interpretation of the *Laws*, their

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the *Laws* come from Thomas L. Pangle’s translation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988).

⁶ Scholars of various methodological persuasions share the view of the *Laws* as offering a realistic political framework. See, e.g., Popper, *Open Society*; Glenn R. Morrow, *Plato’s Cretan City: A Historical Interpretation of the Laws* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960); Trevor J. Saunders, *Plato: Laws* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970); Leo Strauss, *The Argument and the Action of Plato’s Laws* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975); and André Laks, “Legislation and Demiurgy: On the Relationship between Plato’s ‘Republic’ and ‘Laws,’” *Classical Antiquity* 9, no. 2 (1990): 209-229.

interpretations tend to overlook the centrality of the theme of cross-cultural engagement.⁷ By focusing on this theme, my analysis brings to light a new interpretive framework that will affect how other themes in the dialogue are understood. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the *Laws* should be read as a depiction of one man's attempt to awaken the passion for learning in two old men from what the main character calls an "armed camp (στρατόπεδον)," a place that, unlike a city, never enjoys any luxuries like festivals or other forms of leisure but rather is always preparing for war against foreigners, a place that consists not so much of citizens, but of soldiers (666e). Read in this way, the city in speech is seen to represent a harmonizing of two distinct ways of life, a mutual transformation of all three men through dialectic conversation.

The *Laws* can be divided into two parts.⁸ The first three books consist of a conversation regarding the theoretical aim of the laws, which culminates with one of the characters proclaiming that he has been charged to build a Cretan colony and inviting the other two characters to help him build a city in speech. The remaining nine books depict the interlocutors engaged in this exercise. Unlike the city building exercise in the *Republic*, the one undertaken in the *Laws* covers in detail all of the laws of the city including those governing the more mundane aspects of human life; so often does the dialogue seem to prattle on that many have questioned

⁷ For literary interpretations of the *Laws*, see Thomas L. Pangle, "Interpretive Essay," in *The Laws of Plato*; Andrea Nightingale, "Writing/Reading a Sacred Text: A Literary Interpretation of Plato's Laws," *Classical Philology* 88, no. 4 (1993): 279-300; and Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 51-146. The closest analysis to my own is offered by Peter Simpson, "Plato's *Laws* in the Hands of Aristotle," in *Plato's Laws: From Theory into Practice*, Proceedings of the VI Symposium Platonicum, Selected Papers, eds. Samuel Scolnicov and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2003), 298-303. Simpson argues that both the *Republic* and the *Laws* are protreptics to philosophy, with the difference being that the former is aimed at enthusiastic young men and the latter at staid old men. Building on this, my analysis highlights the centrality of the interlocutors' differing attitudes towards foreigners, with the *Republic's* interlocutors exhibiting hospitality and the *Laws'* interlocutors exhibiting hostility.

⁸ For an alternative division of the *Laws*, see Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 62-3.

its authenticity as a work of Plato or judged it an inferior work.⁹ Given the wide-ranging and comprehensive scope of this major section of the dialogue, it would be impossible in the course of a chapter to comment on every feature of the city in speech. As such, my analysis concentrates on the theoretical conversation occupying the first three books of the dialogue and the laws related to the treatment of foreigners that are mentioned in the final nine books. This procedure is justified by the chapter's focus on cross-cultural engagement, which my analysis of the first three books reveals to be of central importance. Proceeding in this way, I hope to offer sufficient evidence that, like the *Republic*, the *Laws* is about soulcraft, but of a different kind—the kind appropriate for interlocutors who have their whole lives been singing one monoharmonic song.

I. “Moving the Immovable”: The *Laws* as the Education of the Armed Camp

To understand the underlying action of the *Laws*, we might evoke the proverbial ancient Greek expression “μὴ κινεῖν τὰ ἀκίνητα,” which translates to “do not move the immovable.” Used to refer to statues, altars, graves, and boundary stones, the expression appears three times in the *Laws*, always with reference to property.¹⁰ Metaphorically, however, it means “let sleeping

⁹ See, e.g., Eduard Zeller, *Platonische Studien* (Tübingen, 1839; repr., Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1969), 19-23; Von Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919); G. Müller, *Studien zu den platonischen “Nomoi”* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1951); Stalley, *Introduction to Plato's Laws*, 171; and Christopher Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 114.

¹⁰ It first appears in Book III when the Stranger mentions that whenever someone “seeks to change land tenure and dissolve debts” to create more equality, everyone cries, “Do not move the immovable!” (684e). It next appears in Book VIII when he recommends that the city of Magnesia have a law which forbids anyone “to move the boundary markers of the earth, neither when they belong to a neighbor who is one of his fellow citizens nor when he possesses a boundary at the edge, adjoining another foreigner; one should hold that the saying about moving the immovable truly applies to this” (842e-843a). Finally, the expression appears in Book XI when the Stranger claims “the saying ‘do not move the immovable’ applies well to many things,” one of which is the taking of property which someone has saved for himself and his posterity (913b-c).

dogs lie,” *i.e.* do not try to change things. As this chapter will show, the main character of the *Laws* fails to follow this advice. Rather than let his interlocutors rest in peace, he invites them to engage in discussion as they embark on a long, steep journey up to the cave of Zeus, assuring them “there are resting places along the way, appropriate for this stifling heat; there are shady spots under tall trees, where it would be fitting for men of our age to pause often” (625b).

Mimicking the slow and difficult ascent of the men towards the cave of Zeus, god of foreigners, the conversation in which the main character engages them seeks to “move the immovable,” to unsettle men who are fixed in their ways. Specifically, he aims to unsettle his interlocutors’ deeply ingrained attitude of hostility towards foreigners. Plato hints at this from the beginning of the dialogue, through the choice of characters and setting.

The *Laws* consists of three characters: an unidentified Athenian Stranger, a Cretan named Kleinias, and a Spartan named Megillus. The identity of the *Laws*’ central protagonist, the Athenian Stranger, has long puzzled scholars. Unlike most Platonic dialogues, Socrates does not figure as the leading character, though some treat the Athenian Stranger as Socrates in disguise. In the *Politics*, for instance, Aristotle refers to the text as a Socratic dialogue.¹¹ Likewise, based on his reading of the *Crito*, Strauss reasons that Socrates would have gone to a well-governed city far away like Crete had he escaped, and notes that Plato invented with ease Socratic and other stories.¹² While some share Strauss’ view,¹³ others take the Stranger to be the voice of

¹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1265a10.

¹² Strauss, *Argument and Action*, 2. For the differences between the Athenian Stranger and Socrates, see Zuckert, *Plato’s Philosophers*, 58-62.

¹³ Pangle, “Interpretive Essay,” 378-79; and Zdravko Planinc, *Plato’s Political Philosophy: Prudence in the Republic and the Laws* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 26.

Plato himself.¹⁴ The strongest argument in support of this view stems from the observation that the city in the *Laws* departs from some of the more radical proposals put forth by Socrates in the *Republic*. Assuming a late composition, it is possible then that the dialogue contains the positions of the older and more experienced Plato, perhaps drawn directly from his failed attempts at reforming Sicily.¹⁵ Finally, some scholars identify the Athenian Stranger as a Pre-Socratic philosopher,¹⁶ perhaps even the Athenian statesman and legislator Solon.¹⁷

While many scholars have speculated as to the identity of the Athenian Stranger, all we can be certain of is that Plato chose to leave him nameless. As a result, throughout the dialogue he is referred to either with the address “ὦ ξένε” (“Stranger”) or “ὦ ξένε Ἀθηναῖε” (“Athenian Stranger”).¹⁸ The address “ὦ ξένε” occurs throughout the Platonic corpus. In most dialogues it appears only once, if at all. The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* stand out among counts of this address, with roughly a dozen uses each. However, even these two dialogues hold no flame to

¹⁴ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Legibus*, trans. C.W. Keyes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 1.4.15; Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City*, 75; A.E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man and His Work*, 7th ed. (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1960), 24; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. C.P. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 71; Stalley, *Introduction to Plato's Laws*; George Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Methuen, 1986), 198; Trevor J. Saunders, “Plato's Later Political Thought,” in *Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. R. Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Voegelin, *Order and History*, 275.

¹⁵ The *Laws* is generally thought to be one of the last dialogues Plato wrote. According to an ancient report, the dialogue was left unedited on a waxen tablet, suggesting Plato was still working on it when he died. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 3.37.

¹⁶ Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 53-57.

¹⁷ Malcolm Schofield, *Plato* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 75-76; and Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 233-34.

¹⁸ “ὦ ξένε Ἀθηναῖε” appears five times in the *Laws*, at 626d, 634c, 642b, 747e, and 885c. It is also used in the *Cratylus* at 429e when Socrates imagines a foreigner incorrectly addressing Cratylus as “ὦ ξένε Ἀθηναῖε, υἱὲ Σμικρίωνος Ἑρμούγενες” (“Athenian stranger, son of Smicrion, Hermogenes”).

the frequency of “ὧ ξένε” in the *Laws*, appearing as it does *over one hundred times*. By leaving the central protagonist of the *Laws* nameless and suffusing the dialogue with phrases that call attention to his foreignness, Plato stresses that the main character relates to his interlocutors as a foreigner and they, in return, regard him as such. Put differently, the Stranger’s foreignness figures as an essential part of his identity in his interactions with his two interlocutors.

Though the other two characters are eventually identified by name as Kleinias and Megillus, their places of origin are also emphasized—or, rather, their *place* of origin is emphasized, for even though historically there were differences between Cretans and Spartans, the dialogue continually groups the two men together.¹⁹ In the opening line, for instance, the Stranger refers to them as a pair when he uses the second person plural pronoun “ὁμῖν,” typically taken as a dative of possession modifying “τῶν νόμων” (signifying “your laws”) (624a). The Stranger repeats this casting together of the Cretan and Spartan laws at various points in the dialogue (*e.g.*, 625c, 630d, 634d). That the Cretan and Spartan laws are being considered as more or less one and the same is also implied when the Stranger says to Kleinias, “you and this man here (σύ τε καὶ ὄδε) were reared in such conventions (ἤθεσι) and habits (νομικοῖς),” implying a significant degree of overlap between the *nomoi* of Crete and of Lacedaemon (625a). At one point, the Stranger even refers to Lacedaemon and Crete as having been settled “as if by codes of law that were brothers (ἀδελφοῖς νόμοις)” (683a). Kleinias too links the Cretan and Spartan laws together at numerous points (*e.g.*, 626c, 628e). In sum, on the whole the *Laws*

¹⁹ The Athenian Stranger first names Kleinias at 629c, suggesting he knows who he is. Kleinias, however, gives no signs of having met either the Stranger or Megillus prior to this conversation. In fact, at the end of Book III, he mentions that the Stranger and Megillus have “come along (παραγέγονας) at an opportune time,” implying that they have just met (702c). Kleinias seems to know Megillus is a Spartan, but does not offer his name. Megillus gives his own name at 642c.

consistently blurs the differences between the Cretans and the Spartans, underscoring the great degree of commonality between these two cultures.²⁰

Ultimately, the *Laws* presents the Cretan and the Spartan as unified by Dorian culture and the war-obsessed political structures to which it gives rise. As the Athenian Stranger tells his interlocutors, “You all have (ἔχετε) the regime of an armed camp (στρατοπέδου) and not of men having been settled in cities (ἄστυσι)” (666e).²¹ Later, he refers to the establishment of the “Dorian armed camp (τὸ Δωρικὸν ... στρατόπεδον),” again linking Kleinias and Megillus to a common cultural origin and regime type (702a). In calling the Dorian regime an “armed camp,” the Stranger suggests a fixation on war against foreigners and the kind of organization and rules this necessitates. Private education has no place in an army, for all must be taught to sing the same song in unison. Armies must suppress individuality in favor of uniformity so as to generate the orderliness that makes united action possible as well as the camaraderie that makes one willing to sacrifice one’s life to save one’s brothers. Accordingly, any voice that does not sing the song of the armed camp must not be allowed to enter. As a form of political regime, this need to preserve a particular way of thinking and behaving gives rise to policies of *xenelasia*. As one

²⁰ I say “on the whole” because there are exceptions. For instance, when Kleinias notes that “Cretans don’t make much use of foreign poetry,” Megillus responds, “We, however, do” (680c). The Athenian Stranger also highlights a major difference in their cultures when he says, “as for Lacedaimon and Crete, the former is considered to be pithy in speech (βραχύλογον) and the latter to be clever (πολύνοιαν) rather than talkative (πολυλογία)” (641e). Interestingly, soon after this (at 642d) Kleinias mentions having a family connection with Epimenides, the Cretan known for coining the phrase, “All Cretans are liars.” This statement gives rise to the Epimenides paradox, which reveals a problem with self-reference in logic. If the statement is true, then it also cannot be true because the person telling it is a Cretan and thus is lying. The only way out of the paradox is to treat the statement as false and to recognize the validity of its negation, “there exists a Cretan who is not a liar.” This makes it possible for the Cretan making the statement to be a liar who is telling the falsehood that *all* Cretans are liars when in fact there exists at least one Cretan who is not a liar.

²¹ I depart from Pangle’s translation here and offer my own so as to make clear that the Stranger is addressing both the Spartan and the Cretan.

scholar explains, “The anxiety of the Dorians, and the Spartans in particular, to keep up the pure Doric character and the customs of their ancestors, is strongly shewn by the prohibition to travel, and the exclusion of foreigners (ξενηλασία), an institution common both to the Spartans and Cretans.”²² Whatever the differences between the Spartan and Cretan regimes, they both fall into the category of “armed camp”. Likewise, though Megillus and Kleinias are unique individuals, they share a nearly identical rearing—just like brothers would. Both are Dorians.

Given the classification of the Dorian regime as an armed camp and the well-known practice of *xenelasia* this entailed, one wonders why Kleinias and Megillus are in conversation with a foreigner at all, nonetheless an Athenian. After all, Athenians prided themselves on their openness to foreigners, welcoming more voluntary immigrants than any other ancient Greek city. Whereas Kleinias and Megillus belong to openly xenophobic, warrior cultures, the Stranger comes from a place that, to paraphrase Pericles in his Funeral Oration, throws open its city to the world and enjoys the luxuries of life rather than submitting to a harsh military education even in times of peace.²³ While Athens’ actions as an empire and its citizenship policies challenge Pericles’ portrayal of Athens as a city of hospitality, the Athenians were less overtly hostile to foreigners than were the Spartans and Cretans, with their explicit practices of *xenelasia*. Per Socrates’ description of the regime types in Book VIII of the *Republic*, Athens was the sort of

²² Karl Otfried Müller, *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race*, 2nd ed., vol. II, trans. H. Tufnell and G.C. Lewis (London: John Murray, 1839), 4. It should be kept in mind that much of what we know about Dorian regimes like Sparta comes to us through non-Dorian writers and therefore likely contains certain biases. Thus historians speak of the “Spartan mirage,” an expression coined in the 1930s by François Ollier to describe the idealization of Sparta in Greek antiquity up to the present day. *Le Mirage Spartiate: étude sur l’idealisation de Sparte dans l’antiquité grecque* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1933). Building on Ollier’s work, other scholars have highlighted a deprecatory strand of thought regarding Sparta, in which it is cast as an anti-Athens. See, e.g., Stephen Hodkinson and Ian Macgregor Morris, eds., *Sparta in Modern Thought: Politics, History and Culture* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2012).

²³ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.39.

regime that valued freedom above all and consequently contained a variety of ways of life. By contrast, Sparta and Crete fit the model of the timocratic regime, where the fundamental cares are honor and victory.²⁴ To find two Dorians engaged in conversation not just with a foreigner, but with a foreigner from a city with values so distinct from their own thus seems strange.

It is even stranger considering that the three characters are all old men. Recall how the *Republic* dramatizes the challenges that the elderly face in questioning the ways of thinking they have for so long taken to be true. Faced with a significant challenge to his belief that justice consists of telling the truth and paying your debts, the old man Cephalus leaves the conversation to keep his promise to pay debts to the goddess Bendideia. This shows that—unlike with the young, whom we worry will be corrupted precisely because their minds tend to be somewhat malleable—with the elderly it is often hard to convince them to see things differently or even to question themselves. Consequently, the interlocutors of the *Laws* pose a double challenge. Not only have they been raised in an armed camp, where all are taught to believe the same things and to reject any voice that does not fit within their cultural horizon, but they have been singing the song of the armed camp for over half a century. To engross them in dialectic conversation, which requires open-minded yet discerning consideration of diverse viewpoints, the Stranger will have to overcome decades of conditioning to a converse mindset. By the same token, the Stranger himself will have to overcome the prejudices deeply ingrained in him through life in a democratic city. Like his interlocutors, he must be willing to put his assumptions to the test.

We later learn the reason for the two Dorians' willingness to engage the Athenian Stranger in conversation. As it turns out, these men have personal ties to Athens. Megillus began developing a fondness for Athenians ever since he learned as a child that his family was the

²⁴ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 545a.

consulate (πρόξενος) for Athens (642b-d). Kleinias, for his part, feels a fondness for Athenians owing to an ancestral bond formed between his family and the people of Athens (642d-643a). In essence, Kleinias and Megillus are somewhat unusual examples of men raised in armed camps because they were conditioned to develop friendly feelings towards Athenians. We will soon see that these feelings do not extend to foreigners more generally, and that these two men are not uncritical of the Athenian way of life.²⁵ Nonetheless, they are distanced just enough from the armed camp's tendency to approach all foreigners with hostility that they are able to engage an Athenian in conversation. In this way, Plato signals that there must at least be a willingness to engage in conversation for cross-cultural engagement to be beneficial. When it comes to a society hostile to foreigners, one must seek out those who express some openness. Otherwise, dialectic conversation is simply impossible.

If Plato's characterization of the three interlocutors emphasizes the deep divide between them, then his choice of dramatic date and setting gestures at the ultimate aim of bringing these men into conversation: to bring about something closer to friendship with foreigners. Though the dramatic date of the *Laws* remains ambiguous, scholars have proposed two possibilities. On the one hand, Slobodan Dušanić argues for an approximate date of 408/7 B.C. based on historical evidence indicating that a Spartan ambassador named Megillus came to Athens during the Peloponnesian War as the head of a three-man diplomatic mission tasked with "negotiating the ransom of war prisoners and, it has been rightly assumed, of preparing a comprehensive peace

²⁵ The fact that these two men possess a great deal of admiration for Athenians suggests that the Stranger's attempt to unsettle their attitudes on foreigners pertains not merely to their attitude towards Athenians, but their attitude towards foreigners more generally.

agreement.”²⁶ Catherine Zuckert, however, argues for a dramatic date some time after the Persian Wars but before the Peloponnesian War, on the grounds that no persons or events from the Peloponnesian War are ever mentioned. Moreover, she points out the unreasonableness of an anonymous Athenian “trying to convince two experienced Dorian politicians to introduce a series of institutions drawn from prewar Athens after her defeat by Sparta without giving an account or explanation of that defeat.”²⁷ Indeed, the textual evidence weighs heavier in Zuckert’s favor. After all, it is additionally strange that Megillus would go to great lengths to convince the Stranger of his fondness for Athens without mentioning that he has actually been to Athens, on a peace mission nonetheless. Moreover, one would expect that, in the midst of hurling insults at Athens, Megillus would jump at the opportunity to mention Sparta’s victory over Athens when at one point in the dialogue he brags about all the peoples they have defeated in battle (637d-638a). These omissions and silences suggest the dialogue takes place before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. In conjunction with the fact that the dialogue depicts an Athenian and two Dorians reaching the agreement that the laws should focus not on war against foreigners but on the creation of internal harmony, the dramatic dating of the dialogue some time in the decades leading up to the Peloponnesian War suggests that Plato has brought these men into conversation to imagine what a more peaceful interaction between the Athenians and the Dorians might have looked like.

The setting of the dialogue further confirms that the conversation depicted in the *Laws* aims to bring about greater friendship between foreigners. As we soon learn, the Athenian is not

²⁶ Slobodan Dušanić, “The Laws and the Foreign Policy of Eubulus’ Athens,” in *Plato’s “Laws” and Its Historical Significance*, ed. Francisco L. Lisi (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2001), 230.

²⁷ Zuckert, *Plato’s Philosophers*, 53-54.

merely a foreigner in the company of two Dorians; he is a foreigner in a land notorious for its hostile treatment of foreigners. Asked by the Stranger whether their laws originate from a god or some human being, Kleinias at first answers that Zeus created the laws, but soon admits at the Stranger's provocation that Minos, a son of Zeus, established the laws in Crete with the guidance of his father's oracles.²⁸ The Stranger then proposes they walk from Knossos to the cave of Zeus—where Minos is said to have met with Zeus—while discussing the polis and laws. Through this, Plato reveals that the discussion between the Athenian Stranger and his two Dorian interlocutors takes place not in Athens, where foreigners are welcomed, but in Crete, where they are often excluded. In the form of the Athenian Stranger, the friendliness of Athens has literally entered the land of hostility towards foreigners.

Of further significance is that the conversation takes place while walking to the cave of Zeus, for as the dialogue will remind us repeatedly, Zeus is the god of strangers and boundaries, extending his protection not only to citizens, but also to foreigners (730a, 842e, 843a, 953e). Despite the myriad evocations of Zeus in the Platonic corpus, in only seven places is he connected with hospitality. Four of those references occur in the *Laws*, suggesting a heightened attention in this dialogue to friendship with foreigners.²⁹ What could Plato mean in depicting the characters of the *Laws* on route to the cave of Zeus and in emphasizing Zeus' role as god of foreigners? A clue lies in the nature of the journey, which is by no means easy, but rather a long,

²⁸ Kleinias may initially avoid attributing the laws to Minos out of a sense of propriety in the presence of an Athenian. After all, Minos was the Cretan king who, according to legend, every year picked seven men and seven women to go into his labyrinth to be eaten by the Minotaur. According to Athenian tragedians, Minos was a cruel tyrant, the heartless exactor of the tribute of Athenian youths to feed the Minotaur. Despite his display of propriety, Kleinias, seems, however, truly to believe in the divinity or perfection of the laws, as he insists it is “most just” to attribute them to a god (624a).

²⁹ For the other three references to Zeus' hospitality, see *Euthyphro* 6b, *Phaedrus* 234e, and the *Seventh Letter* 329b.

steep climb under the hot mediterranean sun. As Strauss notes, “they ascend to the origins of the Cretan laws; their going to the cave of Zeus is an ascent.”³⁰ Likewise, Glenn Morrow reasons that the strangers must have walked to the Idaean Cave, atop Mount Ida, where Zeus is said to have been reared.³¹ Thus, it can be said that the strangers are ascending to the place where the god of foreigners himself was educated. This, as we will see, is an apt metaphor for what takes place in the course of the conversation, as the strangers gradually ascend towards a view of foreigners closer to that of the hospitable god Zeus.³²

Having now brought to light the significance of the characters, dramatic date, and setting of the *Laws*, I turn in the next section to analyzing the conversation of the *Laws* itself. As we will see, the focus on foreigners becomes even sharper as the three interlocutors begin their journey. Indeed, the conversation immediately turns to the subject of war with foreigners. My analysis will show that, like Socrates in the *Republic*, the Stranger tries to persuade his interlocutors that they should choose a life focused on the development of internal harmony rather than a life spent conquering others or worrying about being conquered; that is, he tries to persuade them to pursue philosophy. However, unlike the harsh and direct approach that Socrates takes with Thrasymachus or even the inquisitive approach he takes with Glaucon and Adeimantus, the Stranger’s method of persuasion proceeds so gently and subtly that the pace of the ascent to philosophy crawls by comparison. While some scholars take the Stranger to be un-philosophic, I

³⁰ Strauss, *Argument and Action*, 4.

³¹ Morrow, *Plato’s Cretan City*, 28.

³² Interestingly, the strangers do not make it there. As discussed later in the chapter, this likely symbolizes the impossibility of complete friendship between the three interlocutors. At their age, they can only overcome their prejudices to a certain extent. The dialogue brings them closer to the ideal friendship embodied in the notion of Zeus as god of foreigners, but it does not bring them all the way there.

argue that he is philosophic but that his audience—elderly men from armed camps—affects the style of his protreptic. Ultimately, the *Laws* dramatizes the form of dialectic to which Socrates alludes in the line cited at the beginning of this chapter: the gentle kind suitable for minds deeply entrenched in a particular way of thinking.

II. Gentle Persuasion from War to Friendship

2.1: Rational Argument in the Armed Camp

From his first set of questions, the Stranger attempts to unsettle his interlocutors' hostility towards foreigners using a gentle form of persuasion. First, he brings to light the Dorian laws' *raison d'être* by inquiring why the law ordains common meals and gymnastic training. In response, Kleinias explains that his lawgiver, in Hobbesian fashion, recognized that "there always exists by nature an undeclared war among all cities" and therefore established all the laws with a view toward war (626a). Praising Kleinias for his "fine gymnastic training in understanding the legal customs of the Cretans," the Stranger asks whether the definition of a well-governed city—one that is ordered in such a way as to defeat other cities in war—applies only to cities in relation to other cities, or if it also applies to households in relation to other households, one man in relation to another man, and to a person in relation to himself (626b-d). Kleinias maintains that it does. As he puts it, "all are enemies of all in public, and in private each is an enemy of himself" (626d). When asked to clarify his meaning, Kleinias asserts that, as "the first and best of all victories" is "the victory of oneself over oneself," this indicates that "there is a war going on in us, ourselves against ourselves" (626e). Once focused on war on the macro-

level of the city, Kleinias has now shifted his focus to war on the micro-level of the soul, thanks to the Stranger's questions.³³

The purpose of shifting Kleinias' focus from war between cities to war within oneself, we soon discover, is to persuade him to conceive of the "best" city not in terms of its superiority over foreigners, but in terms of its superiority over itself. Notice how the Stranger brings about this shift in Kleinias' thinking. First, he speaks of cities at war with other cities, then neighborhoods at war with other neighborhoods, households with other households, and a man at war with another man. In all of these cases, two clearly defined entities are warring with each other. He finally ends by asking about war within oneself. In this way, he introduces the idea that within a unified whole there can be distinct parts at war with one another. This allows him, moving back up the chain, to apply this idea to each of the entities involved until ultimately he leads his interlocutors to think about war not between cities but within one city. In other words, having led Kleinias to assert that each person is fighting his or her own internal war, the Stranger is now able to move back towards the level of the city and ask if, just as individual can be said to be superior *to himself*, a neighborhood can be said to be superior *to itself* and a city superior *to itself* (626e-627a). This subtle shift in language also effects a shift in their line of thinking, as now the men turn to considering what makes a city superior to itself. The Stranger and Kleinias agree that in a city that is superior to itself the unjust and more numerous fail to enslave the just and less numerous; when the opposite occurs, the city is inferior to itself. Pushing Kleinias away from his initial conception of the best city as one that defeats foreigners in war, the Stranger redirects him towards a view of the best city as one in which the few just individuals are free

³³ This is similar to Socrates' move in the *Republic*. Socrates proposes that they investigate justice in the city and use this investigation to illuminate justice in the soul. As seen in chapter 2, through the city-soul analogy he moves his interlocutors from the Thrasymachean notion that it is best to conquer other cities to the philosophy that it is best to conquer oneself.

from the tyranny of the unjust majority. As Strauss explains, “The concern is no longer with superiority to outsiders but with the right kind of inner structure.”³⁴

Building from the premises they have established, the Stranger now guides Kleinias towards the conclusion that no respectable lawgiver would legislate with a view toward war. He does this by first returning to the level of the household, suggesting they consider who would be the best judge of a household with some unjust brothers (ἀδελφοί) and a few just brothers. He proposes three possibilities: a judge who destroys the unjust and sets the just to ruling themselves; a judge who makes the worthy men rule and allows the worse to live while making them willing to be ruled; and a judge who destroys and enslaves no one, but rather “[reconciles] them by laying down laws for them for the rest of time and thus [secures] their friendship for one another (πρὸς ἀλλήλους παραφυλάττειν δύναιτο ὅστε εἶναι φίλους)” (628a). Kleinias opts for the third judge, allowing the Stranger to draw him to the conclusion that such a judge and lawgiver would enact laws with a view not towards war, but friendship. By compelling Kleinias to think of war and friendship in the context of something every good Cretan and Spartan can understand—brotherhood—the Stranger sets him in the right frame of mind for considering war and friendship in the larger context of humanity.³⁵

Returning now to the level of the city, the Stranger shows that the same holds true: a good lawgiver would not create a city for the sake of victory in foreign war, but would only fight external wars if the peace of the city were at risk. In fact, speaking of war and civil war, the Athenian Stranger insists that, “the *necessity* for these things is to be regretted (ἀπευκτὸν δὲ τὸ

³⁴ Strauss, *Argument and Action*, 5.

³⁵ Brotherhood, of course, implies the exclusion of women. My point is not that the concept of brotherhood is a smaller scale version of humanism. Rather, the Stranger appeals to his interlocutors’ familiarity with brotherhood because this concept might serve as a bridge to the different, yet related concept of humanism.

δεηθῆναι τούτων)” and that the best outcome is neither war nor civil war (628c, emphasis added). Even the victory of the city over itself likely belongs “not to the best things (τῶν ἀρίστων) but to the necessary things (τῶν ἀναγκαίων)” (628d). Therefore, they must conclude that one “would never become a correct statesman, if he looked first and only to external wars, and would never become a lawgiver in the strict sense, if he didn’t legislate the things of war for the sake of peace rather than the things of peace for the sake of what pertains to war” (628d-e). With the help of a subtle shift in the analogy drawn between cities, neighborhoods, households, and individuals, and a thought experiment intended to evoke sentiments a loyal Cretan like Kleinias would associate with brotherhood, the Athenian Stranger hopes to stir doubts in his interlocutors’ minds concerning victory in war as the measure of a city’s greatness.

2.2: Performative Demonstration of Friendship

What is more, the Stranger works to orient his interlocutors away from war and towards friendship with foreigners not only through rational argument, but also through the mode of discussion itself. In other words, the Stranger’s discourse offers a performative demonstration of the friendship with foreigners to which he hopes to lead his interlocutors. The Stranger’s meta-awareness of the conversation itself—of how the manner of conversing might facilitate a turning of his interlocutors’ souls towards friendship with foreigners—is first seen when Kleinias confesses he finds nothing wrong with the argument, but would be amazed if the Cretan and Spartan laws “were not directed, in all seriousness, to what pertains to war” (628e). “Perhaps so,” replies the Stranger. “Still, *we* should not fight harshly with one another, but should rather make a calm inquiry about the present matters, since we, as well as they, are very serious about these things” (629a). Through both the argument itself and how it is discussed, the Stranger

encourages Kleinias to adopt a friendlier approach to foreigners. While his Cretan upbringing leads him to orient his life around warfare, when confronted with the choice of destroying, enslaving, or becoming friends with one's enemies, even Kleinias must admit the last choice is best. Nonetheless, aware that Kleinias, who believes his laws to be the work of a god, is still struggling with the implications of this, the Stranger tries to soften the impending blow by agreeing with what Kleinias, in his response, maintained—that his lawgiver treated the task of legislating earnestly. Whether true or not, by acknowledging that Kleinias' lawgiver cared as deeply as they do about establishing the best laws possible, the Stranger avoids piquing Kleinias' anger while also casting their investigation into the laws as in accordance with the sincere wish of the Cretan lawgiver that the laws be good. He critiques without insulting, as any true friend would do.

Failing to convince his interlocutors that the laws should aim at friendship and not at war, the Stranger now tries a different route: appealing to the authority of the poets. The first poet he turns to is Tyrtaeus, “who was by birth an Athenian but who became a naturalized citizen of this fellow's people,” *i.e.* the Spartan Megillus' people (629a). Here, the Stranger avoids arousing his interlocutors' anger by suggesting they examine neither Kleinias nor the Dorian lawgiver, but rather a poet. Though most of the poets celebrated in Sparta were of foreign origin, in choosing to call upon a poet who famously left his home in Athens to immigrate to Sparta, the Stranger helps to diffuse some of the tension that a direct criticism of the interlocutor or his godly lawgiver might provoke.³⁶ For, as Thomas Pangle explains, from the perspective of a Spartan or

³⁶ Little has been written about the poetic tradition in Sparta, but various sources attest to the importation of poets from abroad. See, *e.g.*, Sir Richard Claverhouse Jebb, *The Growth and Influence of Classical Greek Poetry: Lectures Delivered in 1892 on the Percy Turnbull Memorial Foundation in the Johns Hopkins University* (Boston and New York: Houghton

Cretan, “[i]t is almost the Athenian stranger’s patriotic duty to interrogate Tyrtaeus,” as by giving up his Athenian citizenship in favor of becoming a naturalized citizen in Sparta the poet Tyrtaeus essentially insulted the Athenians.³⁷ The Stranger’s turn to Tyrtaeus is thus doubly appropriate, for the poet is well respected by his interlocutors and yet, as members of an honor culture, they will understand and even respect the Athenian’s interrogation of this defector.

In line with the Stranger’s performative demonstration of friendship between foreigners, the Stranger delivers his critique of Sparta’s great poet Tyrtaeus in a respectful manner. First, the Stranger praises the “most divine poet (ποιητὰ θεϊότατε)” Tyrtaeus, who seems to them “wise (σοφὸς) and also good (ἀγαθός)” (629b-c). Then, asserting that he and Kleinias agree with Tyrtaeus regarding his praise of men distinguished in war, the Stranger insists that they merely want to “know clearly whether we are referring to the same men or not” (629c). Just as in Plato’s *Republic* when, instead of directly attacking the poet Simonides—from whom Polemarchus draws his definition of justice—Socrates confesses he must not understand the poet’s meaning, here too the Stranger refrains from demeaning Tyrtaeus by instead proposing they might have misunderstood him.³⁸ In other words, Socrates reaches his criticism of the poet through the slower, but less inflammatory (and therefore more effective) route of pretending not to have grasped his genius. Such an approach, Jill Frank argues, “underscores that what matters is not who is the poet but how poetry’s auditors take up the poet’s words,” effectively shifting poetic

Mifflin, 1894), 114-117; and C.M. Bowra, ed., *Greek Lyric Poetry from Alcman to Simonides*, 2nd rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 20.

³⁷ Pangle, “Interpretive Essay,” 385.

³⁸ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 331e.

authority from the poets to their auditors and interpreters.³⁹ Once more, by treading carefully before men who have long sung the poems of Tyrtaeus, the Stranger disposes his interlocutors to maintain a friendly demeanor in the midst of what could easily erupt into a heated conflict.

Reaching the heart of his critique of Tyrtaeus, the Stranger again shows the lengths to which he is willing to go to make sure not to upset his interlocutors. After ascertaining that Tyrtaeus would agree that there are two forms (εἶδη) of war—“civil war (στάσιν)” and “the kind that is waged against outsiders (τοὺς ἐκτός) and members of other tribes (ἄλλοφύλους)” —the Stranger reasons that Tyrtaeus must be referring to men who distinguish themselves in foreign war (629c-d).⁴⁰ In response, the Stranger claims, “we would assert that while these men are good, better by far are those who reveal themselves to be best in the greatest war. And we have a poet as witness—Theognis, a citizen of Sicilian Megara, who declares: Cynus, in harsh civil strife a trustworthy / Man is equal in value to gold and silver” (630a). According to a scholiast, an ancient critic named Didymus attacked Plato for deliberately misrepresenting the well-known fact that Theognis was an Attic Megarian. This misrepresentation makes sense, however, in the context of the Stranger’s aim to move his interlocutors away from war and towards friendship with foreigners. Had he associated Theognis with Attica—and consequently its most powerful city, Athens—his interlocutors may have taken offense at the Stranger’s unabashed use of an Attic poet to combat the views of a Spartan poet. Identifying Theognis as Sicilian rather than Attic allows the Stranger to avoid the hostilities this might provoke and thus to lend more

³⁹ Jill Frank, “The Truth of Poetry in Plato’s *Republic*,” 14 (paper presented at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Political Theory Workshop, Madison, Wisconsin, October 1, 2010). Cited with author’s permission.

⁴⁰ Plato plays with a similar distinction in the *Laches*, showing how both the warrior and the sophist teach youths to value victory against enemies within (*ecthroi*) above victory against enemies without (*polemioi*). In other words, they foster rivalry between citizens as much as, if not more so than, war against foreign enemies. See Avramenko, “Of Firemen.”

legitimacy to the poet's words. From this, the Stranger reveals his willingness to cast aside his pride if it will help advance the conversation.

As the Stranger brings his critique of Tyrtaeus around full circle to reveal his criticism of the Dorian lawgivers, he continues to maintain a respectful posture. Elaborating upon the poet Theognis' views on human excellence, the Stranger argues that a man "would never become trustworthy and sound in the midst of civil wars if he didn't have the whole of virtue," whereas there are many "rash, unjust, insolent, and very imprudent" mercenaries who would fight to the death in the foreign wars Tyrtaeus mentions (630b). In short, one need not look too hard to find a soldier distinguished in fighting foreign wars, but to find a dependable soldier during times of civil war proves more challenging. Consequently, any lawgiver of worth would set down laws with a view towards nothing but the greatest virtue, "trustworthiness in the midst of dangers (πιστότης ἐν τοῖς δεινοῖς)—that quality which someone would call perfect justice (δικαιοσύνην ... τελέαν)" (630c). As for any lawgiver who legislates with a view towards foreign war, he would rank "fourth in number and in claim to honor" (630c-d). Upon hearing that any lawgiver who legislates with a view towards foreign war deserves not the first but rather the fourth rank, Kleinias exclaims, "Stranger, we are consigning our lawgiver to a pretty low rank among lawgivers!" (630d). To this, the Stranger replies, "No, it's ourselves that we're consigning to a low rank, O best of men, when we show that we think Lycurgus and Minos arranged all the customs at Lacedaimon and here chiefly with a view to war!" (630d). The Stranger follows here the same model he used to critique Tyrtaeus' poetry. He critiques by suggesting that the fault lies not with the author but with his interpreters. In fact, just as earlier he showed respect to his interlocutors by referring to Tyrtaeus as a "most divine" poet, now in response to Kleinias asking what they *should* have said were the lawgiver's aims, the Stranger reiterates his respect for the

Cretan lawgiver by answering, “What is true, I think, and just, since we were carrying on a dialogue on behalf of a divine man (θείας)” (630d-e). As this makes clear, the Stranger discusses the traditions of his interlocutors in a way that is at once respectful yet inquisitive—an approach appropriate for men long reared in the habits of an armed camp and therefore likely to be easily offended by any criticism of their way of life.

Even when the Stranger moves from criticizing their *understanding* of the Dorian laws to criticizing the laws themselves, he does so in an exceedingly gentle manner. This is seen, first of all, in the way the Stranger frames their conversation as the sort of enterprise friends would undertake. Proposing that they examine how the laws contribute to the development of the virtues, the Stranger suggests they begin with the lowest virtue, courage, and use this discussion as a pattern for the rest of the virtues so that they will “thus have a comforting discussion (διαμυθολογούντες παραμύθια) about them” as they go along their route (632e). He then enlists Megillus—who has up to this point let Kleinias field most of the Stranger’s questions—into the conversation by agreeing that he will test Kleinias first but will “also try to test (κρίνειν) you and me as well. For the discussion is common to us all” (633a). Playing on the proverb “the things of friends are common (κοινά τὰ τῶν φίλων),” the Stranger implies they should treat each other not as enemies, but as friends, and that testing one another in conversation is consistent with friendship. True friends, he implies, do not refrain from disagreeing with one another. Rather, they respectfully voice their differences.⁴¹ Hence, in trying to persuade his interlocutors to understand his point of view while remaining open to the possibility that they might persuade him to see things their way, the Stranger is acting in accordance with friendship.

⁴¹ Plutarch makes a similar point in a chapter titled “How To Tell a Flatterer from a Friend” in his *Moralia*.

Having prepared his interlocutors for the idea that friends can “test” each other while still guarding their friendship, the Stranger now brings forth his critique of the Dorian laws. Addressing both Megillus and Kleinias, he asks what other practices, besides common meals and gymnastics, their lawgivers established with a view towards war. The question is so easy that even Megillus feels comfortable answering. With the Stranger’s encouragement, he rattles off several practices, namely hunting and various activities aimed at endurance of suffering, including planned fistfights and the *krypteia*.⁴² Praising Megillus for his answer, the Stranger asks, “But look, as to courage, how shall we define it? Shall we leave it at saying that it’s a combat against fears and pains only, or also against longings and pleasures, and certain terrible cajoling flatteries that can turn to wax the spiritedness even of those who think themselves solemn?” (633c-d). Eliciting Megillus and Kleinias’ agreement that courage involves not only being able to face and overcome your fears, but also the temptation of certain pleasures, the Stranger remarks, “Surely the lawgiver of Zeus or of the Pythian hasn’t instituted a crippled courage, able to resist only on the left side but unable to resist on the right, the side of cunning and flattery? Isn’t his resistant on both sides?” (634a). Maintaining it is resistant on both sides, Kleinias provokes the Stranger to request examples of practices the lawgiver established to “constrain men to taste pleasures and not flee them—just as they were constrained not to flee pains, but were dragged right into the midst of them and, by the use of force and by persuasion

⁴² As Plutarch explains in graphic detail, the *krypteia* involved the killing of Helots, the equivalent of slaves in Sparta: “By this ordinance, the magistrates despatched privately some of the ablest of the young men into the country, from time to time, armed only with their daggers, and taking a little necessary provision with them; in the daytime, they hid themselves in out-of-the-way places, and there lay close, but in the night issued out into the highways, and killed all the Helots they could light upon; sometimes they set upon them by day, as they were at work in the fields, and murdered them.” Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Lives*, trans. John Dryden, vol. I, Modern Library Paperback ed. (New York: Random House, 2001), 77.

through honors, were made to conquer them” (634a-b). Kleinias and Megillus are at a loss. Even assuming the correctness of the laws’ focus on war with foreigners, the Dorian laws fall short.

The Stranger brings to light his criticism of the Cretan and Spartan lawgivers while again attempting to soothe his interlocutors. Having revealed an imperfection in the Dorian laws, the Stranger proclaims, “Best of strangers, this is not surprising. But if one of us should blame some feature in the laws belonging to each of the others, being led to this out of a wish to see what is true and, at the same time, what is best, let’s accept such behavior from one another not in a harsh way, but gently” (634c). While Kleinias heartily agrees, Megillus remains silent. For this reason, the Stranger appeals to their sense of propriety by adding that responding harshly would not be fitting for men of their age (634d). When Kleinias again concurs while Megillus stays quiet, the Stranger makes one last attempt to calm both his interlocutors by reminding them of a law of theirs he apparently finds praiseworthy—the law that allows an old man who has been thinking over the laws “to make such arguments before a magistrate and someone his own age, with no young person present” (634e). The Stranger’s legal justification for criticizing the laws resonates with Kleinias, who not only applauds him, but insists he not hold back from laying blame on their laws. As Pangle notes, “We may silently wonder, though, whether the ancient enemy of Athens, Minos, really intended to allow noncitizens, above all Athenians (who heed what ‘the many’ say), to come to Crete and raise questions about his laws.”⁴³ Perhaps wondering the same, Megillus maintains his silence.

Insisting what he has to say at this point is not really a blame of the laws “but rather an expression of perplexity,” the Stranger finally states his criticism explicitly:

⁴³ Pangle, “Interpretive Essay,” 392.

For you are the only peoples of whom we know, among Greeks as well as barbarians (βαρβάρων), whose lawgiver has given orders to keep away from and not taste the greatest sorts of pleasure and play; while as to pains and fears, as we just remarked, he held that if someone flees them, from childhood until the end of life, the result will be that when he gets into unavoidable toils and fears and pains, he will flee before those who have had gymnastic training in such things and will be enslaved by them. I think the same legislator should have thought the same thing about pleasures. (635b-c)

The Cretan and Spartan lawgivers did a good job, in other words, of exposing their citizens to fears and pains so that they would be able to conquer such trials in times of war, but they erred by not similarly exposing them to pleasures so that they would be able to conquer those when necessary. As a result, one cannot call the Spartans and Cretans “courageous and free men without qualification” (635d). Any other people they faced, *including barbarians*, would find it easier to resist the temptation of pleasures, having faced those temptations before. The Spartans and Cretans, on the other hand, lacking any experience with pleasures, may not be able to withstand the temptation. The Stranger’s conclusion recalls the example of Pausanias, the Spartan regent who, after capturing Byzantium, is alleged to have offered assistance to the Persian emperor in exchange for his daughter’s hand in marriage. When King Xerxes agreed, Pausanias became “much more conceited and could no longer bear to live in the conventional manner, but he would go forth from Byzantium wearing Median garb, Medes and Egyptians formed a bodyguard for him as he proceeded through Thrace, [and] he had a Persian table set for himself...”⁴⁴ The story of Pausanias reflects widespread Spartan fears that, when not under the watchful eye of the state, Spartans will succumb to the temptation of foreign pleasures. The

⁴⁴ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.130.

Spartan general Brasidas, Thucydides insinuates, stood out as the first exception to this general rule of Spartan misconduct abroad.⁴⁵

The critique is harsh, yet as we have seen the Stranger has painstakingly worked his way up to it. He did not begin by laying into his interlocutors with a full-on attack of the Dorian laws, but rather gave them a chance to explain why they think their lawgivers chose the laws they did. Then, using a slow, gentle approach, he brought to light an inconsistency in their thinking. Though he could have attacked the divinity of the Dorian lawgivers, he insisted that the error lies not with the lawgivers but with their own interpretation of the lawgivers' intentions. It is as if a foreigner today, wanting to critique American laws before an audience of die-hard patriots, were to praise the wisdom of the Founding Fathers yet maintain that men today have misinterpreted their wishes. This move allows such interlocutors, if persuaded, the opportunity to save face by continuing to hold their lawgivers in esteem while confessing that the practice of the laws may have diverged from the original intent.

2.3: The Stranger's Resort to Provocation

Yet, the Strangers' interlocutors are still not willing to admit the weakness in their laws that the Stranger has revealed, so he advises them to set aside their investigation of courage and turn to the next virtue: moderation. Asked what practices contribute to the development of this virtue, Megillus reasons that the Dorian lawgivers devised common meals and gymnastics to instill in citizens both courage and moderation. The Stranger responds with two counter-arguments. First, as the examples of Miletus, Boeotia, and Thurii demonstrate, such training can encourage citizens to act boldly towards each other. In essence, the Stranger identifies the same

⁴⁵ Ibid., 4.81.

problem with gymnastics that Socrates described in the *Republic*: unless attenuated by music, it can turn men into brutes. Second, such training encourages homosexuality, which, he argues, is an unnatural pleasure (636a-c).⁴⁶ Such examples undermine the claim that gymnastics training promotes moderation.

The Stranger's unusual directness elicits the reaction one would expect from a Spartan: hostility. Circumventing the issue of homosexuality (and failing to pick up on the argument he could make, that Spartans are indeed exposed to pleasures, through gymnastics, as the Stranger himself just admitted), Megillus defends the Spartan lawgiver's decision not to expose citizens to pleasures by attacking the practice of *symposia*, being sure to mention its practice in Athens. "There isn't a one of us," he says, "who wouldn't immediately inflict the gravest punishment when he encountered one of those drunken revelers, and the Dionysia wouldn't afford an excuse that would protect him, if he were doing the sorts of things I saw them do in the carts once among your people" (637b). The Stranger admits that some *symposia* can get out of control, but retorts, "Perhaps someone from our side might defend himself by taking you up, and pointing to the looseness of your women" (637c).⁴⁷ Essentially, the Stranger has now told the Spartan that

⁴⁶ Determining whether Plato himself shared this sentiment lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. Martha Nussbaum has written at great length on (and, indeed, testified in court concerning) this matter, offering many compelling reasons why we should not regard this passage as proof that Plato condemned homosexuality, not the least of which is that in numerous dialogues spanning his career Plato ridicules appeals to the animal kingdom as a justification for or against certain behaviors. "Platonic Love and Colorado Law: The Relevance of Ancient Greek Norms to Modern Sexual Controversies," *Virginia Law Review* 80, no. 7 (1994): 1515-1651.

⁴⁷ Encouraged to develop their intellects and permitted to walk alone in the city, to transact their own affairs, and even to own property, Spartan women were often viewed as licentious by other Greeks owing to their independence. For a detailed history of Spartan women, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Spartan Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For an overview of the perception of Spartan women in the Athenian popular imagination, see Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 164-168.

his laws make the men womanly and the women manly. Yet, as Pangle argues, there is a reason why the Stranger brews conflict at this point in the discussion:

By provoking Megillus's attack on Athens, the Athenian makes himself appear to be forced to come to the defense of his fatherland and of the gods and peculiar religious customs of his people. He is thereby allowed to introduce and defend alien Athenian ways before old Dorians, in a manner which frees him from all suspicion and even disposes his audience somewhat in his favor. For every old patriot honors patriotism, even in his enemies.⁴⁸

In short, the Stranger's attack on Spartan gymnastics is designed to stir Megillus to attack an Athenian practice. This then gives the Stranger the opportunity to defend the Athenian practice of drinking parties, a move with which any patriotic Spartan and Cretan can sympathize because men raised in honor cultures respect those who respond to being insulted by putting up a fight.

However, before offering his defense of *symposia*, the Stranger makes clear that this defense will not follow the Dorian model of solving disagreements through battle; rather, he will give a calm and clear demonstration of the benefits of *symposia* with the expectation that his interlocutors will make an honest effort to hear him out. The Stranger introduces this new model of judgment by first noting that any people may defend any practice of theirs by asserting, "Don't be amazed, stranger. This is the law among us—among your people perhaps there is a different law pertaining to these same things'" (637c).⁴⁹ The Stranger insists this is not a valid

⁴⁸ Pangle, "Interpretive Essay," 395.

⁴⁹ The issue of why laws differ from place to place and time to time is taken up in Plato's *Minos*. There, Socrates leads his interlocutor to agree that what is just or noble in one place must be just or noble in another place, and that those who know—*whether they are Greeks or non-Greeks*—must reach the same conclusions about what is and is not good because the Good does not change across time or space (315e-316d). Hence, laws differ because most people are ignorant of the Good.

justification and that some lawgivers are indeed superior to others. Recommending they determine whether to applaud the lawgiver who allows intoxication or the lawgiver who forbids it, the Stranger adds, “I’m speaking now, not about the drinking or non-drinking of wine in general, but about getting drunk, and whether it should be employed as the Scythians and Persians do, and also the Carthaginians, the Celts, the Iberians, and the Thracians (all these being warlike races), or whether it should be employed as you do” (637d-e). When Megillus implies that the matter is already settled, for “we do put all these peoples to flight when we take up our arms,” the Stranger explains why victory in battle does not suffice as a method of judging one way of life against another (638a):

Best of men, don’t talk that way. Many routs and pursuits have occurred, and will occur again, without a clear cause. So we should always set down victory or defeat in battle not as a clear but as a controversial criterion for whether practices are noble or not. The fact is, bigger cities defeat smaller ones in battle: the Syracusans enslave the Locrians, who seem the best-governed of the people in that area; the Athenians enslave the Ceians; and we could find ten thousand other such examples. So with regard to each practice we discuss, let’s now leave aside the talk about victories and defeats and try to persuade ourselves with arguments, showing how one sort of thing is noble and how another sort is not noble. (638a-b)

Victories in battle or having a majority of people on one’s side in an argument do not matter. One can only truly assess the worth of any particular practice through rational argument. This means that, rather than jumping to conclusions based on a bad example of *symposia* they may have encountered, they must determine what a properly conducted *symposium* would look like and form their judgment based on this.

Conditioned to judge the superiority of a way of life based on victory in battle, the Dorian interlocutors are now asked to practice a model of judgment that entails peaceful conversation between members of different cultures. Moreover, the proposed model of conversation does not simply transmigrate the quest for victory from battlefield to verbal exchange. Rather, instead of approaching the other side as an enemy that must be conquered whether physically through the slashing of one's sword or metaphorically through cleverness in argument, the exchange takes place in a friendly manner.⁵⁰ This means that viewpoints that challenge one's own are given due consideration by being studied in the best possible light, and that the interlocutors treat each other as friends who will both benefit from the conversation. As we have already seen, the Stranger practices this model of judgment with his interlocutors by making a genuine effort to understand the reasoning behind their laws and to give their lawgiver the benefit of the doubt. Though he voices disagreement with the laws, he does so gently and gradually, as one would with a friend who readily takes offense. In the end, we will see that though Kleinias and Megillus are more persuaded by the Stranger's views than he is by theirs, the Stranger too benefits from the conversation for he strengthens the friendship not only between himself and his interlocutors, but also within himself. First, however, I turn to the Stranger's defense of drinking parties, showing how through this defense the Stranger further reveals the dangers of the militaristic education practiced in the armed camp. Though this mode of education seems to allow the armed camp to preserve good traditions, it suffers from the same sort of ailments that often plague the elderly: an inability to break out of customary ways of thinking and behaving and thus to become

⁵⁰ Voegelin observes a similar phenomenon in the *Gorgias*, where a bridge between the men "cannot be found on the level of principles of conduct, for this is precisely the level on which the protagonists meet in 'war and battle'"; rather, only genuine conversation can provide a bridge. Such conversation does not take place on a merely intellectual level, but involves the community of *pathos*, or shared human experiences. "The Philosophy of Existence: Plato's 'Gorgias,'" *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 4 (1949), 482.

better, and a tendency towards virtuous action driven by habit rather than true virtue. The Stranger's defense of *symposia* brings to light these problems with the armed camp, as well as how drinking parties might help to solve them. In the process, Plato reveals how dialectic cross-cultural engagement might serve the same function as *symposia* of awakening our passion for learning.

III. The Sympotic Effects of Cross-Cultural Engagement

3.1: *The Paradox of Education*

According to the Stranger, a correctly run *symposium*—*i.e.*, one under the management of a sober and wise ruler—provides educational benefits. To arrive at an understanding of those benefits, they must therefore know what “education” is. Establishing that by “education” he means, “the education from childhood in virtue, that makes one desire and love to become a perfect citizen who knows how to rule and be ruled with justice,” the Stranger suggests they develop a clearer conception of an idea agreed on earlier, that “the good are those able to rule themselves” (643e-644a; 644b). He returns, in other words, to the first idea Kleinias raised—that there is a war going on within ourselves. To clarify this notion, the Stranger offers his interlocutors an image he later terms the myth of virtue.⁵¹ Imagine, he says, that each of us is a divine puppet pulled in opposite directions—towards virtue on the one hand and vice on the other—by cords or strings representing the various passions within us. Most of the cords are “hard and iron” and “resemble a multitude of different forms,” but it is “the golden and sacred pull of calculation (λογισμοῦ)” that we should always follow (645a). Unlike the other cords, this one is “gentle rather than violent” and therefore “in need of helpers if the race of gold is to be

⁵¹ The image recalls the image of the tripartite soul in the *Republic* and the myth of the charioteer in the *Phaedrus*.

victorious for us over the other races” (645a-b).⁵² We must discover what will help us listen to reason—a single cord pulling us gently—in the face of the many irrational cords that tug at us violently. As the image teaches, ruling oneself involves controlling the pull of the passions while strengthening the passion for *logos*.⁵³ Hence, to become virtuous an individual should “acquire within himself true reasoning about these cords and live according to it, while a city should take over a reasoning either from one of the gods or from this knower of these things, and then set up the reasoning as the law for itself and for its relations with other cities” (645b-c).⁵⁴ Education, then, is what helps us listen to the pull of reason over the pull of the appetites.

Later, the Stranger links education to music. All young things, he argues, have a natural instinct to jump around and cry out; of all the animals, only humans, however, are able to perceive which sounds and movements are orderly and which are disorderly, for only humans have been given by the gods the perception of rhythm and harmony. It is through the musical

⁵² Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 416e-417b.

⁵³ Arguably, the myth is unclear about whether the golden cord of calculation represents a passion working within us just like the other cords. I would argue that it does, however. First of all, to help introduce his definition of education, the Stranger discusses the importance of directing the pleasures and desires of children towards the activity in which they must become perfect: “The core of education, we say, is a correct nurture, one which, as much as possible, draws the soul of the child at play toward an *erotic* attachment to what he must do when he becomes a man who is perfect as regards the virtue of his occupation” (643d, emphasis added). In other dialogues, Plato uses the same language in relation to education in virtue. For instance, in the *Republic*, the creation of a philosopher involves directing the erotic part of his soul towards the intellectual. Likewise, in the *Phaedrus*, philosophy begins with erotic love. Of course, the Stranger is not necessarily trying to transform his interlocutors into philosophers. Nonetheless, as even education in childhood involves the union of *eros* and *logos*, it is reasonable to conclude that he wishes to cultivate in them, to whatever extent possible, the passion for reason.

⁵⁴ Intellectual apprehension of virtue, the Stranger implies, is insufficient; it must be accompanied by action, action involving how an individual relates to others and how a city relates to other cities. The treatment of foreigners is to be determined by the proper ordering of our souls, and a properly ordered soul is not one at war, but at peace thanks to the rule of reason.

gods, and their gift of the perception of rhythm and harmony, that humans receive their first education. In other words, we are drawn to love whatever appears harmonious and to hate whatever strikes us as inharmonious. The educated person, therefore, is trained to sing and dance well, which the Stranger makes clear means not just having a beautiful voice or excellent coordination, but also singing fine songs and dancing fine dances. Unclear what a “fine” song or dance looks like, the Stranger proposes that they next “track down, like dogs sniffing out prey, what is fine in posture, tune, song, and dance. If these elude us and get away, our discussion that should come after—about correct education, *whether Greek or barbarian* (εἶθ’ Ἑλληνικῆς εἴτε βαρβαρικῆς)—would be in vain” (654e, emphasis added).

The Stranger’s hint that the correct education may be non-Greek is borne out in the subsequent discussion. Leading his interlocutors to agree that if we delight in characters who perform evil deeds then we will necessarily become similar to those characters, the Stranger argues that a good lawgiver would never allow a poet to depict depraved characters in a heroic light. Rather, the lawgiver would allow him only to glorify virtuous people. Yet, he says, no state has attempted to enact such a policy—none except Egypt. Long ago, he explains, the Egyptians developed a list of good postures that could be depicted in art, and forbade artists to “make innovations or think up things different from the ancestral” (656e). This policy has held firm literally for ten thousand years. As the Stranger puts it, “the paintings and sculptures have been in no way more beautiful (καλλίονα) or more ugly (αἰσχίω) than those that are being made, with the very same skill, by their craftsmen now” (656e-657a). Though extreme, this policy would be correct, he argues, if it were “the work of a god or someone divine—even as they claim (φασιν) there that the songs which have been preserved for this long time were the poetry of Isis” (657a-b).

Careful exegesis of this passage reveals the first problem with the policy of allowing no innovation in music: only a divine being could discern which music is the right music. Though the Stranger recommends the Egyptian policy ideally, he insinuates that in practice this policy often falls short. First, when he notes that there are other features of the Egyptian law that Kleinias “would find pretty poor (φαῦλ’),” he implies that the lawgiver who established the Egyptian laws on music was prone to error and thus not divine (657a). Second, the Stranger gives the impression that he is as skeptical of the divine origins of Egyptian music as he was of the divine origins of Cretan and Spartan law.⁵⁵ Not only does he qualify the attribution of the songs to the goddess Isis by making clear this is what the Egyptians “claim,” but he also implies that the songs themselves might not be as perfect as the Egyptians believe. After all, in saying their art is “in no way more beautiful (καλλίονα)” than it was ten thousand years ago, the Stranger suggests there is room for it to be more beautiful. It is, at any rate, not “the most beautiful (καλλίστης) song” that he speaks of elsewhere (666e). We have reason to believe, then, that the Stranger questions the desirability of censorship if not implemented by a divine being. While they may not become worse, the Egyptians’ inability to make more beautiful art is surely tragic.

Nonetheless, the Stranger insists on the possibility of discovering the right music and ordering it into law. Turning briefly to the *Timaeus*—another of Plato’s late dialogues in which Egypt symbolizes the preservation of ancient knowledge—will help to elucidate what the search for the right music involves. In the *Timaeus*, the character Critias relates a tale passed down to him through his grandfather Critias, who heard it from the Athenian lawgiver Solon, who himself

⁵⁵ The Stranger’s skepticism of the divine origins of the Dorian laws is apparent from his opening question, “Is it a god or some human being, strangers, who is given the credit for laying down your laws?” (624a).

heard it from the priests at Sais, Egypt. According to the story, whenever floods or other catastrophes devastate the earth, as happens at long intervals, only Egypt escapes the general destruction. Consequently, Egyptians possess the most complete historical knowledge, as other civilizations are essentially wiped out and forced to begin anew. According to the Egyptian priests, long ago Athens was the best governed of all polities ever in existence, and it was because of Athens that the Mediterranean peoples remained victorious against the encroachments of the mighty empire of Atlantis. With the deluge, the memory of Athens' greatness faded, preserved only through the stories of the Egyptian priests.

In the *Timaeus*, the story reaches the ears of a set of old men through the young Critias, who himself had forgotten the story he heard as a child but now recollects it thanks to a conversation with Socrates about the ideal city (which may or may not be the same one related in the *Republic*). As in the *Laws*, in the *Timaeus* Egypt remains unchanged amidst a world always cycling from one extreme to the next, a repository of the knowledge lost to the rest of the world. The problem occupying the attention of this dialogue is how to access the truth after years of forgetting it. The *Timaeus* treats it as a matter of recollection. As Eric Voegelin explains, "Youth is the repository of the idea, and age can gain access to it through anamnesis [...] Youth is nearer to the divine origin, and the youth of the origin has to be recovered through the anamnesis of age."⁵⁶ Applied to the search for the right music, this suggests we already know the right music; it is simply a matter of remembering what we have forgotten.

This brings us to the key problem that the Stranger thinks drinking parties will help to solve, what I call "the paradox of education". As the Stranger explains, "Education brings victory, although victory sometimes brings a loss of education; for many have grown more

⁵⁶ Eric Voegelin, "Plato's Egyptian Myth," *The Journal of Politics* 9, no. 3 (1947), 314.

insolent (ὕβριστότεροι) because of victories in war, and through their insolence (ὑβρίν) have been filled with ten thousand other vices. And education has never become ‘Cadmean,’ although many such victories have happened and will happen again to human beings” (641c). The Stranger refers here to the myth of Cadmus’ founding of Thrace.⁵⁷ Recall that, needing water from a spring guarded by a water-dragon, Cadmus sent his men to slay the dragon, but they all perished. Though Cadmus later succeeded in slaying the dragon and founding the city, the victory came at the expense of those whom the new settlement was supposed to benefit. Thus, the term “Cadmean victory” refers to a victory attained at as great a loss to the victor as to the vanquished. In referencing Cadmean victories, the Stranger suggests that the danger always exists of a well-educated individual or city falling away from virtue in the face of victory over its enemies. That is, virtuous action can give rise to an attitude of superiority, a smugness that destroys the very virtuosity that produced it. Simply put, education can be forgotten. One must therefore discover not only the education that will help one to listen to the pull of reason, but also a way of guarding that education.

To understand more clearly the problem the Stranger has identified, let us consider two other ways of thinking about it with which the Stranger presents his interlocutors. The first is on the level of the city. First, the Stranger establishes the existence of two kinds of fear: the fear that evils will come to pass and the fear that others will consider us evil if we say or do anything ignoble, *i.e.* shame. To be victorious, he argues, we must not have the first kind of fear in the face of enemies, yet we must have the second kind of fear before friends, for shame sometimes prevents us from giving in to harmful desires. In brief, we need “boldness (θάρρος) with enemies and with friends fear of shame on account of vileness” (647b). When the enemy attacks we must

⁵⁷ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 414c. For more on the myth of Cadmus and its connection to the treatment of foreigners in Plato’s dialogues, see chap. 2.

show boldness by raising our spear and fighting to the death, but we need to feel shame with regard to doing the same to a friend.⁵⁸ Otherwise, the victory over our enemies has come at a great expense. A victory over one's enemies is no victory at all—*i.e.*, is a Cadmean victory—if in the process one loses one's virtue.⁵⁹

Recalling the image of the puppet at war with itself, we can see that the same applies on the level of the soul. Education, the Stranger argues, can be defined as “being correctly trained as regards pleasures and pains so as to hate what one should hate from the very beginning until the end, and also to love what one should love” (653b-c). Though to become perfect, virtuous men they will eventually need to confirm through reason the correctness of their early education, when their reasoning powers are not fully developed children learn what to hate and what to love through habituation. It is vital, then, that the lawgiver design games and other educational tools that will draw children towards the right pleasures and pains, and away from the wrong ones. The proper nurture can only accomplish so much, however. For the fact is, as humans age, they tend to become more lax in the habits instilled in them at an early age:

Now, this education which consists in correctly trained pleasures and pains tends to slacken in human beings, and in the course of a lifetime becomes corrupted to a great

⁵⁸ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 375d. The Stranger's prescription of boldness with enemies and with friends fear of shame is too simplistic in Plato's view. After all, throughout his dialogues, Plato presents Socrates as an exemplar of shamelessness. See Arlene Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). It may be more just to say that we should be ashamed when our friends have reason and unashamed when they do not.

⁵⁹ The difference here is between the true virtue of courage (*andreia*) and the bestial kind of courage (*thrasos*). This brings to mind the tale of the Spartan warrior Aristodemus, who sought to redeem his cowardice at the Battle of Thermopylae by fighting furiously to the death at the Battle of Plataea. According to Herodotus, he showed by far the greatest degree of courage, yet received no special honors because the Spartans reckoned that he wanted to die owing to the misery of living disgraced. In their eyes, his *thrasos* in battle betrayed his lack of *andreia*. *Histories*, 9.71.

extent. So, taking pity on this suffering that is natural to the human race, the gods have ordained the change of holidays as times of rest from labor. They have given as fellow celebrants the Muses, with their leader Apollo, and Dionysus—in order that these divinities might set humans right again. (653c-d)

Again, Plato confronts us with the problem of remembering one's education. It is not enough to educate a person properly when he is young, for this education will inevitably weaken. All it takes is for victory to give rise to hubris or for the steep path to virtue to become too tiresome and one will slip. The more time passes, the easier it is to forget why we are doing what we are doing. As such, we all need a reminder from time to time of the things we know to be true. We need, in short, a safeguard for our education.

3.2: Cross-Cultural Engagement as a Safeguard to Education

Though ultimately the Stranger will suggest that cross-cultural engagement can serve as a safeguard to education, to arrive at this he first argues that a correctly run drinking party can provide such a “safeguard” (653a). To understand why, we must comprehend the effect that wine has on the soul. Returning to the image of the puppet, the Stranger argues that if we were to introduce drunkenness into this puppet its soul would return to the disposition it had as a young child, for “the drinking of wine makes pleasures (ἡδονὰς), pains (λύπας), the spirited emotions (θυμοῦς), and the erotic emotions (ἔρωτας), more intense,” while causing “sensations (αἰσθήσεις), memories (μνήμας), opinions (δόξας), and prudent thoughts (φρονήσεις)” to abandon us (645d-e). To put this in the terms introduced in the *Republic*, being drunk feeds the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul while muting the voice of the rational part. Correspondingly, in the myth of virtue, drunkenness encourages the puppet to listen to the pull of

the many, violent passions tugging at him and to drown out the pull of the soft, golden cord of calculation. It makes the puppet at war with itself, as it is pulled in different directions. Hence, when drunk, a man “would be least the master of himself,” and therefore removed from virtue (646a).

While on the surface this seems like the opposite of safeguarding one’s education, when used on a soul that has become so accustomed to acting a certain way that it has forgotten why, wine can serve an educational purpose. To understand how, we must note two facts about aging to which the Stranger alludes. First, the hardening of beliefs and behaviors—whether virtuous or not—tends to happen as people grow older. Contrary to the popular saying “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” this does not mean that older people cannot change; it just means that it is harder to change one’s ways as one becomes increasingly accustomed to following certain thought and behavioral patterns. Second, as one becomes older one generally becomes tamer or less active. Even in today’s world of increasingly long life spans and drugs like Viagra, the idea of the elderly partying and having sex like teenagers seems absurd to most. Of course, plenty of elderly people *are* active, but old age usually causes people to live more moderately as they no longer feel the pull of certain appetites. As Cephalus in the *Republic* remarks, old age frees us from “many mad masters” (329d). Translated to the myth of virtue, whereas the soul of a young person resembles a puppet about to be pulled apart by all the different strings of desire tugging at it, the soul of an older person is like a puppet with most of its strings hanging limply while a small set of strings hold it up so solidly it seems as though they have become hardened in place.

There are two problems with this natural hardening of the soul and taming of the desires as one ages. First, as we saw in the last chapter, harmony in the soul consists of a bringing together of opposing parts. In an elderly soul, however, most of the desires no longer register an

audible note, or the sound they make is so soft that it is easily ignored. There thus exist no opposing parts to unite. The soul may sing one note, but that note lacks the fullness of a variety of notes brought together in harmony. Hence, Cephalus makes for a poor model of virtue. He believes himself virtuous because he no longer feels the pull of the passions, yet in truth his moderate behavior has nothing to do with his character. Rather, he is moderate because as time wore on his passions started to tug at him less violently. He could only be truly virtuous if he experienced that inner turmoil once again and managed to exercise self-control. Yet, the way Cephalus talks about the appetitive desires, one imagines that were he to be flooded with them again he would not be able to control them any more than in his youth. Without having to struggle against those desires, his virtuosity is but an appearance of virtue. Thus Joshua Mitchell writes, “Without illness, there can be no health.”⁶⁰ Virtue cannot exist in the absence of trial and temptation. As strange as it might sound, the problem with the elderly is that they are *not* at war with themselves. What better than alcohol to reawaken the passions within them that have long gone to sleep? The elderly need to get drunk to remember the war they once felt waging within, because only then will it be possible for them to achieve the peace that comes not from an absence of war, but from the creation of friendship between warring parts.⁶¹

The second problem with the natural hardening and taming of the soul as we age is that we might become hardened or tamed in the wrong way. When discussing the Egyptian policy on music, the Stranger implied that no existing community has made the right music sacred. Only

⁶⁰ Joshua Mitchell, *Plato's Fable: On the Mortal Condition in Shadowy Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 20.

⁶¹ This is similar to Socrates' discussion in the *Republic* of the three regions: the lower region of pain, the upper region of pleasure, and the middle region of what is neither painful nor pleasant. Men ascending from the lower region to the middle region, he argues, often mistake this region for the highest (583c-586b).

Egypt practices the policy that ideally one would want in place, but as we saw the Stranger gives us reason to believe that he thinks the Egyptians have not attained to the most beautiful music. As such, no existing community educates its members using the right music. Similar to Socrates' vision in the *Republic* of a world comprised of cities filled with *pleonexia*, the Stranger seems to view the world as a place where everywhere young souls are given an imperfect education. What happens when people across the world grow older and the disharmonious patterns of thought and behavior to which they were habituated become more firmly entrenched? What happens when, in numerous societies, these individuals are given positions of power because of their age and experience? Again, wine is the solution. As the Stranger puts it, the effect of wine is that "we are rejuvenated, and the soul, by forgetting its despondency of spirit, has its disposition turned from harder to softer, so that it becomes more malleable, like iron when it is plunged into fire" (666b-c). By softening the soul, wine makes more possible its rearrangement. Making the old feel young again, wine weakens prejudices and increases curiosity and openness to different ways of life. This is evident from the Stranger's reflection that among three proposed choruses—a children's chorus (dedicated to the Muses), a chorus for those under age 30 (dedicated to Apollo), and a chorus for those aged 30-60 (dedicated to Dionysus)—the last chorus would be the least likely to delight in singing and the most likely to feel ashamed (665d-e). Wine, however, gives them the boldness to do what they would otherwise consider shameful. It helps to loosen up those set in their ways and to get them to try something new.

For men like Kleinias and Megillus the problems are compounded though, as they are not merely old, but have been raised in a regime that—like the elderly soul—is set in its ways. We see this when Kleinias objects that he and Megillus could never sing any song other than those

they learned to sing when they were habituated in the choruses, and the Stranger insinuates that this is the major flaw with the Cretan and Spartan approach to education:

Of course not. For you have really never attained to the most beautiful song. Your regime is that of an armed camp and not of men settled in cities. You keep your young in a flock, like a bunch of colts grazing in a herd. None of you takes his own youngster apart, drawing him, all wild and complaining, away from his fellow grazers. None of you gives him a private groom and educates him by currying and soothing him, giving him all that is appropriate for child rearing. If you did, he would become not only a good soldier but someone capable of managing a city and towns, someone who, as we said at the beginning, was more of a warrior than those warriors in Tyrtaeus. (666e-667a)

In the “armed camp” of the Dorians, children are not regarded as unique individuals requiring an education tailored to each one’s specific needs, such as Socratic education supplies; rather, they are lumped together as a single group and collectively made to regurgitate lessons they may not understand, lessons that may not sit well with their sense of reason. While the Spartans and Cretans may succeed in impressing the same opinions upon the members of their community, they leave uncultivated the higher capacities of those more philosophic in nature. Indeed, their emphasis on obedience to tradition effectively stamps out the skeptical tendencies many young people exhibit. Consequently, it does not matter that as old men they will be allowed to question and criticize the laws, for by the time they reach old age they will be so habituated to the song of the armed camp that they will be virtually unable to hear anything else. Just as an old soul needs something to reawaken the tensions within it and to incite it to behave contrary to its usual ways, an “old” regime—*i.e.*, one that heavily emphasizes the preservation of ancient traditions—needs

something to keep it enlivened or else it will foster an empty reenactment of dead traditions generation after generation.

Though the Stranger explicitly recommends the practice of *symposia*, Plato provides substantial hints that dialectic cross-cultural engagement itself functions like wine and, in fact, that the discussion of drunkenness may be more about offering an analogy for such conversation than about defending *symposia*. Consider the Stranger's response to Kleinias' confusion about who is to make up the third chorus: "Yet most of the arguments (*λόγων*) that have been uttered up until now have been pretty much for the sake of these men!" (664d). The men in the third chorus are aged thirty to sixty, the age group in which all three interlocutors likely fall. The arguments are thus for their sake. However, notice that in the *Laws* none of the interlocutors are ever depicted getting drunk (or, indeed, drinking); it would be odd if they did, given that they are in Crete, where drunkenness is forbidden. Wine does not render their souls more malleable, yet by the end of the dialogue the Dorians are so impressed by the Athenian Stranger that they wish to keep him around to advise them, and the Stranger in his last address refers to Kleinias and Megillus as "friends (*φίλοι*)" rather than "strangers," as in his first address (968e). In other words, a transformation seems to take place over the course of the dialogue for which wine can bear no responsibility. The Stranger's intimation that the arguments have been for their sake suggests that the arguments themselves have performed the same function as wine. As these arguments emerge within the context of a dialectic cross-cultural conversation, this implies that such conversations can serve the same purpose as *symposia*. Is it mere coincidence that Plato has the Stranger defend a practice associated with the foreign god Dionysus and propose that the chorus of elderly men be dedicated to him, all the while three strangers ascend to the cave of Zeus, god of foreigners? The Stranger may present drunkenness as a safeguard for education, but

the *Laws* as a whole presents dialectic cross-cultural engagement as a safeguard. As seen through the Athenian Stranger's interactions with his two Dorian interlocutors, the armed camp needs the voice of a foreigner to help wake it up from the unconscious imitation of traditions handed down by authority figures. The next section lends additional confirmation to this interpretation, showing how the interlocutors' investigation of history helps to arouse the passion for learning by further bringing to light contradictions in the theoretical foundations of the armed camp.

IV. The Errors of the Armed Camp

By the end of the Stranger's defense of *symposia*, it is evident he has not fully reached his Dorian interlocutors despite their verbal agreement with him. For, asking if they wish to consider the other half of education—gymnastics—Kleinias insists that a Spartan and Cretan can give no other answer than yes when it is the subject of gymnastics that remains untouched. Even though the Stranger has pointed out that they have never attained to “the most beautiful song,” the song that will make their city truly best, Kleinias and Megillus remain more interested in gymnastics than music, in warfare rather than friendship. Accordingly, the Stranger, while promising to return to the discussion of gymnastics, subtly changes the subject to the origin of the political regime. Turning to the past, the Stranger sets out to show his interlocutors why, for the sake of the city, their chief focus should be the war within themselves, not wars with foreigners. The purpose of this conversation is, again, to unsettle the Dorians' confidence in their gymnastic training. By exploring the theoretical foundations of the armed camp and drawing on historical

examples⁶² as evidence of the inadequacy of laws aimed at success in foreign war, the Stranger hopes to awaken their passion for learning much in the way wine would.

The investigation commences with a common myth, one Kleinias believes everyone finds entirely credible—the myth of a time when a flood wiped out all human civilization except for pockets of men dwelling high on the mountaintops. Contrary to the account given in the *Timaeus*, in this account no bastion of ancient knowledge such as Egypt survives the flood. Rather, swept away along with most of the human race are not only tools and the metals used to make them, but also the arts and other sorts of wisdom. The remaining humans live, essentially, in a state of nature, a time before the existence of government and laws. Opposite Hobbes’ version of the state of nature, in Plato’s account war does not exist, for under such conditions humans not only lack the means of creating weapons for war and the knowledge of how to wage war, but also the desire to go to war. In fact, owing to their desolation, they are delighted to come across a fellow human. Moreover, with land, food, and other necessities readily available, they are not compelled by poverty to fight with each other. Perfect viciousness, in other words, is unknown in such a time. Unlike in Rousseau’s account, however, in Plato’s state of nature people are not perfectly virtuous either. Though they may behave more justly towards each other, they do so not through knowledge but through habit; hence, they would not withstand the forces of corruption.

The Stranger hesitates, though, to call this time in history a state of nature. In his view, while humans in such circumstances lack a formal legal system, there nonetheless exists a kind

⁶² Of course, this examination of history involves some myth making. If the myth of the flood is insufficient, then the Stranger’s explicit turn to “what is said in myth” (λέγεται τὸ τοῦ μύθου) about how Megillus’ ancestors founded three cities—Argos, Messene, and Lacedaemon—certainly should (683d). As England points out in his translation, “Plato is here continuing to some extent the *invention* of history.” Plato, *The Laws of Plato*, trans. E.B. England (Manchester: University Press; London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1921), 360.

of political regime, one “guided by habits and by what are called ancestral laws” (680a). Labeling this type of regime a dynasty, the Stranger points to the race of Cyclopes as an illustration. Described in Homer’s *Odyssey* as “[l]awless savages” who “have no assemblies or laws but live / In high mountain caves, ruling their own / Children and wives and ignoring each other,” the Cyclopes are represented in myth by the godless Polyphemus, who eats alive members of Odysseus’ crew when he catches them trying to steal his stockpile of cheese and herd of lambs.⁶³ The Cyclopes in Homer’s tale emblemize hostility. With no formal legal system to prosecute, punish, and perhaps rehabilitate violators of rights, the Cyclopes instead deal with perceived injustices via swift, personal retribution.⁶⁴ While Odysseus and his men imposing their notion of hospitality on the Cyclopes may strike us as unjust, the Cyclopes’ violent response is little better. Lurking in the background, then, of the Stranger’s depiction of men in the first political regime is the possibility that these men, though happy to stumble upon other human beings, might instinctually turn violent when others commit injustices against them.

The Stranger’s account of the origin of the political regime next takes his interlocutors to the formation of an aristocracy or monarchy. According to his account, this type of regime comes into being when the population increases and people begin to gather. Finding that each family follows its own customs, they are compelled to choose certain men among them to select from the diversity of customs those they find most agreeable and to present them for approval to the leaders they have appointed. Thus, with the rise of the second regime come lawgivers and

⁶³ Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.105-112.

⁶⁴ According to Lorraine Smith Pangle, the legal system developed in Plato’s *Laws* navigates the tension between the human passion for vengeance and the more rational goal of rehabilitating criminals by allowing for retributive punishment, but combining it with preludes designed to make citizens gentler towards criminals. “Moral and Criminal Responsibility in Plato’s *Laws*,” *The American Political Science Review* 103, no. 3 (2009): 456-73.

rational, as opposed to ancestral, law. The third regime, Ilium comes into being when men finally descend from the heights and settle on low hills. From this regime war originates, eventually the Trojan War. After sacking Troy, the Achaeans return home, but are not warmly welcomed. When those driven into exile return—no longer calling themselves Achaeans but rather Dorians because it was Dorieus who gathered them together—the fourth regime develops. This regime is Lacedaemon and its brother Crete, the regime of the armed camp.⁶⁵ From the first political regime of the relatively isolationist, but instinctually aggressive Cyclopes we at last arrive at the regime of the Dorians, a people who think it reasonable to develop all their laws with a view toward war and to measure a city's worth by its victories in battle. Violence, once an impulse, is now rationalized; war, once nonexistent, now structures a people's way of life.

According to the Stranger, the Dorians decided to divide their army into three parts and for this reason founded three cities: Argos, Messene, and Lacedaemon. In each city, a king ruled with the support of the people. The kings agreed not to become harsher, and the people agreed not to dissolve the kings' rule as long as they kept their oath. Additionally, the kings and people of each of the three cities agreed to look out for each other; if one city disobeyed the established laws, the other two would interfere. So advantageous did the Dorians believe this arrangement that they intended it "to be a sufficient defense not only of the Peloponnese but of all the Greeks, in case any of the barbarians might do them injustice" (685b-c). Yet, somehow the system collapsed, as two of the cities became corrupt while only one, Lacedaemon, held firm. How, the Stranger wants to know, did what seem like a promising arrangement for defending all the Greeks turn into a recipe for disaster? Perhaps, he suggests, they are making the all-too-human error of "always supposing, whenever we see some fine object, that it would achieve amazing

⁶⁵ The Stranger says that they can call this a *polis* "if you wish (εἰ δὲ βούλεσθε)," suggesting that the name is not quite appropriate (683a).

things if only someone knew the way to put it to a fine use” (686c-d). Continuing on, he explains that anyone with such a powerful army would want to preserve it “in order to maintain their own freedom while they ruled over anyone else they wished, and in order to enable themselves and their descendents to do whatever they wanted with the whole human race, Greeks as well as barbarians (βαρβάρους)” (687a-b). We all desire a powerful army, in other words, because we think it will enable us to obtain dominion over others and all the benefits that dominion brings.

The problem, the Stranger implies, is that it is not enough to have a powerful army; we must also know how to use it well. Turning to the example of fathers and sons, the Stranger makes the point that though these two care about each other and are looking out for the other’s best interest, “many of the things a child prays he will get, a father would pray the gods never to allow” and, in turn, the son will not join in his father’s prayers “when the father, either because he is an old man (γέρων) or all-too-much a youth (σφόδρα νεανίας), knows nothing of what is noble (καλῶν) and just (δικαίων), and, experiencing passions akin to those of Theseus against Hippolytus (who died so unfortunately), prays with a vehement spirit (μάλα προθύμως)” (687d-e). From this, it follows that one must pray not to have everything one wishes come to pass, but only those wishes which are in accordance with prudence. The same applies, the Stranger says, to the lawgiver:

...the man who is a statesman-lawgiver must always look to this in setting up the orderings of the laws; and I’m reminded here, and I’d like to recollect for you two as well, what was said at the beginning of the discussion, if you remember: you two maintained that the good lawgiver should lay down all his enactments for the sake of war; I on the other hand maintained that this would only constitute an exhortation to set up laws for the sake of only one virtue out of four, whereas what should be done was to look

to the whole of virtue [...] The argument has arrived again at the same place, and I, the speaker, now say again what I said back then—playfully, if you wish, or seriously, but this is what I assert: it is dangerous for one who lacks intelligence to pray, and the opposite of what he wishes comes to pass. (688a-c)

Coming full circle, the Stranger again makes clear that he thinks it would be a mistake to design one's laws only with a view towards success in war against foreigners. Connected with the previous statement about the powerful army, the implication is that a good lawgiver would not set his sights solely on creating a strong army, for without intelligence he would not know how to use it well. Remember that the Stranger established that everyone would think that with a strong army he could rule over the entire world, and it is this most people would wish for were they in possession of such a force. By introducing the notion that it is dangerous for one who lacks intelligence to pray, the Stranger subtly hints that this common desire to have a strong army with which to conquer the world is misguided. In essence, the Stranger alludes to the conclusion reached in Book IX of the *Republic*—that the tyrant is least master of himself and least free.

To prove his point, the Stranger now explains why the Dorian arrangement failed to provide for their mutual protection. The cause, according to the Stranger, is the tyrannical impulse *par excellence*: *pleonexia*. Reminding his interlocutors that the well-educated like what is good and hate what is wicked, the Stranger surmises that “the desire to have more than (πλεονεκτεῖν) the established laws allowed” must have destroyed the harmony within the souls of the kings (691a). Praising the laws in speech, in truth the kings wanted to cross the boundaries the laws imposed. In this sense they proved ignorant, for they hated what they knew to be good, *i.e.* the laws. Though the Stranger does not explicitly state so, we can gather that each king, filled

with *pleonexia* or the desire for more, sought not merely to have an army that could defend the Greeks, but one that could make him ascendant over all, including his populace, fellow Dorians, fellow Greeks, and barbarians. The kings' desire for dominion over others led, however, to their own destruction as well as the destruction of the power of the Greeks. For when the Persians attacked, Argos and Messene were so far gone in corruption that the former ignored the cry for help while the latter kept Lacedaemon from assisting in the defense by fighting with it (692d-e). Were it not for the heroic efforts of the Spartans and Athenians, the Greeks would not have escaped the Persians; instead of merely being severely weakened, they would have been forced to live in slavery a "scattered (ἐσπαρμένα)" people (693a).⁶⁶

Yet, the Stranger argues, the Persian attack could have been avoided altogether if the Dorian lawgivers had from the beginning devised the proper arrangement. The mistake they made was in supposing that a young soul with immense power could be held in check by oaths. Looking back, the Stranger says, we can see this was insufficient. Had the lawgiver developed his laws with a view towards friendship rather than war, he would not have legislated unmixed authority, for he would have understood that most humans cannot handle so much power, that almost anyone who tastes great power craves more than is wise. Indeed, the only reason Lacedaemon survived was owing to various divine interventions in its original constitution. First of all, "some god (θεός)" brought measure (μέτρον) to the regime by bringing about the birth of

⁶⁶ The Stranger fails to mention the Spartan conquest of Messene and Spartan efforts to extend their conquests into the territory of Argos. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City*, 71. This provides yet another example of the Stranger's gentle approach with his Spartan interlocutor Megillus. As Strauss writes, "...the Athenian stranger speaks 'with a view to' a respectable Spartan: for a foreigner to speak of these harsh facts to a Spartan would be as unbecoming as to speak to a patriotic American of Negro slavery and the fate of the Red Indians." Strauss, *Argument and Action*, 44. Though the Stranger clearly seeks to critique the Spartan constitution and way of life, he converses in a friendly manner, for this is most conducive to initiating a turning in his interlocutor's soul.

twin kings (691e). Then, “some human nature, having been mixed with some divine power (φύσις τις ἀνθρωπίνη μεμειγμένη θεία τινὶ δυνάμει),” seeing that the Spartan rule was still “feverish (φλεγμαίνουσαν),” instituted the Council of Elders with a vote equal to that of the kings (691e-692a). Finally, a “third savior (σωτήρ)” instituted the Ephorate, five men elected annually who shared power with the kings (692a). Had the original Dorian legislators divined the need for mixed authority and thus established a more moderate form of rule, then, the Stranger maintains, “there would never have been an expedition by the Persians or by anybody else against Greece, caused by their looking down on (καταφρονήσας) us as people who count for little” (692c). Unfortunately, it seems the Dorian lawgivers were not divine after all.

One cannot help but notice that the Stranger makes an obviously bad argument here. The Persians would have invaded no matter how well ruled the Greeks were. After all, in Herodotus’ account of the Persian Wars, even though the Persian king Xerxes is warned about the impressiveness of the Spartan military, he gives no heed to this warning and instead proceeds with his attack.⁶⁷ For the Stranger’s plan to work, the Persians would have needed enough wisdom to recognize the significance of the Greeks. Yet it is precisely because they underestimate the Greeks that they invade their land. Moreover, the Stranger’s argument does not make sense within the reality of the world he himself has described. If no city in existence educates its citizens with the right music, then no city is safe from attack. However, had Argos, Messene, and Sparta focused more on maintaining harmony among themselves than on conquering the world, they would have been a more formidable force against the Persians. The Stranger exaggerates the consequences of focusing on internal harmony, but this does not negate his larger argument that a city that cultivates a sense of togetherness and avoids expansionary

⁶⁷ Herodotus, *Histories*, VII.102-105.

wars is more likely to be able to defend itself than a city that is divided and that is always provoking others to attack by stealing their land or resources.

Nevertheless, the Stranger has still failed to reach his interlocutors, as Kleinias now expresses confusion over the Stranger's insistence that the lawgiver aim at friendship and prudence and freedom—goals the Stranger maintains are one and the same (693c). For this reason, the Stranger elaborates upon his argument in favor of mixed authority, showing why the best regimes balance authority and freedom while regimes that fail to achieve this balance and instead give power to one faction over another—whether that faction consists of a monarch or the masses—are not really regimes at all. To illustrate the need for a balance of authority and freedom, the Stranger explains that there are “two mothers of regimes” from which all regimes are woven: monarchy and democracy (693d). True regimes—ones exhibiting friendship, prudence, and freedom—contain a mixture of monarchy and democracy. Pure monarchies or democracies, on the other hand, “aren't regimes, but city administrations where the city is under the sway of despots, with some parts enslaved to other parts of itself. Each takes its name from the authority that is the despot” (712e-713a). As proof, the Stranger points to the historical trajectories of Persia and Athens. While both began as regimes—mixtures of authority and freedom—Persia declined into complete slavery and Athens descended into complete freedom. The effect, however, was the same: “my people have in a way suffered the same thing the Persians suffered—they by leading their population into complete slavery and we by leading the majority in the opposite direction, into complete freedom” (699e). In short, what were once well-measured regimes became disharmonious over time, just as happened with the Dorian regimes of Argos and Messene. Once again, Plato introduces the theme of lost education, of reforming what

has been deformed, a theme that continues to take center stage in the Stranger's more detailed account of the fall of the Persian and Athenian regimes.

Beginning with the Persians, he notes that, "the Persians under Cyrus, possessing the proper amount of slavery and freedom, began by becoming free and then became despots over many others" (694a). Cyrus, lacking an understanding of correct education, not only allowed freedom of speech to those he ruled, but also made the mistake of preoccupying himself with conquering Greece, which prevented him from raising his own children. Instead, women raised the children, and "allowed no one to oppose them in anything, on the grounds that they were endowed with happiness, and compelled everyone else to praise whatever the children said or did..." (694d). As a result of excessive freedom in childhood, his children lacked restraint as adults; one killed the other because he had not learned how to share, and the other descended into drunkenness and thus lost his rule to foreigners.⁶⁸ While the well-educated Darius later restored control to the Persians, he repeated Cyrus' mistake, raising Xerxes in a royal and luxurious education. Since then, the Persians have been unable to manage their affairs correctly because rulers with an uncontrollable lust for power invariably invite their own destruction:

Once this [friendship in the city] is corrupted, the policy of the rulers is no longer made for the sake of the ruled and the populace, but instead for the sake of their own rule; if

⁶⁸ Though the raising of the children by women might suggest their education neglected a crucial part of the harmony in the soul—the *thumos*—the children's actions suggest they in fact suffer from too much *thumos*. In Plato's thought, *thumos* "is blind and wants only independence [...] *thumos* is acting in accordance with one's own will." Harvey C. Mansfield, *Manliness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 207. By letting Cyrus' children do whatever they wanted, the women thus cultivated the children's *thumos* to an excessively high degree. One way to think of it is that the women, themselves lacking a sufficiently developed *thumos*, were not able to say no to the children and, as a result, the children over exercised the spirited part of their souls. A parallel phenomenon takes place in the relationship between Xerxes and his populace. A ruler who is too spirited saps his citizens of spiritedness, for they grow too accustomed to restraining their *thumos* out of fear of him.

they suppose just a little more will accrue to themselves each time, the rulers are willing to overturn cities and overturn and destroy with fire friendly nations, and as a result, they give and receive bitter, pitiless hatred. When they come to need the assistance of their populaces to fight in their defense, they discover that there no longer exists a community with a spirit eager (προθυμίας) to run risks and fight. (697c-e)

In short, the Stranger's account of the Persians highlights the dangers of not attending to the education of one's soul. Rulers who, being improperly educated, become despotic in their bloodthirsty pursuit of supremacy over others simply lose the loyalty of their populace. Though for a while their subjects may help them conquer foreign nations, when the tides turn and the city now stands not in a dominant position but rather in need of a strong defense, no loyal subjects can be found to help withstand the attack. The ruler who craves power beyond the proper bounds therefore sets in motion his own destruction. It would have been better had the ruler paid attention to the war within himself than to warring with foreigners.

Athens, it can be inferred, followed a similar trajectory from a somewhat well measured regime, to one with excessive freedom, to despotism. When the Persian expedition began, the Athenians were enslaved through awe to their rulers and laws. Their fear of the invading force "made [them] even more the slaves of the rulers and the laws, all these things created a very strong sense of friendship among [them]," allowing them to defend not only themselves, but also "the temples, the graves, the fatherland, and their relatives, as well as their friends" (698c, 699c-d). With the passage of time, however, their enslavement to the laws dissolved and led to the excessive development of freedom. In particular, the Stranger blames the poets for overthrowing the laws regulating music, which prevented anyone who was not an authority on music from judging songs: "In their mindlessness they involuntarily falsified music itself when they asserted

that there was no such thing as correct music, and that it was quite correct to judge music by the standard of the pleasure it gives to whoever enjoys it, whether he be better or worse” (700e).

Through this change, people came to believe that everyone is wise in everything, and from this excessive freedom developed such that authority figures, laws, and even oaths to the gods no longer held sway. The Stranger does not mention the growth of the Athenian Empire during the Persian War, and thus “avoids the harsh conclusion that Athens’ finest time and action initiated her decline.”⁶⁹ This could be because, as aforementioned, the dialogue is set before the Peloponnesian War. Nonetheless, Plato’s readers would have been able to draw out the unspoken conclusion of the Stranger’s account of Athenian history.

Through his account of Spartan, Persian, and Athenian history the Stranger has once more illuminated the problems with the armed camp. He exhibited this first by tracing the rise of the Dorian regime and unsettling the assumption on which it is founded: that with a powerful army one can become master of the world. The focus on external aggression, he showed, allowed for the disruption of internal harmony, which in turn rendered the Dorian cities less effective at repulsing the invading Persian forces. Had the Dorians placed less trust in their system and been more vigilant about making sure it worked to establish friendship among the three cities, they would have been better able to defend themselves against the Persian attack. The Stranger continued to bring out the problems with the theoretical foundations of the armed camp through his discussion of Persian and Athenian history. As the trajectory of these two regimes demonstrated, any regime that does not balance authority and freedom is bound to decline. An authoritarian regime fails to earn the loyalty of its citizens and thus falls apart when it comes to need their protection, while an anarchic regime fails to place any limits on its citizens and

⁶⁹ Strauss, *Argument and Action*, 52.

therefore collapses by allowing for the rise of a tyrant. Another way to put this is that a regime with too little freedom cultivates citizens lacking in *thumos*, while a regime with too little authority cultivates citizens with too much *thumos*. The armed camp tries to balance the two by swaying the young to submit to the authority of their elders and tradition voluntarily, with the promise that once they reach old age they can exercise their freedom to voice dissent. However, the song with which they persuade the youth leaves so little room for independent thought that by old age they have been completely stripped of the boldness of spirit that inspires the young to question authority. Ironically, the spiritedness of the Dorians on the battlefield emerges from a lack of spiritedness in community with one another. It is as though the suppression of freedom at home is transmuted into excessive spiritedness on campaigns abroad. What the Dorians need to learn is how to infuse their regime with more freedom, while avoiding the Athenian extreme of complete individual freedom.

As the next section argues, through the construction of a city in speech the three interlocutors attempt to incorporate the Athenian influence into the armed camp, with the result being a regime friendlier towards foreigners than the original Dorian regime. In line with their incomplete ascent to the cave of Zeus, the three men do not create a regime that strikes a perfect balance between authority and freedom. Nonetheless, they arrive a little closer—a valuable outcome.⁷⁰ Rather than a mere armed camp, they build an “armed camp of citizens (στρατόπεδον

⁷⁰ As the Stranger remarks, “Now it seemed to me that the things that were just said, if they took hold of a soul that was not entirely savage, would contribute something to making the hearer listen in a more tame and agreeable mood to the advice. So even if these words have no great effect, but only a small one, still, insofar as they make the one who listens to what was said more agreeable and a better learner, that is in every way desirable. For there is no great plenty or abundance of persons who are eager in spirit to become as good as possible in the shortest possible time; indeed, the many show that Hesiod is wise when he says that the road to vice is smooth to travel and without sweat, since it is very short, but ‘before virtue,’ he asserts, ‘the immortals gods have put sweat / And a path to it that is long and steep, / And rough at first.

τῶν πολιτῶν)” (708a). By comparing the city in speech of Magnesia to the regimes of Sparta and Crete, it becomes evident that Kleinias and Megillus have come a long way from their stubborn insistence on the correctness of creating one’s laws with a view towards war. They have a dialectic cross-cultural conversation to thank for this. At the same time, the benefits the Athenian Stranger accrues from the conversation are also clear by the end. Not only has he gained new friends, but he has also improved the harmony within his own soul. Ultimately, the *Laws* reveals that dialectic conversation with foreigners can help to awaken the passion for learning and thereby save one from both *hubris* and virtuous behavior performed out of habit rather than true understanding.

V. From Armed Camp to Armed Camp of Citizens

Given the Stranger’s emphasis on the importance of attending to one’s internal affairs, it is appropriate that once we reach the end of the Stranger’s account of history Kleinias reveals that he and nine other Knossians have been put in charge of founding a colony. According to Kleinias, “We have been commissioned to establish the same laws as the ones there, if we find some satisfactory; but if we discover some laws from elsewhere that appear to be better, we are not to hesitate about their being foreign” (702c-d). This turning point in the dialogue—from the ideal to the actual—foreshadows how the three interlocutors will construct the city in speech that Kleinias and his fellow legislators will then further remove from the ideal model by translating it into the dialect of Crete and into practice.⁷¹ The interlocutors will draw from their knowledge of

When you arrive at the top / Then it’s easy to endure; but the ascent is hard” (718d-719a). Cf. Voegelin, *Order and History*, 282.

⁷¹For the argument that the Stranger’s proposals will need to be translated into the dialect of Crete if Kleinias wishes to apply them to Magnesia, see Seth Benardete, *Plato’s “Laws”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 41.

foreign constitutions, piecing together the familiar and the unfamiliar. Plato's method in this dialogue will thus be more grounded than how scholars normally conceive it:

With Plato, in effect, the most theoretical research often takes its inspiration from historical or ethnographic information, realities going through or feeding the fictions and myths, the concern, even the most idealized, of that which is *the best* is often the product of a confrontation and comparison with *that which exists elsewhere* and, more generally, a value, even the most elevated, cannot have value independently of values experienced somewhere else.⁷²

Just as the Athenian Stranger had a problem with the Athenians' unwillingness to discern good from bad music, he thinks that discerning the good city from the bad—or the good soul from the bad—requires the juxtaposition of good and bad, and thus not the erasure of difference but the vigilant consideration of it. The extent to which the Stranger has unsettled his Dorian interlocutors' belief in the opposite of this—the exclusion of foreigners—can be seen by examining the passages in the remaining books of the *Laws* concerning the treatment of foreigners.

At the beginning of Book IV, the Stranger and his interlocutors turn to sketching out in speech the city that Kleinias and his fellow Knossians will later attempt to establish. The Stranger's first question concerns the projected geographical location of the city. Relieved to hear it will not be founded on the coast, the Stranger contends that proximity to the sea “infects a place with commerce and the money-making that comes with retail trade, and engenders shifty and untrustworthy dispositions in souls; it thereby takes away the trust and friendship a city feels for itself *and for the rest of humanity*” (705a, emphasis added). When reading this line we must

⁷² Henri Joly, *Études Platoniciennes: La question des étrangers* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. VRIN, 1992), 29. My translation.

remember that the Stranger speaks with a view to a relatively ideal city, one in which citizens have been habituated to seek victory over themselves, not over foreigners. Lacking a proper education, the citizens of other cities are likely to be lovers of material gain, a love that all too often propels conflict. Thus, if the lawgiver wishes to prevent his citizens from harming themselves *and their neighbors*, he must shelter them from the negative influences of those bred in a more conflict-engendering environment. As the Stranger puts it, “we mustn’t overlook the fact that some places differ from one another in their tendency to breed better and worse human beings, and such factors shouldn’t be defied when one makes laws” (747d).⁷³ The Stranger’s concern, however, is not merely for the citizens of Magnesia, but for humanity at large, as demonstrated by his fear that the city may lose the friendship it feels for the rest of humanity. So wondrous would it be for an entire city to practice self-control that any lawgiver who succeeds in creating such a city must guard it from the influences of those who have been raised to liberate their every desire; otherwise, his city will become like any other—a destroyer of cities.

While the Stranger advocates guarding the friendship-loving city from the influence of war-loving foreigners, he does not, however, recommend complete isolation from the rest of the world. Indeed, cutting off contact would, he argues, be both impossible and imprudent: “not to

⁷³ One wonders how closely Aristotle read the *Laws*, as this line explicitly contradicts his contention that Plato paid no attention to dealings with one’s neighbors: “It is stated [in the *Laws*] that there are two factors to which the legislator should pay regard in enacting laws: the territory of the city, and the inhabitants of that territory. But there is also a third factor. If a city is to live a political life, and not a life of isolation, it is a good thing that its legislator should also pay regard to neighbouring countries. For example, a city should employ not only such instruments of war as are serviceable in its own territory but also such as are serviceable for use abroad. Even if one does not accept this way of life as desirable for the individual or for the city as a whole it is none the less essential to be formidable to enemies both when they are invading one’s territory and when they are in retreat.” Aristotle, *Politics*, 1265a18. While Aristotle is correct that Plato refrains from discussing the instruments of war, the Stranger’s attempt to persuade his interlocutors that laws should not be made with a view towards war explains Plato’s silence on this matter.

receive others, or go abroad elsewhere themselves, is at once not entirely possible and in addition, would appear savage and hard to the other human beings, to whom they would seem to be adopting the harsh words of what are called ‘the expulsion of strangers,’ (ξενηλασίαις) as well as stubborn and harsh manners” (950a-b).⁷⁴ Though supportive of the Dorian impulse to protect the city from the corrupting influences of outsiders, the Stranger recognizes that too much sheltering can put the city in danger. If Magnesia expels foreigners from its territory then, like the Spartans and Cretans, it will suffer a bad reputation. Earlier, the Stranger linked a city’s reputation and its likelihood of being attacked when he professed that the Persian War resulted from the Persians looking down on the Greeks as a people who count for little. Despite the hyperbole of this statement, the Stranger’s wariness of *xenelasia* for giving the city a bad reputation seems reasonable in the sense that a state with a reputation for hostility towards foreigners is likely to provoke other states to attack out of fear of hostile action.⁷⁵ In other words, Magnesians must engage with foreigners to some degree if they wish to preserve themselves. In fact, they should even be willing to “give at least some aid to their neighbors if someone else does them an injustice” (737d).

In addition to suggesting that the best city would not long remain at peace if it refused to interact with other cities, the Stranger makes a pointed effort to convince his interlocutors that the best city would not be best without exposure to foreigners. He tries to convince his interlocutors of this by showing that the maintenance of virtue in Magnesia will depend, paradoxically, on foreigners. For instance, when it comes to retail trade, citizens must not engage

⁷⁴ The Stranger may have Crete in particular in mind. As Aristotle notes of Crete’s geographical isolation, “distance has here the same effect which is achieved elsewhere by laws for the expulsion of aliens.” Aristotle, *Politics*, 1272b15.

⁷⁵ This accords with Thucydides’ reasoning that the Peloponnesian War was initiated due to the growth of the Athenian Empire and the fear it provoked. *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.23.

in it, for only the rare few can resist the urge to gain beyond measure (918c-d). Yet, seeing as many goods come from retail trade, Magnesians would do well to hire individuals “whose corruption would least affront the city” to conduct trade on their behalf—hence the laws that only resident aliens and foreigners can conduct trade and that they must be carefully overseen so they will be as uncorrupted as possible and therefore less likely to have a negative influence on the citizens of Magnesia (919d-920a). The same logic underlies the Athenian Stranger’s proposals on comedic performances. The citizen who is to become virtuous must be exposed to the vicious “so that he may never do or say, through ignorance, anything that is ridiculous, if he doesn’t have to” (816e). Yet, just as citizens must not engage in retail trade though it brings certain benefits, they must also avoid imitating the anti-heroic models presented in comedies despite the lessons such performances can impart. Thus, the city will hire slaves or foreigners to perform these roles, as these individuals have already received an inferior education—the former having only been taught to obey, and the latter to rule. In sum, while the city of Magnesia must take measures to guard its citizens from the corrupting influences of foreigners, its goodness nonetheless depends on foreigners carrying out activities that bring benefit to the city, but pose a risk to the souls of those who execute them.

The Stranger identifies a greater use for foreigners than merely fulfilling certain roles that it would be dangerous for the virtuous Magnesians to fulfill, however. Indeed, he makes explicit the idea that Plato conveys through the dialogue as a whole: that cross-cultural engagement can bring certain epistemological benefits. As the Stranger makes clear by the end of the *Laws*, the citizens of Magnesia cannot be truly good unless they adopt their laws by choice. Thus, those citizens among them who have a demonstrated record of excellence will be permitted to spend up to ten years travelling outside the city to observe the affairs of other human beings. “For a city

without experience of bad as well as good human beings would never be able, because of its isolation, to be sufficiently tame and perfect; nor, again, would it be able to guard its laws, unless it accepts them by knowledge and not solely by habits” (951a-b). In other words, while the second best citizen behaves virtuously because of a proper habituation, the best citizen behaves virtuously because, having observed both virtuous and wicked behavior, he knows why he should act virtuously and does so gladly. Cross-cultural engagement allows, in this way, for the ascent from the realm of correct opinion to the realm of understanding.

To understand more fully why cross-cultural engagement provides a safeguard for education, we must return to the discussion of drinking parties. In that discussion, the Athenian Stranger critiqued the Spartan prohibition against drunkenness. Rather than test their propensity to act with restraint in situations that inspire boldness, as they do their ability to act fearlessly in situations that inspire fear, the Spartans ignore this essential aspect of education: “The law simply removes from view what it does not allow and obedience automatically follows; any Spartan would punish on the spot with the greatest penalty anyone caught in drunken revelry. [...] It drives out what it cannot withstand.”⁷⁶ As the Stranger showed, however, drunkenness can actually play an important role in education. Not only do drinking parties allow a practitioner of the art of politics to obtain knowledge of someone’s soul in a safe and convenient manner, but they also provide a safeguard to the correct education. After all, the danger with being correctly educated is it may lead to *hubris* and, consequently, laxness in the performance of good behavior. In exposing citizens to the intoxicating effects of wine, drinking parties help to keep individuals correctly educated by reminding them that they too are subject to the pull of various temptations and that it takes immense effort to remain virtuous.

⁷⁶ Benardete, *Plato’s Laws*, 29.

Just as the Stranger sought to persuade his Dorian interlocutors that their prohibition on drunkenness was detrimental to their education, he seeks to convince them that their prohibition on cross-cultural engagement similarly impedes their educational development. To see this, we must first examine the Stranger's counsel on the treatment of slaves. According to the Stranger, there are two opposing views on slaves. On the one hand, there are those who declare that some slaves are "superior in every virtue to their owner's brothers and sons" and are even responsible for saving their masters' lives, property, and households (776d-e). On the other hand, there are those who maintain no slave is to be trusted for all slaves are wild animals lacking intelligence. Given that Spartans and Cretans seem to have taken the latter view of slaves, it is interesting that the Stranger tries to gravitate his interlocutors towards the former, more positive view of slaves. While not going so far as to endorse the Athenians' general laxity in their treatment of slaves, the Stranger pushes Megillus and Kleinias to see why it might be in their best interest to treat slaves justly.⁷⁷ As he argues, a man truly demonstrates his commitment to justice and abhorrence of injustice when he acts justly "in his dealings with human beings whom he might easily treat unjustly; he who in his disposition and actions toward slaves remains undefiled by what is impious or unjust, would be a man who is fully capable of sowing the natural seed of virtue" (777d-e). The Stranger goes on to say that the just person will treat anyone justly over whom he exercises power.

When it comes to foreigners, then, the same must apply, for as the Stranger makes clear, like slaves they are in a position of weakness:

⁷⁷ Glenn Morrow gives an extensive account of Plato's laws of slavery in relation to Athenian and Spartan laws in *Plato's Law of Slavery in its Relation to Greek Law* (Buffalo, New York: William S. Hein & Co., Inc., 2002). His criticism of Plato for leaning more towards the harsh Spartan treatment of slaves needs to be reconsidered in light of the dramatic context in which these laws are put forth.

...almost all the wrongs committed among strangers or against strangers are linked more closely to an avenging god than are the wrongs committed among citizens. This is because the stranger, being bereft of comrades and relatives, evokes more pity on the part of both human beings and gods; therefore he who has the power to avenge him has a spirit that is more eager (προθυμότερον) to come to his aid. And especially powerful, in each case, are the demon and the god of strangers, who follow Zeus, god of strangers (θεὸς τῷ ξενίῳ συνεπόμενοι Δί). Thus anyone with even a little foresight will take great care to complete his life's journey without having done any wrong to strangers. (729e-730a)

With no friends or family to come to his aid, the foreigner occupies a vulnerable position. It is because of this vulnerability, however, that one should be more careful to wrong a foreigner than a fellow citizen. Not only does the stranger's plight evoke the pity of the god of all gods, but it provides a test of one's virtue. Just as the virtuous man would not harm a slave, he would not harm a free foreigner. Both in positions of weakness relative to a citizen, the slave and the foreigner serve a similar function as the *symposia*: they awaken the passion to do injustice. Even if one does not yield to the temptation to mistreat a slave or foreigner, the mere discovery within oneself of the desire—however small—to take advantage of someone weaker than oneself serves as a corrective to the development of *hubris*. Encounters of this sort also allow the philosopher to uncover the true nature of someone's soul in a relatively safe manner, as it would be better for one foreigner to be harmed than whole cities of foreigners. In this way, the Stranger explicitly shows that cross-cultural engagement can, like *symposia*, provide a safeguard for education.

Furthermore, the Stranger insists that cross-cultural engagement can provide a safeguard for education in yet another way—by ensuring citizens do not settle on less than perfect laws.

Though many foreigners may live feverish lifestyles, he insists that through travels one can encounter the good, even in cities with bad laws: “The fact is, there are always among the many certain divine human beings—not many—whose intercourse is altogether worthwhile, and who do not by nature grow any more frequently in cities with good laws than in cities without”

(951b). While traveling abroad, the select few Magnesians—whom the Stranger refers to as “observers”—should seek out the select few wise people inhabiting other lands and engage them in conversation so that when they return they may “place on a firmer footing those legal customs that are nobly laid down, and correct others, if they are lacking something” (951c). In other words, while the Stranger recognizes that cities differ in how well they raise their citizens, he maintains that even in the most barbaric places one may find a philosophic individual.

Consequently, the wise Magnesian who ventures out of the city must be on the lookout for his or her foreign counterpart. Likewise, the city must give a friendly reception to any wise foreigner who enters their territory, allowing him to go uninvited to the doors of the wise and to “depart as a friend leaving friends, honored with gifts and fitting honors” (953d). Reiterating his disdain for *xenelasia*, the Stranger concludes, “These are the laws that should regulate the reception of all male and female strangers from another country and their sending out of their own—honoring Zeus the god of strangers (ξένιον Δία), and not using meats and sacrifices as a way of expelling strangers (as the nurslings of the Nile do now), nor savage proclamations” (953e). Contrary to the general expulsion of foreigners in places like Sparta and Crete, Magnesia will show hospitality to foreigners on a sliding scale—giving less to those who are less virtuous and more to those who are most virtuous—because it recognizes the distinct possibility of a wise foreigner from whom the citizens of Magnesia may learn something. In Magnesia, the Athenian Stranger and his critiques of the laws would receive a warm welcome.

Though far from advocating a policy that embraces all foreigners, the Stranger nevertheless leads his interlocutors in the right direction. Unlike Sparta or Crete, the city of Magnesia will not be motivated to engage in expansionist wars; rather, it will only fight foreigners in self-defense or in defense of neighboring lands to whom injustices are being done. Moreover, in contrast to the exclusion of foreigners practiced in Sparta and Crete, Magnesia will allow at least some foreigners to visit and even take up residence. In fact, to any wise foreigners who arrive, it will give the warmest of welcomes. Unlike the Athenian Stranger, wise foreigners visiting Magnesia will not have to convince the lawmakers to hear their criticisms of the laws, for with a spirit eager for improvement Magnesia will encourage them to share such insights. Finally, in terms of the treatment of foreigners on Magnesian soil, the Magnesian lawcode exhorts citizens to treat justly anyone who is vulnerable. While one could critique the Stranger for casting this exhortation primarily in the language of self-interest, the effect of evoking a more humane treatment of foreigners, slaves, and others in positions of weakness is without a doubt more desirable than the harsh treatment of such individuals in Spartan and Cretan society.

	Sparta/Crete	Magnesia
Foreign War	focus of laws/culture	only when necessary
Immigrants/Foreign Visitors	exclusion of foreigners	some allowed to visit/travel
Treatment of Wise Foreigner	offended by criticism	welcome criticism
Treatment of Other Foreigners	harsh	gentle

Overall, as the chart above illustrates, it is much to the Stranger's credit that the city of Magnesia far surpasses the armed camps of Sparta and Crete in its treatment of foreigners. That his interlocutors not only accept such proposals, but end the dialogue by beseeching the Stranger to stay and help with the actual founding of the city illustrates the extent to which the Stranger's attempt to unsettle their hostility towards foreigners has succeeded.

Yet, the benefits of the cross-cultural conversation depicted in the *Laws* go both ways, as the Stranger too has learned something. First of all, the conversation forced him to give a conscious defense of his views and in this way kept the rational part of his soul awake, helping him to avoid the error of doing something out of habit alone. As we have seen, the problem of falling into virtue out of habit rather than true understanding arises continuously throughout the dialogue. By engaging in dialectic conversation with two men holding views opposing his own, the Stranger is able to remind himself of the rational basis for his beliefs while also creating an opportunity for his views to be challenged and thus improved. Moreover, the conversation forces him to practice the respectfulness and willingness to compromise that friendship entails. From the beginning of the conversation, the Stranger must restrain himself from bluntly criticizing the Dorian laws, however confident he is that they are misguided. He must give his interlocutors a chance to prove him wrong or to reach agreement with him in their own time and in their own way. In the end, the Stranger accepts that he will not be able to persuade them completely to adopt his views. Yet, instead of forcing them to see things his way, he allows them to create a city in speech that reflects the greatest possible degree of unity reached at that moment among the three men. The conversation thus helps the Stranger instill greater harmony in his soul as well, as the practice of discussing politics with a pair of foreigners who will likely never fully agree with him provides him the opportunity to work on taming the tyrannical part of him that wants complete control. In this way, the conversation proves epistemologically beneficial for the Stranger as well, for it helps him to learn more about himself.

From both our analysis of the *Republic* (chapter 2) and the foregoing analysis of the *Laws*, it is evident that Plato finds cross-cultural engagement epistemologically beneficial. Contradiction sparks dialectic inquiry, and it is foreigners who are most likely to hold political

views that contradict one's own. If the clash of cultural horizons gives rise neither to war nor cultural relativism (which itself leads to war), but rather to dialectic conversation, then an encounter between foreigners can prove most fruitful to the philosophic enterprise. Such conversation allows for the peaceful meeting of opposing viewpoints and, from this, education. Whether the genuine consideration of the ideas of foreigners results in the rejection or further confirmation of one's own cultural horizons, the stimulation to thinking is itself salutary. As Hannah Arendt argues, the cause of evil more often lies in the absence of thinking than in the possession of base motives.⁷⁸ We need to engage the conscience, to embrace the "two-in-one" dialogue of the fractured self. The next chapter, on Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus*, shows how engaging with foreigners can help us do this by illuminating the foreigner within.

⁷⁸ Arendt, "Thinking and Moral Considerations."

CHAPTER 4: DISCOVERING THE FOREIGNER WITHIN (*PHAEDRUS* AND *MENEXENUS*)

The Reluctant Kabbalist's Sonnet

*It is known that "desire" is, numerologically, . . . "the essence of speech."
—Avraham Abulafia, "The Treasures of the Hidden Eden"*

It's hard to explain What was inside came
through what had been between, although it seems
that what had been within remained the same
Is that so hard to explain It took some time
which was, in passing, made distinctly strange
As though the world without had been rearranged,
forcing us to change: what was beyond
suddenly lying within, and what had lain
deep inside—now . . . apparently gone
Words are seeds, like tastes on another's tongue
Which *doesn't* explain—how what's inside comes
through what is always in between, that seam
of being For what's within, within remains,
as though it had slipped across the lips of a dream
-Peter Cole, in *The Invention of Influence*

The previous two chapters on the *Republic* and *Laws* have shown how a clash of cultural horizons can stimulate individuals to philosophize and thereby bring about greater wisdom and friendship. In this chapter, I will argue that a parallel experience takes place in the soul of an individual undergoing a philosophic journey. Specifically, I will argue that engagement with foreigners facilitates the discovery of the foreigner within, by which I mean it enables one to see oneself as though one were a foreigner—someone with a divergent *nomos*, or cultural horizon. Arendt's language of the "two-in-one" from the previous chapter is helpful here. As Arendt notes, and the foregoing chapters have argued, "you always need at least two tones to produce a

harmonious sound.”¹ We have already seen this in the city; it applies to the self as well. Within each of us lie a number of voices. Our cultural conditioning strengthens some of these voices, while quieting others. Philosophy aims to bring to light this internal complexity. One central way it does so is by summoning the voice of a foreigner.

As we will see, for Plato, there exists one true self.² The true self is the culmination of the eternal soul’s journey, the soul that has perceived the entirety of what is and has arrived at its final and most perfect destination. Since the truth, or everything that is, is unchanging, the true self is also unchanging and therefore the same for everyone. However, mortal beings are alienated from the true self because their souls are disordered. As in the *Republic*, in the *Phaedrus* Plato envisions the soul as tripartite. Though there are differences between each dialogue’s image of the soul, both depict it as consisting of different parts that come in conflict with one another. The true self is a soul properly ordered, in which the different parts work in harmony with one another such that the soul is fully able to reside in the divine realm of truth. To varying degrees, mortals try to reunite with the true self, but fall short because of the weakness of their *logos*, or ability to reason. That weakness comes about because each part of the soul has its own voice or way of persuading the deciding part to move the soul in its direction. Owing to this internal complexity, as well as the soul’s primordial desire to be reunited with the true self, the soul is always in motion. In fact, as Zuckert explains, “Such internal complexity seems to be

¹ Ibid., 441.

² Though Plato does not use the language of “true self,” numerous scholars have identified the concept in various works across his corpus. See, e.g., Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, eds., *Plato’s Socrates* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 101-2; Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 135-36; Leo Strauss, *Leo Strauss on Plato’s Symposium*, ed. Seth Benardete (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 150; and Laurence D. Cooper, *Eros in Plato, Rousseau, and Nietzsche: The Politics of Infinity* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 327.

a necessary condition for self-motion. For soul to move itself, one part or aspect of soul would have to be sufficiently separate or distinct from the others to move them, even if the aspects of parts [...] do not exist or function on their own, separate from the others.”³ Yet soul, she goes on to say, is also susceptible to being moved by other souls. In this vein, we must reflect on the role of cultural conditioning. The primary influences on most individuals—one’s family and one’s countrymen—guide the soul in a particular direction. Through enculturation, one comes to view as natural (and therefore unquestionable) a particular pattern of promoting or suppressing different voices within one’s soul. The problem is that this pattern may not be entirely guided by *logos*. Even the souls of philosophers, which are depicted as most in tune with the true self, are differentiated from the souls of the immortal gods who reside in the realm of truth, suggesting that the pattern of a human life *never* attains to the ideal. This chapter will argue that for the soul to move *closer* towards the true self, one needs to be moved in such a way that the ordering of one’s soul is seen not as natural, but as strange. Put differently, the soul must be turned such that one’s *nomos* appears to be the *nomos* of a foreigner. This is what I mean when I say that one must discover the “foreigner within,” and this is precisely what the voice of a foreigner can accomplish.

To make this argument, I turn to Plato’s *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus*. Both dialogues depict Socrates straying from his usual method of questioning and instead delivering a speech. Moreover, both feature him in conversation with a young man enamored with speeches. As I will argue, in both dialogues Socrates turns to speech giving to help his interlocutor see the foreigner within and, consequently, to provoke him to philosophize. Socrates seeks to accomplish this in the *Phaedrus* by mirroring Phaedrus’ interaction with the speech of the *metic* Lysias, an activity

³ Zuckert, *Plato’s Philosophers*, 313.

that helps him make Phaedrus' overwhelming desire for fame seem strange to Phaedrus himself. Though the desire for fame lies at the root of Athenian identity, Socrates aims to help Phaedrus see himself as a foreigner—that is, to turn his soul towards the vantage point from which the cultural horizon that has always looked familiar to him now seems foreign. Likewise, in the *Menexenus*, Socrates seeks to help his Athenian interlocutor see the Athenian cultural horizon as foreign. Here, Socrates aspires to achieve this by presenting that cultural horizon through the voice of Aspasia, a foreign woman. Doing so brings out the discordance in the *logos* of Athens and thus the discordance within *Menexenus*. Ultimately, Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus* mirror each other, showing how the voice of a foreigner can generate greater self-knowledge by allowing one to consider oneself from an outside perspective.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to foreground another important element of the impending discussion of Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus*: the role of the feminine. This element was prefigured by my analyses of the *Republic* and the *Laws*, both of which call into question the dominance of the manly world of war.⁴ The *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus* bring the gender issue to a head. As we will see, female spirits haunt each dialogue, raising the question of how the feminine relates to philosophy and the foreigner. Though I do not pretend to give a full analysis of the treatment of women in Plato's dialogues, I hope to contribute to discussions of this subject by offering a new vantage point, one that illuminates the role of the feminine in Plato's thought by investigating the role of the foreign, and vice versa. What emerges from my analysis is a likeness between female, foreigner, and philosopher. Against the status quo of the death-ridden, Athenian male dominated political sphere, Plato offers a vision of philosophy as a generative

⁴ It is true that, in the *Republic*, Socrates brings women into war. He does so, however, only by "abstract[ing] from the body and from *eros*," to use Strauss' language. Strauss, *City and Man*, 138.

activity that engages the alternative cultural horizons of the female and foreign.⁵ Insofar as she is excluded from defining the identity of the *polis*, the female figures as a kind of foreigner.

Whatever the disadvantages of her exclusion, it affords her some degree of distance from the prevailing *nomos* and in this way proves advantageous. The female and the foreigner can thus both serve the same function as the philosopher, of inciting others to think. Particularly, as this chapter will show, the voice of a foreigner—someone with a different cultural horizon—can help one see oneself as foreign and thus bring out the contradiction that gives rise to philosophy. This dislocation of perspective involves engagement with a more feminine mode of discourse, which looks foreign in a city like Athens where manly speech dominates. As such, there exists a fundamental unity between the philosopher, the foreigner, and the female, who all speak a language not of but outside of the city.

I. *Phaedrus*: Athenian Speechmaking through Foreign Eyes

Let me begin with the *Phaedrus*. While the *Phaedrus*' central motifs of *eros* and rhetoric have tended to occupy the attention of scholars, the theme of foreignness deserves consideration. After all, the *Phaedrus* is the *only* dialogue in the Platonic corpus that dramatically depicts Socrates venturing outside the city of Athens.⁶ Socrates is even explicitly compared to a foreign

⁵ Two works have significantly influenced my interpretation: Arlene Saxonhouse, "The Philosopher and the Female in the Political Thought of Plato," *Political Theory* 4, no. 2 (1976): 195-212; and Stephen G. Salkever "Women, Soldiers, Citizens: Plato & Aristotle on the Politics of Virility," *Polity* 19, no. 2 (1986): 232-253.

⁶ In the *Parmenides*, a young Socrates ventures outside the walls to hear the writings of Zeno (127c). However, the *Parmenides* is a narrated dialogue. In fact, Socrates' trip beyond the walls is related at a third remove; a man named Cephalus reports the story he heard from Adeimantus and Glaucon's half-brother Antiphon, who heard it from Zeno's friend Pythodorus. By contrast, the *Phaedrus* not only offers an unmediated depiction of Socrates venturing outside the city, but in fact stresses the setting more so than in other Platonic dialogues. This distinguishes it as well from the *Lysis*, another narrated dialogue in which Socrates, this time, tells of how he was

visitor seeing the sights (ξεναγουμένω). These and other interactions with the foreign—including the dialogue’s strange ending with an Egyptian myth on writing—complicate the unity of the dialogue, a question on which much ink has already been spilled.⁷ What bearing does the prevalence of foreignness have on the dialogue’s meaning? How do the dialogue’s repeated references to foreigners fit with its focus on the seemingly disparate subjects of *eros* and rhetoric? In what follows, I argue that the presence of foreigners in the *Phaedrus* serves to underscore the dialogue’s concern with how individuals might be led to see themselves as foreign. Turning first to the dialogue’s opening, I will show how Plato’s choice of setting and characterization prepares readers to think about what it means to see oneself as a foreigner and how different kinds of speeches can either alienate us from our true selves or help recall us to ourselves.

1.1: The Words of Others and Self-Alienation

Phaedrus, the character after whom the dialogue is titled, is presented from the beginning as someone who lets the words of others take possession of him. Learning that Phaedrus recently heard the *metic* Lysias privately deliver a speech on love, Socrates invites Phaedrus to relate the

walking just outside the walls when a group of young men called him back (203a). For more on the significance of the setting, see G.R.F. Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato’s Phaedrus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁷ For the most recent debate on the unity of the dialogue, see Malcolm Heath, “The Unity of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989): 151-73; Christopher J. Rowe, “The Unity of the *Phaedrus*: A Reply to Heath,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989): 175-88; and Malcolm Heath, “The Unity of the *Phaedrus*: A Postscript,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 7 (1989): 189-91. Also see William Clark Helmbold and William Benjamin Holther, “The Unity of the *Phaedrus*,” *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 14 (1950-2): 387-417; and Paul Plass, “The Unity of the *Phaedrus*,” *Symbolae Osloenses: Norwegian Journal of Greek and Latin Studies* 43 (1968): 7-38.

speech to him.⁸ When Phaedrus claims to be incapable of remembering and doing justice to the speech of as famous a speechwriter as Lysias, Socrates chides him for making an appearance of being restrained when he knows that Phaedrus would go to any lengths to get what he wants:

I tell you, Phaedrus, if I don't know Phaedrus, I'm a stranger to myself too. But neither of these is the case. I'm sure that once he heard Lysias' speech he didn't hear it just once. No, he nagged him to read it again and again—and I'm sure that Lysias was very happy to comply. And I doubt that even this was enough for Phaedrus. Eventually he borrowed the scroll himself and pored over those parts of the speech he particularly wanted to look at, and continued with this, sitting in his place from daybreak onwards, until he got tired and went for a walk, by which time, I would say—yes, by the dog, I would!—he knew the speech by heart, unless it was really quite long (228a-b).⁹

Here, Socrates reveals what Phaedrus wishes to conceal—his overwhelming desire to know Lysias' speech intimately. Phaedrus is not satisfied with hearing the speech just once, or even several times. Indeed, he feels compelled to get his hands on it so he can memorize it word for word. Yet even this is unsatisfying; in the end, he longs to deliver it himself. We know this because—as Socrates soon discovers—Phaedrus has hidden the speech under his cloak. He could have allowed Socrates to read the speech for himself, but instead conceals it so he might be “forced” to present it in his own voice. Phaedrus' desire to deliver the speech is so boundless that Socrates believes he would eventually repeat it “even if he had to force it on an unwilling

⁸ As Phaedrus would know from his attendance at the discussion of *eros* depicted in Plato's *Symposium*, this subject is well suited for Socrates, who claims to understand nothing except love matters (177d-e), a claim he reiterates in the *Theages* (128b) and *Lysis* (204b-c).

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the *Phaedrus* come from Robin Waterfield's translation (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

audience” (228c). Hearing the speech turns Phaedrus into a boundary crosser, someone who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

The language with which Socrates describes Phaedrus further confirms the power that Lysias’ speech has over him. He first describes Phaedrus as being plainly “delighted to find someone with whom he could share his frenzy (συγκορυβαντιῶντα)” (228b). Literally, he says that Phaedrus delights in discovering someone to join him in the revels of the Corybantes, a secret cult of priests whose worship of the Phrygian goddess Cybele is believed to have featured frenzied dancing and wild music.¹⁰ Similarly, Socrates later describes Phaedrus as being in ecstasy (συνεβάκχευσα) while reading Lysias’ speech (234d). The verb here refers to Bacchus or Dionysus, the foreigner god who brings both madness and epiphany. Phaedrus acts like someone possessed by a wild spirit, the sort that in Euripides’ *Bacchae* causes mothers to kill their sons. Lysias’ speech, in effect, transforms Phaedrus from a human being who understands and observes at least some limitations to a beast with no sense of reason or morality. Phaedrus wants to consume Lysias’ speech in the way a wild creature wants to consume its prey. He exhibits a hunger for it. In fact, Socrates, mimicking Phaedrus, later compares this desire for speeches to the desire of hungry animals (πεινῶντα) (230d). Something about Lysias’ speech sends Phaedrus into a bestial frenzy, making him willing to cross any hurdle standing between him and the speech. Put differently, the speech awakens Phaedrus’ inner tyrant, the part of his soul that will not take “no” for an answer in its quest for absolute power.

¹⁰ For more on the Corybantes, see Ivan M. Linforth, *The Corybantic Rites in Plato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946); Yulia Ustinova, “Corybantism: The Nature and Role of an Ecstatic Cult in the Greek Polis,” *Horos* 10-12 (1992-93): 503-20; and Carl Avren Levenson, *Socrates among the Corybantes: Being, Reality, and the Gods* (Woodstock, CT: Spring Publications, 1999).

Various clues in the dialogue suggest that this is not the first time Phaedrus has allowed the words of another to take hold of him. This is hinted at when Socrates guesses that Phaedrus went to great lengths to obtain the speech, for he “knows” Phaedrus. Consider, too, the dramatic action of the dialogue. When Socrates meets Phaedrus, Phaedrus is about to go for a walk beyond the city walls. He justifies his actions by referring to the words of another: “I follow the advice of your friend (ἑταίρω) and mine, Acumenus, and walk along the roads. He says that walking there is more refreshing than in the porticoes” (227a). Phaedrus literally walks outside the city’s boundaries on the suggestion of a trusted friend. This suggests that certain people’s words tend to exert a powerful effect on him, directly influencing his actions. This is confirmed yet again when, on route to the spot where they ultimately stop, Phaedrus inquires if this area is where Boreas is said to have abducted Oreithuia. When Socrates responds that the spot lies farther down, Phaedrus asks whether he thinks the story is true. Phaedrus does not offer his own opinion, but rather looks to Socrates for insight. Phaedrus’ reliance on the opinions of others persists throughout the dialogue. Indeed, Nightingale observes so many instances in which Phaedrus draws on the words of others that it leads her to the conclusion that Plato must be emphasizing the theme of hearsay.¹¹ Though Phaedrus later makes clear that he does not trust the words of just anyone, his indiscriminating reverence for certain people’s opinions shines forth throughout the text.¹² Why is Phaedrus so obsessed with the words of some others? Why do these words prompt him to cross boundaries, whether literally (the boundaries of the city) or

¹¹ Andrea Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 133-171.

¹² This is indicated by Phaedrus’ complaint later in the dialogue that Socrates might be making up a story he relates from Egypt (275b). As Socrates responds, “perhaps it matters to you who the speaker is, or what country he’s from (ποδαπός), because you are not concerned only with whether or not he is right” (275c).

metaphorically (the boundaries of reason and morality)? To address these questions, let us turn to the character of Socrates.

Through the character of Socrates, Plato mirrors Phaedrus' possession by the speeches of others while slowing down and exaggerating the process of possession so that readers can see it more clearly. First of all, whereas from the beginning Phaedrus exhibits a tendency to let the words of others drive him to cross boundaries, Plato presents Socrates as someone who tends not to cross boundaries so as later to magnify the effect that Lysias' speech appears to have on him. Socrates' tendency not to cross boundaries comes to light after walking along the Ilissus—a river outside the walls of Athens—when Socrates describes the enchanting nature of their destination and remarks that Phaedrus has been ἄριστά [...] ἐξενάγηται—the best guide of strangers (230b-c).¹³ To this, Phaedrus responds, “You're quite remarkable (θαυμάσιε), Socrates! You're like a complete stranger (ἀτοπώτατος)—literally, as you say, as if you were a visitor being shown around (ξεναγούμενον), not a local resident (ἐπιχωρίω). It's proof of how you never leave town either to travel abroad (ἀποδημεῖς) or even, I think, to step outside the city walls at all” (230c-d). Unlike Phaedrus, Socrates is cast as exhibiting a tendency to stay within the boundaries of Athens. He is not one to venture to foreign lands or even beyond the city walls. For this reason, when out in the countryside with Phaedrus he resembles a foreigner, someone *a-topos*, “out of place.”¹⁴ Wondrous it is, then, that something has moved Socrates to leave the city.

¹³ In full, the original Greek is: ὅστε ἄριστά σοι ἐξενάγηται, ὃ φίλε Φαῖδρε. I have opted to rely on my own paraphrasing rather than Waterfield's translation—“You are indeed a very good guide, my dear Phaedrus”—because it does not capture what, for my purposes, is the most significant aspect of the verb ξεναγέω (*i.e.*, its etymological root in the word for “foreigner,” ξένος).

¹⁴ For more on Socrates' *atopia*, see Joel Alden Schlosser, “Engaging Socrates” (PhD diss., Duke University, 2009), esp. chap. 7.

It is important to recognize, however, that the portrayal of Socrates as having never left town is not entirely true. Rather, Plato's artistry is at work here. Though Socrates does seem to have left the city only rarely, several Platonic dialogues refer to his military service in three campaigns during the Peloponnesian War and the *Crito* alludes to his attendance at the Isthmian games at Corinth.¹⁵ Moreover, though Socrates compares himself to a stranger visiting the area for the first time, in the *Parmenides* and *Lysis* it is reported that Socrates walked outside the wall. It is also likely that Socrates would have passed by the setting of the *Phaedrus* daily on his route home.¹⁶ Indeed, that Socrates appears to know more about the countryside than Phaedrus suggests he is not a stranger to the area. Hence, Robin Waterfield asks, "Is it too far-fetched to suggest that we are having our attention drawn to the crossing of boundaries?"¹⁷ Likewise, Daniel S. Werner notes that the opening line of the dialogue—in which Socrates asks Phaedrus where he has come from and where he is going—"establishes straightaway the thematic importance of movement and journeys" and that the dialogue as a whole is "predicated upon a *crossing of boundaries*."¹⁸ By having both Socrates and Phaedrus refer to Socrates as a foreigner visiting the area for the first time, Plato emphasizes the theme of foreignness, specifically, the seeing of oneself as a foreigner. Readers who recognize the exaggeration in this portrait of Socrates—as well as the strangeness of implying that the land just beyond the city walls

¹⁵ The campaigns were at Potidaea, Amphipolis, and Delium. See *Symposium* 219e-221d, *Charmides* 153a-154b, *Laches* 181b, *Apology* 28e, and *Crito* 52b.

¹⁶ Charles L. Griswold Jr., *Self-Knowledge in Plato's Phaedrus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 34. Also see Catherine Osbourne, "'No' Means 'Yes': The Seduction of the Word in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1999), 268 n. 9.

¹⁷ Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Waterfield, 79.

¹⁸ Daniel S. Werner, *Myth and Philosophy in Plato's Phaedrus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 20, 21. Emphasis Werner's.

constitutes a “foreign” place—are then led to wonder about the significance of Socrates’ self-description as a foreigner. Why does he present himself to Phaedrus this way?

1.2: *The Foreigner Within*

As the dialogue continues, it becomes clearer that Socrates’ presentation of himself as a foreigner to the geographic region presages his presentation of himself as a foreigner to another, metaphorical land—the divine realm of truth. This first comes to light through his response to Phaedrus’ coy degrading of his ability to recount the speech of a writer as clever as Lysias: “I tell you, Phaedrus, if I don’t know Phaedrus, I’m a stranger to myself too (ὦ Φαῖδρε, εἰ ἐγὼ Φαῖδρον ἄγνοῶ, καὶ ἐμαυτοῦ ἐπιλέλησμαι).” Literally, Socrates says that if he does not know Phaedrus, then he has also forgotten himself.¹⁹ In connecting knowledge with memory, Plato gestures to anamnesis, a concept developed more fully later in the dialogue when Socrates imagines souls in the afterlife struggling against each other and themselves to see the heavenly sights and to remember these sights when they return to earth. Similar to the notion of anamnesis developed in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus* portrays the path to knowledge as a process of recollection. To forget oneself means to forget the truths one has seen in the afterlife. Just as an Alzheimer’s patient is more herself when she remembers her life’s experiences, so is one more oneself the more one remembers the entirety of the sights seen in the divine realm of truth. Inasmuch as these sights are ingrained in the soul’s memory, they constitute the essence of one’s identity; consequently, to forget these divine truths is to forget one’s true self.

Yet, the *Phaedrus* represents self-forgetting not simply as a matter of memory loss, but as a kind of self-alienation or identification of the self with a foreign being. This is most clearly

¹⁹ Cf. Plato, *Apology*, 17a.

seen when Socrates responds to Phaedrus' inquiry regarding the truth of the story about Boreas and Oreithuia:

I am still incapable of obeying the Delphic inscription and knowing myself. It strikes me as absurd to look into matters that have nothing to do with me (τὰ ἀλλότρια) as long as I'm still ignorant in this respect, so I ignore all these matters and go along with the traditional views about them. As I said just now, I investigate myself rather than these things, to see whether I am in fact a creature of more complexity and savagery than Typhon, or something tamer and more simple, with a naturally divine and non-Typhonic nature. (230a)

Socrates does not think it wise to spend one's time investigating τὰ ἀλλότρια—foreign things, literally the opposite of things that are οἰκεῖος—when one still does not know what one's own soul looks like.²⁰ This is because, as the reference to Typhon suggests, τὰ ἀλλότρια may lie within oneself. Typhon was a gigantic monster whose human half reached to the stars and whose arms stretched east to west, a many-tongued monster known for trying to kill Zeus, father of

²⁰ Though τὰ ἀλλότρια can simply mean “things belonging to another” or “things that are not mine,” there are three reasons why I am justified in translating it as “foreign things.” First, Socrates uses the phrase with reference to the myth of Boreas and a variety of ἀτοπία (“strange”) creatures including hippocentaurs, chimaeras, the Gorgons, and pegasi (229d-e). In addition to being composite beings, all of these creatures are of foreign origin: Boreas was said to be from Thrace, hippocentaurs from Thessaly, chimaeras from Lycia, the Gorgons from Libya, and Pegasus from the neck of the Gorgon Medusa when she was slain in her cave. Socrates is therefore literally referring to foreign things. Second, elsewhere in his corpus Plato draws a clear link between τὰ ἀλλότρια and foreigners. For instance, in the *Republic*, Socrates says, “I assert that the Greek stock (τὸ μὲν Ἑλληνικὸν γένος) is with respect to itself its own (οἰκεῖον) and akin (συγγενές), with respect to the barbaric (τῷ δὲ βαρβαρικῷ), foreign (ὀθνεῖόν) and alien (ἀλλότριον)” (470c). Likewise, in *Menexenus*, Socrates' Aspasian oration speaks of the hatred that Athenians, being pure blooded, feel towards “alien races (τῆς ἀλλοτρίας φύσεως)” (245d). Finally, other scholars have interpreted τὰ ἀλλότρια as referring to the foreign. See, e.g., Sara Ahbel-Rappe, “Father of the Dogs? Tracking the Cynics in Plato's *Euthydemus*,” *Classical Philology* 95, no. 3 (2000): 282-303.

gods and men.²¹ The Greeks identified Typhon with the Egyptian god Set, an evil spirit associated with chaos, storms, the desert, and foreigners.²² In worrying that he may resemble Typhon, Socrates thus expresses his concern that there might be a foreigner within him, that he might be possessed by a powerful foreign god. Though this imagery might seem to denigrate foreigners, we will later see that Socrates aims to help Phaedrus reach the realization that the Athenian cultural horizon itself functions like Typhon. In other words, the allusion to Set is not meant to convey the danger of engaging with foreigners. Rather, it is intended to draw on a familiar conception of foreigners and use it to illuminate how one's own *nomos* might actually make one a foreigner to one's true self, effectively reflecting the stereotype back on oneself. Plato plays on the common association of foreigners with danger, but in a way that undermines the conventional elevation of the native that often accompanies it.

By representing Socrates as someone who generally does not cross the physical boundaries of the city and who worries about crossing the metaphorical boundaries of reason and morality, Plato emphasizes the intense power that speeches can exercise.²³ For, though Socrates never leaves the city, the enticement of hearing Lysias' speech compels him to venture out with Phaedrus. Evidence for this appears in two places in the dialogue. It first appears right after

²¹ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 1.6; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 1.145; Hesiod, *Theogony*, 820. We can compare this imagery to the image at *Republic* 588b-589b of the tripartite soul as consisting of a human being (*logistikos*), a lion (*thumos*), and a many-headed beast (*epithumetikon*) who is described as looking much like Typhon. One is most fully human when *logos* rules.

²² Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.156, 3.5; Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 41, 49.

²³ Mary Nichols argues, and I agree, that in wondering about himself Socrates simultaneously displays a complex and a simple nature: "Such wonder on the part of Typhon would mean that he is gentler than he appears, and on the part of a gentler, simpler animal that he is less simple than he would otherwise be." Mary P. Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship and Community: Reflections on Plato's Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Cf. Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 41.

Phaedrus informs Socrates that Lysias' speech attempts the seduction of a good-looking boy by a non-lover. After playfully asserting that he wishes Lysias would write a speech about how you should gratify poor, elderly men like him rather than rich, young ones, Socrates confesses, "I'm so keen to hear it [the speech] that I'll keep up with you even if you walk to Megara—up to the wall there and back again, as Herodicus recommends" (227d).²⁴ Not usually one to travel, Socrates now finds himself willing to journey a full twenty-six miles or so to the town of Megara, and back again. Socrates' willingness to travel with Phaedrus to hear the speech becomes even stronger once they reach their destination:

You'll have to forgive me, my friend. I'm an intellectual, you see, and country places with their trees tend to have nothing to teach me, whereas people in town do. But I think you've found a way to charm me outside. Just as people get hungry animals to follow them by waving some greenery or a vegetable in front of them, so it looks as though all you have to do is dangle a speech on a scroll in front of me and you can take me all over Attica, and anywhere else (ὅποι) you fancy (230d-e).

Now, Socrates is not only willing to travel twenty-six miles away to Megara, but to travel anywhere at all. A lover of speeches, one sick with a passion for hearing them, Socrates finds himself willing to cross boundaries to hear Lysias' speech. Eventually we will see Socrates cross the boundaries of reason and morality as well, for his love of speeches provokes him to deliver a speech he later realizes is irreverent.

²⁴ While Phaedrus follows the advice of the Athenian physician Acumenus, Socrates apparently follows the advice of Herodicus, an athletic trainer from Selymbria, a Megarian colony on the northern coast of the Propontis in Thrace. At *Protagoras* 316d-e, Protagoras describes Herodicus as formerly from Megara. Socrates criticizes him in the *Republic* for nursing his illness and thus never being cured of it (406a). Nails, *People of Plato*, 164.

Through both the conversation and the action of the dialogue, then, Plato conveys that the speeches of others can provoke one to cross boundaries. Such a crossing of boundaries takes place on two levels in the dialogue: the geographic and the metaphorical. Geographically, the *metic* Lysias' speech provokes both Phaedrus and Socrates to venture beyond the boundaries of the city. Metaphorically, it leads them to act in illogical and immoral ways, as manifested through Phaedrus' tyrannical desire to obtain Lysias' speech and Socrates' compulsion to deliver a shameful speech. Ultimately, Lysias' speech encourages self-alienation, as seen through Phaedrus' possession by Asiatic divinities (the Corybantes and Dionysus) and the revelation of the Typhonic nature of Socrates' soul. Socrates' worry, not that he has committed sacrilege by venturing outside the city, but that his soul resembles the impious monster Typhon-Set indicates, however, that the boundaries Plato is concerned with are the boundaries of reason and morality. His decision to depict Socrates and Phaedrus traversing the physical boundaries of the city serves to accentuate this concern. Plato is not, in other words, condemning travel beyond one's native city, but rather using the dramatic action of the dialogue to underscore the dialogue's focus on the crossing of the boundaries of reason and morality. In fact, as the next two sections show, Plato presents Phaedrus and Socrates' journey beyond the city and their engagement with the foreigner Lysias' speech as mutually beneficial. Engaging with Lysias' speech outside the context of the city helps bring to light the cause of the speech's power over them: their enculturation into Athenian society. Speeches so easily captivate their souls because of their Athenian education, which has taught them to value the masculine pursuit of fame and fortune over the feminine journey towards truth and virtue. Ultimately, by mimicking Phaedrus' interaction with Lysias' speech, Socrates helps him see his love of speeches as driven by a

corrupted kind of *eros* implanted in him by his society and sustained through a culture of shame. In this way, Phaedrus comes to see himself as a foreigner, alienated from his authentic self.

II. The Manly Speech of Athens and the Womanly Speech of Philosophy

2.1: *The Manly Speech of Athens*

Despite Phaedrus' demonstrated proclivity for crossing boundaries, it is clear that Socrates sees potential in him and for this reason engages him in conversation. After all, unlike many others, Phaedrus shares Socrates' love of speeches. In fact, he claims to value skill in speechwriting over money (228a). As soon becomes clear, Phaedrus is dazzled more by ornament and cleverness than by true beauty of content and composition. Nonetheless, he exhibits philosophic potential by taking pleasure in speeches more so than, say, the pleasures of youth. In this regard, he surpasses Cephalus of the *Republic*, who only develops a love of speeches in old age (and a muted one at that). However, Phaedrus has not yet been swayed to take up philosophy. As Socrates describes him, he is "in two minds (ἐπαμφοτερίζη)," conflicted as to whether he wants to pursue rhetoric or philosophy (257b).²⁵ Through the course of the dialogue, Plato sketches out the two distinct discursive modes between which Phaedrus is torn: the manly speech of Athens (represented by Lysias' speech) and the womanly speech of philosophy (represented by Socrates' speech). By exploring the larger social context behind Lysias' speech, Plato's *Phaedrus* reveals that the speech's power over Phaedrus derives from the

²⁵ Interestingly, the word ἐπαμφοτερίζη is used by Aristotle to describe species that are intermediate between other species (see, e.g., *PA*697b1, *HA*589a21). This is fitting given the extent to which the dialogue features creatures that combine the parts of different animals (*viz.*, Typhon-Set, Anubis, and Pan). In "Between Polis and Empire," Mary Dietz relates this word (which she translates as "dualizer") to Aristotle's status as a *metic*, someone arbitrating the boundaries between citizen and foreigner.

inculcation of Athenian values in him. Those values foster a culture in which young men like Phaedrus embrace an unhealthy *eros* akin to rape so as to earn their countrymen's praise.

The underlying cause of the power of Lysias' speech over Phaedrus is hinted at through an image of Lysias' speech that Plato provides early in the text. The image comes forth through the discussion of the Myth of Boreas. According to the myth, the Athenian princess Oreithuia was playing along the river Ilissus when Boreas, god of the North Wind and bringer of winter, abducted and then raped her.²⁶ Originating in Thrace, Boreas symbolizes the violent and possessive form of *eros* echoed through both the form and content of the foreigner Lysias' speech. First of all, Lysias' speech is cloaked as the speech of a non-lover, but, as Socrates' speech following it reveals, is in truth the speech of a lover.²⁷ The deception seeps into the speech's style, which is "sharp, bare, and analytical," as though devoid of *eros* or, as Graeme Nicholson puts it, devoid of "everything that might be uncertain or cloudy."²⁸ Likewise, Seth Benardete describes the speech as "disenchanted," "charmless," and "uninspiring."²⁹ The

²⁶ Such stories were commonplace in Greek culture: "The abduction of young girls, perhaps while they play with flowers, by marauding forces, foreigners passing by, divine or otherwise, is a motif that pervades the entirety of the Greek story. One might think of Europa and countless others, Persephone, Ariadne, and, of course, Helen." Peter Warnek, *Descent of Socrates: Self-Knowledge & Cryptic Nature in the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 159.

²⁷ Benardete argues that Lysias' speech contains the seeds of its own destruction: "The one addressed cannot be a beloved without the speaker automatically becoming a lover, and the speaker cannot choose which beauty he is to address without asserting by his choice that he is indeed a lover. Lysias, then, wrote a speech that cannot be spoken, for as soon as it is spoken, relations are established that deny the premise of the speech." *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy: Plato's Gorgias and Phaedrus* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 110-111. Also see Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 46.

²⁸ Graeme Nicholson, *Plato's Phaedrus: The Philosophy of Love* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999), 42.

²⁹ Benardete, *Rhetoric of Morality*, 118.

speech's content similarly presents *eros* in a cold, analytical manner, boiling it down at the outset to συμφέρειν, the conferring of benefits (230e). However, as inferred from Socrates' first speech, Lysias' speech is a case of love between a wolf and a lamb (241d). The one giving the speech is, in truth, possessed by erotic love for the listener and will say anything to trick him into getting into his belly. He is thus like Boreas, whose name also means "Devouring One." The speech takes possession of Phaedrus the way a wolf takes possession of a lamb or the way Boreas takes possession of Oreithuia: violently and with no regard for the beloved's well being.

In likening Lysias' speech to Boreas' rape of Oreithuia, Plato alludes to the underlying cause for Phaedrus' reaction to the speech—his Athenian upbringing. For the Myth of Boreas brings to mind the fact that Athenians revered Boreas' potentially destructive power because, owing to his marriage to Oreithuia, he came to their aid by destroying the invading Persian ships.³⁰ The Myth of Boreas hence "recalls the dangers of Athenian sea power and expansion."³¹ Plato is at pains in the *Phaedrus* to present Athenian speechmaking as equally driven by a militant kind of *eros*. This understanding of the Athenians' relationship to speechmaking differs from their own understanding of it. Avramenko, for one, has traced the rise in Athens of political courage, the notion that the virtue of Athenians "lies in their proficiency not only in the art of violence but also in the art of rational articulation."³² This ability to demonstrate skill in both deed and speech was thought to separate Athenians from the brutish "mechanics of violence"

³⁰ Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.189.

³¹ Slobodan Dušanić, "Athenian Politics in Plato's *Phaedrus*: Principles and Topical Themes," in *Understanding the Phaedrus: Proceedings of the II Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Livio Rossetti (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1992), 230. Also see Warnek, *Descent of Socrates*, 160.

³² Richard Avramenko, *Courage: The Politics of Life and Limb* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 94.

produced in Sparta.³³ Indeed, in his funeral oration, Pericles paints the discursive mode of Athens as allowing for a more humane way of interacting with fellow citizens. However, writers like Thucydides viewed Athenian discourse as more contentious than peaceful. Plato offers a similar critique of Athenian speechmaking across his corpus, but no more vividly than in the *Phaedrus*, where it takes the form of a not so metaphorical sexual metaphor.

Specifically, Plato presents speechmaking in Athens as bound up with and reflective of the practice of *paidēraστία* (παιδεραστία), a social institution involving the development of a personal relationship between a well-connected older gentleman (the ἐραστής) and a young male in his bloom (the ἐρώμενος). These relationships typically entailed asymmetrical power relations, as the boy was expected to let the successful suitor have his way—to “gratify” his lover, as the Greeks delicately put it. In exchange for sexual favors, the older man would offer the young man advice and assistance establishing himself in political life. By connecting the love of speeches with *paidēraστία*, Plato suggests that the *eros* Phaedrus exhibits for the lover Lysias’ speech stems from an attraction towards the life of fame and fortune glorified in Athens. Phaedrus—who we later learn is the son of Pythocles, “Eager for Fame”—loves the speech not because of the truth it conveys, but because of the fame such speechmaking ability could bring him. He therefore treats Lysias’ speech as something to be consumed and used to his own advantage, mimicking in his actions the very militant kind of *eros* the speech condones. Ultimately, though on the surface Lysias’ speech appears to possess Phaedrus just as Boreas

³³ Ibid., 110.

possesses Oreithuia, it is not Lysias' *logos* that possesses him so much as the *logos* of Athens, which dictates that one should love whatever will bring one fame and fortune.³⁴

To lend further support to this interpretation, let us consider Socrates' thoughts on where Lysias' speech, as well as his own first speech, erred. Socrates gives his first speech under compulsion to satisfy Phaedrus' desire to hear a speech that, like Lysias', argues in favor of the non-lover, but outdoes Lysias at his own game. He is ashamed from the beginning to present the speech, as signified by his hesitance to deliver it and unwillingness to do so without covering his head with his cloak. It is not until after he delivers the speech and gets up to go that he is able to articulate why he sensed it was so shameful, however. As he explains to Phaedrus, when he was about to head back into town he seemed to hear a voice telling him not to leave until he had purified himself from a sin he had committed against the gods: "After all, the soul too has something of the same ability that seers possess. Just now, when I was delivering my speech, something disturbed me, and I was rather worried, as Ibycus says, 'lest the cost of winning honour among men is that I sin in the eyes of the gods.' But now I see where I went wrong (ἀμάρτημα)" (242c-d). Continuing on, Socrates explains that thanks to the intervention of his *daimonion* he realized that not only did his and Lysias' speeches speak falsely about Love, which is divine, but "although everything they said was unsound and false, they gave themselves solemn airs as if they were important, to see if they could deceive some pathetic people into admiring them" (242e-243a). Later, Socrates applies this critique to almost all speeches by reminding Phaedrus that "the politicians with the highest self-regard adore speech-writing and

³⁴ To be sure, the *logos* of Athens is bound up with the *logos* of the speechwriters. Lysias' speech is effective because Phaedrus has been conditioned to envy good speechwriters, but the speech also feeds that cultural conditioning. For more on the psychological transformations that Plato thinks speeches can produce, and Plato's influence on later thinking about the art of rhetoric, see Daniel J. Kapust, *Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

the survival of their written works [...] they feel so much affection for those who admire any composition of theirs that each time, at the beginning of the piece, they inscribe the names of its admirers” (257e). Together, these quotes reveal that the temptation to cross boundaries is so great because humans naturally like to be admired and rewarded with accolades; filled with pride, they will cross the boundaries of reason and morality to obtain the favor of men. In Athens, this entails giving speeches that the many will admire. Phaedrus’ possession by Lysias’ speech hence stems from his enculturation in a society that places great emphasis on the manly pursuit of fame and fortune. Playing off the natural human desire to be admired, the “shame culture” of Athens instills fear of what people will say if one does not conform to the dominant model of the hero conquering all in battle, whether physical or verbal.³⁵

In recognizing that he allowed himself to be possessed by a part of his soul he ought to tame, Socrates has discovered something about himself—he is more alike to Typhon, the gigantic monster who tried to kill Zeus, than he would like. Like Typhon, Socrates defied the boundaries of piety, but he did so to win the favor of mere humans. The act of delivering a speech incited Socrates to cross the boundaries of reason and morality, for as the speech progressed Socrates increasingly found himself wishing to impress others with his words. He found himself wishing to impress them so much that he was willing to give “an awful (*δεινόν*) speech,” one “stupid (*εὐήθη*) and almost irreligious (*ἀσεβῆ*)” (242d). He said things his true self would never say; he spoke as if possessed by Typhon, a powerful foreign god from whose mouth issues forth all kinds of sounds. Enticed by the possibility of out-performing Lysias and thus gaining Phaedrus’ rabid veneration (rabid, for speeches turn Phaedrus bestial), Socrates forgot

³⁵ For more on the “shame culture” in Greece, see E.R. Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

himself and became willing to speak words that were not his own, words he felt ashamed to pronounce.³⁶

We ought to question, however, the conclusion that Socrates delivered the speech out of a desire to impress Phaedrus or gain renown. After all, when attempting to convince Socrates to deliver the speech, Phaedrus twice offers to commemorate his cleverness as a speechwriter by erecting prominent statues in his honor, but to no avail (235d-236b). Even the threat of brute force fails to motivate Socrates to deliver the speech. In the end, only Phaedrus' threat never again to recite or report to Socrates anyone's speeches motivates him, for, at this, Socrates exclaims, "Ah, you foul creature! You've certainly found a good way to make a speech-loving man (ἀνδρὶ φιλολόγῳ) do what you want" (236e). Could Socrates' love of speeches be genuine, unattached to any aspirations for fame?³⁷ Could Plato even be playing with the depth of meaning contained in the word *logos*?³⁸ In comparison with Phaedrus' exuberant yearning to deliver the speech he heard from Lysias, Socrates' extreme reluctance to repeat the speech he heard and unwillingness to share more of it than necessary call into question the authenticity of the quasi-

³⁶ The word "rabid" is also appropriate for describing Phaedrus because it comes from the Latin *rabidus*, which means frenzied or mad.

³⁷ Nietzsche, of course, would say no. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he attributes Socrates' decadence (or malice against life) to his experience of internal disorder—desires Socrates recognized in those around him as well. This is connected with Nietzsche's insight, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that all philosophy consists of unconscious auto-biography.

³⁸ The word *logos* has a variety of meanings. Throughout most of the *Phaedrus*, it refers to an account or explanation of something, *i.e.* a speech. It can also refer, however, to the internal thinking or reasoning process itself, which is in essence a kind of discourse with oneself. It can also simply mean "reason," or the rules or principles embodying the result of the use of logic. In the Platonic context, we must also remember the connection between *logos* and the part of the soul that should rule, the *logistikon*.

possession Socrates claims to have experienced.³⁹ If, in delivering the speech, Socrates had truly joined Phaedrus in revelry, surely he would not have departed as soon as he could for fear of being forced “to do something even worse” (242a). Indeed, no astute reader can fail to pick up on the signs that Socrates’ “transformation” is only apparent; the question is why he leads Phaedrus on in this way. As the next section will show, Socrates pretends to lose himself, to become possessed by a powerful foreign being, so that he might help Phaedrus discover the foreigner within. In the process, Plato makes clear that whereas the manly speech of Athens resembles Boreas’ rape of Oreithuia or Typhon’s attempted overthrow of Zeus, Socrates’ philosophic speech is infused with a feminine spirit that more closely models the cosmos itself.

2.2: *The Womanly Speech of Philosophy*

Various commentators on the *Phaedrus* have argued that Socrates is not truly sent into a frenzy by Lysias’ speech, but rather is imitating Phaedrus’ enthusiasm for the speech in a way that might undercut it. Benardete, for example, notes of Socrates that, “The portrayal of Phaedrus to Phaedrus had involved his own disguise. Impersonation and self-representation do not apparently go together.”⁴⁰ Other scholars use the language of “mirroring” to describe this phenomenon. For instance, Ronna Burger references the “intricate mirror-play which ensues between the two lovers of speeches.”⁴¹ Likewise, Werner speaks of Socrates “continuing to hold

³⁹ In his speech, Socrates only discusses the reasons why the lover should not be preferred. Much to Phaedrus’ disappointment, he does not delve into the reasons in favor of the non-lover, for, he says, he would merely be repeating in the negative all the traits of the lover.

⁴⁰ Benardete, *Rhetoric of Morality*, 127-28.

⁴¹ Ronna Burger, *Plato’s Phaedrus: A Defense of a Philosophic Art of Writing* (University, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1980), 16.

a mirror up to Phaedrus, as a way of inducing his interlocutor to change.”⁴² Griswold for his part extensively traces Socrates’ efforts throughout the dialogue to offer Phaedrus “a reflection that will somehow cause one to move in the direction of self-knowledge rather than a reflection that will simply mirror what one is already or what one would vainly like to think of oneself as already being.”⁴³ In what follows, I confirm this interpretation of Socrates’ behavior in the *Phaedrus*, while bringing an additional dimension to bear on the analysis. Specifically, I show that in mirroring Phaedrus’ interaction with the speech of the *metic* Lysias, Socrates aims to help Phaedrus see himself as a foreigner—that is, to turn his soul in such a way that he no longer takes his Athenian cultural horizon for granted, but rather sees it as in some way foreign. This uncovering of the foreigner within takes place thanks to Socrates’ evocation of the womanly speech of philosophy, which works to unsettle Phaedrus’ conditioning in favor of the manly speech of Athens, thereby helping him see his desire for fame as a construct of the city that is foreign to his authentic self.

Socrates’ aim to help Phaedrus perceive his Athenian cultural horizon as foreign emerges from the beginning of the dialogue. It is first seen when Socrates refers to himself as a foreigner visiting the area for the first time. This line and the dramatic action accompanying it (*i.e.*, Socrates’ wonderment at the setting) both introduces the idea that one might see oneself as foreign and helps Phaedrus see himself as foreign. As Ferrari explains, Socrates’ reaction to the setting serves to render strange an aspect of Phaedrus’ identity that he would otherwise take for granted as natural and normal:

⁴² Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*, 192.

⁴³ Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 32-33.

The nub of this strangeness is that Socrates is acting like a stranger even though he is a native Athenian (230c6-d2); for he refuses to allow Phaedrus to take for granted his skill in providing for the comfort and entertainment of his companion. The ultimate target of praise in his description of the harbour is less the physical features of the place than Phaedrus' achievement as tourist-guide in selecting them... In this he confronts Phaedrus with what he would not normally notice: Phaedrus' quite ordinary ability (at least as Phaedrus himself sees it) to get successfully and appropriately oriented in his environment. [...] He [Socrates] is a 'stranger' (*atopos*) because he is alive to what it takes to be ordinary and native.⁴⁴

Socrates calls attention, in other words, to an aspect of Phaedrus' identity that Phaedrus himself would otherwise have taken for granted. Phaedrus performs the role of host *unconsciously*, unable to see that his skill in providing hospitality has been acquired through immersion in his particular society. In other societies—the inhospitable society of the Cyclopes comes to mind—he would not have learned these skills, or he would have obtained different expectations of what it means to be a good host. By placing himself in the position of a foreign visitor, Socrates seeks to make Phaedrus more conscious of the way he treats strangers.

This consciousness-raising with regard to Phaedrus' treatment of foreigners continues as Socrates mirrors Phaedrus' interaction with the *metic* Lysias' speech. Like Phaedrus, Socrates appears to succumb to an irrational, boundary-crossing frenzy; however, he reaches this state in a way that helps to illuminate the Athenian-grown, possessive *eros* of Boreas driving Phaedrus' reaction to the speech. Socrates' first step is to enter Phaedrus' ecstatic state only by proxy. As he confesses, when watching Phaedrus “glow with pleasure” as he read Lysias' speech, he “came

⁴⁴ Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 14.

to share in the ecstasy (συνεβάκχευσα)” (234d). It is his observation of Phaedrus’ reaction to the speech—not the speech itself—that makes Socrates feel frenzy-stricken. Even Phaedrus can read between the lines: the speech does not affect Socrates in the same way it affects him. Hearing the speech for the first time, Socrates has not fallen into the revelry that Phaedrus, having heard it several times and even committed it to memory, still exhibits. Socrates knows Phaedrus values his opinion and wants him to share in his delight on his own impetus (228b). By sharing incompletely in Phaedrus’ delight, Socrates deflates his enthusiasm a bit. In effect, he at once reflects the sentiments of the young man and distances himself from them; he holds up a mirror to Phaedrus, but one that calls into question the very image it reflects. The image appears strange to Phaedrus because it is not an unmediated reflection, but one in which Socrates has intervened. Phaedrus cannot help but feel the intended dissatisfaction, which he expresses by first asking Socrates if he is joking and then entreating him to give his honest opinion on the speech.

When Socrates admits that he finds Lysias’ speech lacking in both form and content and is sure that he has heard a better speech on love elsewhere, Phaedrus goads Socrates into giving the speech he has heard. Socrates then uses this as another opportunity to help Phaedrus uncover the foreigner within. First of all, Socrates stresses that the speech is not his, but rather has filled his ears “like a jug, by streams flowing from elsewhere (ἐξ ἀλλοτρίων ποθὲν ναμάτων)” (235c-d).⁴⁵ Specifically, he mentions as potential authors of the speech the lyric poetess Sappho and the lyric poet Anacreon, the former of whom was from Lesbos, an island just off the coast of Asia Minor, and the latter of whom was from Teos, a city on the coast of Asia Minor. His speech is thus, literally, ἀλλότριος. By emphasizing the ἀλλότριος (as opposed to the οικεῖος) nature of the

⁴⁵ The imagery of streams and of the river Ilissus is revealing. As Heraclitus famously said, you cannot step into the same river twice. Rivers are naturally composed of elements that are ἀλλότριος and represent an ongoing journey. In this sense, they resemble Phaedrus, who is presented from the dialogue’s opening line as in movement.

speech, Socrates not only distances himself from it but also underscores Phaedrus' desire to appropriate the property of a foreigner. Whereas Socrates respects the boundary between his ideas and another's, Phaedrus' actions betray that he "would have memorized and delivered Lysias' speech as his own, if Socrates had not uncovered his ruse."⁴⁶ Why else does Phaedrus go out into the countryside to practice Lysias' speech unless to prepare to do what Lysias, as a foreigner, cannot do—deliver it publically? By contrast, Socrates is hesitant to deliver, even privately, what is not his own. Through his hesitance and careful emphasis of the speech's foreign origins, Socrates calls attention to Phaedrus' tendency not to respect the boundaries between the native and the foreign.

The Athenian tendency to take possession of what belongs to foreigners was already implied by the image of Boreas, which alluded to the growth of Athenian imperial power. It is also expressed within the masculine form of *eros* that Boreas represents. As David Halperin has shown, the Athenian tendency to think of *eros* in a gendered, hierarchical way reflects social relations both with members of the city and with foreigners:

In this socio-sexual system all respectable sexual relations were necessarily hierarchical. 'Active' and 'passive' sexual roles were isomorphic with 'masculine' and 'feminine' gender roles, which in turn corresponded to superordinate and subordinate social status. An adult, male citizen of Athens could therefore have legitimate sexual relations only with statutory minors (his inferiors not in age but in social and political status): the proper targets of his sexual desire included, specifically, women, boys, foreigners, and slaves—all of them persons who did not enjoy the same legal and political rights and privileges that he did. In conformity with this hierarchical system, the ethos governing the proper

⁴⁶ Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 308.

sexual enjoyment of citizen youths denied the latter a significant share in the experience of *erōs*: it was clearly unacceptable, after all, for the future rulers of Athens to exhibit any eagerness or desire to play a subordinate role in their relations with other men.⁴⁷

The notion of citizenship is thus bound up in Athens with participation in a social institution that celebrates a hierarchical, masculine form of *eros*. To fail to participate, or to participate improperly, is—if one is a man—to demote oneself to the status of non-citizen. Kenneth Dover confirms, “There seems little doubt that in Greek eyes the male who breaks the ‘rules’ of legitimate *eros* detaches himself from the ranks of male citizenry and classifies himself with women and foreigners.”⁴⁸ Hence, behind Phaedrus’ desire to possess Lysias’ speech lies not only the desire to earn the admiration of his fellow citizens by making clever speeches, but also the desire to assert his superiority over those excluded from citizenship. However cosmopolitan Phaedrus may seem for interacting with foreigners like Lysias and admiring their speeches, Socrates’ mirroring of Phaedrus reveals that he is anything but. Rather, Phaedrus’ admiration for the speech works to conceal his underlying captivation by the manly speech of Athens and the masculine, hierarchical *eros* it promotes.

Studying the other influences to whom Socrates credits the speech, it becomes clear that Socrates is calling into question the manly speech of Athens that drives Phaedrus’ desire to possess Lysias’ speech. Infusing his speech with feminine elements typically neglected in Athenian discourse, Socrates seeks to help Phaedrus see himself not as natural and right, but as

⁴⁷ David M. Halperin, “Why Is Diotima a Woman? Platonic *Erōs* and the Figuration of Gender,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, eds. Froma I. Zeitlin, John J. Winkler, and David M. Halperin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 266-67.

⁴⁸ Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (1978; repr., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 103.

possessed by a manmade way of life alienated from divine being. The infusion of feminine elements is first marked by Socrates' claim to have heard a better speech from skillful "men (ἄνδρες) and women (γυναῖκες) of old" (235b). He then again brings women and men together by mentioning Sappho and Anacreon. Later on, he asks the Muses (the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne) to help him deliver the speech that Phaedrus has compelled him to speak (237a). As his speech unfolds, he interrupts himself to remark upon the powerful influence of their natural setting.⁴⁹ This setting contains both masculine and feminine elements. On the one hand, there is the river Ilissus. Traditionally, rivers "were regarded as male divinities that supplied a vital, seminal energy"; they were known both "for their life-sustaining properties (drinking water) and for their role in religious ceremonies (such as purification rites)."⁵⁰ Alongside this masculine influence is a feminine one, that of the Nymphs. Divine female spirits believed to inhabit and personify natural, rural settings (especially water sources such as springs, rivers, and lakes), nymphs were commonly associated with the ecstatic experiences of dancing and music, and the sexual license to which such activities often give rise. As Jennifer Larson explains, "...the nymph embodies a fantasy of total female independence. Eternally young and lovely, she enjoys both sexual freedom and, equally important, the physical freedom that was denied most Greek women."⁵¹ Phaedrus and Socrates are therefore conversing in a setting permeated with both masculine and feminine influences.

⁴⁹ Socrates' ability to interrupt himself reflects the high degree to which his soul is propelled by self-motion. To some extent, he is able to achieve on his own what souls like Phaedrus largely cannot accomplish without the voice of a foreigner—distancing himself from himself. Could this suggest that his *daimonion* is itself a foreign voice?

⁵⁰ Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*, 22.

⁵¹ Jennifer Larson, *Greek Nymphs: Myth, Cult, Lore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 90.

By calling attention to the influence of external forces, Socrates prompts Phaedrus to contemplate the influences in his life. Phaedrus' venture into the countryside reveals that these influences are located primarily in the city. For though Phaedrus walks outside the city "his soul is owned by it. Hence the symbolic power of Phaedrus' possession of Lysias' written text outside the walls of the city," a text that is literally "a product of the polis' *techne*."⁵² To know whether the city's influence is salutary or not, or under what conditions it might be beneficial or harmful, Phaedrus must understand the nature of the city's influence. The strong presence of the feminine outside the city underscores its absence in Athens. Athens is dominated by a masculine *eros* that, like Boreas with Oreithuia, overpowers the feminine *eros* that haunts the natural world. By privileging the cool calculation of the non-lover over the frenzied irrationality of the lover, Athenian citizens demonstrate a preference for the masculine over the feminine, as females were associated in the Greek mind with irrationality. In so emphatically bringing this feminine influence back in, Socrates beckons Phaedrus to question the exclusion of the feminine from the *logos* of both Lysias and Athens.

Setting out to extol *eros*, Socrates' second speech illuminates the importance of the feminine. Consider, first of all, Socrates' account of the divine cosmos. The divine cosmos is presented through the Myth of the Chariot, which tells of how the human soul resembles a chariot with a charioteer and two horses of opposing temperament. As each soul makes its journey through the afterlife, a beautiful, white horse pulls it towards the heavens, while an ugly black horse pulls it back towards earth. Owing to the turbulence of this ride, humans cannot, like the immortal gods, completely ascend to gaze upon the region of "truth (*τὸ ἀληθείας*)" (247b-248b). Those souls that follow one of the gods are able to come in close contact with the truth

⁵² Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, 35.

that nourishes our souls, while the rest can only catch glimpses of it or cannot even break through to see it owing to the jostling of their horses as they revolve around the heavens. Interestingly, in Socrates' initial account of the divine cosmos, only two gods are named: Zeus and Hestia. Zeus leads the gods in their revolution around the heavens, while Hestia "stays alone in the gods' house," to which the gods return after having feasted their gaze on everything that is (247a). The purpose of mentioning Hestia, the virgin goddess of the hearth, is "to bring more vividly before the mind's eye the picture of the starry heaven revolving round a fixed central body, the earth."⁵³ Yet, beyond this, Hestia symbolizes the place at which humans are most truly at home. She lies where the gods themselves come to rest after feasting their eyes on the sight of the truth. This divine hearth is therefore also where the true self belongs. It is, notably, a place held together by the feminine.⁵⁴

Philosophy, the *Phaedrus* shows us, helps the soul connect with its proper home. It is driven by an *eros* for the things that are real, of which their likenesses here on earth serve as a

⁵³ Plato, *Plato's Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), 73. Cf. David A. White, *Rhetoric and Reality in Plato's Phaedrus* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 102.

⁵⁴ As Heidegger notes, of all the gods "the one who most remains and is most steadfast is Hestia"; it is she who represents the "middle" (or, Voegelin might say, *metaxy*) of "steadfast constancy and presence," the ultimate destination of human beings. However, owing to man's forgetting of that which is constant, the divine hearth appears not to be his proper home, but rather a foreign land. Humans thus feel "unsettled" and "unhomely" in the divine hearth even though primordially this is where they dwell. Heidegger therefore concludes, "Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign." For Heidegger, this means that Germans must engage the foreign so as to arrive at a fuller awareness of the beauty of German culture—something akin to the Amish practice of *Rumspringa*. In thus instrumentalizing the foreigner, Heidegger misses the point that Plato's *Phaedrus* conveys, however. For the point of Socrates' account of the divine cosmos—which depicts the soul's proper dwelling as the realm of the feminine and (seemingly) foreign—is to reveal that the masculine city of Athens, however familiar it seems to Phaedrus, is truly foreign soil. One's true home does not lie in the Athenian city, the German city, or any other city; it lies in the divine hearth accessed through the mind's eye. *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1996), 113, 49.

reminder. Only those few with good memories who managed to poke their heads into the realm of true being can be prompted by the things on earth to remember the things that are real, however. Such are the souls of the philosophic, the followers of Zeus (252e-253a). Zeus, remember, is the god of foreigners. Philosophic souls model themselves after this god, the most hospitable of the gods. These souls ascend closer to their true home, the divine hearth of Hestia, with the aid of arguments. Unlike the aggressive, possessive, manly speech of Athens, the speech of philosophy is presented as caring, generative, and feminine. Philosophers show “no malice or mean-spirited ill-will in their dealings with their beloveds,” but rather do everything they can to persuade their beloveds to ascend to the realm where their soul most truly resides (253b). They treat their beloveds as godlike and “spend their lives” as close friends, rather than discarding them once they have achieved sexual gratification (256c). Through this, they and their beloveds together grow wings. Philosophy thus reveals its generative and caring nature, a nature more in line with the feminine than the masculine. As Halperin argues, “Plato’s theory of erotic procreativity [...] is oriented around what his contemporaries would have taken to be a distinctively feminine order of experience.”⁵⁵

Indeed, throughout his corpus, Plato links philosophy and the female. At several points in the *Theatetus*, Socrates presents philosophy as a feminine activity when he describes himself as a midwife helping people give birth to ideas (e.g., 150b-151c, 157c, 161e, and 210c). The description of philosophy in Book VI of the *Republic* also evokes imagery related to female reproduction (see, e.g., 490a-b). In fact, in the *Republic*, philosophy itself is presented as a female when Socrates describes philosophy as an abandoned bride defiled by unworthy men (495c). Saxonhouse notes a further connection between the philosopher and the female:

⁵⁵ Halperin, “Why Is Diotima a Woman?,” 277.

“Philosophers in the Platonic corpus and women in the Greek tradition are private individuals. They belong to the world of the *idios*, not the community or the *koinon*. While women may stay in seclusion inside their homes, the philosopher must insulate himself not from the activity of the agora, but from the opinions of the city.”⁵⁶ To this list of connections between the philosopher and the female, Salkever adds the fact that Socrates identifies women as his teachers.⁵⁷ Though Callicles in the *Gorgias* derides philosophers for being “unmanly (*ἄνανδρον*)” (485c), the multitude of linkages between philosophy and the female suggest that Plato is trying to revive the reputation of the feminine and the female.⁵⁸ The female resembles the foreigner insofar as she too has traditionally been excluded from direct participation in political affairs. Yet the exclusion of the female goes beyond the exclusion of her physical being; it extends also to the exclusion of a feminine mode of speech. Arguing that in the *Phaedrus* “truth itself is female,” Wendy Brown contends that Plato aims to return this feminine voice to the world of men:

Plato is radically revaluing and resituating both the activity and the content of philosophy; to signify this radicality, he renders the knower, the known, and the quality of their relation in dramatically foreign terms. He makes strange by making female the

⁵⁶ Saxonhouse, “Philosopher and the Female,” 206.

⁵⁷ Salkever, “Women, Soldiers, Citizens,” 236. Also see Elena Duvergès Blair, “Women: the Unrecognized Teachers of the Platonic Socrates,” *Ancient Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (1996): 333-350.

⁵⁸ There has been an extensive discussion of whether Plato is a feminist or proto-feminist. Some, like Julia Annas, argue that, “Plato the feminist is a myth.” “Plato’s ‘Republic’ and Feminism,” *Philosophy* 51, no. 197 (1976): 321. Also see Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Others contend that while Plato believed in the superiority of men over women, his work nonetheless can be used to justify feminist principles. See, e.g., Harry Lesser, “Plato’s Feminism,” *Philosophy* 54, no. 207 (1979): 113-117. Finally, others identify in Plato a strand of thought more receptive to the idea of the equality of women. See, e.g., Saxonhouse, “Philosopher and the Female”; Salkever, “Women, Soldiers, Citizens”; and Wendy Brown, “‘Supposing Truth Were a Woman...’: Plato’s Subversion of Masculine Discourse,” *Political Theory* 16, no. 4 (1988): 594-616.

entire philosophical endeavor, thereby seeking not only to divest philosophy and politics of the socially male qualities to which he objects but also to rupture, more generally, the ground of existing ontological and epistemological assumptions about knowledge and power.⁵⁹

So thoroughly has the city of Athens excluded the feminine that it now seems foreign to them, just as Hestia's hearth seems foreign even though in reality it is the soul's natural dwelling. In casting philosophy as feminine, Plato emphasizes the degree to which the manly speech of Athens has resulted in self-alienation. Athenian citizens have forgotten an entire part of their being and consequently have disordered souls.⁶⁰ Lying latent within them dwells an element that they believe only foreigners possess, a feminine side.⁶¹

III. The Philosopher as Translator and Guide

The role of the philosopher is to serve as translator or intermediary helping individuals travel from the mortal, masculine city to the divine, feminine hearth, *i.e.* helping them discover the foreigner within. This is indicated by Socrates' attribution of the Great Speech to Stesichorus. Various scholars have noted how Plato's name play indicates that whereas Socrates' first speech

⁵⁹ Brown, "Supposing Truth Were a Woman...", 609.

⁶⁰ Recalling Aristophanes' speech on *eros* in the *Symposium*, we might say that they have forgotten their other half, who was split from them as punishment for human ambition to supplant the gods. For the Platonic Aristophanes, however, this other half may be female or male. Ronna Burger draws an intriguing parallel between Aristophanes' story of humans as fractured selves and the story of human origins in Genesis, which is concerned only with the relation between man and woman. Interestingly, Burger suggests that the first woman is also the first philosopher, for it is Eve who so desires wisdom that she is willing to disobey the edict of God not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "Male and Female Created He Them: Some Platonic Reflections on Genesis 1-3," in *Nature, Woman, and the Art of Politics*, ed. Eduardo A. Velásquez (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 1-18.

⁶¹ The Persians in particular were mocked for their femininity.

sprang from a desire for glory and hedonistic delight, the Great Speech unites desire with piety.⁶² A further, yet often unnoted distinction between the two speeches concerns the former's attribution to an Athenian (Phaedrus) and the latter's to a Western Greek from Himera (Stesichorus), an ancient Greek colony in Sicily. Given the prominence of the theme of travel throughout the dialogue, we ought to take this contrast seriously and ask why Plato has Socrates attribute the second speech to someone so geographically remote from Attica, yet nonetheless a progeny of and participant in ancient Greek culture. Socrates' Great Speech itself offers a significant hint. Recall that the soul of a philosopher was said to have gazed most closely of all mortal beings upon true being. As a result, the philosopher becomes truly perfect, but "since he is remote from (ἐξιστάμενος) human concerns and close to divinity, he is criticized by the general run of mankind (τῶν πολλῶν) as deranged (παρακινῶν), because they do not realize that he is possessed by a god (ἐνθουσιάζων)" (249c-d). Moreover, when the philosopher catches sight

⁶² Socrates prefaces the Great Speech by claiming that whereas his first speech was "by Phaedrus the son of Pythocles, of the deme Myrrhinous," this speech "will be by Stesichorus the son of Euphemus, from Himera" (243e-244a). According to H. N. Fowler, Stesichorus' father's name, Euphemus, translates as "Man of Pious Speech" and the city he comes from, Himera, translates as "Town of Desire." On the other hand, Phaedrus' father's name, Pythocles, translates as "Eager for Fame" and the city he comes from, Myrrhinous, translates as "Myrrh Town." Based on this, James M. Rhodes argues that Plato's decision to have Socrates include the names of each author's father and place of origin aids readers in differentiating the second speech from the first: "The speech will not be the offspring of Eager for Fame (Pythocles) from Myrrh Town. That is, it will not spring from libidos for glory and hedonistic delights that one might associate with myrrh, a resin used in perfumes, cosmetics, and *pharmakons*. Instead, it will be the child of Speaking Well (Euphemus, the Hellenic term for the opposite of blasphemy) from Yearning Town, that is, from a desire (*himeros*) that differs from *epithymia* and that will soon be connected with Zeus. It will be the opposite to the first speech in every way." *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence: Plato's Erotic Dialogues*, vol. 1 (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 464. Similarly, John C. Adams sees the names connected with Stesichorus as indicative of a union of desire and piety, suggesting his speech "betokens the character of a person who has undergone the conversion experience portrayed in the speech, where desire and piety coalesce in the attitude of reverence which is marked by Socrates as the spirit of the speaker and his speech." "The Rhetorical Significance of the Conversion of the Lover's Soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1996): 9.

of beauty here on earth, “[h]is wings begin to grow and he wants to take to the air on his new plumage, but he cannot; like a bird he looks upwards, and because he ignores what is down here, he is accused of behaving like a madman (μανικῶς διακείμενος)” (249d). Now we can read in a new light Phaedrus’ description of Socrates as *a-topos*. In truth, Socrates is out of place wherever he goes; as the verb ἐξίστημι (“to be displaced”) suggests, he is like a foreigner everywhere on earth. Remembering the sights his soul observed as it struggled to make the journey the gods make—one that culminates in a return to Hestia’s hearth—a philosopher like Socrates strikes others as utterly out of his element in the world of men. In this world, where men tend to value the ephemeral over the unchanging, the trivial over the essential, the judgment of men over the judgment of gods, the philosopher stands in need of a guide much like a foreigner wandering a strange land.⁶³

The philosopher’s foreignness manifests itself not only in his neglect of the earthly cares that preoccupy most, but also in his strange treatment of others. While for most the sight of beauty in its tangible form “does not arouse reverence” but merely sexual passion, a more philosophic soul who espies beauty here on earth is moved “to revere his beloved as if he were a god” (250e-251a). Holding his erotic desires in check, such a soul aims above all to raise up both his own soul and that of his beloved, using “persuasion (πείθοντες)” and “attunement (ῥυθμίζοντες)” to “get the boy to conform, as much as he can, to the god’s way of life and characteristics” (253b). In the philosophic individual’s impassioned attempt to better both his

⁶³ Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 173c-174a, where Socrates describes the philosopher as keeping aloof from the affairs of the city because “it is only his body that has its place and home in the city; his mind, considering all these things petty and of no account, disdains them and is borne in all directions, as Pindar says, ‘both below the earth,’ and measuring the surface of the earth, and ‘above the sky,’ studying the stars, and investigating the universal nature of every thing that is, each in its entirety, never lowering itself to anything close at hand.”

own and his beloved's character, *eros* and piety come together. Yet, this applies not only to the philosopher's relations with his beloved, but to his interactions with others in general. As the speech explains, anyone with purity of soul "spends his life honouring and imitating to the best of his ability the god to whose chorus he belongs, and *in all his dealings and relations*, including his love-affairs, he conforms to this mode of behaviour" (252c-d, emphasis added). In aspiring as much as possible to recollect truly and resemble the god he saw in the world beyond (Zeus, god of foreigners), the philosopher differentiates himself from the many who model themselves after flawed heroes and gods blindly deemed worthy of imitation. Hence, in terms not only of his fundamental cares but also his behavior, the philosopher is akin to a foreigner, for he treats others strangely, as though he were a traveler unaccustomed to the mores of the place.

Foreign to prevailing concerns and behaviors, the philosopher strikes the majority of humans as out of place anywhere he goes; yet, in those souls with the potential to recollect the truth, the philosopher plants the seeds of love. Though at first these souls mistake love for friendship, to cultivate the love in these few and far between admirers, to channel their *eros* away from bodily pleasures and towards the enjoyments of the mind, the philosopher must turn a small degree away from the divine and reach out his hand to his beloved. He must descend into the cave to help his beloved ascend towards truth. The attribution of the Great Speech to a Western Greek, in other words, represents the need for the philosopher to be simultaneously distanced from and familiar with the human condition. Mirroring Stesichorus' remoteness from the mainland yet substantial immersion in the language, stories, and practices that bind Greeks together in kinship, the philosopher stands apart from his fellows while nonetheless intimately knowing their way of life from being reared in the same environment. Indeed, as Socrates reveals through his interactions with Phaedrus, the fulfillment of the philosopher's divine mission

depends on how well he can navigate the local waters, so to speak. John C. Adams is correct when he writes, “In Platonic thought, the rehabilitation of one’s soul cannot be accomplished without external assistance.”⁶⁴ The raising up of a soul, however, requires the philosopher to speak that soul’s language to some degree. To transform Phaedrus, Socrates must appear to transform himself. He must mimic to some degree Phaedrus’ enthusiasm for speeches so as to help him discover the foreigner within. The attribution of the Great Speech to Stesichorus—a poet at once immersed in and remote from Greek culture—symbolizes Socrates’ effort to integrate the sublime and incommunicable insights of his philosophic travels with the clear, persuasive language of rhetoric. Only through the union of philosophy and rhetoric can Socrates hope to transport Phaedrus out of the world of men, to channel his *eros* in the right direction.

What the *Phaedrus* has shown us, then, is that engaging with the voice of a foreigner can assist us in discovering the foreigner within. By engaging with the foreigner Lysias’ speech, Socrates helps Phaedrus turn his soul in such a direction that he is able to reflect back on himself and see himself as a foreigner, as someone possessing an entirely different cultural horizon. This turning of Phaedrus’ soul is signified by his request at the end of the dialogue that Socrates include him in his prayer to Pan—the wandering god whose name is translated in the *Cratylus* as “all”—to become (γενέσθαι) beautiful within and to possess on the outside what is in harmony with this inner wealth (297b-c). As the verb “become” implies, Phaedrus now recognizes the

⁶⁴ Adams, “Rhetorical Significance,” 9. Nichols fleshes out this point based on the Myth of the Chariot: “Even if self-knowledge consisted in truths seen before birth, self-knowledge would differ from individual to individual, because human beings have not had the same vision or experiences. They have seen only some of the beings in their former lives, for example, and not very clearly as they struggle to ascend. To know the truth, then, one must go beyond oneself. It is therefore not the case that according to the theory of recollection, at least as it is presented in the *Phaedrus*, that each human being has the truth within himself and so needs only to be reminded of it. Should we acquire the truth, it would come to us in part from outside ourselves.” Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship*, 111-12.

disorder within his own soul, the presence of a powerful foreign god like Typhon-Set that Socrates suspected, and now has apparently confirmed, lies within his own soul as well. By mirroring Phaedrus' reaction to Lysias' speech, Socrates has helped him uncover his soul's possession by foreign voices. These voices are none other than the voices of their fellow citizens, and others they admire, as Nightingale explains:

Since human beings are continually making the language of others their own, the very boundaries of the self are called into question. What I take Plato to be indicating is that a human soul's authentic voice does not comprise the manifold voices that reside within it—it is not coextensive, in short, with all the soul's internal voices. The authentic voice is something that needs to be identified and developed by way of philosophical inquiry. Since this kind of inquiry involves testing the truth of different *logoi*, the practice of philosophy demands that a person examine and evaluate not only external discourse but also the voices within. This person will discover that some of his internal voices are in fact alien in the sense that they do not represent the wisdom-loving part of the soul.⁶⁵

For Plato, engagement with the foreign can be a way of discovering our own foreignness. Such engagement does not always provoke philosophic reflection, as discovered in previous chapters and in this chapter through Phaedrus' initial reaction to Lysias' speech. Yet, when approached properly, the voice of a foreigner can help us see ourselves from a different perspective.

It is no coincidence, then, that Socrates exclaims, “yes, by the dog I would!” when he tells of how he would guess that Phaedrus had Lysias' speech memorized by the time he got up to go for a walk (228b). “By the dog” is an invocation common to Socrates and likely refers to the Egyptian god Anubis, the jackal-like god of judgment and discernment who determines the

⁶⁵ Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, 145.

worth of souls trying to enter the afterlife.⁶⁶ Judging by other uses of the phrase in the Platonic corpus, it is likely a dramatic way of affirming the truth of a proposition, particularly one regarding the nature of someone's soul.⁶⁷ Like Anubis, Socrates possesses the ability to look beyond a person's reputation or appearance, to see someone's true essence. Phaedrus may appear humble and moderate, but in fact he is prideful and unrestrained. Is it a coincidence that the truth about his soul is heralded by an expression referencing a barbarian god? The whole of the *Phaedrus*, which reveals how cross-cultural engagement can help lead to greater self-knowledge, suggests not. To understand oneself better, the dialogue suggests, one should engage with the voice of a foreigner.

Indeed, Plato submits himself to the same test when near the end of the dialogue he evokes an Egyptian myth that reflects on the art of writing and thus on the dialogue itself. I will defer my discussion of this myth, however, until the conclusion of this dissertation, as there we will reflect on how the treatment of the foreigner in Plato's dialogues sheds light on how Plato hoped his dialogues would be read. For now, let me turn to the *Menexenus*, where again we see the voice of a foreigner helping a young man enamored with speeches to see his Athenian cultural horizon as foreign to his authentic self.

IV. *Menexenus*: Athenian Funeral Orations through Foreign Ears

⁶⁶ Cf. Plato, *Gorgias*, 482b.

⁶⁷ See Greg Moses, "'By the Dog of Egypt!': Plato's Engagement with Egyptian Form, and the Scholarship of Cheikh Anta Diop" (paper presented at SUNY-Binghamton, Oct. 1996); Robert G. Hoerber, "The Socratic Oath 'By the Dog,'" *The Classical Journal* 58, no. 6 (1963): 268-269; and Russell Blackwood, John Crossett, and Herbert Long, "Gorgias 482b," *The Classical Journal* 57, no. 7 (1962): 318-319.

Like the *Phaedrus*, the *Menexenus* explores the disjunction between the true self and the culturally conditioned self. It does so through the lens of an Athenian institution of collective self-delusion *par excellence*: the funeral oration. Delivered by a prominent figure during the funeral rites commemorating the deaths of Athenian soldiers fallen in battle, the funeral oration was a primary means through which Athenians could imagine themselves as a community. Offering its own funeral oration framed by brief dialogue between Socrates and a young man named Menexenus, the *Menexenus* identifies some of the problems with Athenian funeral orations while demonstrating what a philosophic funeral oration might look like. This is achieved by playing with the authorship of the oration. Not only—as indicated by the dialogue’s dramatic date some time after the Corinthian War—is the speech delivered by a Socrates long deceased, but it is apparently the speech of a woman herself dead—the Milesian mistress of Pericles, Aspasia. In the *Menexenus*, the dead eulogize the dead, for reasons we will later explore. Of chief interest, however, is Socrates’ decision to attribute the oration to Aspasia. As I will argue, by placing in the mouth of a foreign woman the lies Athens commonly tells itself, Plato’s Socrates creates a jarring effect that helps his interlocutor uncover the foreigner within. That is, Aspasia’s voice helps him look upon his own culture as though it were a foreign culture rather than his own, and in the process helps him discover the discordance within himself. While the transformation is far from complete, the dialogue suggests that engagement with the voice of a foreigner can help to bring about greater self-knowledge and therefore promote learning.

4.1: Funeral Orations as Collective Self-Delusions

From the *Menexenus*’ opening lines, Plato indicates that the dialogue will showcase Socrates’ attempt to moderate Menexenus’ interest in funeral orations. The subject of funeral

orations arises when, learning Menexenus has come from the Council Chamber, Socrates infers that Menexenus must have been there because, having deemed himself finished with his philosophic studies, he seeks now—as Socrates puts it—“to rule us, your elders, so that your house will never cease to provide us with a caretaker” (234a-b).⁶⁸ In response, Menexenus reveals that his current preoccupation lies not with public service per se, but with rhetoric. In fact, he was at the Council Chamber because he hoped to learn who would be selected to deliver the funeral oration. Socrates apparently cares less than Menexenus about who will be appointed to deliver the oration. He has not, after all, come from the Council Chamber, though aware of the meeting. Moreover, when Menexenus speculates that either Archinus or Dion will be chosen, Socrates offers no speculations of his own.⁶⁹ Through his absence from the Council’s meeting and his silence on the likely choice of orator, Socrates signifies he does not share Menexenus’ concern over who will be selected as funeral orator.

We soon learn the reason for Socrates’ lack of interest in the Council’s choice of orator—to Socrates, it does not matter who delivers the speech because all funeral orations follow the same formula and yield the same, troubling effects. His first problem with funeral orations is they give indiscriminate praise to those who have fallen in battle. As Socrates explains, “even if

⁶⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from the *Menexenus* come from Susan D. Collins and Devin Stauffer, *Empire and the Ends of Politics: Plato's Menexenus and Pericles' Funeral Oration* (Newburyport, MA: Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company, 1999).

⁶⁹ If I am correct that Plato intends to expose the injustices of Athens’ treatment of foreigners, then the mention of Archinus and Dion may be hinting at such injustices. After all, following the overthrow of the Thirty Tyrants, Archinus attacked a proposal to grant Athenian citizenship to *metics*, foreigners, and slaves who had helped restore democracy. For his part, Dion was a foreigner from Syracuse whom Plato deeply admired. Neither would have been chosen to deliver the oration. Archinus was unpopular due to harsh measures he instituted to help maintain the amnesty, and Dion, being a foreigner, was ineligible. In mentioning these men, Plato may be calling attention to Athens’ exclusion of worthy foreigners from citizenship and related activities. For an alternative interpretation, see Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 184, n. 7.

he was worthless (φαῦλος), he receives praise from wise men (ἀνδρῶν σοφῶν)” (234c). In essence, Socrates finds it problematic that, to earn public praise, one need not live a virtuous life but merely die in battle. For one can rest assured that the orator will ascribe to each man “qualities he actually possessed and even some he didn’t” (234c). Moreover, just as these orations fail to distinguish men of high and low moral character, they also are not written with any particular group of men in mind. Rather, the speeches are prepared “long beforehand” and thus could be adapted to describe any set of Athenians fallen in any battle (234c). By design, then, Athenian funeral orations make sweeping generalizations that ignore the particular attributes of either the group of men who has fallen or of the specific individuals within that group. Consequently, they cannot escape from telling untruths.⁷⁰

Yet, the most problematic aspect of funeral orations is, though they unfailingly paint a false portrait of the men who have died, they are delivered in such a way that listeners are made to feel as if this portrait were true and applies to living Athenians too. According to Socrates, funeral orators “bewitch (γοητεύουσιν) our souls” with fair and colorful words. As the word “bewitch” implies, in Socrates’ view funeral orators are akin to snake charmers, producing a hypnotic effect on their audience, one even Socrates experiences:

...I for my part, Menexenus, feel altogether elevated by their praises. Each time, as I listen and am charmed, I am altered, believing that I’ve become at that moment greater, more dignified, and more beautiful. Often some foreigners (ξένοι) follow along and listen with me, and in their eyes too I become instantly more majestic. And indeed, it seems to

⁷⁰ One might object that this criticism is overly harsh. No one would expect, at such a solemn occasion, to hear the complete truth about a person’s life. This objection is mollified, however, by recognizing that Socrates’ point is that funeral orations go too far in effacing the truth. They do not merely gloss over some of the negative qualities of a particular citizen or the city itself; rather, they turn the worthless man into a man of great virtue and honor, and the corrupt city into the Isles of the Blessed.

me that they, having been seduced by the speaker, feel the same things towards the rest of the city as they feel towards me, believing her to be more wondrous than before. This sense of majesty stays with me for more than three days. The speech is so fresh and the speaker's voice so rings in my ears that scarcely on the fourth or fifth day do I remember who I am and notice that I am of this earth—in the meantime I almost believe that I live on the Isles of the Blessed. (235a-c)

Funeral orators turn our sight away from our individual flaws so that we may see ourselves instead as perfect beings. They do this by transporting us from the actual, sometimes misguided community in which we live to the Isles of the Blessed—the eternal paradise of heroes. They replace the living yet imperfect, with the dead yet idyllic. In contrast to the Socratic mission of helping people perceive their lack of wisdom, funeral orators help fuel the fire of self-delusion. We might imagine them in the Allegory of the Cave not working to emancipate the prisoners by helping them see the reality of their situation, but rather casting marvelous shadows of the prisoners themselves. Once recognized, these shadows may bring delight and feelings of grandeur, but the hard-to-bear truth is that the prisoners' "happiness" depends on them lying to themselves about themselves.

An exercise in collective self-definition, the Athenian funeral oration involved a kind of communal self-delusion. As Nicole Loraux argues, Athenian funeral orations were not merely descriptive, but also prescriptive. Bound up with the development of democracy, the funeral oration provided an essential link between Athens' past and future, helping Athenians to identify and to "invent" themselves. Based on the almost complete absence of any Athenian public epitaph to the dead of the Persian Wars despite the presence of such epitaphs in other Greek states, Loraux hypothesizes that the practice arose sometime after the Persian Wars, perhaps near

the start of the first Peloponnesian War. In her view, the funeral oration gave Athenians the opportunity to justify to themselves abandonment of Pan-Hellenic action and engagement in struggles against other Greek cities. The funeral oration, in short, played the role of an educator “constantly reminding the citizens that their patriotism must serve the superiority, past and future, of the hegemonic city.”⁷¹ The Athenian funeral oration was not, then, simply a collective self-delusion, but one pertaining specifically to the city’s treatment of outsiders. As one scholar puts it, it was “a way of deluding oneself about foreigners and allies.”⁷²

Plato’s Socrates shares this view of funeral orations as a form of collective self-delusion about Athenian injustice towards foreigners. Though in the passage quoted above he suggests even foreigners cannot help but be swept up in the pro-Athenian fervor funeral orations incite, he soon admits it is not as easy to charm a foreigner as it is to charm one’s own people. “Now, if one should have to speak well of Athenians before Peloponnesians, or of Peloponnesians before Athenians,” he says, “then one would have to be a good rhetorician to persuade and win esteem. But when someone competes before the very ones he is praising, it is no great thing to seem to speak well” (235d). He later repeats this claim, insisting even the student of a mediocre rhetoric teacher “could still win esteem when praising Athenians before Athenians” (236a). Comparison with Thucydides’ version of Pericles’ Funeral Oration is instructive. Near the beginning of his oration, Pericles explains why it is difficult to speak about the deeds of the dead: “The one listener, who is informed (ξυνειδῶς) and of goodwill, might believe that what is presented is wanting in comparison with what he wishes to hear and what he knows (ἐπίσταται), while the

⁷¹ Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 98.

⁷² Henri Étienne Caffiaux, *De l’oraison funèbre dans la Grèce païenne* (Valenciennes: B. Henry, 1860), 55.

other, who is uninformed (ἄπειρος), might believe out of envy that some things are even exaggerated, should he hear anything surpassing his own nature.”⁷³ In Pericles’ view, the orator would not be mistaken in giving a glorious representation of the deeds of the dead. After all, everyone friendly to and familiar with the Athenians *knows* the dead are deserving of such a representation; it is only those inferior to the dead who, out of envy, suspect exaggeration. By contrast, Socrates makes clear when he describes the orators as transporting their listeners to the Isles of the Blessed that funeral orations do not provide realistic accounts of the dead or Athenians in general, but rather romanticized portraits. Moreover, by suggesting it would be difficult to convince Peloponnesians of the nobleness of Athenians, Socrates hints that it is chiefly with regard to their treatment of foreigners that Athenians delude themselves in their funeral orations.

Given Socrates’ insinuation that funeral orations fan the flames of a collective self-delusion regarding Athens’ treatment of foreigners, it is no wonder he responds so negatively to Menexenus’ professed interest in funeral orations. As a future leader of the community, Menexenus must break free of this collective delusion. He must face the truth about Athens, or else become culpable himself of committing great injustices. As we will see, in the *Menexenus* Socrates attempts to moderate Menexenus’ interest in funeral orations by providing him with a philosophic funeral oration. The clearly ironic character of Socrates’ opening comments on funeral orations—an irony even Menexenus recognizes, as indicated by his remark that Socrates is “always making fun of the rhetoricians”—gestures towards the frame of mind with which we should approach the oration Socrates delivers (235c). Though the dialogue contains a serious message, Plato signifies through this opening exchange that we should not take Socrates’ oration

⁷³ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.35.

literally.⁷⁴ Rather, we must interpret it in light of Socrates' revelation that these orations amount to little more than collective self-delusions, painting a lustrous yet untrue portrait of Athens. Once we approach Socrates' funeral oration aware of the irony lurking behind it, we will be able to perceive that it seeks to reveal to Menexenus the foreigner within—that is, it seeks to turn his soul towards a vantage point from which he can look back on the Athenian *nomos* and see it as though it were the *nomos* of a foreign people. Socrates aims to reveal the foreigner within primarily by presenting the lies Athens tells itself through the voice not of an Athenian male, but of a foreign woman, Aspasia.

4.2: Reading the Speech through Aspasia: A Foreign Woman's Logos

Aspasia is introduced when, unconvinced of the ease of crafting a first-rate funeral oration, Menexenus challenges Socrates to compose one. In response, Socrates claims he could, having heard one the other day from his rhetoric teacher, someone who has produced great orators, including the famous statesman Pericles. This teacher is Aspasia. A *metic* from Miletus—a Greek colony in Asia Minor—Aspasia was Pericles' mistress. As a *hetaera* or courtesan, she was highly educated and more independent than the average Athenian woman. Attracting many prominent intellectuals and philosophers including Socrates to Pericles' home, Aspasia was known not only for her immense beauty, but also for her skill in carrying on intelligent conversation. In fact, Aeschines' dialogue *Aspasia*—thought to have been written before the *Menexenus*—depicts Aspasia in the role of Socratic philosopher. Aspasia stands, in

⁷⁴ For an overview of the debate on whether the dialogue is serious or satirical, see Robert Clavaud, *Le Ménexène de Platon et la rhétorique de son temps* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980).

sum, as the rare exception to the general restriction of women from Athenian public life, though as Cheryl Glenn notes, “even Aspasia’s voice is muted, for she speaks only through men.”⁷⁵

Her wider reputation was less than credible, however, as in various ancient comedies she is depicted as a city-wrecking harlot. As Plutarch reports, Aspasia was thought responsible for the Samian War, for when the Samians refused to allow the Athenians to arbitrate their conflict with Miletus, Pericles attacked Samos, presumably because Aspasia’s native city was Miletus.⁷⁶ Moreover, just before the Peloponnesian War, Aspasia was accused of corrupting the women of Athens and was put on trial for impiety. Though acquitted thanks to Pericles’ tears and entreaties, her reputation remained soiled, as evidenced by the fact that in the *Acharnians* Aristophanes blames Aspasia for the Peloponnesian War. Various compared to Omphale (a queen in Asia Minor who for a year served as Heracles’ master), Deianira (a “man-destroyer” known for killing Heracles, her husband), and Helen of Troy (“the face that launched a thousand ships”), Aspasia was associated in the Athenian popular imagination with gender reversal and the concomitant disgrace and disaster it was thought to bring to men and the states they rule. What is more, her reputation for political ruin was intimately connected with her status as a foreigner. Not only was she of Eastern origin, but, according to Plutarch, she was also rumored to have emulated Thargelia, a renowned *hetaera* who spread sympathy for Persian interests by seducing powerful Greek men. Contrary to what the meaning of the name “Aspasia” suggests, Aspasia was not “welcomed” by most Athenians, but rather treated with suspicion because of her seductive power over men and her foreign lineage. She is thus an icon of both femininity and

⁷⁵ Cheryl Glenn, “Sex, Lies, and Manuscript: Refiguring Aspasia in the History of Rhetoric,” *College Composition and Communication* 45, no. 2 (1994), 193.

⁷⁶ Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Lives*, 221-22.

foreignness and, indeed, is often presented this way in the scholarly literature.⁷⁷ As C. Jan Swearingen writes, “To look upon the figure of Aspasia is to look upon the growing distaste the Athenians harbored toward Pericles’ foreign imports, including the sophists, Aspasia herself, and rhetoric.”⁷⁸

In the *Menexenus*, Socrates undergoes a reversal of his own by evoking Aspasia; yet, as he himself seems aware, this reversal threatens not to empower foreigners and women, but to disempower them even more. Only yesterday, he tells Menexenus, he heard Aspasia practicing a funeral oration, some of it improvised and some of it drawn, he supposes, from the oration Pericles delivered.⁷⁹ Assuring Menexenus he could recite the speech by memory, Socrates nonetheless expresses hesitation, just as he did with the speech he delivered in the *Phaedrus*: “I fear that my teacher will be angry with me if I divulge her speech (ὄν ἐξενέγκω αὐτῆς τὸν λόγον)” (236c). The phrase translated as “divulge her speech” deserves closer scrutiny. Literally “carry out of,” the verb ἐκφέρω is used to refer to the carrying out of corpses for burial—appropriate for a dialogue about honoring the dead. Yet, with regard to women, it can also mean

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Stephen G. Salkever, “Socrates’ Aspasian Oration: The Play of Philosophy and Politics in Plato’s *Menexenus*,” *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 1 (1993): 133-143; and Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong, “Aspasia: Rhetoric, Gender, and Colonial Ideology,” in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995).

⁷⁸ C. Jan Swearingen, “Plato’s Women: Alternative Embodiments of Rhetoric,” in *The Changing Tradition: Women in the History of Rhetoric*, eds. Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Jane Sutcliffe (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 40.

⁷⁹ Scholars debate whether this is a reference to the actual speech Pericles gave, or Thucydides’ version of it. See A.E. Taylor, *Plato: The Man*, 43; Charles H. Kahn, “Plato’s Funeral Oration: The Motive of the *Menexenus*,” *Classical Philology* 58, no. 4 (1963): 221, 231; and M.M. Henderson, “Plato’s *Menexenus* and the Distortion of History,” *Acta Classica* 18 (1975): 28. For whether Thucydides’ *History* might be better read as a funeral oration of which Plato might approve, see Simon Stow, “Pericles at Gettysburg and Ground Zero: Tragedy, Patriotism, and Public Mourning,” *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007).

“bring to the birth.” Given Socrates’ common metaphor of himself as a midwife helping to deliver wisdom, Socrates is suggesting that Aspasia will be angry with him if he himself gives birth to her *logos*. As a foreigner and a woman, Aspasia was barred from delivering the funeral oration. It makes little sense that Socrates would be worried about provoking Aspasia’s anger because of “the fear that the impact of her speech might be diminished if it had already been privately heard.”⁸⁰ After all, if funeral orations encourage self-delusion, why would Socrates let a woman’s scorn prevent him from trying to dampen their impact? It makes more sense that he would fear angering her by sharing words and ideas that belong to her, in the only realm in which she herself might share them—private company. Socrates alerts us, in other words, to an inequality lying at the heart of the very question of who will deliver the funeral oration. The answer to that question cannot be a female, and certainly not a foreign female.

Plato’s intention in attributing the speech to Aspasia has been the subject of vast scholarly debate. On the one hand, some write off the attribution as unimportant or ironic. Pamela Huby, for instance, writes, “It is difficult to know what to make of the statement that the speech is the work of Aspasia, but as the pretence wears very thin at the end of the dialogue, we should probably not attach too much importance to this point.”⁸¹ For Susan D. Collins and Devin Stauffer, “only the most humorless reader could take seriously Socrates’ claim.”⁸² We should not dismiss the attribution so readily, however. Whatever Menexenus’ doubts about the speech’s authorship, Plato urges us to consider why Socrates attributes the speech to Aspasia by having

⁸⁰ Lucinda Coventry, “Philosophy and Rhetoric in the Menexenus,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 109 (1989): 6.

⁸¹ Pamela Huby, “The ‘Menexenus’ Reconsidered,” *Phronesis* 2, no. 2 (1957): 109-110.

⁸² Susan D. Collins and Devin Stauffer, “The Challenge of Plato’s ‘Menexenus,’” *The Review of Politics* 61, no. 1 (1999): 88.

him insist from beginning to end that she is its creator. Were it a mere joke, we would expect a single passing remark, not repeated instances of the claim. Besides, Aspasia figures as one of two female characters in the entire Platonic corpus.⁸³ That alone gives us pause.

Others take the attribution seriously, but suggest negative motivations behind Plato's use of Aspasia—namely, an intention to disparage sophistic rhetoric. As Edmund F. Bloedow argues, considering Aspasia's role as a “co-architect of the Sophistic movement” and the speech's satirical qualities, Plato must have intended to discredit sophistic rhetoric and one of its principal sources, Aspasia.⁸⁴ Likewise, Madeleine M. Henry contends that Plato evokes Aspasia's reputation as a “buyable woman,” as well as her status as a non-citizen, to emphasize the interchangeability of funeral orators and thus to deride rhetoric.⁸⁵ Neither Bloedow nor Henry explains why another practitioner of sophistic rhetoric could not have been substituted in Aspasia's place. After all, in dialogues such as the *Protagoras* and the *Euthydemus*, Plato casts the sophists as “buyable” and itinerant, suggesting any one of them might have served the purpose Bloedow and Henry identify. Perhaps, as Susan Jarratt and Rory Ong suggest, the focus of Plato's hostility is not rhetoric, but rather the power of women and foreigners.⁸⁶ They reach

⁸³ The other is another foreigner, Diotima of Mantinea, who in the *Symposium* Socrates declares to be his teacher on erotic matters. Scholars have long debated the connection between Diotima and Aspasia, the relationship between Diotima's philosophy and Plato's, and whether Diotima is an actual historical person or the only character of Platonic invention. For an overview of these debates and relevant literature, see “Diotima (ca. 400 B.C.E.),” in *Women's Political & Social Thought: An Anthology*, eds. Hilda L. Smith and Berenice A. Carroll (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 13-14.

⁸⁴ Edmund F. Bloedow, “Aspasia and the ‘Mystery’ of the Menexenus,” *Wiener Studien* 9 (1975): 32-48.

⁸⁵ Madeleine M. Henry, *Prisoner of History: Aspasia of Miletus and Her Biographical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 32-40.

⁸⁶ Jarratt and Ong, “Aspasia,” 17-22.

this conclusion on the basis of the oration's myth of autochthony, which subordinates the role of women and conceals and silences foreigners. Yet, given the dialogue's opening scene in which Socrates disparages funeral orations, we have reason to question Plato's subscription to the ideas presented in the *Menexenus*' funeral oration. The same critique applies to Catherine Zuckert's reading of the dialogue. Though she acknowledges that the attribution of both Pericles and Socrates' funeral oration to Aspasia signifies that "neither of the understandings of Athens put forward may be entirely true or factually accurate," she takes the content of Socrates' oration to be "a description of Athenian history and politics on the basis of Socratic principles" as articulated in the *Republic*.⁸⁷ To be sure, by remarking that the oration is "a Socratic public or political work, and so not delivered in his persona as philosopher," Zuckert distances Socratic philosophy from the Socratic politics advocated in the *Menexenus*.⁸⁸ However, she does not go far enough, in my view, in interrogating the claims about Athens put forth in Socrates' Aspasian oration.⁸⁹ Socrates' derision of funeral orations undermines (or at least renders questionable) the content of the oration he then delivers. Additionally, the fact that scholars have persuasively argued that the *Republic*, read as a whole, undercuts Socrates' advocacy of the city in speech, further suggests that we should be skeptical of any commonalities between the "just" city of the *Republic* and the Athens of the oration of the *Menexenus*.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 820-21.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 825.

⁸⁹ For instance, regarding the passage where Socrates/Aspasia praises the compassion of the Athenians, Zuckert writes, "And this in light of the (in)famous Melian dialogue! Apparently Plato blamed the Melian oligarchs, who would not let the people hear the Athenian offer for the fate of the city." Such a conclusion is unjustified, I argue, given the dramatic context in which the speech is delivered. *Plato's Philosophers*, 826, n. 13.

⁹⁰ See, e.g., Strauss, *City and Man*, 50-138; Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity*, 132-157; and Roochnik, *Beautiful City*. Also see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

In contrast to these interpretations, other scholars treat the evocation of Aspasia more positively. While one scholar contends that the attribution of the speech to Aspasia serves simply to link the funeral oration to that of Pericles,⁹¹ Sara Monoson goes further, arguing that the figure of Aspasia, the female courtesan, renders Pericles' image of citizens as lovers of the city "unstable and therefore problematic, prying open space for Socrates to propose instead a familial-relations metaphor for understanding citizenship." This new metaphor is "rooted in material necessity and nature," in contrast to the Periclean model of citizens "freely choosing to enter into a relation with a city after having been attracted by its charms and virtues, opportunities and strengths."⁹² While provocative, lost in this account—as in Jarratt and Ong's—is any consideration of the ironic exchange opening the dialogue. When in his speech Socrates states that Athenians are born from the earth and nurtured by the land like a mother, Monoson simply takes these declarations at face value as indications of the citizenship metaphor Plato is proposing as an alternative to Pericles', without wondering whether Plato might be critical of the citizenship model advanced in Aspasia's speech.⁹³

The most persuasive explanations of Aspasia's role in the dialogue, in my estimation, take into account the oration's irony and make central Socrates' motivation for sharing it with Menexenus. Attending to the ironic elements of the dialogue without reducing it to pure satire, Salkever, for instance, views Socrates' attribution of the oration to Aspasia as a symbol of his aim in the dialogue of weaving together "the strands of gentleness and virility, of the female and

⁹¹ Coventry, "Philosophy," 3.

⁹² Monoson, *Plato's Democratic Entanglements*, 196-197.

⁹³ For other critiques of Monoson's argument, see Christopher P. Long, "Dancing Naked with Socrates: Pericles, Aspasia, and Socrates at Play with Politics, Rhetoric, and Philosophy," *Ancient Philosophy* 23 (2003).

foreign (Aspasia) and the male and native (Menexenus).”⁹⁴ In other words, Socrates adopts the guise of Aspasia in an effort to transform Menexenus’ focus from maintaining a position of leadership in the city to caring for human beings. Similarly, Saxonhouse argues that “Socrates’ goals appear to be to transform the politics of Menexenus from contention and striving for rule to a politics of unity and incorporation of self into the city.”⁹⁵ Aspasia, whose understanding of the city derives from the material realm of the female body in contrast to the abstract realm of the male intellect, enables Socrates to provoke this transformation. In both Salkever’s and Saxonhouses’ account, Aspasia helps bring to Menexenus and perhaps to Athens at large an element missing from the Athenian approach to political life, an element without which there can be no balance or harmony.

Like these scholars, I argue that, in attributing the speech to Aspasia, Socrates hopes to redirect Menexenus’ spiritedness away from rhetoric and towards philosophy. Yet, in my view, Aspasia affords Socrates the opportunity to do this not because of her more feminine understanding of the city, but because of the tensions her voice (or lack thereof) exposes in the Athenians’ understanding of themselves and who they are in reality. The oration Socrates gives in Aspasia’s name is hardly unique, as Salkever and Saxonhouse suggest, but rather a mixture of different examples drawn from the funeral oratory genre. What is unique is that the oration has been composed not by a native male but by a foreign female. Once the usual lies that Athenians tell themselves are attributed to a foreign woman, those lies become all the more visible. Aspasia’s words stand so odds with her own identity and experience as both foreigner and woman, and hence doubly outcast in Athenian society, that one almost cannot help but hear the

⁹⁴ Salkever, “Socrates’ Aspasian Oration,” 135.

⁹⁵ Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity*, 117.

dissonance in Athens' self-image. Aspasia's authorship effectively undercuts the speech's content and, consequently, the grounds of Athens' sense of superiority. In doing so, the speech reveals the foreigner within in a double sense: (1) it gives voice to the often silenced perspective of Aspasia, who is, literally, a foreigner within Athens and (2) it encourages Menexenus to see, from the vantage point of an outsider looking in, the cultural horizon he takes for granted as natural and true.

Taking seriously Aspasia's authorship necessitates considering what it means for Aspasia to put forth the various claims the oration makes. Throughout, we must remember that though Socrates is speaking, the words are not his, but Aspasia's. In essence, Saxonhouse's observation about Socrates' role in the *Republic* applies equally here: "We often casually say that Thrasymachus says that justice is the interest of the stronger and the character of Thrasymachus has become part of our vocabulary to describe political cynicism. But of course it is not Thrasymachus who says this; it is Socrates as *if* he were Thrasymachus."⁹⁶ Similarly, in the *Menexenus*, it is not Socrates who sings Athens' praises; it is Socrates as *if* he were Aspasia. Even if Socrates invents Aspasia as the speech's author, we must contemplate why Plato has Socrates associate the speech with Aspasia rather than himself or another person qualified to deliver it—*i.e.*, a native male. As I argue in what follows, Aspasia's authorship serves to expose as lies the praises of Athens that orators often sing, namely the myth of Athens as autochthonous, as inclusive democracy, and as benevolent defender of freedom.

V. The Lies Athenians Tell Themselves

⁹⁶ Arlene Saxonhouse, "The Socratic Narrative: A Democratic Reading of Plato's Dialogues," *Political Theory* 37, no. 6 (2009): 739.

5.1: *The Myth of Athens as Autochthonous*

The first myth Plato works to unsettle is the myth of Athens as autochthonous, or born of the earth. Aspasia presents this myth in its standard format:

To begin with, the basis of their good birth is that their ancestors were not born in a foreign land (οὐκ ἔπηλυσ οὔσα), and thus they, the descendants, did not migrate (μετοικοῦντας) to this country, with ancestors from elsewhere (ἄλλοθεν). No, they were autochthonous (αὐτόχθονας), living and dwelling in their true fatherland, nurtured not by a stepmother as others are but by a mother, the country in which they lived. And now in death, they lie in their familial places in the country that bore, nurtured, and has received them back again. (237b-c)

Myths of autochthony, such as this, appear in many extant Athenian funeral orations, but also in ancient histories, tragedies, and comedies. While some cities celebrated their founding by a prestigious foreigner, others like Athens took solace in the idea of having originated from their own. Tracing the origin of Athenians back to the land itself, myths of autochthony lent a certain nobility and continuity to Athens. In fifth century Athens, it is almost certainly the case that myths of autochthony were evoked to distinguish Athens from Sparta, as Sparta's foundation story was one of immigration and invasion.⁹⁷ Lying at the essence of this myth, then, is a claim of perpetual Athenian superiority over foreigners.

That Aspasia, a *metic* from Miletus, articulates this myth is ironic. After all, in professing the superior origins of Athenian citizens, Aspasia denigrates both herself and her people. Legend has it Miletus was founded due to a population influx from Crete. Aspasia's native city cannot, then, claim autochthonous origins; she herself comes from one of those cities over which Athens

⁹⁷ Loraux, *Born of the Earth*, 15.

claims superiority. Nor can Aspasia identify with Athens' myth of autochthony. As a *metic* and woman, Aspasia was excluded from Athenian citizenship. The myth of autochthony does not apply to a foreign woman like Aspasia, but only to native males like Menexenus. In praising the Athenians for not being of immigrant stock, Aspasia's speech disparages *metics* like herself, as well as her son with Pericles.⁹⁸ Socrates' attribution of the speech to Aspasia helps illuminate one element of Athenian funeral orations not likely to sit well with foreigners. In the mouth of an Athenian male, the myth of autochthony may appear (to Athenian men like Menexenus) natural and agreeable, but when we imagine it in the mouth of a foreign female the flip side of the praise of Athens' origins—the cloaked jab at foreigners—becomes more unavoidable.

As if to emphasize the folly and hubris of placing Athenians on a pedestal from their birth, Plato takes the standard myth of autochthony one step further by transforming it into a myth of human origin. Not only did the land of Athens give birth to the pure race that has inhabited it for generations; it gave birth to the first man. Just as we can determine if a woman is truly a mother by observing whether she possesses within her body nourishment for a child, the Athenian Earth Mother proves herself the true mother of mankind because “she alone first brought forth human nourishment” (238a). The oration follows this with an even more indefensible claim: “It is more fitting, too, to accept such a proof on behalf of the land than on behalf of a woman, for the land has not imitated woman in pregnancy and birth, but woman land” (238a). Are we to believe it is easier to ascertain from whence mankind originated than to

⁹⁸ As discussed later in this chapter, their son, Pericles the Younger, was eventually granted citizenship, in exception to the law his father put in place that prohibited citizenship to children born of non-Athenian parents. Interestingly, Pericles the Younger was one of the Athenian generals at the Battle of Arginusae who was illegally condemned to death for failing to rescue the crews of the Athenian warships lost at battle. Hence, as Zuckert notes, Aspasia “had as good if not better reasons than Socrates not simply to praise Athens,” and had reasons to be friends with Socrates given that he alone protested the illegality of the trial. *Plato's Philosophers*, 826, n. 13.

determine which woman is the mother of a particular child? This seems to be the thrust of the argument, but it is not argued so much as authoritatively stated. Furthermore, it is stated through the voice of Aspasia, herself a mother. Again, Aspasia demeans herself.

Transporting the myth of autochthony to new heights through the exclusionary *logos* of Aspasia to which Socrates gives birth, Plato uncovers the dependence on the foreign and female buried within Athens' account of itself as self-originator and provider of nourishment to others. Far from an exceptional race upon which others depend, Athens depends on others for its exceptionalism. That is, its exceptionalism requires "inferior" others. The Athenian view of themselves as superior derives not, then, from any internal standards of superiority, but from external ones. Like the Dorian interlocutors in Plato's *Laws*, the Athenians conceive of the best city in terms of its ability to dominate others, as opposed to its ability to rule itself. Their greatness thus relies wholly on foreigners, though they hide this from themselves. It relies too on the women who provide them their lives, but who are themselves slaves to laws not of their making. By having Aspasia articulate the Athenian male fantasy of autochthony, Plato underscores the discord in a sense of superiority that depends on the belittlement of others, including the native of a city that once paid tribute to Athens and the bearer of a great Athenian statesman's child.

5.2: The Myth of Athens as Inclusive Democracy

Plato next undermines the myth of Athens as an inclusive democracy. Claiming the Athenians were educated by gods, the oration shifts to the polity on the grounds that "it is necessary to show that those who came before us were nurtured in a noble regime, on account of which they were good, as are men now, including these who have died" (238c). From his earlier

conversation with Menexenus, we already know Socrates' judgment on this matter. If Athenian funeral orations sometimes praise wretches, then Athens must have its share of bad men and therefore the polity cannot simply be noble.⁹⁹ Aspasia's speech ostensibly contradicts this conclusion, however, by echoing Thucydides' pronouncement that Athens—a democracy in name—was in truth ruled by one man (Pericles): “Although one man calls her a democracy, another something else that pleases him, in truth she is an aristocracy with the approval of the multitude” (238c-d).¹⁰⁰ Continuing on, we learn Athenians hand over government posts “to those who are consistently deemed (δόξασιν) to be best; and, unlike what happens in other cities, no one has ever been left out because of weakness or poverty or the obscurity of his father, nor has anyone ever been honored for the opposites. Rather, there is one standard: he who is deemed (δόξας) to be wise or good has authority and rules” (238d). It is not stated that these rulers *are* wise or good, but that they are *deemed* to be so. The repetition of the verb δοκέω, with its connection to δόξα (“opinion”), undermines the suggestion that the Athenian polity is ruled by the wisest. As Coventry remarks, “Honour is given [...] not to merit, but to the appearance of merit; and we have been told at 235d, 236a, on what the Athenians base their opinion—they will think well of anyone who praises them.”¹⁰¹

Plato's careful wordplay in this section of the dialogue prepares us for the Aspasian irony that follows it via a statement applauding the equality of birth enjoyed in Athens:

For the other cities have been constructed from all sorts of unequal human beings (ἐκ παντοδαπῶν [...] ἀνθρώπων εἰσι καὶ ἀνωμάλων), with the result that their regimes—

⁹⁹ Salkever, “Socrates' Aspasian Oration,” 138.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 2.65.

¹⁰¹ Coventry, “Philosophy,” 12.

tyrannies and oligarchies—are also unequal (ἀνόμαλοι). They live, therefore, regarding some as slaves and others as masters. But since we and our people have all grown as brothers of one mother, we do not think it right to be slaves or masters of one another. Indeed, our equality of birth (ἡ ἰσογονία), our natural equality, makes it necessary to seek equality under law, legal equality, and to yield to one another for no reason other than reputation for virtue and prudence. (238e-239a)

Spoken from the lips of an Athenian male to an Athenian male audience, this statement would not be at all unsettling. Yet as the words of a foreign woman directed to a mixed audience of citizens and foreigners, the effect is disconcerting. Athenians can only boast about the homogeneity and equality of their citizenry because they have excluded from citizenship the bulk of the population: women, *metics*, and slaves. By having Aspasia—a foreign woman—speak through the voice of Socrates, Plato calls attention to the silencing of non-male, non-Athenian voices. Even as a relatively free foreign woman, Aspasia cannot speak in the assembly, deliver a funeral oration, or exercise any kind of direct political power, even if her knowledge of politics exceeds that of most Athenian men. Virtue and prudence do not dominate; masculinity and ancestry do.

As Aspasia's oration reveals, the equality on the basis of which Athenians judge themselves superior to foreigners is only made possible by hiding from view the inequalities pervading their society. Athens is just as heterogeneous as any other polity, as Aspasia's existence proves. The myth of Athens as an inclusive democracy in which only equals exist is true only when one ignores the presence of foreigners and women—not to mention actual slaves—in Athenian society. This is exactly what Athenians tend to do. In their funeral orations, they applaud themselves for being a society of equals without stopping to consider those

excluded from this equality. Plato's philosophic funeral oration, on the other hand, reminds them of this inequality by keeping in view someone who, despite her proven intelligence in political matters, is regarded as a lesser individual. Their own words, coming from a foreign woman, in effect render more visible the disjunction between the Athenian self-image and Athens in reality.

5.3: *The Myth of Athens as Benevolent Defender of Freedom*

In the remainder of the oration, Plato largely focuses on exposing the lies inherent in Athens' view of itself as a benevolent defender of freedom. Specifically, Aspasia's account of Athenian history purports to show that Athenians performed noble deeds "out of the belief that it is necessary on behalf of freedom (ἐλευθερίας) to fight both Greeks on behalf of other Greeks, and Barbarians on behalf of all the Greeks" (239b). Beginning with the Persian Wars, it first paints an extensive portrait of Persia as an imperialist aggressor enslaving its neighbors one by one. Then, with dramatic flair, the oration plays up the heroism of the Athenians while downplaying the contributions of the Spartans. The battle of Thermopylae is not even mentioned. Aspasia's oration then seamlessly transitions into the Peloponnesian War without mentioning the Athenian empire. Rather, the war is chalked up to the envy of other Greeks. There is no hint, as in Thucydides' *History*, of the growth of the Athenian empire and the concomitant fear of domination felt by other Greek states.¹⁰² Athens remains a hapless victim of fate, "pushed (κατέστησεν)" "unwillingly (ἄκουσαν)" into war with other Greeks (242a). The omission of any mention of the Athenian empire is striking, as in other famous funeral orations the empire is referenced; indeed, in Pericles' funeral oration, the empire figures prominently. Just as earlier Aspasia was silent about the inadequacies and inequalities of Athens, now she is silent about

¹⁰² Cf. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.23.

what Athenians considered the greatest proof of their superiority—their empire. This silence is all the more conspicuous owing to Aspasia’s ties with Miletus, which defected from the Athenian-dominated Delian League during the Peloponnesian War. In effect, Aspasia blames her native city for the war rather than defending it on the grounds that it feared Athens’ increasingly strong grip. The omission of any mention of the Athenian empire thus implies that what the Athenians wish to hide from themselves is that their empire was the cause of the Peloponnesian War, that they themselves are to blame for the Greeks fighting the Greeks.

The motif of Athenian innocence persists throughout Aspasia’s account. On the one hand, Athens is depicted as exhibiting mercy towards her fellow Greeks: “[The Athenians] believed that whereas they ought to wage war against the Barbarians all the way to destruction, they should fight those of their own race only to the point of victory, and should not let the anger of a single city destroy the community of the Greeks” (242d). Contrasted with this portrait of an Athens restrained in its use of violence and fiercely loyal to the cause of Greek liberty is a depiction of other Greeks as so overcome by jealousy as to place their own self-interest above the greater good of Greece: “the rest of the Greeks came to desire victory over our city so much that they dared to make a treaty with our most hated enemy, the King, whom they and we in a common effort had expelled; in private they entreated him to return, a Barbarian against Greeks, and they assembled against our city all the Greeks and Barbarians” (243b-c). Again, absent from this account is any acknowledgment of the role Athenian imperialism played in sparking the Peloponnesian War. Rather, Athens is depicted as a benevolent defender of freedom, a vision that later reappears during Aspasia’s account of the Corinthian War. After explaining that the Athenians became so disenchanted with the rest of the Greece that they vowed never again to defend other Greeks from slavery, the oration reiterates the theme of Athenian benevolence by

stating, “if someone should wish to accuse our city justly, only by saying this would he accuse correctly: that she is always too given to pity and a servant of the weak” (244e). One cannot help but wonder what the Melians would say to this. Again, Athens is “forced” into war because of its benevolence and devotion to the Greek race; only the briefest mention of the recovery during the war of her walls and fleet alludes to the re-growth of Athens’ imperial ambitions.

Near the end of her account of the major deeds performed by Athenians, Aspasia returns to the myth of autochthony with which her entire oration began—a return to the earth that, like Socrates’ own return, helps illuminate the true character of Athenians. The myth is recalled to make sense of Athens’ involvement in the Corinthian War. According to Aspasia, the cause of Athens’ intervention can be traced to its hatred of everything barbarian:

As you well know, the nobility and freedom of our city are this firm and sound, and we are by nature (φύσει) Barbarian-hating (μισοβάρβαρον) because, unmixed with Barbarians (ἀμιγεῖς βαρβάρων), we are purely (εἰλικρινῶς) Greek. There live among us none of the descendants of Pelops, or Cadmus, or Egyptus, or Danaus, nor the many others who are Greeks (Ἕλληνες) by convention (νόμῳ) but Barbarians (βάρβαροι) by nature (φύσει). Rather, Greeks through and through, we live unmixed with Barbarians (οὐ μίξοβάρβαροι οἰκοῦμεν), which has given our city its pure hatred of foreign natures (τὸ μῖσος ἐντέτηκε τῇ πόλει τῆς ἀλλοτρίας φύσεως). (245c-d)

Aspasia’s earlier exaltation of the autochthonous origin of the Athenians seems innocuous in comparison to this vitriolic condemnation of anything foreign, which stands in stark contrast to the distinction made in Pericles’ Funeral Oration between the Spartans, with their policies of *xenelasia* (exclusion of foreigners) and constant preparation for war, and the Athenians, who throw open their city to the world and enjoy the luxuries of life rather than submitting to a harsh

military education even in times of peace.¹⁰³ As Aspasia makes clear, the Athenians are not as welcoming of foreigners as Pericles made them out to be. In fact, their treatment of foreigners more closely resembles that of their most recent worst enemy, the Spartans.

Interestingly, Aspasia's reflections on the singularity of Athens suggest that Plato's *Menexenus* is not—as some scholars have maintained—merely aimed at promoting Pan-Hellenism, but rather at encouraging less hostile treatment of all foreigners, both *xenoi* and *barbaroi*.¹⁰⁴ After all, though earlier Aspasia speaks of the need to protect the community of Greeks, in the passage above she implies that the division between Greeks and barbarians is in fact tenuous, unlike the division between Athenians and everyone else. Other Greeks are Greeks by *nomos*, but they are barbarians by *phusis* and the Athenians hate “foreign natures (τῆς ἀλλοτρίας φύσεως)”. Drawing on the distinction between *nomos* and *phusis* that the sophists introduced into Greek thought, the implication of this statement is that Athenians are fundamentally different from other races; if others speak and act similarly it is due only to their education. Nickolas Pappas and Mark Zelcer thus observe in the *Menexenus* a tripartite hierarchy of peoples: Athenians, non-Athenian Greeks, and barbarians.¹⁰⁵ While they argue that, in granting a “mixed” status to other Greeks, Aspasia's speech softens the stark difference between Athenians and other Greeks as implied by the myth of autochthony, it is equally if not more plausible to read the above passage as re-emphasizing the gulf between Athenians and other Greeks. For though education may have allowed other Greeks to imitate Athenians, the speech

¹⁰³ For further analysis of this distinction see Avramenko, *Courage*, 87-98.

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., Kahn, “Plato's Funeral Oration,” 230; and Bruce Rosenstock, “Socrates as Revenant: A Reading of the *Menexenus*,” *Phoenix* 48, no. 4 (1994): 336.

¹⁰⁵ Nickolas Pappas and Mark Zelcer, “Plato's *Menexenus* as a History that Falls into Patterns,” *Ancient Philosophy* 33, no. 1 (2013): 19-31.

makes clear that nature is what counts and, when it comes to nature, other Greeks are barbarians. Echoing Pericles' assertion in the funeral oration that the Athenians are courageous by nature whereas the Spartans are courageous only because of their education, Aspasia's speech brings to light the underlying insinuation of Pericles' claim: other Greeks are barbarians disguised as Greeks. They may speak and act like Athenians, but they are imitators or imposters.

When we take into account Aspasia's authorship of the speech, the Athenians' claim to purity of blood unravels. For, if mixing with barbarians—which, judging by the reference to blood and descendents, surely means procreating with—produces children of barbarian nature, then Athens cannot claim to be a city of purebloods. After all, if other Greeks are by nature barbarians, then Aspasia herself must by nature be barbarian. Her son with Pericles is therefore also barbarian by nature, being of mixed blood. Though under Pericles' own citizenship law of 451/50 B.C. their son Pericles the Younger was disqualified from citizenship for having a non-Athenian mother, around 430/429 B.C he was granted citizenship.¹⁰⁶ Given that the *Menexenus* is set later in Athens' history, as evidenced by the mention of the Corinthian War, this means that at least one Athenian citizen—a prominent one at that—was not in fact of pure blood. Ancient reports of other illegitimate sons being granted citizenship and of the bestowing of citizenship on

¹⁰⁶ Only two primary sources attest to the existence of Pericles' citizenship law: Plutarch, *Pericles*, 37.1-5, and Aristotle, "Athenian Constitution," 26.4. Inconsistent chronology and the dearth of primary evidence has led to much scholarly debate on the law's purpose and scope. For more on this debate, see Cynthia Patterson, "Athenian Citizenship Law," in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Law*, eds. Michael Gagarin and David Cohen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 267-89; and Cynthia Patterson, *Pericles' Citizenship Law of 451-50 B.C.* (New York: Arno Press, 1981). The reason Pericles the Younger received citizenship is also contested. Most accept Plutarch's claim that the Athenians granted it out of pity for Pericles losing his two legitimate sons to the plague. Edwin Carawan makes a convincing case, however, that Pericles may have convinced the Athenians to pass an amendment to the law allowing fathers with no surviving legitimate sons to adopt an illegitimate son and thus to continue the legacy of their house and name. Among other evidence, he cites cases of other illegitimate sons who were granted Athenian citizenship. "Pericles the Younger and the Citizenship Law," *The Classical Journal* 103, no. 4 (2008): 383-406.

large groups of foreigners during the Peloponnesian War, combined with the fact that Pericles' citizenship law likely did not apply retroactively, suggest Pericles the Younger was not the only Athenian citizen of mixed blood.¹⁰⁷ Hence, Aspasia's authorship of the speech points to the very evidence that undermines the claim put forth about the pure blooded nature of Athenians. It also suggests that Plato is not merely interested in promoting Pan-Hellenism but rather friendly engagement with all foreigners, for it reveals the illusory nature of the Greek – barbarian distinction. How can the Athenians hate barbarians if, according to their own understanding of what it means to be barbarian, they themselves are barbarians?

In sum, by having a female *metic* give a distorted version of Athenian military history, Plato turns on its head the myth of Athens as benevolent defender of freedom. Demonstrating Athens' inability to recount its deeds abroad without distorting the truth, the funeral oration of the *Menexenus* thus reveals itself to be philosophic. Rather than promote a pleasant communal self-delusion, the oration works to unearth the lies Athens tells itself by juxtaposing those lies with a person whose identity bespeaks the truth. As we will see, by closing with a speech from the dead, the oration emphasizes one last time that what the Athenians need are not orations that provoke unquestioning belief in a shared delusion of Athenian superiority over others, but speeches that incite self-examination by bringing to light the foreigner within. That is, they need speeches that will allow them to view the Athenian cultural horizon with a degree of distance, as though it were not their own *nomos* but rather that of a foreigner.

VI. Unearthing the Lies We Tell Ourselves

¹⁰⁷ Carawan, "Pericles the Younger"; and Mogens Herman Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles, and Ideology*, trans. J.A. Crook (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

Following what most agree is a pastiche of one or more Athenian funeral orations, Aspasia's oration adopts a more serious tone as it comes to a close. Baffling, too, is the multiplication of identities in the dialogue, for now the orator claims to have a message from the dead to deliver. As Salkever puts it, "The dialogue thus presents itself as work of manifold invention and concealment. Plato invents Socrates, who may or may not invent a speech-writing Aspasia, who in turn invents a unison chorus of dead Athenians."¹⁰⁸ Moreover, as aforementioned, both Socrates and Aspasia are dead, for the dialogue's dramatic date lies some time after the Corinthian War. What does Plato mean to suggest with the manifold identities haunting the dialogue? Why have the dead (Socrates) speak the words of the dead (Aspasia) who herself speaks the words of the dead (Athenian soldiers)? We will consider in a moment what all this concealment of authorship may mean. For now, keeping the issue in mind, let us turn to the content of the dead soldiers' speech.

Speaking first to their sons and then to their parents, the dead attempt in both speeches to turn their listeners towards a more self-referential conception of what it means to be best. First, urging their sons to pursue virtue, the dead fathers insist, "if we surpass you in virtue, know that our victory brings us shame, whereas our defeat, should we be defeated, brings us happiness" (247a). In challenging their sons to bequeath a more virtuous legacy to their children than they themselves inherited, the dead encourage them to judge themselves not in comparison to foreigners but to their own fathers. In the speech to their parents, the comparison becomes even more narrowly circumscribed as the reference point or standard by which one is to judge oneself is no longer one's ancestors, but oneself. The dead counsel their parents to adopt this measure of self-worth by beseeching them to practice self-dependency: "The old saying 'Nothing too much'

¹⁰⁸ Salkever, "Socrates' Aspasian Oration," 135.

certainly seems to be nobly said, and it is in fact well said. For if a man depends on himself for everything or nearly everything that brings happiness and does not depend on other human beings, upon whose doing well or badly his own fortunes would be compelled to wander, he is the one who is best prepared to live” (247e-248a). As the speech implies, the Athenian practice of measuring oneself according to Athens’ power over foreigners is a fragile system of measurement, for it depends on countless others. Aspasia’s authorship of the speech points, furthermore, to the tendency of people who base their self-worth on the acquisition of power to violate the proverb “nothing too much,” for it reminds of the massive population of women, foreigners, and slaves from whom a relatively small group of Athenian males withhold power.

More generally, the dialogue’s bringing to life of a multitude of voices foregrounds the plurality of Athens, as against the united Athens that funeral orations such as Pericles’ tend to present. However much orators identify Athens with a particular character, the truth is more complicated. Athens is not (merely) the powerful, collective actor that the funeral orators display to their audience. It is comprised of a variety of individuals, including those who have come before and those yet to come. Athens is not synonymous with any one of its people. Anyone unfamiliar with Athens other than as it is presented in an Athenian funeral oration would be surprised to encounter Socrates or Aspasia. By juxtaposing the rhetoric of an Athenian “self” with the voices of some of the most diverse individuals living in Athens, Plato calls attention to the way orators try to persuade Athenians to see themselves in a certain way. This not only raises questions about the function of funeral orations in Athenian society, but also highlights the role of individual agency in determining the city’s identity or identities.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ John Zumbrunnen makes a similar argument about Thucydides’ presentation of Pericles’ funeral oration. Against the backdrop of Pericles’ oration, he argues, is the plurality of the silent demos. As Zumbrunnen puts it, “Whatever the stature of Pericles, we should thus read his

The oration ends by reflecting on the role of the city or—appropriately for a dialogue with many identities—the *roles* of the city. According to the speech, “since fate has cast her without design into the role of an heir and a son to those who have died—into a father to their sons and a guardian to their parents—our city takes complete care of all at all times” (249b-c). The city is a caretaker to everyone connected to the funeral oration. It takes the place of the dead, offering assurance that the essential roles they filled in their community will continue to be performed. Yet, what of the dead Socrates? Can the city that killed him provide the sort of care-taking he once gave? Can Menexenus be the kind of caretaker Athens needs, a Socratic one? Perhaps Plato’s *Menexenus* is an attempt to answer that question, to honor not a wretch but the wisest of men in the manner in which he would have liked to be honored—through the continuation of the philosophic tradition to which he gave birth.

Indeed, true to the aporetic nature of Socratic inquiry, the *Menexenus* leaves readers wondering how to carry on the role that Socrates performed of awakening his fellow citizens from their self-delusions. After all, even Plato’s philosophic funeral oration seems to fail to transform Menexenus. Reminded the speech was that of “Aspasia the Milesian (Ἀσπασίας τῆς Μιλησίας),” Menexenus says, “By Zeus, Socrates, this Aspasia you speak of must be blessed if, though a woman (γυνῆ), she is able to compose such a speech” (249d). By referring to her for the first and only time not just as Aspasia but as “Aspasia the Milesian,” Socrates calls attention to Aspasia’s status as a foreigner. In doing so, he underlines the fact that this speech and Pericles’,

Funeral Oration as another attempt to define the ‘identity’ of *hoi Athenaioi*, not as a simple expression of that identity. In this sense, Pericles faces the same task as any other Athenian who seeks to lead the demos, and his role in Athenian politics is fundamentally like that of any other would-be elite. He must draw from his political judgment and rhetorical skill to try to persuade the assembled Athenians to accept his account of who they are as a unit of action and thus to follow his advice for the immediate future.” *Silence and Democracy: Athenian Politics in Thucydides’ History* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 91.

both of which glorify Athens, owe their existence to a foreigner living within Athens. If it is difficult to praise Athenians before an audience of foreigners, then what does it mean to have a foreigner not only listen to such praise, but deliver it? Menexenus does not stop to consider the question, or even to raise it; he is preoccupied instead with the author's gender. However, his skepticism that the speech could belong to a woman betrays his lack of understanding.

Menexenus has not learned anything, if he applauds the speech and demeans the woman.

Ultimately, he has failed to grasp either that a person should be judged based only on virtue and prudence, or that the content of a speech like this is not admirable. He remains stuck in the cave, gratified by the shadows Socrates has presented to him, unable to see their true essence despite Socrates' best efforts. Yet, he now expresses interest not in hearing the state-sanctioned funeral oration, but in hearing more of "Aspasia's" speeches—not exactly mission accomplished, but a step in the right direction.

The fact that Socrates' funeral oration does not succeed in turning Menexenus' soul such that it can see the Athenian *nomos* at a distance should not convince us that such attempts are futile. Socrates does help Menexenus insofar as he persuades him to engage with him more. Furthermore, as we saw from the *Phaedrus*, sometimes Socrates is even more successful in turning his interlocutors towards philosophy. However, surveying the Platonic dialogues, it is clear that the extent to which Socrates is successful ultimately depends on his interlocutor, as Zuckert explains:

From the narrated dialogues, we learn that Socrates did not always have the effect he sought. He was not able to convince most of his young interlocutors to pursue a life of philosophy. He was not even able to persuade some of them to act more justly in conventional, political terms. His comments as narrator nevertheless shows us what he

intended as well as his own recognition of the limited kinds of effects he could have on his interlocutors in a single conversation.¹¹⁰

That Socrates was often unsuccessful is no reason to deny the value of his conversations with others. If the Socrates depicted in the dialogues is Plato's ideal model of a philosopher, then perhaps he represents the most that a philosopher can hope to achieve. In the end, very few can break free of their city's particular *nomos* and reunite with the true self. Very few can do this because it involves recognizing the foreigner within—a shift in perspective too difficult and uncomfortable for most. Nonetheless, the conversations Socrates has with his interlocutors are meaningful because, at the least, they allow Socrates to see himself through his interlocutors' eyes and thus to look at himself from the perspective of someone with a different cultural horizon. Whether this leads him to reject his beliefs or reaffirm them, he benefits from questioning himself. As we will see in the next and final chapter of this dissertation, this is also the reason Plato wrote and the reason we should engage his writings.

¹¹⁰ Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, 23.

CHAPTER 5: ENGAGING PLATO THE FOREIGNER

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.”

-T.S. Eliot, from “Quartet No. 4: Little Gidding”

In closing, I wish to return to the implications of my argument for political theory, as introduced in Chapter 1. On one level, by challenging the dominant view of Plato as hostile to foreigners (or, at least, hostile to *barbaroi*), this dissertation contributes to political theorists’ understanding of one of the most significant and influential thinkers in the history of Western political thought. This is valuable in itself, if only as a correction to the historical record. Yet, more significant than this is what emerges *that can speak to us today* from a better understanding of Plato’s thoughts on foreigners. In this vein, I have argued that Plato’s vision of cross-cultural dialogue as central to the activity of philosophy has important implications for the contemporary practice of political theory. Namely, it lends substantial support to the comparative political theory movement and its calls to expand the canon. If Plato envisions political theorizing as, in large part, a comparative enterprise, then contemporary political theorists must ask what is lost by not reviving this practice of political theory. This dissertation shows us, in short, that comparative political theory is not a deviation from the tradition of Western political thought, but a restoration of it.

Beyond this, Plato’s thoughts on the relationship between philosophy and the foreigner make a compelling case in their own right for cross-cultural dialogue. As we have seen, cross-cultural dialogue can be epistemologically beneficial. Its epistemological value stems from its ability to provoke us to philosophize together, an activity at once conducive to the quest for

wisdom and generative of friendship. Plato is careful, however, to distinguish the kind of cross-cultural engagement he imagines from the kind often promoted in democracy. His version does not involve an attitude of cultural relativism, or acceptance of all ways of life as equally good. Chapter 2 on the *Republic* demonstrates the problems with what Plato casts as the democratic approach to foreigners. Though this approach fancies that it allows for the peaceful co-existence of any and all forms of life, the dialogue shows that such co-existence is illusory. Choices must always be made that favor some ways of life over others. Even non-interference, or allowing everyone to do as they please, ends up sanctioning the dominance of some over others. Nonetheless, Plato values to some extent the democratic soul's openness to alternative forms of life, for philosophy requires the ability to adopt a sense of critical distance towards one's native *nomos*. He also values, however, the aristocratic soul's concern for the truth and commitment to living the virtuous life. Plato seeks to balance these two necessary conditions of philosophy through the open-minded, yet discerning practice of dialectic conversation. Participants engage in a mutual search for truth guided by the aim of harmonizing the seemingly discordant notes of their conflicting cultural horizons. In the end, they may not reach agreement, but the experience of attempting to merge horizons helps to strengthen the wisdom of each while building ties of friendship. If encounters with contradictory *nomoi* are channeled so as to give rise to such conversations rather than cultural relativism, such encounters can therefore be of great epistemological value.

Of course, Plato recognizes that, whatever the good of bringing citizens and foreigners together in dialectic conversation, places that welcome diversity often encourage dogmatic toleration of all ways of life and, in so doing, invite tyranny. Provoking conversations such as that depicted in the *Republic* while facing a tide of cultural relativism is by no means an easy

task, one no doubt doomed to fail on many occasions. Nevertheless, in revealing the at least equally pernicious effects of places that shun diversity, Plato pushes us to consider whether the potential benefits of multiculturalism might outweigh the risks. The dangers of excluding foreigners were elucidated in Chapter 3 on the *Laws*. There it was shown that regimes that stifle cross-cultural dialogue, such as the “armed camps” of Sparta and Crete, also stifle learning. Without voices to contradict the dominant beliefs of their society, members of armed camps become locked in customary ways of thinking and behaving that may not truly be best. Even a community with ideal *nomoi* could never really be ideal if its members were driven towards virtuous action by habit rather than virtue. To flourish, an individual and a regime require more than an empty, mindless reenactment of traditions out of blind obedience to ancestors. Such a state of affairs is arguably as tragic and tyrannical as that of a democracy that bucks against discrimination of any kind. In fact, it might be more tragic. The Athenian Stranger himself alludes to this when, addressing poets wishing to enter their city in speech, he says, “our whole political regime is constructed as the imitation of the most beautiful and best way of life, which we at least assert to be really the truest tragedy” (817b). As the *Republic* teaches, an imitation of something cannot measure up to the thing it imitates. This is because it lacks the essence of the original. However well instructed, one cannot become best without active consciousness driving one’s actions. For this reason, as well as the possibility that one might be mistaken in one’s judgment of the good life, cross-cultural dialogue is valuable. It helps to stimulate consciousness, serving much the same role as the Socratic gadfly.

Ultimately, philosophy itself can be understood as an effort to provoke engagement with a foreigner—the foreigner within. As argued in Chapter 4 on the *Phaedrus* and *Menexenus*, the philosopher aims to help individuals see themselves at a distance, as though they were foreigners

or people with a divergent *nomos*. Indeed, such self-examination lies at the core of philosophy. This is apparent from Socrates' mirroring of Phaedrus through the prism of the *metic* Lysias' speech and his mirroring of Menexenus through the voice of Aspasia. In both cases, self-examination involves seeing the *nomoi* of one's native land through a foreigner's perspective. This experience of travelling outside oneself, frequently with the help of cross-cultural engagement, is vital to the pursuit of self-knowledge because, without some measure of distance from oneself, the cultural patterns that inform one's thoughts and actions can be taken for granted as natural and unquestionable. By refracting one's self-image with the help of a foreigner's perspective, philosophy helps one discover what in the ordering of one's soul is in discord or harmony with the true self, the properly ordered soul. The philosophic injunction to know thyself thus involves seeking out the foreigner within, often by engagement with the foreigner without.

I. The Foreigner Within Political Theory

What emerges from the close reading of the treatment of foreigners in Plato's dialogues presented in this dissertation is the revelation of the foreignness within contemporary political theory. Plato in this sense serves as the voice of the foreigner helping political theorists to see themselves at a distance, to see the dominant practices and outlooks of contemporary Western political theory as though they were not their own. Of course, Plato could not have foreseen the direction that Western political theory would take. Nonetheless, in encountering a practice of political theory that—however much considered “our own” and at the foundation of the work many political theorists do—diverges in a significant way from how political theory is practiced today, we are forced to confront many questions. Namely, we must ascertain whether or not this

divergence is cause for alarm. Is Plato right about the importance of cross-cultural dialogue, or are we in fact better off with the more insular model of political theory to which we have grown accustomed? Can we give a viable defense of current practices, one that responds to the concerns Plato might have? If not, how can we reconcile holding up Plato's corpus as one of the great masterpieces of Western political thought while dismissing a central element of his vision of political theory?

1.1: An Egyptian Myth on Writing

To grasp further the tensions in contemporary Western political theory that come to light when we engage Plato the foreigner, the remainder of this dissertation turns to one of the few reflections that Plato offers on his own practice of political theory: the *Phaedrus*' Egyptian myth on writing.¹ Insisting that they still need to discuss what is beautiful (καλῶς) in writing and what is unseemly (ἀπρεπῶς), Socrates relates a myth he heard from their predecessors (τῶν προτέρων) (274b-c). The story is set in Naucratis, Egypt. It tells of how the ancient Egyptian god, Theuth, once presented his inventions—including numbers, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, checkers, dice, and writing—to the Egyptian king Thamous. Before taking Theuth's recommendation and spreading these inventions throughout Egypt, King Thamous wanted to know what good each would do. Accordingly, he asked Theuth to give a defense of each invention. When it came to writing, Theuth maintained it would increase men's intelligence and enhance their memories. King Thamous was not convinced. On the contrary, he predicted, writing will atrophy people's memories, for people will come to "remember things by relying on marks made by others (ὕπ' ἀλλοτρίων), from outside themselves (ἔξωθεν), not on their own inner resources (οὐκ ἔνδοθεν

¹ We cannot know for sure how the philosophic thinking of Plato differed from that of his teacher Socrates, but we do know that Plato wrote whereas Socrates did not.

αὐτοὺς ὑφ' αὐτῶν), and so writing will make the things they have learnt disappear from their minds” (275a). As such, he reasoned that Theuth’s invention might be better regarded as “a potion (φάρμακον) for jogging the memory (ὑπομνήσεως), not for remembering (μνήμης)” (275a). His worry, in essence, is that writing will detract from true remembrance, which relies on nothing other than one’s mind, and will thereby foster the appearance of wisdom rather than actual wisdom.

Scholars have long reflected on the seeming incongruence of a prolific writer critiquing writing in a written work. If these critiques are read as self-referential, then Plato seems to be condemning his own work. Indeed, this is the traditional interpretation, that the critiques of writing in the *Phaedrus* (through the Egyptian myth and, later, Socrates, who complains that writings cannot answer questions or defend themselves, nor say different things to different people) offer a straightforward presentation of Plato’s own views on the matter.² Advocates of this interpretation often point to the consistency between Socrates’ declaration in the *Phaedrus* that writing should be merely an amusing pastime to help jog the memory later in life (276d-e) and the *Seventh Letter*’s assertion that no person will ever try to communicate serious doctrines through writing (344c-d). Other scholars contend that by expressing these criticisms of writing through writing, Plato is implicitly conveying his approval of writing. They propose that Plato’s writings may themselves offer an escape from the criticisms Socrates raises. Ronna Burger, one of the chief proponents of this interpretation, puts it thusly: “By questioning its own clarity and

² See, e.g., Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R. Hackforth, 162-64; Gerrit Jacob de Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1969), 20-22; Christopher Rowe, “The Argument and Structure of Plato’s *Phaedrus*,” *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 212 (1986): 113-116, 120; and D. White, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 259-260. Jacques Derrida famously traces, through the works of Plato and beyond, the Western philosophical tradition of the debasement of writing and its repression of “full” speech. See *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, corrected ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

firmness, the Platonic dialogue refuses to present itself as a replacement for living thought; by transforming itself into a playful ‘reminder to the knower,’ the dialogue demonstrates its serious worth.”³ In other words, the critique of writing is deliberately built into the dialogue so that readers will be moved to think for themselves and not to rely on Plato’s word, thus escaping the problem with writing that the dialogue identifies.

Arguably, part of the way the Egyptian myth on writing encourages independent thought is by highlighting the diversity of voices at the heart of Plato’s dialogues. Plato calls attention to this diversity, and how it bears on our reading of his dialogues, immediately following the Egyptian myth. For, upon hearing the myth, Phaedrus retorts, “Socrates, it doesn’t take much for you to make up stories from Egypt and anywhere else in the world you feel like,” to which Socrates responds that in the olden days people “were so foolish that they happily listened to oak and rock, as long as they told the truth. But perhaps it matters to you who the speaker is, or what country he’s from (ποδαπός), because you are not concerned only with whether or not he is right” (275b-c).⁴ Though Phaedrus accepts Socrates’ admonition without hesitation, one might note some contradiction in Socrates’ position. First of all, if it does not matter who the speaker is,

³ Burger, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 105. Also see, among others, Griswold, *Self-Knowledge*, esp. 219-222; Nicholson, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 75, 78-79; Waterfield, “Introduction,” xxxviii-xliii; and Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship*, 144.

⁴ In Plato’s *Charmides*, it is Socrates who is rebuked for caring about who the speaker is (161c). The rebuke comes after Charmides proposes that temperance is minding one’s own business, and Socrates accuses him of having heard this from Critias or some other wise man. When Charmides asks if it matters from whom he heard it, Socrates admits that it does not matter who said it, only whether or not it is true. This is followed by a discussion in which the topic arises of whether one is temperate or intemperate in writing down and reading the words of another, as this might seem to be a deviation from one’s own business. A full interpretation of this discussion lies beyond the scope of the present work, but it is interesting that Socrates is able to engage Charmides in conversation in the first place by pretending to have learned a cure for headaches from a Thracian physician while on campaign. Why does he claim Thracian origin for the “charms” or beautiful speeches that will cure the whole person by engendering temperance in his soul? Could this be a sign of the importance of cross-cultural engagement?

then why does Socrates attribute the critique of writing to an Egyptian god? As Mary Nichols argues, “Although Socrates claims that one should be concerned only with whether Thamus’ words are true, and not with ‘who is speaking them and where he comes from’ (275c), if these issues made no difference Socrates would have no reason to tell the story rather than simply present Thamus’ argument against writing.” Moreover, she points out, Thamus himself regards the source of words as important, for he suspects Theuth may be partial to writing because it is his invention.⁵ This echoes the major revelation of Socrates’ first speech on love—that Lysias’ speech is in fact that of a wolf in disguise. As Ferrari maintains, Socrates’ injunction not to care about where a speech comes from reflects an ideal that is too simplistic for a world where pedigree and truth have been sundered.⁶ Knowing who the speaker is helps to reveal whether the speaker means to do us good or harm with his speech. While effect may not always follow from intention, such considerations can be valuable in determining whether or not a speech is true. In sum, we should not accept, as readily as Phaedrus does, Socrates’ claim that the speaker does not matter. In reading a Platonic writing, it may in fact be important from whence a particular idea comes. The dialogue form itself suggests as much, insofar as any given statement does not mean the same thing coming from Socrates as it does coming from another character.

1.2: The Diversity of Plato

To discover why Plato speaks through different voices, we might consider why Socrates does so in the *Phaedrus*. Specifically, why does he attribute the critique of writing to an Egyptian god rather than voicing it himself? The most obvious reason is to augment the persuasiveness of

⁵ Nichols, *Socrates on Friendship*, 145.

⁶ Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, 216-18.

the message. As discussed during our brief foray into the *Timaeus* in Chapter 3, the ancient Greeks associated Egypt with ancient wisdom, a repository of memories reaching far into the past. Casting the critique of writing as the words of an Egyptian god therefore “immediately adds an aura of authoritativeness and antiquarianism to what Socrates is about to say.”⁷ Indeed, this is arguably what Phaedrus accuses Socrates of doing when he remarks that Socrates would have no difficulty making up stories from Egypt or anywhere he pleases. Phaedrus is someone who attaches a lot of weight to reputation, who exhibits “a penchant for repeating what other people say”—particularly what prominent authority figures say.⁸ In fact, as his blind admiration of the speechwriter Lysias shows, he tends to suppose that those with reputations for a particular skill or knowledge are always and completely reliable sources of authority on their area of expertise. For Phaedrus, it matters, therefore, whether the story comes from the venerable land of Egypt or from his strange friend Socrates. He worries that Socrates has attributed the speech to an Egyptian god to lend it an air of credibility, a worry that is not entirely unfounded given Socrates’ habit in the dialogue of attributing his speeches to others.

Even so, Socrates’ tendency in this and other dialogues to question reputed sources of authority and to advocate the rigorous pursuit of truth suggests we should look deeper for an explanation of his attribution of the critique of writing to an Egyptian god. One possibility emerges from close scrutiny of his language. Whereas the Egyptian god credited with the invention of writing is commonly known as “Thoth (Θώθ),” Socrates calls him “Theuth (Θεὺθ),” which, as Robin Waterfield proposes, is likely a tactic Plato uses to remind readers of the end of the Greek name “Prometheus (Προμηθεύς),” the god credited in Greek myth with the invention

⁷ Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*, 190.

⁸ Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue*, 136.

of writing.⁹ The figure of King Thamous—who must have been an invention of Plato’s, as there is no record of such a historical person—is then paralleled with Zeus. Socrates suggests this parallel when he mentions that the Greeks know King Thamous as Ammon, the Egyptian version of Zeus. The link to Zeus is again confirmed when, just after relating the myth, Socrates mentions the people at the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona telling of how the prophecies there were spoken by an oak (275b). These equivalences invite comparison of the Egyptian and the Greek myths on the invention of writing. The key difference lies in how writing is introduced. Whereas Prometheus defies Zeus’ authority by giving mankind fire and other inventions such as writing, his Egyptian counterpart Thoth is represented as a loyal aide who submits his invention to the god’s judgment. Accordingly, Rhodes reasons that, in drawing on the authority of the most ancient of peoples (the Egyptians), Socrates means to suggest that “the Greek version of the Zeus-Prometheus myth is dead wrong. [...] The *technai* and the games of chance themselves are not weapons that can be used against the god’s authority, for both nature and chance are subject to divine governance.”¹⁰ Speeches must, as Socrates contends, be “pleasing to the gods” and not to men, except incidentally (273e). Socrates attributes the critique on writing to an Egyptian god, then, to invite comparison with the Greek myth on writing and thereby to illuminate the Greeks’ impiety. In this way, Plato demonstrates the valuable role that the voice of the foreigner can play in sparking reflection on one’s native *nomos* and consequently on oneself.

That Plato wishes to underscore the relationship between cross-cultural engagement and the search for self-knowledge is also indicated by Thoth’s connection to another Egyptian god alluded to in the *Phaedrus*: Set. Recall Socrates’ worry that he might be a creature like Typhon,

⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. Waterfield, 111.

¹⁰ Rhodes, *Eros, Wisdom, and Silence*, 535.

and how this conjured up the common Greek identification of Typhon with the Egyptian god Set, an evil spirit associated with chaos, storms, the desert, and foreigners. Interestingly, in Egyptian mythology, Thoth plays the role of the god who heals the destruction caused by Set. According to ancient legend, the jealous Set murdered his brother Osiris, god and king of Egypt, and scattered the pieces of his body throughout the land. After helping Osiris' wife Isis collect the pieces of her husband's body, Thoth used his magical powers to reunite the limbs of the dead king and bring him back to life long enough for him to conceive the son that would later avenge him. Hence, Thoth plays a major role in repairing the damage done by Set. If the many-tongued Set represents the soul's invasion by the multitude of voices in society that draw humans away from the true self (as argued in Chapter 4), then Thoth must represent whatever brings the parts of the soul back into harmony. Curiously, Thoth is a foreign (barbarian) god.¹¹ Could Plato be suggesting, then, that to cure the discord within us we must engage the foreigner?

Plato's use of the Egyptian myth in the *Phaedrus* reveals that most of us *already* engage the foreigner, but that it often takes the voice of a foreigner to bring this to our awareness and thus to make our engagement with the foreigner conscious. To clarify this point, let us further examine the juxtaposition of Typhon-Set and Thoth. Both are associated with multilingualism. Yet, while a "babel of screaming sounds" issues from Typhon's hundred snake heads, Thoth is known for the epithet "he who *distinguishes* the tongue of every foreign land."¹² The

¹¹ Not only that, but he is paired with Seshat, goddess of wisdom, knowledge, and writing, whose name means "she who scrivens" (*i.e.*, she who is the scribe). Together, Thoth and Seshat fix the length of a king's reign by inscribing his name on a tree in the temple of Heliopolis ("City of the Sun"). For more on the Egyptian deities mentioned in this dissertation, see Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹² Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse, vol. I, Loeb Classical Library, no. 344 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), 2.244ff.

differentiation of language with which Thoth is associated is, as Derrida argues, inseparable from the problem of the plurality of languages.¹³ The problem of the plurality of languages is that, for a plurality to exist, there must be some incommensurability between languages. This incommensurability creates difficulties in terms of interaction between individuals and groups of individuals, but the image of the soul as potentially resembling Typhon-Set suggests the problem might exist on the level of the soul as well. That is, it is possible for one's soul to be guided by a confused mixture of voices drawn from the *nomoi* of various lands. Thoth represents the activity that helps us recognize and grapple with this internal complexity. He is a foreigner because it is often through discovering parts of ourselves in foreigners and vice versa that we become aware of the plurality of voices in conflict within us.

Ultimately, Plato's evocation of the Egyptian myth on writing reminds readers that his dialogues are themselves the product of cross-cultural engagement. This is true in a quite literal sense, as, according to Greek myth, writing was first discovered in Egypt and only later introduced to the Greeks by Cadmus. Even modern scholars agree that writing did not originate in Greece.¹⁴ Moreover, as one scholar attests, "The Greek indebtedness to Egypt in regard to writing would always remain conspicuous, given that the actual writing material used during the classical period—the papyrus plant—was native only to the marshes of lower Egypt and hence had to be imported."¹⁵ Plato's dialogues could thus not exist were it not for cross-cultural engagement and, indeed, economic trade. This is true in another sense as well, for Plato arrives at

¹³ Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy," in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 89.

¹⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of the origins and development of Ancient Greek writing, see Anastasios-Phoivos Christidēs, Maria Arapopoulou, and Maria Chritē, eds., *A History of Ancient Greek: From the Beginnings to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Werner, *Myth and Philosophy*, 190.

his understanding of the world through his interaction with foreigners (*xenoi* and *barbaroi* alike), both in real life and through the foreign characters, myths, practices, and ideas represented in his dialogues. When political theorists read Plato's work, they are therefore already engaging the foreigner insofar as Plato's thought is bound up with cross-cultural engagement. This complicates the meaning of the term "Western political thought". In what sense is this tradition of political thought strictly "Western" if at its foundation lies a thinker whose work is cross-cultural, comprised of the voices of Egyptians, Persians, Thracians, and more?

The implications of recognizing the cross-cultural nature of Plato's dialogues, as demonstrated in this dissertation, are three-fold. First, it enriches our understanding of Plato's political thought by revealing the importance of a relatively unexplored dimension of his work: relations between cities and between members of different cities. When read using the methods of close textual exegesis, Plato's dialogues are seen not to justify hostility against foreigners—as is often thought—but to promote the kind of cross-cultural dialogue that generates greater wisdom and friendship. In fact, such conversations figure as central to Plato's conception of philosophy. Second, it challenges the contemporary division of political theory into Western and non-Western. If even the thought of a thinker as foundational and familiar as Plato represents the convergence of ideas from various regions of the world, then when we read Plato we are, in a sense, already engaging the foreigner. Moreover, Plato's understanding of foreignness as determined by cultural horizon rather than place of origin suggests that comparative political theory need not be concerned exclusively with "non-Western" texts, but can involve engagement with "Western" texts as well. For instance, despite their influence on the Western world, the thought of the ancient Greeks is arguably still quite foreign to us. This is evident to anyone who has tried to teach, say, Homer to students with little sense of what it means to be immersed in an

honor culture. Recognizing the cross-cultural nature of Plato's dialogues stimulates us, in short, to re-think our relationship to texts in the Western tradition. Finally, it challenges the tendency of contemporary political theorists to resist engaging with non-canonical texts. However foreign the ancient Greeks might be to us, Plato's dialogues show that there are good reasons to engage with thinkers from a variety of cultures. Whether an aspect of our way of life is right or wrong, cross-cultural dialogue is valuable because it stimulates us to think. It therefore serves the same purpose as the Socratic gadfly of keeping us from falling into dogmatism. For these reasons, philosophy for Plato centrally involves cross-cultural dialogue. If contemporary political theorists continue to avoid exploring distant cultural horizons, they thus do so at the peril of diverging from the original vision of political theory as a largely comparative enterprise and, if Plato is right, at the peril of truly living the self-examined life.

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