SOCRATES AND THE POLITICS OF MUSIC: PRELUDES OF THE *REPUBLIC*

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Abstract: At least since the appearance of Aristotle's *Politics*, Plato's *Republic* has been read as arguing for a politics of unity in which difference is understood as a threat to the *polis*. By focusing on the musical imagery of the *Republic*, and specifically on its compositional organization around three 'preludes', this essay seeks an understanding of Socratic politics that moves beyond the hypothesis of unity. In the first 'prelude', Thrasymachus and his insistence that justice is the self-interest of the stronger threatens to subject the harmony of the community to the tyrannical whims of the individual. In the second, the perfected justice of Adeimantus's city threatens to destroy the erotic rhythm of difference that is the very condition for the possibility of the *polis*. It is only in the song of dialectic, which itself is called a 'prelude', that the tension between the rhythm of plurality and the rational homophony of unity is dynamically tuned in such a way that both the anarchic politics of self-interest and the totalitarian politics of rationalized oppression are equally muted. This conception of politics is embodied in the relationship that emerges between Glaucon and Socrates. Ultimately, the true political community is established here, between rational, erotic individuals seeking justice in concrete, living dialogue.

Socrates, Aristotle tells us, was led astray in the *Republic* by an incorrect hypothesis: he posited that the best state is the one with the most unity.² According to Aristotle, because plurality is the very condition for the possibility of a *polis*, the social engineering policies advanced by Socrates in the *Republic* that are designed to purge the *polis* of plurality would in fact lead to its destruction.³ It would be, Aristotle says, 'as if someone should make the homophonous a symphony, or one metrical foot a rhythm'.⁴ Political harmony requires difference; the rhythm of life in the *polis* is predicated on plurality. Despite his criticism of Socrates, Aristotle's analogy between politics and music resonates with a central trope of the *Republic* in which musical vocabulary lends compositional order to the discussion and reveals a conception of Socratic politics that moves beyond the simple hypothesis of unity.

Aristotle's vision of Socratic politics as determined by the hypothesis of unity has had a long history of efficacy.⁵ Nietzsche, for example, sees Socra-

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² Aristotle and W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis Politica, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford, 1957), 1263b29–31 and 61a15–16.

³ *Ibid.*, 1261b22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 1263b34–35.

⁵ Although Aristotle is careful in his criticism of the ideas found in the *Republic* to speak not of Plato, but of the character Socrates, more recent critics have presumed that

tes as a 'despotic logician'⁶ who explicitly chooses 'Apollo and his instruments over Marsyas and his' in an attempt to establish justice in the city.⁷ On this reading, Socrates, like Apollo and his kithara, seeks to subvert the irrational magic of Marsyas and his *aulos* in order to purge the city of the destabilizing force of *erōs* — the power that, in driving humans to transcend their limits, forces them to recognize their finitude.⁸ Yet the nature of Socratic

the hypotheses presented in the *Republic* are straightforwardly those of Plato and indeed, are part of a 'topical political manifesto' designed to liquidate difference and establish a proto-totalitarian system of government. See, Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton, 1943), vol. I, pp. 45–54, cf. p. 153 and p. 66. Martha Nussbaum seems to read the *Republic* in a similar vein, identifying its ideas with the position of Plato and suggesting that Plato's ultimate goal is to subvert the inherent fragility of human existence by establishing a stable, harmonious — that is, firmly rational — political order. See, Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge, 1986), chapter 5. In the first five chapters of book II of the *Politics*, Aristotle himself seems to have been more careful than his translators in limiting his critique of the hypothesis of unity to the Socrates of the *Republic* rather than simply identifying it and Socrates with Plato. For a translation that elides this difference, see Hippocrates Apostle and Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle's Politics* (Grinnell, Iowa, 1986). For a sustained critique of the theory that Socrates is the mouthpiece for Plato, see Gerald A. Press, *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity* (Lanham, MD, 2000). Debra Nails puts it succinctly: '... Is Socrates Plato's mouthpiece? — to which the answer is No. Who Speaks for Plato? The dialogues do, irreducibly. The dialogue form provides a means of encouraging readers and listeners to reason dialectically to defensible positions of their own, rather than to treat Plato's words — or those of Socrates — as so authoritative as to obviate the necessity for intellectual labor.' See, Debra Nails, 'Mouthpiece Schmouthpiece', in *Who Speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity*, ed. Gerald A. Press (Lanham, MD, 2000), p. 16.

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'The Birth of Tragedy', in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 2000), p. 92. Nietzsche follows Aristotle in speaking about the character Socrates rather than presuming that Socrates speaks for Plato.

⁷ *Platonis Opera* (Oxford, 1992), vol. IV, *Rep.* III, 399e. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are taken from *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom, Second ed. (New York, 1991). The reference is to the myth in which the satyr Marsyas, playing the *aulos*, challenged Apollo and his kithara to a musical contest. When Marsyas almost had him beat, Apollo added his voice in harmony with the kithara and won. Apollo then ordered Marsyas flayed alive for his *hybris*. (In what follows, the Greek *aulos* will be left untranslated as the usual translation, 'flute', covers over the fact that the *aulos* was a reed instrument.)

⁸ This preliminary definition of *erōs* is predicated on a reading of the *Symposium* in which Aristophanes' suggestion that *erōs* is the desire for wholeness (192e) that reminds us of the limits Zeus imposed upon humans because of their *hybris* (190c) resonates with the action at the end of the dialogue. Specifically, Aristophanes' conception of *erōs* is reinforced by the juxtaposition between Diotima's speech in which the activities of *erōs* lead to a vision of eternal Beauty Itself (211c–212a) and Alcibiades' abrupt appearance on the scene that returns us to the world of human *erōs* and contingency. For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between the Diotima speech and the appearance of Alcibiades, see Gary Alan Scott, *Plato's Socrates as Educator* (Albany, NY, 2000),

politics cannot be captured by this one dimensional image of hyper-rationality, for although he is indeed animated by the Apollonian voice of the oracle, he is also said to play the *aulos*, more amazing than even Marsyas in his erotic capacity to astound those who hear him.⁹

Socratic politics is not so much seen in the dialogues of Plato, as heard. And in listening to the dialogues our attention is called back from the abstract, metaphysical obsession with the eternal, permanent forms or 'looks' (*eidē*), to the concrete, contingent world of human community.¹⁰ Yet the tension between the visual and the auditory is not to be abstractly negated; rather, the transcendent looks themselves become politically effective only in the dialectical songs Socrates sings with each person he encounters. This music, which at once calls us beyond ourselves and yet remains firmly grounded in the sensuous, finite and temporal, has the capacity to harmonize the tension between this world and that other, between the messy irrationality of the political and the dreamlike purity of philosophy, between the mesmerizing allure of the erotic and the hegemonic authority of the rational.¹¹

To discern the rhythm of this delicate harmony, it is not enough simply to scan the dialogues for a systematic theory of music and its relation to politics; rather, we must listen for the music of Socratic politics in the very dramatic context in which it resounds. The approach must be as much aural as visual; it must attend to mood, mode and modulation as much as idea, theory and conceptualization. Nowhere is this more vital than when listening to the complex political composition of the *Republic*, a dialogue in which we hear Socrates temper the austere song of political rationalism with a comic dissonance that forces his interlocutors — and us — to face the very limits of rationalized politics. In an era in which the smooth cadence of political rhetoric is designed to purge politics of all nuance and ambiguity, the voice of Socrates emerges as a powerful rejoinder, however unsettling, in which the rich texture of human co-existence is permitted to resonate in all its complexity.

pp. 120–1. For a strong statement of the political importance of *erōs* suggested here, see Stanley Rosen, 'The Role of Eros in Plato's *Republic*', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 18 (1965), pp. 452–75.

⁹ *Platonis Opera* (Oxford, 1901), vol. II, *Symposium*, 215b–15e.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion of how the dialogues return us from the metaphysical to the concrete, see the discussion of Plato's 'grounding strategy' in Christopher P. Long, 'Is There Method in This Madness? Context, Play and Laughter in Plato's *Symposium* and *Republic*', in *Philosophy in Dialogue Form: Plato's Many Devices*, ed. Gary Alan Scott (Evanston, IL, 2007).

¹¹ For a discussion of the capacity of music to negotiate the tension between the divine and human, the transcendent and the temporal, see Kenneth Dorter, 'Plato and Music: Sensuousness and Spirituality', *Music and Man*, 2 (1978), pp. 205–21.

Three Preludes of the *Republic*

The *Republic* is composed of three preludes, each striking a different note, but together constituting a sort of overture to an understanding of Socratic politics that moves beyond the hypothesis of unity.¹² At the beginning of book II, Socrates calls the entire discussion of book I a 'prelude' (357a). Compositionally, this comment links the previous, negative and aporetic discussion of justice found in book I to the discussion Socrates has in books II–X with the two sons of Ariston, Adeimantus and Glaucon. This first prelude is a sort of *proaulion*, in which, as Aristotle asserts, *aulos*-players play first whatever they play well, introducing the fundamental theme of the song itself.¹³ In book I, we hear the familiar song of Socratic *elenchus*, the most striking example of which is found in the conversation Socrates has with the sophist, Thrasymachus, who vigorously — and frightfully — insists that 'the just is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger' (338c). And while there is much in the opening passages of the *Republic* that dramatically prefigures the main themes of the work,¹⁴ the refutation of Thrasymachus introduces its most fundamental and perplexing motifs.

The second prelude is recognized by Glaucon. Toward the end of book IV, once Socrates has established Adeimantus' perfectly rationalized city purged of everything erotic, he playfully tells Adeimantus to get an adequate light

¹² To assert that the *Republic* is composed of three preludes is not to insist that this is the only way to understand the structure of this complex text. This approach uncovers one aspect of Socratic politics. It is meant neither to be reductive nor to deny the insights of other ways of articulating the structure of the dialogue, ways such as Eva Brann's ring structure, David Roochnik's appeal to the three waves of the dialogue, Stanley Rosen's recognition of the importance of the ascent/descent metaphor and C.D.C. Reeve's suggestion that the *psyche* is the key to the composition. See, Eva T.H. Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, *The Music of the Republic: Essays on Socrates' Conversations and Plato's Writings* (Philadelphia, 2004), p. 93. David Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's 'Republic'* (Ithaca, 2003), pp. 57ff. Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study* (New Haven, 2005), p. 19. C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton, 1988), p. xiii.

¹³ Aristotle and W.D. Ross, *Ars Rhetorica, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford, 1975), III.14, 1414b.

¹⁴ The descent to Piraeus, the playful compulsion of Socrates by Polemarchus and his slave, the appeal to a novel horse-race by torchlight all anticipate important aspects of the *Republic*. For a discussion of the significance of the horse-race, see George Rudebusch, 'Dramatic Prefiguration in Plato's *Republic*', *Philosophy and Literature*, 26.1 (2002), p. 80. Bloom highlights the significance of the compulsion of Socrates: 'This little scene prefigures the three-class structure of the good regime developed in the *Republic* and outlines the whole political problem.' See, Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 311. As to the significance of the Piraeus, Brann calls it the 'beyond land', arguing that it mythically represents Hades itself. See, Eva Brann, 'The Music of the Republic', *Agon*, 1 (1967), p. 3. Rudebusch suggests that it means literally 'Tryerman', and points to any reader who attempts to cull from the text the higher wisdom it teaches.

and call his brother and Polemarchus in to help look for wisdom, courage, moderation and justice (427c). These should be accessible, Socrates emphasizes, 'if, that is, [the city] has been correctly founded' (427c-e).¹⁵ Although they locate the first three in the city, justice is found 'rolling around' between them as they speak with one another. Glaucon calls what they have been saying: 'A long prelude for those who desire to hear' (432e). This playful scene suggests that the political justice Socrates seeks might not be located in the rigidly rationalized city of Adeimantus, but somewhere else, perhaps even in the very conversation they are enacting with one another.

The third prelude, however, is the most perplexing of all. It occurs in book VII *after* what are widely held to be the fundamental doctrines of the dialogue have been established. After the communal possession of women and children is introduced, the philosopher-kings installed and the images of the divided line and the cave presented, Socrates suggests that all these things are 'a prelude to the song [*nomos*] that must be learned' (531d).¹⁶ This is, according to Socrates, the song of dialectic that turns its hearers toward the pursuit of the good itself. If, however, all of this has been a mere prelude to the song of dialectic, the composition of the *Republic* is rendered open, offering itself not as a set of political precepts, but rather, as an aural inducement to pursue the just, the beautiful and the good in the dialectical song that must in each case be learned for oneself, though sung always with others. Perhaps this is the very music of Socratic politics, sung finally with Glaucon, in whom word and deed coincide in a kind of Doric harmony.¹⁷

¹⁵ The scene is beautiful in its complexity; for Socrates tries to foist the city onto Adeimantus, calling it 'your city', and insisting that Glaucon, Adeimantus and Polemarchus go searching together. Glaucon says that Socrates is talking nonsense and renegeing on his promise to pursue justice, a promise Socrates made because he claimed it would be unholy not to defend justice (cf. 368b-c). Socrates grants Glaucon's charge, but insists on their help. He then calls the city 'ours' and proceeds to go searching with them.

¹⁶ The argument presented here depends on hearing the musical meaning of the Greek word *prooimion* — which literally means a 'before' (*pro*) 'path' or 'way' (*oimos*). Both Bloom and Cooper translate the term consistently in this way at 357a, 432e, and 531d. For Bloom, see, Plato, *The Republic of Plato*. For Cooper, see John M. Cooper, and D. S. Hutchinson, *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1997). The citation at 531d, with its explicit reference to '*nomos*' or 'song', can hardly be rendered otherwise than as 'prelude'. However, it is admittedly less clear that the first two citations need to be translated this way, and many translators choose other legitimate terms. In order of citation — 357a, 432e and 531d — here are some examples: Paul Shorey has 'prelude', 'prologue', and 'prelude'. See, Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, *Plato: Collected Dialogues, Bollingen Series* (Princeton, 1989). Emile Chambry has: '*prélude*', '*préambule*', and '*prelude*'. See, Plato et al., *Platon: Oeuvres Complètes, Collection Des Universités De France* (Paris, 1923), vol. VI. Friedrich Schleiermacher has '*Eingang*', '*Vorrede*', and '*Vorspiel*'. See, Plato, *Sämtliche Werke* (Hamburg, 1968), vol. III.

¹⁷ Cf., Plato, *Platonis Opera* (Oxford, 1903), vol. III, *Laches*, 188d-e.

Glaucón emerges as the only one of Socrates' interlocutors capable of co-founding with him a city, not in words alone, but in deed as well.¹⁸ Ultimately, the true political community is established here, between rational, erotic individuals seeking the meaning of justice in concrete, living dialogue. The music of Socratic politics is a personal affair, for Socrates neither takes political power directly, nor withdraws completely from the human realm of politics — rather, his political work is done each day with each individual he encounters. As Eva Brann argues, the true *polis* is 'that set of relations, correctly called friendship . . . which a philosopher institutes between himself and his fellow-citizens whenever he is able'.¹⁹ In order to apprehend the deep political significance of the community Socrates establishes with Glaucon, it is necessary to attend more closely to the play of the erotic and the rational in the three preludes of the *Republic*.

The First Prelude: The Dissonance of Thrasymachus

Listening with great impatience to the friendly conversation Socrates is having with Polemarchus who defends the position that justice is benefiting one's friends and harming one's enemies, Thrasymachus, 'hunched up like a wild beast' (336b), flings himself at Socrates. This upsurge of energy and its subsequent taming by Socrates at once anticipates Thrasymachus' own position concerning justice as the self-interested advantage of the stronger and prefigures the position Socrates will establish in books II–VII concerning the perfectly just city.²⁰ The just city Socrates founds in speech from which *erōs* is radically purged and whose occupants are bred and trained like animals is, in

¹⁸ Brann emphasizes Socrates' relationship with Glaucon as founding the only city in deed in the *Republic*. See, Brann, 'The Music of the *Republic*', p. 21. Sallis agrees, calling the education of Glaucon the central deed of the *Republic*. See, John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington, 1996), p. 401.

¹⁹ Brann, 'The Music of the *Republic*', p. 23. Stephen Salkever has a similar view of Socratic politics based in part on the vision of the *politikos* developed in the *Statesman* (303e–308e): 'the practitioner of the true political art will not rule directly over the objects of his care, but will operate behind the scenes, instructing orators and generals and judges with an eye to establishing within the *polis* a fruitful tension or blend of virility and moderation.' See, Stephen G. Salkever, 'Plato on Practices: The *Technai* and the Socratic Question in *Republic I*', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 8 (1992), p. 260. See too, Salkever, 'Socrates' Aspasian Oration: The Play of Philosophy and Politics in Plato's *Menexenus*', *American Political Science Review*, 87.1 (1993), p. 135. The difference between the image of the philosopher as *politikos* in the *Republic* versus that set forth in the *Statesman* is that the politics of the *Republic* is directed not at generals, orators and judges, but at a young man with identifiable political ambition, Glaucon. (For Glaucon's political ambition, see Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, III.6, I.)

²⁰ Bloom recognizes the regime Socrates develops in speech as an alternative opposed to the position Thrasymachus offers. He also understands their similarity: They are both 'improbable and opposed to experience'. See, Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 329.

fact, the antistrophe to the strophe Thrasymachus sings in book I. Thrasymachus' first appearance as a beast — indeed, as a wolf, the untamed cousin of those highly trained dogs who serve as guardians of Socrates' just city — signals the dangerous, bestial side of *erōs*, the spiritedness or *thymos* that the just city is designed to control.²¹ Further, when Thrasymachus introduces the art or *technē* of shepherding in the course of his discussion with Socrates to argue that the shepherd is not interested in the good of his sheep, but exclusively in his own good (343a–345e), he anticipates the basic model on which the rationalized city is predicated. Although Socrates takes issue with Thrasymachus' assumption that the true shepherd is unconcerned with the well-being of his sheep, he seems to accept the traditional, Homeric model of the ruler as a 'shepherd of the people'.²² As we will see, Socrates models the art of political leadership in the city he establishes on the good breeding of animals, particularly of those dogs that serve as its guardians.

In refuting Thrasymachus, Socrates seems to envision the *technē* of political rule on the model of the true shepherd who cares for his flock. This, of course, is simply the obverse of Thrasymachus' suggestion that the *technē* of political rule involves the ability to actualize one's own self-interest. Although Socrates had challenged that vision by introducing the possibility that the ruler could be mistaken concerning his own self-interest, both he and

²¹ In discussion with Glaucon in book III, Socrates characterizes savage people this way: 'the savage stems from the spirited part of their nature, which, if rightly trained, would be courageous; but, if raised to a higher pitch than it ought to have, would be likely to become cruel and harsh' (410d5–8). This is the result of a lack of musical training and could be heard to apply to Thrasymachus, who is cruel and harsh with Socrates. In *Republic* book IX, Socrates says the spirited part of the soul 'is wholly set on mastery, victory and good reputation' (581a). However, the relationship between *erōs* and *thymos* is complex. In one sense, it is embodied in the differences between Glaucon, who is both erotic and musical (see, 398e–403c) and Thrasymachus, who is thymotic and dissonant. Glaucon is the main interlocutor with Socrates because his erotic nature is attuned by musical training: his *erōs* has become a sort of *philia*, infused with a rational drive toward the beautiful, the good and the just. (For a discussion of this conception of *philia* in its relation to *erōs* and *epithymia*, see Drew A. Hyland, 'Eros, Epithymia and Philia in Plato', *Phronesis*, 13 (1968), pp. 32–46.) In book IV of the *Republic*, Socrates develops the famous three-part view of the soul (440e–441a) in which the thymoeidic part of the soul stands between the *logistikon* (rational) and the epithymetic (desirous) parts, working on the side of reason to bring desires in line. Perhaps if the *thymos* mediates between human reason and the lower, animalistic desires, *erōs* might be understood to mediate between human reason and those higher, more divine ideals that stand somehow beyond the human *logistikon*. By book IX, however, the parts of the soul are characterized mainly by *philia*; they are wisdom-loving, victory-loving and gain-loving (581b–ff). This suggests a more unified understanding of the soul in which *philia* plays a central role.

²² A standard epithet for Agamemnon in Homer is '*poimēn laōn*', 'shepherd of the people'. See, for a few of the many examples, Richmond Lattimore, *Homer's Iliad* (Chicago, 1951), II.243, 54 and 772, IV.413, VII.230.

Thrasymachus seem to agree here that political rule is a *technē* based on determinate knowledge of what is good. If this were not the case, Thrasymachus would have accepted Cleitophon's radical rejection of knowledge (340b) and thus saved himself from the embarrassing refutation of Socrates. However, because Thrasymachus' own interest involves marketing his technical skill of rhetoric, he must claim knowledge of a craft and thus he must appeal to some standard of judgment. Once he does this, Socrates has the leverage he needs to lead Thrasymachus to the recognition that a *technē* is not self-reflexive, directed toward the good of the craftsman, but rather, objective, directed toward the good of the object with which it is concerned.²³

If, however, in Socrates' view, the ruler rules for the sake of the flock, another art must be introduced into the craft of political leadership, for without the art of wage-earning, there will be no incentive for rulers to rule. In a city of good people, Socrates says, this 'wage' will take the form of a penalty, for in such a city there would be a fight over not ruling (347a-e). As Bloom suggests, with the introduction of the wage-earner's art, Socrates admits precisely the tension between the public and private good he had originally denied when he asserted that the interest of the shepherd coincides with that of the flock (345b-e).²⁴ That Thrasymachus does not pick up on this inconsistency not only adds to his ultimate shame as an expert rhetorician, it also anticipates Adeimantus' failure to recognize the inadequacy of the principle of justice that underlies the allegedly just city in speech Socrates founds with him. Although that city predicates justice on the principle that each person must only practise one art (370b), once Socrates recognizes the need for currency and commerce, he implicitly insists that each citizen must practise also a second art — that of wage-earning — thus undermining the very principle of justice on which the just city is based.²⁵

Here, then, the *proaulion* Socrates plays for Thrasymachus serves as a prelude to the longer song he sings with Adeimantus and Glaucon concerning the just city in speech. This prelude, however, is itself dissonant; for although it is able to tame Thrasymachus, it is at odds with itself in two ways. First, the model of political *technē* with which it operates treats human beings in a radically inhumane way, as if they were mere animals. Second, this *technē* at once

²³ For a detailed discussion of this rather typical move in Socratic *elenchus* whereby once an interlocutor appeals to some standard or limit, Socrates is able to turn the person toward the question of the good and the just, see David Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technē* (University Park, PA, 1996), pp. 131–50. For a discussion of what happens when an interlocutor fails to make such an appeal, see Socrates' discussion with Callicles in the *Gorgias* (cf. *ibid.*, 208–11).

²⁴ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 333.

²⁵ Sallis emphasizes this point: 'This means ... that each man would then need to practice both his own art and the art of money-making. The result is that every man would end up practicing two arts, contrary to the basic precept of the city ...' See, Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, p. 356.

assumes the coincidence of the interests of the shepherd and the flock and requires the introduction of the architectonic skill of wage-earning in order to harmonize the two. This dissonance, however, does not prevent Socrates from taming the thymotic beast Thrasymachus shows himself to be at the start. In fact, the taming of Thrasymachus itself serves as a prelude that anticipates Socrates' discussion with Adeimantus, who fails, like Thrasymachus, to see the inadequacy of the technical model of political rule.

If the prelude Socrates sings with Thrasymachus prefigures the ultimate failure of Adeimantus to recognize the inadequacy of the premises on which the just city in speech is based, it also anticipates the success Socrates will have with Glaucon in establishing the just city in deed. Just as Socrates introduces the problematic need for wage-earning to negotiate the tension between the self-interest of the ruler and the interest of the ruled, Glaucon interjects by admitting his confusion. Ostensibly this confusion is due to Socrates' attempt to call a 'penalty for not ruling' a sort of 'wage' (347a). Yet Glaucon's sceptical interruption at precisely this juncture indicates at least an intuitive sense that something is amiss in Socrates' introduction of wage earning into the political art.²⁶ This intuitive scepticism, combined as it is here with an ability to admit confusion, suggests that perhaps Glaucon, unlike Thrasymachus and Adeimantus, is prepared to engage with Socrates in the only true political activity of the *Republic* — the actualization of a community between citizens critically considering the question of justice and the good life. Indeed, Socrates is quick to turn the discussion with Glaucon to the more important issue underlying Thrasymachus' position: 'What Thrasymachus now says is in my own opinion a far bigger thing — he asserts that the life of the unjust man is stronger than that of the just man. Which do you choose, Glaucon . . . and which speech is true in your opinion?' (347e). Here the abstract political question concerning justice is personalized and rendered urgent. The *Republic* is not animated, as some have thought, by an abstract attempt to establish a political regime based on the *technē* of shepherding, but rather, by a personal relationship that seeks to transform the soul of an individual by bringing it, through dialogue, to a recognition of the value and importance of living a just life.

The Second Prelude: A Song Too Sweet

The second book of the *Republic* begins with Glaucon and Adeimantus pushing Socrates to consider further the sort of position Thrasymachus gave up on during the process of his taming. Glaucon's courage and erotic desire for the

²⁶ Perhaps Glaucon has an inchoate awareness of what David Roochnik has suggested is a very strange *technē* indeed: 'Wages are a by-product of the other *technai*, and to earn them a technician needs neither to know nor to practice anything other than his own *technē*. Since it does not require any special knowledge, indeed any knowledge at all, how can wage earning be conceived as a *technē*?' See, Roochnik, *Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's Understanding of Technē*, p. 143.

truth drives the dialogue forward and forces Socrates to recognize that what came before was 'only a prelude' (357a).²⁷ However, although Glaucon begins the discussion, thus continuing to serve as the erotic principle of the argument itself, it is Adeimantus who quickly takes over by insisting that justice must be praised by itself and not merely for the good reputation it offers those who seem just. Indeed, he insists that the praise of justice is of the utmost seriousness: '... by what device [*mēchanē*], Socrates, will a man who has some power — of soul, money, body or family — be made willing to honour justice and not laugh when he hears it praised?' (366c). Adeimantus is looking for an instrument through which powerful people might be forced to honour justice — to take it seriously. Socrates, in fact, obliges Adeimantus in this by founding for him in speech what seems on the surface to be a perfectly serious, totally rational city — although in fact it is utterly comical, irrational and, when taken seriously, potentially tragic. Adeimantus, for his part, is unable to recognize the limitations of this city; for, as John Sallis notes, he 'remains entirely at the level of the building of the city, at the level where the soul is treated in terms of parts rather than in terms of *erōs*, at the level where the virtues are understood in relation to art rather than in relation to the good'.²⁸ Throughout the discussion of the education of the guardians, Adeimantus remains true to his name — the 'Undaunted' — in seriously pursuing the rational instrument that will successfully set political life in order.

Thus, Socrates establishes the first city with Adeimantus, who uncritically accepts not only the 'one person, one craft' principle, but also the introduction of the money making art that implicitly undermines it (369c–372b). While this city, guided by necessity, seems to fulfil the needs of its citizens and so appears self-sufficient, its inadequacy as a *human* city remains unrecognized by Adeimantus. Rather, it is Glaucon who calls it by its proper name, 'a city of pigs', and insists that the city should have couches so as to allow people to eat from tables and have relishes and desserts (372d–e). This forces Socrates to

²⁷ The erotic Glaucon drives this dialogue. Leo Strauss rightly points out that Socrates turns to Glaucon when the highest things are addressed. See, Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, 1964), p. 100. Stanley Rosen recognizes that Glaucon keeps the dialogue moving. See, Rosen, 'The Role of Eros in Plato's *Republic*', p. 466. He claims, however, that Glaucon is a bad listener. In his more recent work, Rosen continues to give him little credibility: 'Glaucon is better suited for the role of auxiliary or soldier than to be a philosopher-king. This is to say that he makes an excellent disciple of the founding father. He is a lieutenant in a revolution but not a general or strategist.' See, Rosen, *Plato's Republic: A Study*, p. 12. This judgment fails to recognize the extent to which Socrates' main goal in the *Republic* is not political revolution in the traditional sense, but the equally revolutionary turning of an individual soul. David Roochnik's more positive opinion of Glaucon's character as insightful and impressive — 'Glaucon properly understands Eros as a tyrant who cannot be completely subdued' — is more in line with the position advanced here. See, Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's 'Republic'*, pp. 56–7.

²⁸ Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, pp. 400–1.

look at how a luxurious city comes into being and thus perhaps to catch sight of how justice grows in such cities. The luxurious city is feverish, for it includes a mass of people who are not needed — poets, musicians, rhapsodes, actors, choral dancers, relish-makers and cooks, among others. It requires extra land as well, and thus the need to go to war and to defend itself against its neighbours (373b–e). Therefore, Socrates introduces the guardians to defend and fight for the sake of the city.

Continuing to play off of Glaucon's insistence that this will be a city of pigs, Socrates suggests the noble dog as the model on which to understand the nature of the guardians. The guardians, like dogs, are full of spirit (*thymos*), yet this spirit must remain always under control. What controls the spirit of a dog is what Socrates calls its 'philosophic nature', which is ironically characterized this way: 'When [the dog] sees someone it doesn't know, it's angry, although it never had any bad experience with him. And when it sees someone it knows, it greets him warmly, even if it never had a good experience with him' (376a). This capacity to distinguish friend from foe based exclusively on familiarity, the most superficial and unreflective form of experience — a mere 'look', as Socrates emphasizes — is called 'truly philosophic'. Given Socrates' proclivity to question normative judgments based merely on reputation and appearance and given his own taste for novelty, it is impossible to take the dog-philosopher image seriously.²⁹ Yet, however comic, there is some truth to it; for ultimately, the soul of the individual is best if its spirit is guided by its intellect, that is, if it becomes genuinely philosophical. However, the philosophical control of *thymos* cannot be accomplished by the imposition of order from the outside — good humans cannot be trained like good dogs. Rather, philosophy must emerge as an internal principle, willingly chosen by the one who decides, in dialogical community with others, to pursue a just life.

Adeimantus takes over the conversation concerning the education of the guardians in full seriousness, although Socrates reminds him of precisely what they are doing: 'Come, then, like men telling tales in a tale (*en muthō muthologountes*) and at their leisure, let's educate the men in speech' (376d). The larger myth is, of course, the cities in speech they are founding in order to gain insight into the just soul of the individual (368e–369b). The myth within this myth is the education of the guardians. Through this image of embedded

²⁹ Socrates' (and Glaucon's) interest in the novel is dramatically underscored by the motivation behind his descent to Piraeus: To observe how the new festival of the foreign goddess, Bendis, was performed. Bloom emphasizes Piraeus as a 'center of innovation'. See, Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 441. In his commentary he writes: 'Socrates has a taste for newness which is antithetical to the best political orders and which he shares with the democracy' (p. 311). The Socratic taste for novelty is further dramatically emphasized by the way Adeimantus and Polemarchus tempt Socrates to remain with them by appealing the torch race on horseback. Socrates responds curiously: 'On horseback? That is novel' (328a).

myths, Socrates distances himself from the account even as he enters deeply into a discussion of the education of the guardians. Adeimantus nowhere indicates that he appreciates the humour and irony of the way the discussion has been framed. He is the first in a very long line of humourless students of Socrates who take the radical measures imposed upon the guard-dogs seriously as reflecting Socrates' genuine position concerning philosophy, education and politics.³⁰

The measures taken are, indeed, so extreme that they would destroy the very spiritedness required of the guardians if they are to fulfil their role in the rationally organized city.³¹ Liberally quoting the most abhorrent and offensive passages from Homer, Hesiod and Aeschylus, Socrates ironically purges the feverish city of stories that sing of the violation of oaths, strife, evil, multiplicity, lying, fear of death, crying and lamenting, laughing, disobedience, excessive food, drink and sex, desiring gifts and money, womanliness, insults, poking fun at others, shameful language, madness and, indeed, *erōs* itself (379e–398c).³² Although Adeimantus — with whom Socrates playfully, but in all seriousness, identifies the argument for such a rationalized city (389a) — earnestly goes about censoring the poets with Socrates, laughter literally breaks into the discussion when Socrates claims that everyone can discover, based upon what has just now been said, what must be said about music. 'And Glaucon laughed out and said, "I run the risk of not being included in everyone. At least I'm not at present capable of suggesting what sort of things we must say. However, I've a suspicion"' (398c).

The last person to actually laugh in the dialogue, as opposed to merely mentioning laughter and the laughable, was Thrasymachus, who burst out with sardonic laughter at Socrates, just after pouncing upon him (337a). Socrates uses the word '*sardonios*' to describe the scornful laughter of Thrasymachus. Here, the term used to describe Glaucon's laugh is '*epigelan*' — to laugh with, to smile upon or to laugh with approval: Glaucon is the only one of Socrates' interlocutors who laughs with him.³³ At play with Socrates, perhaps

³⁰ Aristotle's comments in the *Politics* discussed above, consolidate this picture, which has been further reinforced, not only by Popper and Nussbaum, as mentioned, but also, for example, by A.E. Taylor. See *Plato: The Man and His Work* (London, 1952), pp. 279–80.

³¹ See, Bernard Freydberg, *The Play of the Platonic Dialogues*, in the series edited by Peter Heller, *Literature and the Sciences of Man* (New York, 1997), p. 87.

³² Though he leaves out the banning of mad, irrational behaviour at 396b, Freydberg serially lists these as the 'dark impulses' that are forbidden in the city, providing the textual reference for each, see, *ibid.*, pp. 86–7. He goes on to include the discussion of music, which is here treated separately below.

³³ Cephalus is the only person other than Glaucon and Thrasymachus to actually laugh in the dialogue. Cephalus, however, laughs with his son, Polemarchus, who makes a joke about inheriting everything from Cephalus, even his argument (331d). Bloom notes that another reading, less well supported by the manuscripts, has Socrates uttering

catching on to his dissembling irony, Glaucon laughs and so enters back into the discussion precisely at the moment when it turns to consider the nature of music. Glaucon, not Adeimantus, is the appropriate interlocutor not only because he is himself musical and thus capable of deciding which musical modes would be most appropriate for such a purged city, but also, and more importantly, because he is able to hear the founding of the rationalized city as a kind of comic prelude and not as the definitive expression of Socratic politics.

The music of this purged city must be rational and harmonic. The instruments of Marsyas are rejected in favour of those of Apollo (399e). Music here is understood as a powerful ethical instrument capable of shaping the character of citizens through rigorous training. Thus, Glaucon and Socrates only allow two modes of music into this purged city: the Dorian, the imitation of which leads to courage 'in warlike deeds and every violent work', and the Phrygian, the imitation of which makes a person moderate, measured and capable of good, voluntary action (399a-c). This is the traditional Greek conception of music as an ethical *technē* capable of honing the dispositions of those who listen. Because music is a *technē*, decisions concerning the precise modes that will best serve the purpose of the founders must be made by experts, like Damon, the renowned authority who recognized that different modes of music have different impacts on the soul.³⁴ By permitting only the Dorian and Phrygian modes into the purged city, Socrates, drawing explicitly on Damon's ethical principles of music, seeks to engineer the very souls of the guardians, quite literally training them to be brave in war and moderate in peace.

Music emerges in the discussion of the purged city as precisely the sort of device Adeimantus sought that would be capable of coercing the citizens into harmony with one another. As Edward Lippman suggests: 'Sonorous music is a matter of habit and training; it affects the nature of the guardians, making them harmonious and rhythmical. But it does not give them science; it contains nothing that will draw the soul from becoming to being, that will tend toward the highest good.'³⁵ The music of the purified city is Apollonian. Even the Phrygian mode, which is often associated with the *aulos* and religious

the line at which Cephalus laughs. See, Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 441. If this reading is accepted, then it is only Cephalus and Glaucon who laugh with Socrates.

³⁴ For a discussion of Damon's philosophy of music and how it might be related to Platonic philosophy, see Klitos Ioannides, 'L'ethos musical chez Platon: Damon et sa doctrine', *Philosophia*, 15-16 (1986), pp. 254-63. See, too, Warren D. Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music* (Cambridge, 1966). Both Ioannides and Anderson take Socrates' comments in *Republic* III seriously, uncritically ascribing them to Plato. Despite this problematic assumption, these texts offer insightful information concerning the relationship between ethics and music in Greek culture.

³⁵ Edward A. Lippman, *Musical Thought in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1964), pp. 76-7.

frenzy, is made into a kithara mode by the rejection of the *aulos* from the city. It is thus rationalized, purged of its relation to madness and *erōs*.³⁶

Yet even here, as the rational harmony of Adeimantus' city reaches its most seductive apex, a counter rhythm is discernable; for just as Socrates seems to unequivocally purge the city of *erōs*, it reintroduces itself. Glaucon, it seems, once heard and fell in love with the beautiful, harmonious soul of a youth who had some bodily defect. Upon hearing Socrates praise the beauty of harmony and the love a musical person should feel toward those who live a harmonious life, Glaucon introduces this personal experience, shifting the discussion from the general and legal to the individual and personal. Kenneth Dorter suggests that 'if we can regard beauty as a certain unity of diverse elements, perhaps harmony can be understood as the relation of these parts to the whole, and rhythm as their relation to one another'.³⁷ By introducing his personal, erotic relationship with this physically defective youth, Glaucon adds a diversifying rhythm to the mesmerizing consonance of the abstract principles Socrates seeks to establish. He reminds Socrates, and us, that these principles are not simply ways of organizing the whole in the abstract, but they also will pervade the very real relationships between the parts. The rhythm Glaucon introduces in fact rescues the justice Socrates seeks from dissolving into an absurd and dangerous homophony. The image of Glaucon engaged in an erotic relationship with another, particularly one who does not *seem* beautiful in body, though he has a beautiful soul, gestures toward the very relationship being established between the ugly Socrates and the musical Glaucon. This relationship rhythmically embodies the only city established in the *Republic* in deed. And although Socrates quickly insists that certain laws must be put in place to prevent the immoderate and licentious gratification of lovers by young boys — that is, the citizens must be coerced into acting the way Glaucon seems to have acted willingly³⁸ — he concludes the discussion of music here by saying: 'Surely musical matters should end in love matters that concern the beautiful' (403c).³⁹

³⁶ Anderson, *Ethos and Education in Greek Music*, p. 108.

³⁷ Kenneth Dorter, 'The Ion: Plato's Characterization of Art', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 32 (1973), pp. 74–5.

³⁸ The term Glaucon uses to describe his relation with this boy is '*haspazesthai*' — to welcome kindly, greet; to cling fondly to as a disciple to a master; to embrace, kiss, caress. Although the term does not have the strong sexual connotation of *charizesthai* — to gratify, Socrates is worried enough about the last few meanings to insist upon a law governing this sort of physical contact.

³⁹ Bloom's translation of *kalos* has been altered from 'fair' to 'beautiful' so as to give the passage more poignancy. Jacob Howland notes that this is the only place prior to the third wave in which *erōs* is treated as more than mere sexual desire. See, Howland, Jacob, 'The *Republic*'s Third Wave and the Paradox of Political Philosophy', *The Review of Metaphysics*, 51 (1998), pp. 633–57, 653. However, in Adeimantus' city, musical *erōs*

This suggests that the music Socrates and Glaucon make together might be something other than the musical training imposed upon the guardians which ends, not in an erotic concern for the beautiful, but in an uncritical, technical conformity. That something other than the *technē* of music and the hypothesis of unity is at play between the two can be heard in the way they play together in the dialogue. Once Socrates has finished founding Adeimantus' city, he enlists Glaucon's help in playfully looking for justice in it. Glaucon, for his part, goes along with the game, and when Socrates catches sight of it 'rolling around' [*kylindeisthai*] at their feet, though they had not noticed it, Glaucon designates what has come before as a sort of 'prelude for one who desires [*epithymein*] to hear' (432b–e). Socrates goes on to call the original rule set down at the beginning — namely that each person must mind his own business — 'a certain form' of justice (433a–b). From the perspective of *technē*, this rule meant that each person must practise only one art and nothing more. Here, however, Socrates qualifies the rule, calling it a 'certain form' of justice and saying: 'Well, then, my friend, this — the practice of minding one's own business — when it comes into being *in a certain way*, is *probably* justice' (433b, my emphasis). Indeed, when Glaucon unequivocally agrees, Socrates cautions him not to 'assert it so positively just yet', goes on to link the structure of the city to that of the soul of an individual and finally claims that 'we'll never get a precise grasp of [justice in the soul] on the basis of procedures such as we're now using in the argument. There is another longer and further road leading to it' (434d–435d). The hypothesis of unity does not lead to a proper grasp of justice.

Perhaps the vision of justice Socrates has with Glaucon is precisely that of the relationship established between them as they playfully search for justice. When he sees it, Socrates dramatically exclaims, literally: 'Here! Here! Glaucon!' And, shifting to the auditory metaphor, he says 'we have been saying and hearing it all along without learning from ourselves that we were in a way saying it' (432e). The way they may have been saying justice and teaching themselves about it is by engaging with one another in the playful, erotically charged vigorous pursuit of justice. If this is the case, Glaucon's recognition that their discussion to this point has been merely a prelude suggests that he has not, like his brother, been charmed by the apparent harmony of the founding of Adeimantus' city in speech. He has not listened passively as the city is purged of *erōs* according to the principle of rational unification, but sought to accompany it with a rhythm of his own, one that subtly subverts the authoritarian homophony of that city. Indeed, although Glaucon is well versed in the rational *technē* of music, he is also sensitive to its erotic playfulness. He embodies the playful balance between reason and *erōs*, the harmony of the kithara and the *aulos*.

does not ground virtue; rather, *erōs* is constantly kept under control externally, through *technē* (cf., *ibid.*, p. 651).

The Third Prelude: The Song of Dialectic

Although the *aulos*, and with it the erotic, was banned from the rational city of Adeimantus, the young men present, especially Polemarchus and Adeimantus, want to hear more about things erotic. So they push Socrates to speak further about the begetting of children and the nature of the relationship between men and women in the city. Socrates is hesitant, doubtful, frightened: 'If I believed I knew whereof I speak, it would be a fine exhortation ... But to present arguments at a time when one is in doubt and seeking — which is just what I am doing — is a thing both frightening and slippery' (450d–451a). Glaucon, again laughing, says: 'But, Socrates, if we are affected in some discordant way by the argument, we'll release you like a man who is guiltless of murder and you won't be our deceiver. Be bold and speak' (451b). Socrates is hesitant because he is afraid that his speech might be taken too seriously, that it might be received dogmatically, as if spoken by one who knows the truth — a fear that has proved itself well-founded. Yet Glaucon's laughter, his playful desire to listen, seems to lend Socrates the courage he needs to swim, now that he appears to have slipped into a sea of problems.

Socrates himself uses the image of his having slipped into a sort of sea out of which he is forced to swim to characterize his own precarious position in the *Republic* (453d). This image echoes that found at the start of his discussion with Glaucon and Adeimantus in which he claims both not to be capable of defending the just life and yet not to be able not to defend it (368b). Socrates is thus stuck somewhere between his recognition of his own ignorance concerning justice and the need to defend justice itself — the danger being that in speaking authoritatively about justice, those who hear him will be charmed by his voice and forget the limits of his own knowledge. Glaucon's laughter allows Socrates to proceed with some confidence that what he will present will not be taken too seriously. Of the three waves that threaten to drown Socrates, the second and third at once present the greatest difficulty and are the most ridiculous.⁴⁰ The second wave suggests that women and children should be held in common and procreation strictly regulated by the state, the third that philosophers should rule as kings.

The position Socrates takes here is comic in the sense of traditional Greek Old Comedy, which often generates patently absurd situations in order to challenge its audience to think critically about the norms and values it holds most dear. Leo Strauss has characterized the core of Aristophantic comedy as

⁴⁰ Drew Hyland argues that the first of the three waves — the equal treatment of men and women (451d–457b) — should be taken seriously as both plausible and desirable, while the second two are neither plausible nor desirable. See, Drew A. Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues* (Albany, 1995), chapter 3. Bloom takes all three waves as absurd. See, Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, p. 380ff.

presenting the impossible as possible.⁴¹ Of course, this suggestion is limited insofar as it leaves out much that is important and interesting about Aristophanes' comedy and Old Comedy in general; for example, that it emphasizes contingency over necessity, that it is more concerned with the body (and its functions) than with the soul, and that it forces its audience to laugh at itself and, more generally, at the strange finitude that haunts the human condition. Nevertheless, however, Strauss's formulation captures something significant about how comedy, by insistently transgressing popular social norms and boundaries, calls these very values into question, forcing the audience into a mode of critical self-reflection.

Arlene Saxonhouse highlights the connection between the *Republic*, particularly book V, and the comedies of Aristophanes like the *Birds* in which Athenians quite ridiculously seek to control nature by organizing the birds into a *polis*.⁴² The position Socrates develops in book V concerning eugenics and the radical, authoritarian control the philosopher-ruler must impose upon the city is comic because it takes the technical model of politics, and indeed, the image of the political ruler as the shepherd of the people, to its ridiculous extreme. Justice in this city depends ultimately on the despotic superiority of the philosopher-king, who, possessing firm knowledge of the good itself, breeds humans like animals.

Using the good order of Glaucon's own household as an example, Socrates appeals to his skill at breeding the best dogs, birds and horses with one another so as to produce the best specimens of each. He then suggests that it must be the same with the rulers of the just city: 'My, my, dear comrade, how very much we need eminent rulers after all, if [*eiper*] it is also the same with the human species' (459b). Glaucon seems to remain oblivious to the fact that it is not the same with humans, though Socrates' emphasis on the conditional, his '*eiper*', indicates that he at least knows better. The comic language Socrates uses throughout book V and particularly the rife appearance of images that link humans to animals has the effect of undermining and tempering what might otherwise be seen as Socrates' extreme *hybris*: the audacious suggestion that true justice is achievable on earth if only philosophers would rule as kings (473c-d).

This latter suggestion Socrates is most hesitant to make, for he recognizes the *hybris* of it and the ridicule he will receive for giving it voice. Indeed, Socrates' account of the nature of the philosopher in books V and VI, at least leading up to the image of the divided line, suggests not only that the philosopher loves the good and seeks the beautiful, but also that the philosopher actually possesses knowledge of what is always the same and, on this basis, is able to

⁴¹ Strauss, *The City and Man*, p. 62.

⁴² Arlene W. Saxonhouse, 'Comedy in Callipolis: Animal Imagery in the *Republic*', *American Political Science Review*, 72.3 (1978), p. 891.

set the city in order.⁴³ Indeed, the image to which Socrates appeals when Adeimantus questions the qualifications of the philosopher is that of the expert sailor: The *technē* of navigating seems akin to that of the philosopher-king (487b–490b). On the model of *technē*, the philosopher would not only be rare, as Socrates suggests, but divine, indeed, a divine sort of craftsman.⁴⁴ The *hybris* of Socrates' account of the philosopher-ruler, who loves the whole, not one part more than another, and, seeing the good itself, sets the city in order, is tempered by the comic image of a city populated not by human beings, but by animals.

This suggests that the founding in speech not only of Adeimantus' city, but also of the city ruled by philosopher-kings is, as Stanley Rosen suggests, 'a sort of satire, whose exaggerations are meant to teach the opposite of what they explicitly say'.⁴⁵ The comic and satirical dimensions of the *Republic* are completely muted when the dialogue is approached visually. They become audible, however, if we listen to the dialogue, attending not only to the sound of laughter that reverberates throughout, but also to the rhythm of Socrates' relationship with Glaucon. This rhythm tempers the hyper-rational homophony of the cities established in speech by emphasizing the concrete presence of the individual soul for whom the discussion was undertaken in the first place.

This relationship attains its highest point of political friendship the moment Socrates, for the first time, refuses Glaucon's insistent, erotic demand to proceed to the 'song itself' (532d). After founding the city ruled by philosopher-kings, Socrates introduces the divided line, in which the good is characterized not as something that might be possessed, but as somehow beyond being itself, beyond even reason and intelligibility, which Glaucon, 'quite ridiculously', and, we might add, appropriately, calls a 'demonic excess' (509c). The allegory of the cave is then introduced and Socrates ultimately leads Glaucon through a series of studies designed to haul his soul

⁴³ Socrates suggests that philosophers are able to possess what is always the same in all respects at VI.484b. Cf. 484c–d. Later he divines 'that no one will adequately know the just and fair things themselves before this [how they are good] is known' (506a). Drew Hyland recognizes that these passages suggest not that the rulers are *lovers* of wisdom, but *wise* people who possess knowledge of the good, just and beautiful — a suggestion that goes against the thrust of most other Platonic dialogues. See, Hyland, *Finitude and Transcendence in the Platonic Dialogues*, pp. 78–9.

⁴⁴ Socrates emphasizes that such people will be rare at V.476b–c, VI.491a–b, and VI.496a.

⁴⁵ Rosen, 'The Role of Eros in Plato's *Republic*', p. 460. Rosen has more recently distanced himself from this position, arguing that the revolutionary nature of the *Republic* lies 'in the frank, shockingly open statement by Socrates of what is required if we take seriously, and follow consistently, the political implications of philosophical wisdom ... The argument of the *Republic* ... is that, if we did know the truth, we would be led to support a city very much like the one constructed in the *Republic* under the leadership of Socrates'. See *Plato's Republic: A Study*, p. 5.

toward being. These studies — arithmetic, geometry, the unnamed study of depth, astronomy and its 'antistrophe': harmonic movement — lead, however, not to an ecstatic *vision* of the good itself, but to a strange sort of song, one performed, says Socrates, by dialectic. Indeed, Socrates goes so far as to suggest that what has come before — the various studies and perhaps even the 'tales in tales' told concerning the cities in speech — is nothing but a prelude to this song, which now must be learned (531d–532a). The song of dialectic, Socrates tells Glaucon,

... is in the realm of the intelligible, but it is imitated by the power of sight. We said that sight at last tries to look at the animals themselves and at stars themselves and then finally at the sun itself. So, also, when a man tries by discussion — by means of argument (*logos*) without the use of any of the senses — to attain to each thing itself that *is* and doesn't give up before he grasps by intellection itself that which is good itself, he comes to the very end of the intelligible realm just as that other man was then at the end of the visible (532a–b).

The 'song of dialectic' metaphor is itself dissonant for dialectic is said to be a *logos*, but without any of the senses. As a 'song' and indeed, as a kind of *logos*, dialectic is firmly embedded in the world of sound, specifically those sounds that pass back and forth between individuals as they speak to one another. This auditory, verbal model of philosophical dialectic is ineluctably temporal in a way the visual, with its capacity to capture multiplicity in a single glance, is not.⁴⁶ Glaucon's response to Socrates suggests that he hears something of the dissonance in the metaphor:

I accept this as so. It seems to me extremely hard to accept, however, but in another way hard not to accept. All the same — since it is not only now that these things must be heard, but they must all be returned to many times in the future — taking for granted that this is as has now been said, let's proceed to the song itself and go through it just as we went through the prelude (532d–e).

Socrates here finally succeeds in forcing Glaucon into precisely the position into which Glaucon had forced him throughout the dialogue; for Glaucon is now caught somewhere between the need and the inability to accept the account offered. Indeed, at the end of book V, Socrates notes that the opinions of the many about the beautiful 'roll around [*kylindeisthai*] somewhere

⁴⁶ For an important discussion of the temporality of vision, see Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology: Essays* (New York, 1966), pp. 135–56. The precise meaning and nature of the dialectic in Plato has been the source of much discussion and debate. While it is often associated with a rigorous logical technique or a meta-mathematical methodological process, here it is important to recognize that Socrates leaves the precise meaning of the 'song of dialectic' intriguingly vague. For a good review of the literature on the nature of the so-called Platonic dialectic, see Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's 'Republic'*, p. 133ff.

between not-being and being purely and simply', that they 'must be called opinable but not knowable, the wanderer between, seized by the power between' (479d). And it was precisely justice that Socrates caught sight of 'rolling around [*kylindeisthai*]' at their feet when he was playfully hunting for it with Glaucon (432d). Perhaps then, Socrates and Glaucon together have been seized by the power of the between, firmly situated in the peculiar, irreducibly human, position between the animals and the gods, the irrational and the rational, the *aulos* and the kithara.

Glaucon, acutely feeling now his own finitude, seeks to transcend it, enjoining Socrates to proceed beyond the prelude to the song itself which 'would lead at last toward that place which is for the one who reaches it a haven from the road, as it were, and an end of his journey' (532d). But Socrates, in his ultimate gesture of political friendship, refuses Glaucon, saying:

You will no longer be able to follow, my dear Glaucon, although there wouldn't be any lack of eagerness on my part. But you would no longer be seeing an image of what we are saying, but rather the truth itself, at least as it looks to me. Whether it is really so or not can no longer be properly insisted on [*diischyriizesthai*]. But that there is some such thing to see must be insisted on [*ischyristeon*]. Isn't it so? (533a).

Glaucon will not be able to follow because he must take the lead himself. He must make his own way along the road, choose a life and in this choosing find a voice through which to seek, dialectically and dialogically, the truth, which Socrates insists exists even as he calls the story he tells about it into question. Socrates' own insistence on the importance of insisting, indicated by the repetition of verb forms related to *ischyriizesthai* — to use all one's strength to insist strongly, suggests that something like the hypothetical method Socrates introduces in the *Phaedo* is at work here. There Socrates had insisted on the importance of hypothetically positing the existence 'of a Beautiful, itself by itself, and a Good and a Great and all the rest' in order to encourage his friends to spend their lives seeking these things.⁴⁷ Here, as there, Socrates refuses to offer his interlocutors anything more certain than a hypothesis. Yet, Socrates' refusal to offer Glaucon anything more than an insistent hypothesis is here the founding act of the only community established in the *Republic* not merely in speech, but in deed as well.

This is no utopia, for it has a very specific *topos*: The human soul of Glaucon, situated between the divine, intelligible sphere of the gods and the wholly sensuous realm of the beasts. The 'Callipolis' is not an abstraction existing only in speech. It exists in Glaucon himself. It is the beautiful soul

⁴⁷ Plato, *Phaedo*, 100b–02a. There Socrates also insists [*diischyriizesthai*] 'that all beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful' (100d7). Sallis has highlighted the connection between the *Republic* and the *Phaedo* with regard to the question of the *logos* that belongs to *hypothesis* in his discussion of *dianoia* and the divided line, see Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, pp. 424–8.

that recognizes its need to insist upon the existence of the good, the beautiful and the just as what might now be called erotic principles. These ideas are principles insofar as they provide a standard against which the limitations of contingent, human existence become discernible. They are erotic, however, insofar as they at once animate the attempt to transcend these human limitations and yet remain, in principle, unattainable. The Socratic response to this tragic condition is playful and political. Rather than dogmatically positing a determinate vision of the just, the beautiful and the good, forcefully imposing them upon others, Socrates playfully pursues them as hypotheses, seeking them in dialectical dialogue with others. Yet, however playful, the search remains earnestly political; for it compels each individual who enters into dialogue with Socrates to recognize the very limitations of the political context in which they live and to imagine this context improved, brought, however slightly, closer to justice, beauty and goodness.

Precisely how these erotic principles are politically mobilized emerges in the *Republic* when we attend to the music of Socratic politics that resonates in the dialectical song Socrates sings with Glaucon. Its rhythm and harmony become discernible in the two preludes that precede it. In the strophe, the thymotic rhythm of Thrasymachus and his insistence that justice is the self-interest of the stronger threatens to subject the harmony of the community to the tyrannical whims of the individual. In the antistrophe, the homophony of a perfected justice threatens to subject the erotic rhythm of difference that is the very condition for the possibility of the *polis* to the hegemonic hypothesis of unity. It is only in the song of dialectic, itself a sort of prelude, that the tension between the rhythm of plurality and the rational homophony of unity is dynamically tuned in such a way that both the anarchic politics of thymotic self-interest and the totalitarian politics of rationalized oppression are equally muted. Socrates accomplishes this difficult tuning, neither by taking power himself, nor by escaping into a quiet refuge of contemplation, but by musically engaging in dialectical dialogue with Glaucon, simultaneously drawing him to a deeper recognition of the limits of the concrete political position in which he is embedded and enjoining him to pursue, in this very situation, the just, the beautiful and the good. The tremendous political power of these erotic principles lies not, ironically enough, in the way they 'look' to those who contemplate them, but in the way they sound to those, like Socrates, intent on weaving them into the fabric of finite, human community.

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