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**S.M. Connell ‘Parallels Between Tyrant and Philosopher in Plato’s *Republic*’
(forthcoming in *Polis: The Journal for Ancient Greek Political Thought*).**

Abstract: The *Republic* presents the characters of the philosopher and the tyrant as similar. Strongly focused by indiscriminate erotic motivation, both defy convention and lack familiar emotional responses, which make them appear to be mad. This essay argues that Plato put forward these parallels partly in order to defend Socrates from the charge of corrupting the young, partly to present a possible way to overthrow the current regime and partly to show the ineffectiveness of democracy. The very best leaders may look like tyrants; it is only through proper philosophical education that their true natures can be discerned.

Keywords: Tyrant, philosopher, *erôs*, democracy, Alcibiades

I. Introduction

Plato’s *Republic* asks us to frame two extreme personalities – one tyrannical, the other philosophical (*Rep.* 9.580b7-c8). Socrates’ stated goal in constructing this contrast is to prove to Glaucon that the just life is the most rewarding and happiest. The philosopher is the most just man there could be, the tyrannical man the most unjust (8.544a5-6). The finale finds the philosopher to be 729 times happier than the tyrant (9.587d9-588a1).¹ Since philosopher and tyrant sit at opposite extremes, one might suppose them to have nothing in common. However, when considered more closely, significant parallels emerge. Philosopher and tyrant both come to the fruition of their characters only through the intervention of others. Both, strongly focused by a peculiarly indiscriminate erotic motivation, defy convention (one

¹ In Plato’s *Republic* Book 2 Socrates initially sets out to show that the just man is the happiest and the unjust man the most unhappy (361b4-d3), before identifying these with philosophical and tyrannical personalities in Book 9. Not all people with tyrannical personalities end up as tyrants, but all tyrants have tyrannical personalities. Thus the tyrant is eventually used as shorthand for the tyrannical person and contrasted with the philosopher ruler (who similarly must have a philosophical personality). All texts and translations of Plato’s *Republic* are from Plato, *The Republic*. Loeb Classical Library, trans. P. Shorey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930), 2 vols. References to other Platonic works can be found in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

meaning of the Greek *nomos*) and do not form the sorts of personal attachments that others do, making them appear to others to be mad (*mania*). In this essay I argue that Plato uses these parallels for various purposes. They play a role in providing a defence for Socrates against the charge of corrupting the youth, and in particular Alcibiades. They also promote a rechanneling of the powerful impulses people feel toward charismatic tyrannical characters away from those individuals and towards philosophers. The most important purpose of the parallel, however, is philosophical. On the surface it appears that Plato needs to convince his contemporaries of the fundamental differences between the two characters in order to defend his proposed philosopher rulers from accusations of tyranny. When we dig deeper, however, a further message is that there is no effective method to make this distinction based on appearances: the two could be so similar as to be indistinguishable. Given this, democracy is fundamentally flawed; only a good ruler will be able, based on knowledge of her own psychology, to take over rule. But in so doing, those without knowledge may see her as a tyrant. And so a key message of the *Republic* as a whole is secured: democracy is ineffective. The only way to bring about a good polis is through proper philosophical education whereby the ability to select the best rulers is attained.

Plato argues that tyrant and philosopher differ fundamentally on the inside, in terms of motivations and values, so that only the latter will benefit the state. The philosopher is concerned about and motivated to better the lives of those he rules over while the tyrant is only motivated by self-interest, and more narrowly, by an irrational pursuit of his own experiences.² The idea of tyrannical destructiveness is closely associated with the term *paranoia* in the literature at the time, and Plato also uses it of the tyrant's drives. Although the philosopher also acts contrary to current conventions (*nomoi*), she is law abiding, i.e. in touch with what is really or objectively right and good. Furthermore, in order to placate

² One might protest that philosophers care for the good of the *polis* not the well-being of individuals within it. However, there is plenty of evidence that the concerns of individuals do matter to the philosopher-ruler (*Rep.* 1.342e1-9, 9.589b2-3, 590d1-e1).

Glaucon in particular, the life of the philosopher must be shown to be rewarding, and this is based on the idea that only the philosopher gets what she wants, because the objects of her desires are real whereas the objects of the tyrant's desires are illusory. Since the structure and focus of their psyches are similar, it is only by differentiating their objects as real and unreal that Socrates can distinguish between them, at the same time establishing that philosophers abide by a higher law. The difference between real and unreal is not available, though, to just anyone but only to those with a proper philosophical education. Thus the tyrant and philosopher appear similar to almost everyone, making it impossible in a democratic setting to defend philosophers – a theme we find throughout Plato's works.

I will begin by detailing the similarities between the tyrant and the philosopher. This will involve a sketch of the account of the tyrant in *Rep.* 9, along with some historical context. I will then find references to the philosophical personality which are scattered throughout the work. Next, I will explain how this sketch serves several different purposes before detailing the differences which are only discernible to those with true knowledge.

II. Plato's Tyrannical Character

Socrates comes to describe the tyrannical person in *Rep.* 9 at the climax of the degeneration of types of city and corresponding characters.³ This degeneration completes his response to Glaucon's challenge in *Rep.* 2 to show that the just man lives the best and happiest life. Socrates initially provides a sketch of the just individual in *Rep.* 4. In the just person, the three parts of soul, the reasoning part (*logistikón*), the spirited part (*thumêtikón*) and the appetitive part (*epithumêtikón*) are in harmony; each performs the function at which it is best and the lower two respect the rule of reason, which acts for the good of the whole (436a3-8, 441e2-442d5). After further elaborating the philosophical character of the just person in *Rep.* 5-7, Socrates returns to consider the lesser types of city and person in *Rep.* 8-9.

³ *Rep.* 8.563e3-569c8 details the rise of tyranny, 9.571a1-576b9, the tyrannical man.

Due to a chance error in breeding, the ideal *polis* will degenerate into a timocracy (8.546a2-d9). Similarly, a genetic fault causes the degeneration of the philosophical person, beginning with the disadvantage of happening to have one less good parent (549c2-d1). The soul of the mother is corrupted by her concerns with honour and money above intellectual pursuits and, presumably because this person takes after their mother, they are swayed by her concerns and complaints (*Rep.* 8.549d2-550a2). The degradation of every personality is due to a change in the soul's constitution. The three parts are properly ruled by reason in its substantive and instrumental aspects, with spirit and the appetites agreeing to this management of the whole (*Rep.* 4.441e2-442d1). The timocrat's soul allows spirit to enslave reason, using it in an instrumental manner to the end of honour (550b3-5). The faulty constitution of the oligarch, democrat and tyrant are all due to the appetitive portion of the soul gaining sovereignty (553c4-9). They are distinguished by different types of appetitive desire – the oligarch listens to the necessary appetites, the democrat includes the unnecessary ones (558d2-559e2) and the tyrant is ruled by those unnecessary appetites that are paranomic.⁴

‘Of our unnecessary pleasures and appetites there are some paranomic ones, I think, which probably are to be found in us all, but which, when controlled by the laws and the better desires in alliance with reason, can in some men be altogether got rid of’... ‘What desires do you mean,’ he said. ‘Those,’ said I, ‘that are awakened in sleep when the rest of the soul, the rational, gentle and dominant part, slumbers, but the beastly and savage part, replete with food and wine, gambols and, repelling sleep, endeavours to sally forth

⁴ *Paranomos* is normally translated as ‘lawless’ but the meaning is obscure and the connotations to contemporary readers numerous, as I intend to explain. For now I will label these appetites paranomic. The tyrannical character is foreshadowed at several points. First, he is similar to Thrasymachus’ leader, who as shepherd, cares for the sheep only for his own gain (343b1-3). Next, Glaucon’s story of Gyges makes each of us question whether we wouldn’t have a tyrannical character if given the chance:

no one, it seems, would be so incorruptible that he would stay on the path of justice or stay away from other people’s property, when he could take whatever he wanted from the marketplace with impunity, go into people’s houses and have sex with anyone he wished, kill or release from prison anyone he wished, and do all the other things that would make him like a god among humans. Rather his actions would be in no way different from those of an unjust person... (360b3-c2).

Zeus is also depicted as tyrannical in his lack of control over his sexual urges at *Rep.* 3 (390c1-4).

and satisfy its own character. You are aware that in such case there is nothing it will not venture to undertake as being released from all sense of shame and all reason. It does not shrink from attempting to have sex with a mother or with anyone else, man, god or brute. It is ready for any foul deed of blood; it abstains from no food, and in a word, falls short of no extreme of folly and shamefulness' (9.571b3-d4).

In seeking to satisfy his paranomic appetites, the tyrannical person turns to a life of petty crime, unable to gain enough resources by conventional means – and is likened to an addict or drunkard (573b9-c7). But it is not just the predominance of these appetites which effect the transformation. Unlike the other degradations of personality, this one requires external agents. Tyrant makers or wizards (*magoi*) are needed to 'implant in his soul an overriding erotic drive to be a protector of his idle and prodigal appetites' (572e7-573a2).⁵ This erotic urge '*has madness as its bodyguard*' (573b1-2) which is why '*erôs has so long been called the tyrant of the soul*' (573b8). Plato's tyrannical person is driven by passionate desire, *erôs*, becoming an antisocial criminal who has no friends, cannot be trusted, and is tormented by fears and regrets (573d2-578b5). If, by chance, he should become an actual tyrant, his life will be even more abhorrent (578b7). This character is Plato's creation, but since he is labelled tyrannical the discussion must also relate to the idea of a tyrant in the Athenian democratic imagination.

By the time that Plato wrote the *Republic*, the tyrant is a commonplace in the literary and political landscape of Athens, most often as antihero, to be contrasted with the good democratic ruler.⁶ The term is used of leaders who came to power not through traditional means, such as hereditary monarchy, but were popular with the people for radical reforms

⁵ This point is made convincingly by A. Larivée, 'Eros Tyrannos: Alcibiades as the Model of Tyrant in Book IX of the Republic', *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*, 6/1 (2012), pp.1-26, p.14.

⁶ See the discussion particularly in V. Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) and J. McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture in Ancient* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

and upholding the needs and desires of many ordinary citizens.⁷ At least in its initial use, the term was not pejorative. By the time of Aristotle, tyrants are defined as those leaders who rule for the sake of their own pleasure and not for the common good.⁸ According to its foundation myth, democracy emerged from tyranny, with the tyrannicide of Hipparchus, son of the tyrant Peisistratus.⁹ The fact that, for Plato, tyranny comes from democracy (9.562a4-569c8) curiously reverses the supposed historical trajectory and is a challenge to the idea that democracy is good. On the other hand, Plato plays the audience's hatred for tyranny to his advantage, by describing it as the inevitable outcome of democratic 'freedom' (*eleutheria*) (*Rep.* 9.562a4-567e8), a freedom that many Athenians in his audience imagine they enjoy.

As well as hatred, the tyrant as radical ruler retains a certain attractiveness; in times of strife, one powerful personality may be capable of transforming a problematic *polis* for the better.¹⁰ A character who promises positive change could be charming and ingratiating. Although this personality is close to the tyrannical one, to call such of person a 'tyrant' remains an accusation and a slur. The idea of tyrant as hated but also attractive or adored is clearest in the numerous narratives about Alcibiades, the quintessential charismatic politician, accused of plotting tyranny. Ancient sources testify that he was the adopted son of the successful democratic leader, Pericles. As such he was extremely well connected. He is also universally attested to have been charming, tall and very physically attractive.¹¹ As a political

⁷ P. Ludwig, *Eros and Politics: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 152.

⁸ Aristotle makes a detailed contrast between a king (*basileiontos*) and a tyrant, noting the different regard each would have for their citizens, although the main distinction is between inherited rule and the imposition of rule by other means. See Aristotle *Politics* v.10 (All references to Aristotle can be found in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984], 2. Vols). The idea of the selfishness and destructiveness of a tyrant carries through to the enlightenment. Locke, in *The Divine Right of Kings*, writes that 'tyranny is the exercise of power beyond right, making use of power not for the good of the ruled but for own separate private advantage'. See Ludwig, *Eros and Politics*, p.152.

⁹ Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, p.4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.151-58, 217, 225-27.

¹¹ Plutarch remarks that his beauty 'flowered in every age and season of his physical development and as a boy, a youth, and a man made him adorable and sweet' *Alc.* 1.4, Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, p.131. See also Plato *Alcibiades I* 103a1-106a2.

figure he was alternately loved and hated.¹² In Athens he advocated the Sicilian Expedition but was forced to flee to Sparta where he campaigned against Athens. Having made more enemies, he then went to Persia, finally returning to Athens. Eventually, he was condemned to death and died in exile.¹³ Also striking are the connections made between Alcibiades' personal character and his political ambition. For some, accusations of plotting tyranny were due to his lifestyle of intemperate luxury.¹⁴ Furthermore, his pursuit of many unconventional sexual relationships with both men and women, laying claim to what was not rightly his, or *hubris*, is also linked to his public actions.¹⁵

Plato made use of the specific example of Alcibiades, especially in the ways in which tyrannical and philosophical characters overlap. It is particularly noteworthy that he uses the term *paranomia* to characterise the desires of the tyrannical personality since Alcibiades is well known as the most paranomic of all characters.¹⁶ We can also note that the general connection between personal licence and one's political role is carefully detailed by Socrates in *Rep.*9 (as described above).¹⁷ Plato's tyrant is a philosophical fantasy – but ties in with what other writers were talking about as characteristics of tyrants. The tyrant is an ambiguous figure at this time; on the one hand bad and hated, as a contrast with a democrat and on the other hand attractive as a radical reformer. Plato is appealing to his audience and their background assumptions about the nature of tyrants while also subverting these ideas. At some junctures, he implies that when democrats think of someone as a bad tyrant, they

¹² The *demos* hates him but also 'loves him...and wants to possess him', Aristophanes *Frogs* 1425. See also Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, p.126.

¹³ *Ibid.*, chs. III-IV; *Plut. Alc.* 22.1, 23.1, 39.

¹⁴ Thucydides 6.15.4: 'The majority feared the magnitude of his *paranomia*...thinking he desired tyranny'.

¹⁵ On tyrannical *hubris* see Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, pp.138-9, 221-2, 252. Later on Aristotle will include sexual *hubris* as one of the key features of tyranny (*Pol.* 1310a40-1313a17).

¹⁶ As Wohl *Love Among the Ruins*, p.129 explains '*paranomia* is the essence of Alcibiades' imagined biography'. See for example, Antishenes (fr. 29 Caizzi = Ath. 5.220c), Antiphon fr. 67 Thalheim, Plutarch *Alcibiades* 16.15.4. See also Larivée, 'Eros Tyrannos'.

¹⁷ The idea that someone who is not in control of himself should not rule over others is found throughout Plato's works, e.g. *Gorgias* 491d-e, but also in many of his contemporaries and successors. See, for example, Xenophon's *Hiero* and Aeschines' *Against Timarchos*. Cf. J. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), p. 301.

may be wrongly labelling a good leader. In this way, the philosophical leader would be good for the city despite popular disbelief (e.g. *Rep.* 7.516e9-517a6). On the other hand the real tyrant can never be good, even when they are appealing, or even particularly in that case. Let us now turn to the philosophical person.

III. The Philosopher

The character of the philosopher is more difficult to discern, partly because its presentation is diffuse. The philosopher is a lover of truth, driven by an *erôs* for knowledge (*Rep.* 6.485b1, 490b2, 499b5, 501d2).¹⁸ This focused *erôs* does not directly lead them to contemplate the beauty of true reality (*Rep.* 7.517b8-c6). Instead they have to be compelled to turn around and then driven by force to ascend the steep track out of the metaphorical cave (515c4-e6, 519c4-5).¹⁹ In *Rep.* 5-7 their otherworldly concentration means less interest in the personal dynamics that characterise a more mundane existence. A lack of private property and nuclear family suit this personality. Furthermore, their knowledge allows them to rule absolutely without written laws and without any ambition or desire to rule. Within the context of the cave metaphor in particular, these characteristics lead the many to view the person with a philosophical temperament as strange – as unable to see the world the way that they do (7.517a1-4).²⁰

The parallels between philosopher and tyrant include all of the following.

- (1) Both start out with the same strong character and potential for virtue.²¹
- (2) Both are moulded into their leadership position by the concerted effort of others.

¹⁸ This is a point even more strongly expressed in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*.

¹⁹ Philosophers must also be compelled to take charge of the city (7.520a8, e2, 521b7, 539e4, 540b4) and at each stage of their further education (e.g. 540a4-8). See R. Barney, 'Eros and Necessity in the Ascent from the Cave', *Ancient Philosophy*, 28/2 (2008), pp. 357-72, pp. 359-64. For this reason, R. Weiss, *Philosophers in the Republic: Plato's Two Paradigms* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012) argues that the philosophers of *Rep.* 7 are not real philosophers.

²⁰ See D. Scott, 'Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny' in M. Burnyeat and D. Scott (eds.), *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 136-53.

²¹ At *Rep.* 6.490e2-497a4 while defending philosophy, Socrates explains how philosophical natures come to be corrupted. The very best and the very worst supposedly start out in youth with the same propensities and are 'drawn to philosophy' (6.494e1-2). The current state of affairs brings about their total corruption (see particularly 6.495a2-b9 and also 7.518e2-519a1). A more detailed analysis is provided in Section IV.

- (3) Both are strongly motivated by indiscriminate *erôs* – erotic or passionate love.
- (4) Both display behaviours that stand outside current convention (*nomos*).
- (5) Both lack the usual social responses and do not form personal attachments.
- (6) Because of (3)-(5), both seem strange or disturbed to others.

Although philosopher and tyrant differ fundamentally, on the surface they will often appear very similar, due to these parallels. One might think that their behaviours would differ radically. The tyrant rapes, kills, beats up his parents – all activities which the philosopher does not engage in. However, their behaviours may not seem so different to the uninformed observer or one who construes these behaviours in a particular manner. If philosophers must punish those who require it (for the good of the whole) this may look like crimes to those who do not understand. On the other hand, a tyrant, who is actually committing acts which benefit only himself, may present them as honourable or hide them from public view. Socrates' insists that *'the height of injustice is to seem just without being so'* and that when considering the most unjust character *'we must allow him, while committing the greatest wrongs, to have secured for himself the greatest reputation for justice'* (2.361a1-b1). Meanwhile, the *'imagined counterpart'*, the most just person, *'though doing no wrong...must have the repute of the greatest injustice'* (361c5-6). If the tyrant's villainy is discovered while the philosopher's virtue remains hidden or the other way around, then their behaviours could appear almost identical. In the triumphant finale where he has separated the completely just from the entirely unjust person in *Rep.* 9, Socrates emphasises again that this contrast occurs *'alike whether their character is known to all men and gods or is not known'* (580c6). Thus, he would not consider it unusual for one to be mistaken for the other. Furthermore, it is understandable how their responses to and effect on others are in many respects similar (4-6), given the fact that both are motivated by an overbearing erotic drive (3).

Recent scholarship which touches on the parallels between tyrant and philosopher focuses on (3) leading to (6).²² Dominic Scott uses the contrast to explain why *erôs* is downgraded in the *Rep.* (4.439d6) to a position in the lowest part of the soul as opposed to its more elevated standing in other dialogues.²³ I will further develop this narrative by offering viable reasons why Plato would present the two characters as parallel.²⁴ This then reveals a more significant break with the account of *erôs* elsewhere in the Platonic Corpus. In the *Rep.*, the proper objects of *erôs* are attainable and so it not the desire itself that is downgraded but the drive when it occurs without knowledge of its proper objects. It is this that definitively distinguishes philosopher from tyrant and which will be the focus of the next Section. It is also important to explore the other ways in which they are parallel in order to more fully understand why Plato so purposefully set these out. Sections IV-V discuss the importance of (3) in showing how interested Plato was in presenting the two characters as similar and will then propose some reasons why he might have wished to do so. Sections VI-VII will go on to explain how Plato can argue for the two characters being different and in doing so will also discuss (1), (2), (4) and (5).

IV. The Psychic Similarity of Tyrant and Philosopher

Both tyrant and philosopher are motivated by *erôs*. The philosopher must have an indiscriminate love of all knowledge.²⁵

²² Scott, 'Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny', p.136: 'they have one thing in common: both are gripped by an obsessive *eros*'.

²³ See, for example, *Symposium* 177d7-8, 198d, *Phaedrus* 251a7-8, *Lysis* 204b5-c2, and *Charmides* 155d4-e2. For this problem see also P. Ludwig, 'Eros in the Republic' in G. Ferrari (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato's Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 202-31, pp. 202-3, A. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 62-3 and S. Rosen, 'The Role of Eros in the Republic', *Review of Metaphysics* 18 (1965), pp. 452-75, pp. 454-62.

²⁴ Scott, 'Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny', does not does not provide any explanation of why Plato would want the philosopher and tyrant to have parallel psychic structures.

²⁵ See also *Sym.* 210d-11d where the student must learn to have erotic passion for all beautiful people, laws and institutions. Philosophical lovers should have no attachments to particular people. See G. Vlastos, 'The Individual as Object of Love in Plato', in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 3-42.

[T]here is every necessity that he who is by nature enamoured of anything (*ton erôtikôs tou phusei echonta*) should cherish all that is akin and pertaining to the object of his love...the true lover of knowledge must, from childhood up, be most of all a striver after truth in every form...when in a man the desires incline strongly to any one thing they are weakened for other things. It is as if the stream had been diverted into another channel (6.485c5-d5)

The *erôs* of the tyrant is similarly indiscriminate. First of all, his motivations come principally from the paranomic set of appetites. When these desires dominate then the person *‘does not shrink from trying to have sex with a mother...or with anyone else, man, god, or beast. It will commit any foul murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat’* (9.571c9-d2). Although paranomic appetites are *‘to be found in us all’* (571b5) it is only in the tyrant that they become active motivations resulting in actual behaviour. The tyrant is also described as having a singular appetite (573a1), more focused than the multifarious and bland pursuits of the democratic person.²⁶ This singular appetite leads him toward the plural set.

The tyrant’s focus on ‘paranomic’ erotic appetites has perplexed many scholars.²⁷ Despite Glaucon’s interjection that the description is ‘most true’ (9.571d5) this aspect of his character is remarkably counterintuitive. In the above description, appetite for food is lumped together with appetite for sex. We can easily imagine why someone would eat any food (9.571d2), no matter how immoral or disgusting, due to extreme need. Empirical instances such as the desperation of shipwreck or plane crash victims abound. If it were

²⁶ The democratic person is described as follows:

he lives always surrendering rule over himself to which ever desire comes along, as if it were chosen by lot. And when that is satisfied, he surrenders the rule to another, not disdaining any but satisfying them all equally...he declares that all pleasures are equal and must be valued equally (8.561b3-7).

²⁷ Ludwig, ‘Eros and Politics’, p. 395, notes of the outlaw *erôs*, ‘it is hard to say what its object is’. Scott, ‘Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny’, p. 139: ‘it is difficult to spell out precisely what a lawless desire is meant to be, and how it differs from a lawful one...[these desires] are inherently destructive of society’. Others posit that they ‘violate the fundamental requirements of the city’ (S. Benardete, *Socrates’ Second Sailing: On Plato’s Republic* [Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989], p. 205) or ‘subvert the foundations of the polis’ (Larivée, ‘Eros Tyrannos’, p. 10).

possible to have an erotic appetite like this, then this would entail that the agent have an appetite for sexual satisfaction singularly indifferent to the object or means by which that satisfaction were obtained.²⁸ From the *Symposium* we learn that *erôs*, even when its objects are physical, is not a desire to have sex with anyone or anything, but a response to beauty and a desire to possess that beauty (*Sym.* 204d3-8); this is the case even for the crudest animal urges (*Sym.* 206c2-7). Furthermore, the popular idea of a tyrant motivated by *erôs* is hardly the idea that he will have sex with anyone or anything, whether appealing or not.²⁹ Their power gives them the ability to have their pick of the most attractive people (e.g. the Sultan's harem).³⁰ In the *Republic*, then, the tyrant is imagined to have a completely indiscriminate urge for sexual congress, which is not something normally thought to occur in tyrants or in anyone else.³¹ I would like to suggest that this is consequence of Plato's wish to make this psychology in significant ways parallel to that of his philosopher. The nature of *erôs* in the psyches of these extreme personalities has the same quality of being entirely indiscriminate about its chosen set of objects: for the tyrant, sex objects, and for the philosopher, truths or real objects.³² The tyrant's extremely rare type of sexual desire which abhors no sex object,

²⁸ One can distinguish here between a desire (*erôs*) for erotic activity and the activity itself. Admittedly the activity can occur without any sexual attraction or desire, but for Plato the sexual desire is what marks these appetites as paranomic not the sexual activity.

²⁹ One may take note of Donald Trump's defence when accused of sexually assaulting several women, which is to repeatedly suggest they were not attractive enough for him. For example of Jessica Leeds, he said, 'believe me, she would not be my first choice. That I can tell you'. <<https://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/trump-jessica-leeds-accusations-229805>>, accessed 16/1/2108. Of another women with a similar complaint, Trump said: 'Look at her...I don't think so' (speech at political rally in West Palm Beach, Florida, 14 October 2016). On Donald Trump as similar to Plato's tyrant see especially D. Allen, 'Donald Trump is a walking, talking example of the tyrannical soul', Washington Post. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2016/10/08/donald-trump-is-a-walking-talking-example-of-the-tyrannical-soul/>>, accessed 23/4/2017

³⁰ Those who would be like Gyges could 'have sex with whoever he chose to' (2.360c1-2). In Xenophon's *Hiero* 1, 26, Simonides links sex with tyranny in so far as power makes it 'possible...to have intercourse with the fairest you see.'

³¹ The ancients knew about rabies and its symptoms, one of which is hyper-sexuality. See Aristotle *HA* 8.22. If Plato was thinking of the tyrant as pathologically hyper-sexual, this could explain why he is depicted as turning into a 'wolf-like person' at 8.566a.

³² L.H. Craig, *The War-Lover: A Study of Plato's Republic* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1994), p. 53 notes that 'the philosopher is more like an indiscriminate philanderer than a faithful monogamist...' See also Ludwig, 'Eros in the *Republic*', p. 209: 'the philosophic *erôs* is profligate and promiscuous'.

is then as odd as the philosopher's drive for all knowledge. We might be led to wonder why, even at the cost of plausibility, Plato wants these parallels.³³

V. A Defence of Socrates and a Gain for Philosophy

One plausible reason for Plato to create parallels between the two personalities is to provide a defence of Socrates against the charge of corrupting youth. Another is to channel the attraction the audience and readers of the *Republic* feel for a charismatic and counter-conventional political personality from the tyrannical type towards the philosopher.

In *Rep.* 6, when beginning to show Adeimantus how it is that philosophers can actually be useful to the city, Socrates feels he must provide an explanation for their current bad reputation. This leads him to detail the frequent corruption (*diaphthoras*) of the philosophical nature. Oddly, its very own qualities of courage, high-mindedness (*megaloprepeia*), aptness to learning (*eumatheia*) and possession of a good memory (6.490c8-9)³⁴ 'tend to corrupt the soul of its possessor and divert it from philosophy' (6.491b4-6). In order to explain this, Socrates employs a metaphor.

We know it to be universally true of every seed and growth, whether vegetable or animal, that the more vigorous it is the more it falls short of its proper perfection when deprived of the food, the season, the place that suits it. For evil is more opposed to the good than to the not-good (6.491d1-5).

The philosopher 'sown and planted and grown' in the wrong environment will become bad (491e2-492a5).

Since no present government is suitable for philosophy (6.497a8-b1), philosophical nature is as 'a foreign seed sown in an alien soil' which 'degenerates into something else'

³³ It is perhaps of interest that modern psychology recognises some similarity between sexual desire and the desire to problem solve. See A. Gopnik, 'Explanation as Orgasm and the Drive for Causal Understanding' in F. Keil and R. Wilson (eds.) *Cognition and Explanation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 299-323. See also the *Theaetetus* where Socrates likens engaging in arguments to naked wrestling matches, noting the *erōs* he feels for the former (169a-c).

³⁴ At 6.487a Socrates also includes charm and being friendly and akin to truth, justice, bravery and temperance. Cf. 7.535a-c.

(497b3-5).³⁵ Those with true philosophical natures are so disrupted that they swing strongly in the other direction – becoming vicious in an ostentatious manner (490e2-494a3, 495a8-c5, 497b1-9). Thus, ‘*great crimes and pure wickedness*’ come from a strong nature that has been ruined. The corrupting conditions mentioned here include being wealthy, physical strong, well connected (6.491c1-3) and applauded and praised by the multitude (492b6-c8). Within the corrupt city, the pleasures and desires of the multitude will influence this person.

Even as a boy among boys such a one will take the lead in all things, especially if the nature of his body matches the soul... His kinsmen and fellow-citizens, then, will desire, I presume, to make use of him when he is older for their own affairs (6.494b2-9).

These associates will flatter and faun on such a person, resulting in haughty, proud and senseless behaviour ‘*especially if it happen that he belongs to a great city and is rich and well-born... handsome and tall*’ (494c3-5). This rather elaborate story of the potential young philosopher who goes wrong is designed to remind us of Alcibiades.³⁶ We will also simultaneously recall that Socrates’ conviction on the charge of corrupting the youth relates most strongly to his friendship with Alcibiades.³⁷ Plato’s own narrative has it that Alcibiades is a failure as a student of philosophy and is in thrall to his lowest appetites.³⁸

If both Socrates and Alcibiades begin life with the same capacity to become philosophers – they have a good memory, a propensity for learning and a greatness of soul – why is it that Socrates becomes a philosopher and Alcibiades turns to evil ways, perhaps even ending up

³⁵ See also 7.518e2-519a1: ‘excellence of thought...according to the direction of its conversion, becomes useful and beneficial or useless and harmful’.

³⁶ See P. Shorey’s notes on Plato *Republic*, p. 45 and Larivée, ‘Eros Tyrannos’, p. 13. See also Plato *Alcibiades I* 103a1-106a2. They could also be designed to make the reader think of Plato himself and his own good luck in avoiding such corruption. I thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

³⁷ Along with Critias (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.2). A number of writers at the time depict the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, for example, the comic playwright Aristophanes. For numerous references see Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, pp. 158-70, and D. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens: A Study in Literary Presentation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999).

³⁸ In the *Symposium* he brings back the flute girl, standing in for sex, and consumes over 2 litres of wine (*Sym.* 212c6-213a2, 213e6-214a3). Larivée ‘Eros Tyrannos’, p. 17.

with the tyrannical personality detailed in *Republic* 9? The idea of the good seed gone rotten allows Plato to lay the blame on the growing conditions and not on the seed or the farmer.³⁹ The outcome was down to luck. If Socrates had had the bad luck to have been the handsome adopted son of the ruler of Athens, then rather than spending his time in detached reflection, he would have faced the expectations and ambitions of his friends.⁴⁰ This means that Alcibiades cannot be wholly blamed for turning out as he did; rather, he is like the passive plant affected by the wrong soil. The affection, and even love, that Socrates feels for Alcibiades is thereby justified.⁴¹ This love can even be channelled for the good. The attractiveness of this clever, charming, controversial leader gives us some hope that philosophy will eventually come to dominate politics.

The thought that a philosophical personality can lurk inside a tyrannical one can be viewed as a positive point. According to *Rep.* 8-9 aristocracy inevitably declines into timocracy, then oligarchy, democracy and eventually tyranny. The scheme implies a circular rather than a linear structure, as Aristotle aptly points out.

[Plato] never says whether tyranny is, or is not, liable to revolutions, and if it is, what is the cause of them, or into what form it changes... [A]ccording to him it should revert to the first and best, and then there would be a complete cycle (*Pol.* 1316a25-29).

The only way to go from tyranny is back to aristocracy and the kingly rule of philosophers. In order for Kallipolis to happen, a king will have to become a philosopher or a philosopher a

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 22-4.

⁴⁰ Arguably the tyrant-makers are such people. See Larivée, 'Eros Tyrannos', p. 14 and also Weiss, *Philosophers in the Republic*, p. 26.

⁴¹ Socrates is depicted as being in love with Alcibiades in *Alcibiades* I. Those who take up philosophy too young and thereby become paranomic are to be treated with 'leniency' and even 'pity' (7.539a6).

king (6.499b3-c3, 5.473c1-d3).⁴² These conversions are extremely unlikely and if either did come about, the resultant rulers would not have acted like the Greek ideal of a king.⁴³

First of all, there is hardly any chance that whoever happens to inherit rule as king would also have a philosophical character, since this is very rare (6.491a3-4). Furthermore, even if he did, a king will already be fully grown and would not have had the right education to develop into a philosopher; and finally, suppose he did become a philosopher, then he would have no desire to rule and so would pass over his hereditary right to some other family member. This leaves the second option that a philosopher should become a king – but this would not really be possible either, since a king has a hereditary right to rule – thus, the philosopher will actually need to either overthrow a current regime or convince the majority that this is in their best interests and be democratically elected. Socrates does not concentrate (and will think that he cannot as I will explain) on convincing the current population but instead recommends something more like the former strategy.

They'll send everyone in the city who is over ten years old into the country. Then they'll take possession of the children, who are now free from the ethos of their parents, and bring them up in their own customs and laws, which are the ones we've described. This is the quickest and easiest way for the city and constitution we've discussed to be established, become happy, and bring most benefit to the people among whom it's established (7.540e3-541a5).

A philosopher who becomes a 'king' and then goes to such extremes will appear to be tyrannical. And Plato may well be aware of this; in indicating that only by '*some fate or chance*' would a philosopher end up as ruler, he evokes the language of tyrannical

⁴² See also Plato's VIIth letter 326a2-b4.

⁴³ Unlike basileic regimes, in Kallipolis, rule will not necessarily be inherited since random gold births will occur in the other classes (3.415c2-4).

overthrow.⁴⁴ Although Plato prefers to refer to the most just man in the *Republic* as a ‘king’ (*basileos*), it is unclear he is entitled to do so. The parallel between tyrant and philosopher thus helps Plato to explain why philosophers may look like tyrants from the outside.

Many feel that even though it is possible that some tyrants started off life as potential philosophers, due to the irreversibility of corruption, it is impossible to make a tyrannical man into a philosophical one.⁴⁵ However, one may cite Plato’s analysis of the psyche of the tyrant in support of an alternate perspective on the prospect of reform.⁴⁶ The tyrant is depicted as tormented. Indeed Socrates’ argument would be compromised if the tyrant were not to experience extreme psychic dissonance; he is ‘*full of confusion and repentance*’ (9.577e2).⁴⁷ The tyrant clearly feels the drives of his higher and better self, the rational soul, which cares for the whole person. There appears to be a way to touch the tyrant then through what is left of his rational faculty, which operates periodically when he feels shame and regret.⁴⁸

Thus far, I have urged that the parallels between the philosophical and tyrannical personalities serve to help defend Socrates from the charge of corrupting the young, and his associate, Alcibiades, in particular. They also gesture toward the need for extreme measures to remake the city through the cooperation of the right sort of tyrant, who may be capable of radical self-reform. This possibility is, however, substantially reduced by current practices in

⁴⁴ See McGlew, *Tyranny and Political Culture*, p. 210: ‘In answering the question of how the ideal state might be realised, Socrates uses language that seems borrowed from the self-representations of tyrants: if “by some extraordinary fortune” (*ektuches*) or “as the consequences of divine providence” the unlimited freedoms of the tyrant is conjoined with wisdom (499b), then the political artist possessing both could “wipe the city and the customs of men clean like a canvas” and “take possession of it and draft new laws” (501a)’.

⁴⁵ See Larivée, ‘Eros Tyrannos’, p. 21.

⁴⁶ G. Giorgini, ‘Plato and the Ailing Soul of the Tyrant’ in S. Gastaldi and J.-F. Pradeau (eds.), *Le Philosophe, le roi, le tyran. Études sur les figures royales et tyranniques dans la pensée politique grecque et sa postérité* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2009), pp. 112-127, pp. 121-125 also believes that it is possible for *erôs* to be redirected in the tyrant.

⁴⁷ Plato also uses this term for repentance, *metameleias*, in the *Laws* where it helps him to differentiate between intentional killing and killing under the influence of irrational emotions, such as anger. He who does not fully intend to kill will feel repentance (*Laws* 866d-867b).

⁴⁸ He is driven by mad desires, but madness is only episodic. See R.D. Parry, ‘The Unhappy Tyrant and the Craft of Rule’ in Ferrari, *Cambridge Companion*, pp. 386-414, p. 401 and R. Padel, *Whom the Gods Destroy: Elements of Greek and Tragic Madness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), ch.4.

philosophical education. The conventions of Athenian society require a student of philosophy to give it up when they are fully adult as Plato has Glaucon explain.

[T]hose who turn to philosophy, not merely touching upon it to complete their education (*pepaideusthai*) and dropping it while still young, but lingering too long in the study of it, the majority become cranks, not to say rascals, and those accounted the finest spirits among them are still rendered useless to society by the pursuit which you commend (6.487c6-d8).⁴⁹

When too young the best natures cannot yet grasp the seriousness of the task at hand but instead are ‘*infected with paranomia*’ and so use dialectic to cleverly argue in favour of disreputable pursuits and behaviour (7.538d5-539a2).⁵⁰ Contrary to this corrupting practice, Socrates recommends that philosophical techniques not be introduced until at least the age of 30, and then only to the most able guardians, selected through a rigorous screening process (7.537d1-8). By setting out philosophy as a mature discipline that must be entered into with a great deal of care, the Platonic defence of Socrates is somewhat weakened, for he did philosophy with Alcibiades and others when they were very young and unprepared. One might even see this narrative as a veiled criticism by Plato of his teacher.⁵¹ On the other hand, within a democracy philosophy can only survive if unregulated in this manner – which also serves to obscure its potential subversiveness.⁵² As for actual complete transformation of the polis along philosophical lines, the most viable option is for the son of a king or leader to become a philosopher (6.502a2). This avoids the suspicion that irreparable damage has already been done but seems very tricky insofar as the study of philosophy is itself corrupting

⁴⁹ In a similar vein, Callicles in the *Gorgias* proclaims that philosophy is only a youthful pursuit and those who continue with it when older are ‘laughable’ because they are ‘*inexperienced in the laws of their city*’ and ‘*in the ways of human beings altogether*’ (*Grg.* 484c3-e2).

⁵⁰ See also the flippant manner in which the democratic man toys with philosophy (8.561d1-3).

⁵¹ Socrates may be excused because he had no choice but to introduce philosophy where he could in such a corrupt society. Since the current regime is very far from Kallipolis, mature and serious philosophers can only occur in an uncontrolled, chance-like manner. In Plato’s VIIth letter Dion ascribes ‘*divine fortune*’ to the opportunity to turn a Sicilian monarch into a philosopher.

⁵² I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me.

if brought in too soon. The daughter of a king or tyrant might be a better prospect. A female child would not be as influenced by expectations and might be left to quietly develop a philosophical character. This could be another reason why it was so important to Plato to establish the necessity for female philosopher rulers,⁵³ perhaps having heard of successful queens of Old Egypt such as Hatchepsut.

Rejecting the prevailing educative practices, including the lack of proper provision for female children, is just one of the many ways in which current conventions must be transformed in order to achieve the ideal society. The philosopher ruler must thereby systematically break with convention. Given this, in continuing to defend Socrates and philosophy, Plato must show that the philosopher alone breaks with convention in a manner that is beneficial for rather than destructive of society. Proving that the philosopher is not paranomic consists of her having a different and more positive relation to the law (*nomos*). I will first explain (in section VI) why Plato must ultimately emphasise the lawfulness of the philosopher and then (in section VII) offer his more thorough defence of this position, grounded in psychology.

VI. Who is Paranomic, Antisocial and/or Psychopathic?

For Plato the tyrannical person has paranomic desires (9.571b2-8) and paranomic visions in dreams (9.572b5-7) and he is drawn to a paranomic lifestyle (9.572b1). Indeed, the tyrant himself is, simply put, paranomic (8.539a2). It is unsurprising that Plato employs this term when in fifth and fourth century Athens *paranoia* is so often used of those who are perceived to have or accused of having tyrannical characters.⁵⁴ The focus on the *erôs* of the tyrannical man in *Rep.* 9 also falls in line with this narrative. Paranomic sexual desires are

⁵³ For Plato's argument for female philosopher rulers see *Rep.* 5.452e3-457b5.

⁵⁴ On Alcibiades see note 12. Pericles was also accused of such ambitions and slandered regarding his private passions. Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, pp. 101, 136.

strongly associated by Plato's contemporaries with tyrannizing.⁵⁵ Even given this background, it is still difficult to discern the proper import and application of *paranomia* in the *Republic*.⁵⁶ It might indicate the nature of the desires of a person who sets himself against the norms and laws. This reading makes *paranomia* dependent on *nomia*, representing a 'perverse implantation'.⁵⁷ In this case, the behaviour of the imagined tyrannical man would merely serve to reinforce the law, by showing it in relief.⁵⁸ But *paranomia* need not be mere empty rebelliousness; it could point, instead, to something beyond the laws and a challenge to their very basis. On this more interesting view, the tyrant has a strong personality and is not afraid of what others will think or what others will try to do to stop him, based on the rules that they follow blindly.⁵⁹ On the surface it is not clear that the temperament and lifestyle of Plato's philosopher could not also be viewed as paranomic in this sense.⁶⁰ Consider, for one, how unusual the philosopher rulers' attitude toward legal rules is. In order to allow for the noted reforms, current laws surrounding marriage, incest, adultery, property, etc. will become

⁵⁵ Cf. Hdt. *Histories* 3.80.5, Eur. *Suppl.* 452-4, Xenophon *Hiero* 1.26, Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 18.1-2, *Pol.* 1311a280b23, Isoc. 2.29-31, 3.36-44. References from Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, p. 9. See also Larivée 'Eros Tyrannos', p. 6.

⁵⁶ The following translations have been offered: 'outlaw' (Ludwig 'Eros in the *Republic*'), 'lawless' (P. Shorey translation of Plato *Republic*, G.M. A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve translation of Plato *Republic* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992], Scott 'Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny') and 'translegal' (Benardete, *Socrates' Second Sailing*, p. 205). Larivée, 'Eros Tyrannos', p. 10 n.29, suggests that all current translations 'overlook the transgressive and monstrous aspect of the desires'. Scott, 'Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny', pp. 138-9, touches on the *paranomia* of the tyrant, particularly with respect to the nature and object of his *erôs* – physical sexual urge as opposed to a non-physical intellectual one – but glosses over the meaning and connotations of the term.

⁵⁷ See Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, pp. 125-126 on D. Halperin, 'The Democratic Body: Prostitution and Citizenship in Classical Athens', *differences* 2 (1990) pp. 1-128 and J. Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1990) and their Foucauldian approaches to Greek sexuality.

⁵⁸ See especially Ludwig, 'Eros in the Republic', p. 230 on the tyrant as antinomian. 'He wishes to flout convention...Conventionality is still remotely governing the tyrant in his embrace of the unconventional; *thumos* is still policing his soul, asserting a new self as breaker of laws'.

⁵⁹ Two characters within Plato's dialogues fit this description – the rulers described by Thrasymachus in *Rep. I* (1.338d3-339a2, 343b2-c4, 344a2-c3) and Callicles in the *Gorgias* (491e2-492c6), plus perhaps also Gyges (2.360c-d). Thrasymachus explains that whoever is in power makes up the laws and punishes anyone who breaks them as paranomic (338e6).

⁶⁰ This is no doubt why the idea of a philosopher ruling looks unappealing and paradoxical (5.473d1-474a8). Adeimantus reacts with alarm to the idea of a philosopher as ruler in the *polis* (6.487d1-3).

null and void.⁶¹ Furthermore, philosopher rulers, it is said, will have no need for any written laws and will rightly disdain any attachment to legal proceeding (6.427a1-c3).⁶²

The second similarity of philosopher to tyrant is the lack of the usual emotional responses and consequent social ties. Much is made of the tyrant's disregard for the feelings of others, starting with his mistreatment of his parents (9.574b4-c2), which leads to him having no true friends (576a2-4). We can also note his sexual impropriety (573d1-2) and his tendency to disregard strongly held social mores, such as taboos on incest and bestiality (571c2-d2). But now consider whether the philosopher is so very different. In terms of friends, he does not have the sort that we are used to – not possessing nor desiring to possess close familial ties or personal affections.⁶³ Furthermore, he or she does not form the usual attachments in his or her sexual conduct (5.457c8-d2). Indeed, if the potential philosophers of the Guardian class are any guide, each philosophical nature must be able to have sexual intercourse with whoever he or she is assigned to in the mating ceremony (459e4-460b2), which also allows for incest.⁶⁴ More generally, the philosopher's feelings of compassion will appear to be subdued or non-existent. So, for example, if the philosopher has a child, she will not balk at handing it over, new-born and vulnerable, to an impersonal crèche. In that place, every possible device is put in place so that when she feeds this child with her breasts, she will not recognise or bond with it. If the child is deemed worthy only of a lower class, the

⁶¹ They will 'wipe the slate clean' (6.501a7).

⁶² This is a theme Plato takes up elsewhere, for example, in the *Politicus*: 'There is no doubt that legislation is in a manner the business of a king, and yet the best thing of all is not that the law should rule, but that a man should rule, supposing him to have wisdom and royal power' (294a5-7). J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 105-6, is disdainful of this move, anticipating a disregard for the 'rights' of the people. 'Plato (quite in defiance of the political realities familiar to him) has in effect taken the education of the Guardians to replace the part played in public life by a constitution, or a code of statutes. He thinks that once we have the right people to do the job, laws will turn out to be fairly trivial' (p. 177).

⁶³ The *Phaedrus* also depicts the philosopher as disregarding the usual social ties, such as attachment to siblings and parents (251d1-52b2).

⁶⁴ The products of one mating ceremony would know each other as siblings but mating with older or younger biological siblings is allowed (5.461d1-e3). Despite his radicalism, Plato is sensitive to the current norms concerning various forms of incest, the sibling version not being as serious as parent/child variety. The tyrant oversteps the line of decency in his willingness to have sex with his mother. For a more detailed analysis of incest in Plato and Xenophon see D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.225-7.

philosopher will not feel upset about casting it out. ‘[I]f children are born to them with an infusion of brass or iron they shall by no means give way to pity in their treatment of them, but shall assign to each the status due to his nature and thrust them out...’ (3.415b7-c1). And finally, if the child is judged defective (5.460c2, 461b5) or superfluous (4.423c3), she must dispose of it entirely. One might argue that this was not counter-conventional given that infanticide was common, however there is evidence of much anxiety and moral squeamishness about the practice,⁶⁵ which the philosopher ruler would not share. Although exposure of infants not yet welcomed into an *oikos* might have been acceptable, purposefully letting those die who are well established members of the community would surely have been frowned upon. And yet this is what Socrates strongly recommends with respect to those whose illnesses render them ‘useless’ to the state. Medical practitioners, Socrates declares, ‘care for the bodies and souls of such of your citizens as are truly well born, but of those who are not, such as are defective in body they will suffer to die’ (3.410a1-2). A sickly person is not allowed to continue to live if he or she cannot be restored to complete function (3.406a2-407e2) and also might pass on their sickliness to the next generation (407d8). Euthanasia is made even easier because the philosopher will not lament death (10.603e7), as others might, since she will realise rationally that ‘nothing in mortal life is worthy of great concern’ (10.604b9-c1, Cf. 6.486a7—b2). Finally, one might think that the philosopher will lack the usual sense of self because she will not care for herself above the good of the whole (4.420b2-c2, 7.519e1-520a2) and indeed will not have anything that belongs solely to her and will not desire this.⁶⁶ At this point, the comments of a modern ethicist might give us pause: ‘Does [s]he care for anybody? Is there anybody whose sufferings or distress would affect

⁶⁵ C. Patterson, “‘Not Worth the Rearing’: The Causes of Infant Exposure in Ancient Greece”, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 (1985), pp.103-23, pp. 106-7. Why else would Socrates recommend that it be carried out in ‘secret’ (4.460c2).

⁶⁶ The guardians will only utter ‘mine’ in the sense of collective ownership (*Rep.* 5, e.g. 462c2-8).

[her]? If we say “no” to this, it looks as though we have produced a psychopath’.⁶⁷ How, if at all, can Plato convince us not to abhor the counter-conventionality of the philosopher, while retaining a healthy fear of tyrannical *paranoia*?

In recognising such similarities in antisocial tendencies, Scott also sees that ‘we need some way of showing that the philosopher is not lawless.’ The solution, he says, is ‘not too hard’: ‘the philosopher is asocial, but not anti-social.’⁶⁸ To be paranomic indicates that the agent is antisocial, meaning that they destroy social ties.⁶⁹ The philosopher, though, is merely asocial. This remedy is not complete, however. Plato’s idea that a city will become more unified if family ties are weakened (461e2-462d3) is controversial.⁷⁰ Given this, the philosopher’s attitudes and behaviour could be viewed, quite understandably, as similarly destructive of fundamental social ties. This worry is further reinforced and complicated by another striking similarity between the two characters, namely a certain shamelessness which comes along with transgressing customary norms.

When Plato first sets out the paranomic desires, for incest and bestiality for example, he is aiming to provoke our disgust at the tyrannical person’s shamelessness (9.571d2, 574d2-3). Charming Alcibiades, the most tyrannical of characters, is also said to be unusually shameless, as only Socrates has ever made him feel the least ashamed (*Sym.* 216b2). If we look to the *Gorgias*, Socrates similarly appeals to our outrage at a lack of shame in order to

⁶⁷ B. Williams, *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 23-4.

⁶⁸ Scott, ‘Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny’, p. 152. Ludwig, ‘Eros in the *Republic*’, makes the philosopher ‘anomian’ and the tyrant ‘antinomian’. Larivée, ‘Eros Tyrannos’, p. 21 n.60 rightly finds this distinction obscure and unsustainable.

⁶⁹ ‘Socrates’ point may well be that lawless desires are inherently destructive of society and of the relations that should exist between human beings’. Scott, ‘Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny’, p. 139.

⁷⁰ Aristotle criticises the *Republic* for using the words for friendship and love while leaving behind the lived reality of these relations. Aristotle believes that affection is by necessity focused on strong individual connections and a feeling of possessiveness, which Socrates disallows. ‘Of the two qualities which chiefly inspire regard and affection – that a thing is your own and that it is precious – neither can exist in such a state as this’ (*Pol.* 1262b13-23). See also Aristotle, *Pol.* 2.4, Ludwig, ‘Eros in the *Republic*’, p. 215. From a modern point of view, another worry is pressing: the viability of an impartial morality. Modern criticisms of impartiality include the thought that it is psychologically impossible (e.g. K. Baier, *The Moral Point of View: A Rational Basis of Ethics* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958] and that morality requires partiality (B. Williams, *Moral Luck* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], pp. 17-18).

dismiss the character of the tyrannical hero championed by Callicles. This strong leader, he offers, is outside the law (*nomos*) but in line with nature (*phusis*).

As for all those who were either sons of kings to begin with or else naturally competent to secure some position of rule for themselves as tyrant and potentates, what in truth could be more shameful and worse than self-control and justice for these people who, although they are free to enjoy good things without any interference, should bring as master upon themselves the law of the many? (*Grg.* 492b2-8).⁷¹

Socrates objects that, rather than finding a higher law in the natural order, this person is to be dismissed because of his lack of shame in making his desires as large as possible (492d1-493d1). To deem a character's motivations and behaviour shameful is to appeal to customary responses that may not be rational or correct. In his disdain for Callicles' hero, Socrates reduces him to the 'frightfully miserable' *kinaidos*, a passive male, whose role is shameful only in the context of Athenian pederastic power relations.⁷² However, in order for the philosophers to lead their new lifestyle, they are encouraged not to feel customary shame.⁷³ This is why having naked women in the gymnasium, even though 'contrary to custom' (*para to ethos*), is a positive move (5.452a2-c2). Reactions of disgust and shame will be inappropriate and the implementation of such practices serve to overcome these reactions in the next generation (8.540e6). Socrates relies, then, on the reactions of disgust and revulsion in detailing the behaviour of the tyrannical type while simultaneously encouraging us to

⁷¹ Translation by D.J.Zeyl in Cooper, *Plato Complete Works*, p. 835. Callicles' 'natural' leader bears a striking resemblance to Alcibiades. This thesis is reinforced when he is referred to later as like a lion cub raised in the city, breaking free and becoming 'natural' again (*Grg.* 483e4-b1), since Alcibiades is said to be like a lion kept in the city in Aristophanes *Frogs* 1431-2. Cf. the discussion in Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, p. 147.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92, and Halperin, 'The Democratic Body', pp. 13-18. Alcibiades was also slandered in this manner. See especially Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, pp. 127, 130, 133, 165. Someone who seeks the 'passive' role in homosexual sex can only be found shameful in a culture that downgrades women and then associates such men with women.

⁷³ Ludwig, 'Eros in the *Republic*', p. 216 says that 'Socrates intends a revolution in shame' when it comes to the guardians' erotic relations.

overlook such responses to the proposed practices of his guardians.⁷⁴ If the philosophical personality really offers a radical alternative to current conventions, then it is hard for him to criticise the tyrant on the ground that he contravenes norms which the philosopher no longer abides by or believes in.⁷⁵ Plato must explain how it is that *paranomia* is not equally applicable to his imagined philosopher ruler, who could be viewed quite legitimately with equivalent fear and trepidation in her disruptiveness. How is it that, with so much in common with the *paranomic* tyrant, motivationally and emotionally, the philosopher can avoid the charge of tyranny?

VII. How Philosopher and Tyrant Differ

Plato must do some work to show that the philosopher ruler cares for all citizens and works for the good of the whole *polis*, unmotivated by personal gain – whereas the tyrant cares only for his own perceived advantage. First of all, it is more usual to regard the philosopher as useless (6.487d2) and even as harmful.⁷⁶ Also, even though a tyrant is later on defined by his disregard for the welfare of the people, there is no necessary step from the original meaning of tyrant to this new one.⁷⁷ After all, the popularity of certain tyrants⁷⁸ suggests that their leadership was better for the people who preferred them to rule.⁷⁹ Furthermore, even Plato's idealised philosopher could be seen to take over power and rule for their own advantage, as tyrants are accused of doing. Plato's ideal *polis* will be best for

⁷⁴ See also Plato's use of 'bastard' as a mark of inferiority (e.g. 6.496a2, 7.536a2) which thereby attempts to retain traditional disdain for illegitimate births, even though, by current rules, every guardian child in Kallipolis will be so.

⁷⁵ So, for instance, when the tyrant is said to be hubristic, the negative evaluation of hubris relies on the idea of a violation of property; but the philosopher will have no personal property (or property related to kin, e.g. 'one's own wife') and furthermore will not recognise the value of it. On tyrannical hubris see n.15 above.

⁷⁶ Fearing him, the people attempt to kill the philosopher who returns to the cave (7.517a7).

⁷⁷ Aristotle *Pol.* 1311a2: '*a tyrant...has no regard to any public interest, except as conducive to his private ends. His aim is pleasure*'. EN 1160b1-3: '*the tyrant looks to his own advantage, the king to that of his subjects*'. See also Isocrates 5.154.

⁷⁸ Peisistratus, tyrant of Athens c. 561-27 B.C.E., was by most accounts a positive ruler, supported by the people he ruled over. The pejorative tyrannies came with his 'legitimate' successors, Hippias and Hipparchus. Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* 16, Hdt. *Hist.* 1.59. Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, p. 21 and p. 219; and on the sons pp. 3-4.

⁷⁹ This of course presupposes that the people (or 'the many') know what is good for them which is something that Plato persistently questions. So, for example, he argues that the many would only listen to a leader who promises them pleasures rather than what is actually good for them, like taking nutritional advice from a pastry chef rather than a physician (*Grg.* 521e2-522a8).

philosophers who will spend most of their time philosophising (7.520d6-7), won't be persecuted and won't be ruled over by someone worse (1.347c3-4). That the philosopher could, in some sense at least, be motivated to make life best for people like herself, also makes good sense in the context of the argumentative aims of dialogue as a whole, where Glaucon has to be shown that being just pays for the individual (2.367d2-4).⁸⁰ On the surface, the method of taking control and the appearance of a self-interested motive is the same in philosopher and tyrant.

The only way to tell a tyrant from a philosopher is to '*go down into a person's character and examine it thoroughly*,' rather than being '*dazzled by the façade*' (9.577a1-3). From this process in *Rep.* 9, we eventually discover the key to the meaning of *paranomia* and why it can only be applied to the tyrant. The first difference is one of structure and the second of content. Let's begin with the structural point. As explained earlier, the tyrant's soul is structurally unsound because the lowest part takes control. The appetitive part breaks free from the rest of the soul to '*sally forth and find a way to satisfy itself*' (571c5). Furthermore, in the tyrant these appetites (*epithumiai*) are paranomic. The philosopher, in contrast, possesses the correct structural arrangement in her soul with the rational part controlling any paranomic urges (571d3-572b2) which explains how '*everyone*' has them (572b4) although very few act on them. With appetites in control, the tyrant's soul is conflicted (577d1-578a2); furthermore, his out of control appetites are insatiable (578a1, 579e1-4).

Plato's opponents could claim that the tyrannical person is not conflicted but is pursuing the desires he feels most akin to and which make him happy. For Thrasymachus, for example, tyranny is '*the most consummate form of injustice which makes the man who does the wrong...most happy*' (1.344a3-4). Gyges would also appear to get what he wants and to

⁸⁰ The most just man, i.e. philosopher, will be the happiest and will feel the most pleasure (580b2-c1, 587b3-e8).

be happy (2.359c8-360b1; Cf. 2.362b2-c7). One could also argue that the Alcibiades was not merely out of control, but wilfully choosing a powerful alternative to conventional morality. Why not posit that the tyrant has a harmonised soul, since *erôs* focuses his desires and integrates them toward one end (or one type of end, i.e. physical erotic activity)? Plato has further arguments concerning the internal psychological state of the tyrant which can be used to answer such objections. In particular, he will make a case for the tyrant as addict, and thereby not in control and thereby incapable of happiness.

In order to attempt to draw in the likes of Thrasymachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus, Socrates must appeal to what they *want* – and then show them that although it might seem desirable to act badly to get what you want, like Gyges, this is psychologically impossible. The soul of such a person – destined for great villainy or virtue (6.490a8-494b2) – simply cannot be content to do wrong and harm. Something in their soul will protest - their ‘better’ or rational self. Plato clearly does not think that the tyrannical man is able to self-identify with his epithumetic part. Like an alcoholic (573c1), the tyrant is not purposively and wilfully doing what he *really* wants to do. In effect, what he wants is not what he *really* wants (576e2). The tyrannical man is actually made to do what he does by parts of his psyche which he is unable to control. Thus, we are reminded of the tripartite psychology and the attendant examples of *Rep.* 4. Leontius and the thirsty man both attempt to resist the desires originating in the lower parts of their soul, suggesting that the focus on control is only in the reasoning part (*logistikos*). Leontius curses himself because when he looks at the corpses he has lost control, driven to do so by a desire with which he does not identify – he is outside himself, out of control (4.439e4-440b3). So also, we are to imagine the tyrant not doing what he really wants to do, since his real self is only to be identified with the rational part which would, so Socrates wants us to think, disapprove of and resist erotic urges of the tyrannical

paranomic variety. He does not choose but is driven by a force separate from his true self, as in instances of addiction.

At one point, Socrates tries to ground his case in ontology, presenting the idea that a tyrant cannot be happy because the objects of their desire are unreal, as opposed to the real objects of philosophy. This argument occurs towards the end of *Rep.* 9 running up to the conclusion that the tyrannical person is the most unhappy individual and the philosopher the happiest, with happiness being here identified with pleasure. The three parts of soul are first associated with three types of life, each of which value a different entity –profit loving, honour loving and knowledge loving; tyrants are of the first variety, philosophers of the last. Each will consider their life the most pleasant (*Rep.* 9.7.580d5-581d5). Rather than treat this as subjective preference, Socrates maintains that one of them is correct, i.e. the philosopher, who judges rightly due to experience, wisdom and argument. The remainder of *Rep.* 9 ch.8 establishes that the philosopher has experience of all three, whereas the others do not. However, this does not mean that the others could not experience the utmost pleasure in their own minds, only that they do not have the third kind of pleasure. Thus, Socrates must move on to discredit the pleasure that the other two experience, ultimately focusing entirely on the lover of profit, who seeks out the objects that satisfy bodily desires.⁸¹ *Rep.* 9.9-10.583b1-586c6 is a two pronged attack on the experience of pleasure and then on the objects that effect that experience in the profit lover. The experience is suspect because it is mistaken pleasure – based on the view that pleasure is not subjective, but somehow truth-apt.⁸² The second argument (9.10.584d1-586c6) is more relevant to the context of the *Republic*. Here Plato posits that the objects of bodily desire, which he called ‘nutriment’ (585b9), are less

⁸¹ Socrates must think that the the same argument applies to the honour lover, who is only mentioned in passing (*Rep.* IX.11.586c5-d5).

⁸² Plato’s position on mistaken pleasure is more fully developed into a view about false pleasure in his *Philebus*. The basic idea is that pleasure is a certain bodily process so if an individual’s body is not undergoing this, then pleasure is not really occurring and the experience is thereby false. See D. Frede ‘Rumpelstilskin’s Pleasures: True and False Pleasures in Plato’s “Philebus”’, *Phronesis* 30/2 (1985), pp. 151-180 and D. Russell, *Plato On Pleasure and the Good Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

real than the objects sought by the intellect, the eternal objects of knowledge. He repeatedly claims that these latter objects have more share in truth and reality (585b6-d6). Those focused on bodily appetites have never been filled with real things (586a5). The unreal objects (or less real) they seek make their desires insatiable (*aplēstian*) and so they are ever greedy for more (*pleonexia*) (586b2-3). Transposing this idea of less real or unreal objects back onto the mental state of the agent, Plato calls the profit lovers experiences mere ‘phantasms’ (*eidôlois*) and ‘scene-paintings’ (*skiagraphêmenais*) of true pleasure (586b9). The idea that there are objects with differing degrees of reality links to other discussions in the text. The tyrant’s pleasure is particularly suspect being ‘three phantasms away from reality’ (587c6), this third level recalling the shadows of puppets in the cave and anticipating the critique of mimetic art in *Rep.* 9 (602c2).⁸³ We are surely meant to see the profit lovers who think that the objects of bodily desire are real as like the cave prisoners who think that the shadows of puppets are true reality (7.515b9-c2).⁸⁴ Neither life is choice-worthy for the individual.

That there could be real objects that fix moral knowledge is still a contentious and unproven claim. It is possible that there are no objective values and thus nothing to ground these claims of the value of philosophers of the type described. That we talk as if there were absolutely right and wrong is no help, since such talk can be in ‘error’.⁸⁵ Plato’s case cannot, thereby, rest directly on the claim that only philosophers can access what is real. Instead it gets its strength from the view that an extremely immoral agent is psychologically conflicted and unhappy. One might worry that if the tyrant were asked if he was conflicted and unhappy, i.e. if he felt ashamed, he would reply ‘not at all’. It certainly seems in principle

⁸³ Mimetic art is at three removes from reality (10.5.602c2) and is associated with ‘scene-painting’ (*skiagraphia*; 10.602d2).

⁸⁴ Freed from bodily pleasures, philosophers make a conversion towards things that are real and true (7.519b1-3).

⁸⁵ For moral error theory and arguments for there being no objective values, see J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Viking Books, 1977) particularly Part I. For a viable theory of moral language without realism, see S. Blackburn, *Spreading the Word: Groundings in the Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

possible for someone who, for example, violated another sexually against their will not feel any mental conflict. A pragmatic moral sceptic could say that it is only due to the harm caused to another that such personalities are frowned upon. But there are strong intuitions about the wrongness of such actions and those whose personalities lead to them, quite apart from whether any harm has been done. Thus, rape is wrong even when the victim is unconscious and will never find out what has occurred.⁸⁶ Anyone who did not grasp this fact, fails to have a properly constructed human psyche. This is why we are led to think that as long as the tyrannical person maintains some grip on his humanity, and is not entirely bestial, he will suffer anguish both in this life (9.587e5, 12.589a1-3) and the next (10.615d3-616a7).⁸⁷ Within the tyrant is a true self or mind, while at the same time he desires and seeks out the wrong objects and ends. He is thereby at odds with his self, taken in its ‘entirety’ (579e2). The tyrant is mad; he is ‘out of’ his (right) mind.⁸⁸

The turn toward the internal psychology of philosopher versus tyrant, however, makes establishing which is which from an objective point of view pretty impossible. Since it is only from the inside that a person can know herself to be either philosopher or tyrant, it will be difficult to trust a radical leader. Thus, the more assurance there is that it is possible to line up reality with goodness, the more persuaded a reader will be of the possibility of a good leader, even if absolute proof is unavailable. And so the *Republic* must direct its rhetoric in this manner.

The *Republic* is constructed in part to convince the reader of the superiority and usefulness of the philosopher over the tyrant. Although we may not accept that philosophers

⁸⁶ J. Gardner and S. Shute, ‘The Wrongness of Rape’ in J. Horder (ed.) *Oxford Essays on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 198.

⁸⁷ Someone (like Thrasymachus) may still argue that the horrific deeds of tyrants do not render them any less subjectively happy. But unless they were defective and so outside the scope of humanity, they would be horrified by themselves. Socrates notes the case of the eating of one’s own children in *Rep. X* in order to drive home this point (X.619c1-2).

⁸⁸ ‘The best and most reasonable...part is enslaved’ (577d). Although degraded in the tyrant, ‘reason still has some sense that the soul is not what it should be’. Parry, ‘The Unhappy Tyrant’, p. 412.

are in touch with transcendental reality, we can follow Socrates' case for this in the narrative of the text. As Section IV showed, the *erôs* of philosopher and tyrant are the same in so far as *erôs* is an obsessive drive which seeks its objects indiscriminately, whether that set of objects be objects of knowledge or sex objects. The difference between the sorts of objects of *erôs* differentiates the two characters. On the one hand, the objects of tyrannical *erôs* are supposedly unreal⁸⁹ (583e4-587c1), which is why the tyrant is perpetually unfulfilled (578a1-b2, 579e2-3). The pleasure he feels is also illusory and so cannot truly satisfy him, just as a phantasm of a beautiful woman cannot satisfy her lover (9.586c3). On the other hand, the objects of philosophical *erôs* are real, and so, when attained, they are satisfying and result in complete happiness (586e2-587a1).

Scott argues that the difference in the objects that obsess tyrant and philosopher mean that the philosopher is mad in a good way and the tyrant in a bad way.⁹⁰ He concludes that *erôs* has been downgraded in the *Rep.*, noting the differences between this text and the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. But the more crucial difference here is not so much the value of *erôs* as the structure of the psyche with relation to the erotic drive. First of all, in order to fully support the contrast between tyrannical dissonance as opposed to philosophical integrity, the philosopher cannot be mad at all. In the *Phaedrus* the philosopher is 'out of her mind' in the sense that she is focused on something better than herself or any other individual person, the Good Itself. 'Standing outside human concerns and coming close to the divine, he is considered by the many to be out of his mind, although what they don't realise is that he is divinely possessed' (*Phdr.* 249c8-d2). In the *Symposium*, the psychology of the philosopher is conflicted and incomplete. Just as the tyrant is in a state of perpetual struggle, full of

⁸⁹ Since he is amongst the profit lovers.

⁹⁰ Scott, 'Eros, Philosophy, and Tyranny', pp.142-3. The distinction between good and bad madness is borrowed from the *Phaedrus*. Good madness is a 'divinely inspired release from normally accepted behaviour' (*eiôthotôn nominôn*, *Phdr.* 265a6-11).

dissatisfactions (586b1-4, c1-5),⁹¹ so also the *erôs* that a philosopher experiences is characterised by lack and frustration (*Sym.* 202d1-4, 203d1-4). When experiencing *erôs*, a person does not yet fully possess the good and beautiful things which she desires and which will make her 'happy' (202c8). The state of the psyche of the philosopher in the *Republic*, in contrast to these characterisations of lack and frustration, is integrated and stable. Although initially it seemed that both philosopher and tyrant shared similar psychic drives, in fact Socrates must emphasise how differently *erôs* manifests itself in the two, integrating the mind of the one while dividing that of the other. The claim that the tyrant never gets what he wants implies that, for Plato, *erôs* in its proper and complete form is directed toward really existent objects, and thus the drive is only satisfiable if and when these are attained.

It is now possible to summarise Socrates' presentation of the difference between tyrant and philosopher. The especially extreme psychological dissonance found in the tyrant is caused not only by the dominance of the appetitive portion of the soul but by an *erôs* cut off from its proper objects. A motivation toward physical sensuality drive the tyrant without thought for the whole person away from completeness and satisfaction which can only be found in the true, knowable and law-like objects of *erôs* – the intelligibles

Erôs is a powerful force for either good or evil. When mistakenly directed towards objects that lack reality, it is merely a completely focused extreme passion without law and order (9.587a6-9) which causes the agent to disregard all of her usual and customary concerns for no good reason. In contrast, the *erôs* that brings about such detachment is beneficial in the philosopher. It ensures a just society by eliminating feelings of possessiveness towards others in those in charge. Those who are born into the wrong class are reassigned, cutting out nepotism and ensuring social mobility. Thus, for example,

⁹¹ 'The tyrant will always be needy and suffer from unfulfilled desire' (9.578a1). 'So far from finding even the least satisfaction for his desires, he is in need of most things...' (579e2).

controlling the size of cities through euthanasia (3.407d4-e2, 410a1-5, 5.460c3-7), is a task that the guardians will not find ‘difficult’ but ‘easy, (4.423d8-e3).

The ideal ruler, as Socrates explains in several places, takes care of what she rules over for the good of that thing, be it sheep (1.343a9-b3) or plants (9.589b2-3) or people (1.342d2-e10, 345d3-e3, 9.590c7-d10). This is the opposite of the *pleonexia* that characterises the tyrant’s motivations - the narrow greed that harms others by depriving them of their due. As Scott notes, the counter-conventionality of the philosopher is beneficial rather than its destructive cousin *paranomia*, because it is fundamentally lawful.⁹² Law or custom, *nomos*, is used to label two phenomena: the contingent laws in place in actual cities and that which is lawful in some broader sense. In the narrow sense philosophers need not bother with the laws in cities, such as the petty regulations that prescribe hairstyles (4.425a9-b4). However, they will have supposedly internalised the correct rules that ought to govern all human life. Thus, in terms of the higher or correct *nomos*, the philosopher is law-abiding and, indeed, law enforcing. Possessing knowledge of what is real, which is lawful, philosopher rulers will be able to properly judge which customs to retain. For example, when guardians use the names ‘father’ or ‘mother’ ‘all their actions conform to the name in all customary observance toward fathers and in awe and care and obedience (*nomos*) for parents’ (5.463d2-4). What defies custom is the fact that they will not have a single father and mother but thousands of them and this is not unlawful because it is a reform based on understanding ‘true reality’.⁹³ The tyrant, however, is seen to lack any relation to *nomos* in the abuse he meets out to his parents (9.574a2-c8).

Despite this argued for difference, in many other instances, the behaviour of tyrant and philosopher will seem identical. So, for example, they may both harm and kill people; only

⁹² Scott, ‘Ēros, Philosophy, and Tyranny’, p. 152.

⁹³ As well as there being any absolute truth of this sort, one may also legitimately question the idea that special concern for individuals can be discarded without any harmful effects. The idea of a parent who has no special concern for his or her own child might rightly make the reader feel uneasy (see Section VI). See also note 67.

when the philosopher does so, Socrates wants the reader to believe that this will be according to a higher law which improves the city, for example in killing someone ‘*incurably evil*’ (4.419a2-3), and harming someone who requires punishment in order for their life to go better (9.591a3-b10). The outward appearance of similarity means that it is only from an internal perspective that philosopher and tyrant can be differentiated. Non-philosophers will not be able to properly discern the differences.

By bringing to light such similarities and emphasizing the importance of an internal psychological perspective, two key themes in the *Republic* are brought together – the rejection of democracy and the importance of self-knowledge. Arguably, Plato is aware that democratically inclined readers will feel uneasy about anyone putting themselves forward as deserving supreme power, no matter what their pedigree. As Aristotle so astutely put it, ‘*nowadays nobody thinks someone is immeasurably superior to others to be king.*’⁹⁴ Despite this strong democratic ideology, however, many literary contemporaries were similarly critical of the *status quo* and much longing for a singular superior ruler remained, explaining the draw of numerous charismatic political figures. Even Glaucon or Adeimantus are presented as attracted to tyranny believing that a bad regime may have to be replaced forcefully by a better one.⁹⁵ On the surface it might seem that Plato is attempting to use this unruly attraction to gain support for the philosopher. Ultimately, though, he considers that project to be entirely impracticable. There really is no principled way to tell the difference,⁹⁶ and so the desire to find a good ruler that the populace can love is to be abandoned. It does

⁹⁴ Any leader who obtains office by force or fraud is considered to be a tyrant. Aristotle recommends to such a person that he try to appear to be like a king in caring for his subjects and hiding any sensual indulgence (*Pol.* 1314b29-35).

⁹⁵ Larivée, ‘Eros Tyrannos’, p. 22, Ludwig ‘Eros in the *Republic*’, p. 225, Weiss, *Philosophers in the Republic*, p. 215.

⁹⁶ In *Rep.* 1 Socrates already hints at how this will be difficult: ‘*surely people often make mistakes about this, believing many people to be good and useful when they aren’t, and making the opposite mistake about enemies?*’ (334c3).

not matter whether you think a person is tyrannical or not, they may be the right person to rule if they know themselves to be so; the popular vote should play no part in that decision.⁹⁷

The non-philosophical democrat believes falsely that a tyrant is bad because he is not chosen by the people and he could be good if he appealed to the people. In fact, a real tyrant's badness has nothing to do with popularity – but with inherent destructiveness to society. However, someone who appeared to be a tyrant could be good without the people thinking or believing this. The parallels between the philosopher and the tyrant and their resultant seeming similarity is important because it teaches the reader how unimportant the appearances are and thus encourages her to find out about what is actually the case and in doing so, pursue philosophy. And doing philosophy, for Plato has profound political ramifications. To do philosophy and to truly be a philosopher, he thinks, one cannot simply toy with words and arguments in one's youth and carry on as usual. Instead, the pursuit of the frenzy for knowledge that best represents the vocation is entirely incongruous with maintenance of the *status quo*. If, as a result, the philosopher looks like a tyrant, this cannot be helped. In this situation, a person must look inside, know herself and the reality of her motivations. If her motivations are towards what is truly lawful, then she may legitimately take charge. This is why a person must be concerned to 'keep his [or her] eye fixed on the constitution of the soul' (9.13.591e1-2). Alcibiades did not learn this, Thrasymachus is beyond help but Glaucon and Adeimantus must come to understand the uselessness of democracy and the politically transformative relevance of self-knowledge.

⁹⁷ M. Burnyeat, 'Utopia and Fantasy: The Practicability of Plato's Ideally Just City' in J. Hopkins and A. Savile (eds.), *Psychoanalysis, Mind and Art: Perspectives on Richard Wolheim* (London: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 175-87 provides support for an idealistic as opposed to a practical reading of the *Rep.* against, for example, W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume IV, Plato: The Man and his Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and C. Rowe, 'Introduction' to *Plato The Republic* (London: Penguin, 2012).