

# Interpretation

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# Interpretation

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# Poetic Justice for Plato's Democracy?

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No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms of government that have been tried from time to time.

Sir Winston Churchill, Speech in House of Commons, November 11, 1947

But there is no need for a man who criticizes democracy and democratic institutions to be their enemy.

Sir Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1, p. 189.

In *The City and Man* Leo Strauss observes that the sequence of five regimes, so vividly depicted by Plato in Books 8 and 9 of the *Republic*, corresponds to the analogous sequence of the five races of man known well from Hesiod's *Works and Days*. One link of this parallel, however, appears quite strange: Plato's counterpart of Hesiod's "divine race of heroes" is democracy. Strauss tries to explain this oddity: "We must understand, democracy is the only regime other than the best in which the philosopher can lead his peculiar way of life without being disturbed: it is for this reason that with some exaggeration one can compare democracy to Hesiod's age of the divine race of heroes which comes closer to the golden age than any other."<sup>1</sup> This is, indeed, an exaggeration, though. As Strauss himself emphasizes, Plato "thought of the well-being not merely of the philosophers but of the non-philosophers as well" (p. 132), and intellectual freedom—important mainly for the former—cannot be a sufficient explanation of the puzzling correspondence between the half-divine, half-human stage and the democratic stage.

The idea of this paper is to show that the parallel between Hesiod's and Plato's schemes of historical development is much richer than Leo Strauss and other commentators have ever noted. After a brief description of some striking analogies between these two sequences (section 1), I shall focus on the main similarities between Plato's aristocratic and democratic regimes, and shall contrast them with the timocratic, oligarchic, and tyrannical regimes (section 2).<sup>2</sup> The main aspect of the contrast is the fact that the latter three are defined by conflict, and, as such, must always be unstable and short-lived. Democracy

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cannot achieve a true harmony either, of course, but makes at least some stability possible. Plato's political psychology (section 3), in turn, juxtaposes the obsessively one-sided timocratic, oligarchic, and tyrannical characters with the democratic character, which, although rather shallow and by far inferior to the philosophical aristocrat, appears to be the only livable political personality. In the end (section 4), Plato's unenthusiastic acceptance of democracy will be shown to be not so shocking, when placed in the broader context of his life and thought.<sup>3</sup>

## 1. HESIOD AND PLATO

It seems almost impossible to exaggerate the immense role of Homer and Hesiod in the development of the ancient Greek world. For a thousand years the entire Greek culture, education, literature, drama, rhetoric, and everyday speech were founded on their art. For centuries the Greek youth made their first acquaintance with mythology, history, and moral and political terminology while reading and memorizing the *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Theogony*, and *Works and Days*. Homer's and Hesiod's picture of heroic society, heroic ideals and values remained firmly rooted in everyone's mind. Concerning the history of Greek political thought, the role of Hesiod seems especially significant. The historic Athenian lawgiver Solon, for instance, is considered to be in many ways indebted to Hesiod in his usage of some basic political concepts, like *dike* (justice), *eunomia* (law and order, political harmony), and *dysnomia* (disharmony). The last concept, according to Ostwald, is found only in Hesiod and Solon in classical literature. Hesiod is also considered the father of the idea, extremely influential not only in antiquity, that an ideal society existed in some remote past, but was lost and forgotten.<sup>4</sup> When he criticized his contemporary society as based on wickedness, hubris, and violence, his standards of moral and political judgment were derived from that vision of an ideal but lost society.

Thus, when Plato quoted the ancient poets, he did so not only as an artistic embellishment but because their classic poems constituted an important part of political language and thinking. Almost every stage of the *Republic's* argument recalls some Hesiodic motifs. When in Book 1 Thrasymachus defines justice as the rule of the stronger, he clearly refers to what has been said several times in the *Works and Days*: "Might will be justice" (in the description of the age of iron, lines 189 and again 192), "Foolish the man who wishes to fight against those who are stronger; he loses the victory and suffers pain in addition to shame" (the hawk to the nightingale, lines 243–44).<sup>5</sup> When in Books 2–4 Socrates leads the discussion defining justice as the healthy condition of the soul (and of the city as the human soul writ large), in which each part of the soul (and of the city) does its own job and does not meddle with the natural tasks of the other parts (cf. 433a–b, 444d–e), Hesiod's poetical historiography, dividing human beings into the races of gold, silver, bronze, and iron (415a, and again

546e) is introduced. Finally, when in Book 8 Socrates responds to Glaucon's earlier demand to compare the life of the just man (and the just city) with the life of the unjust men (and the corrupt cities) with respect to their happiness, and when he develops his famous regress of the five constitutions, Hesiod's version of that historical regress, apparently constituting a popular commonplace in the Greek culture of Plato's time, is recalled and developed.

Leo Strauss is right: there seems to be no doubt that Plato's story of the five constitutions and political characters is clearly inspired by Hesiod's famous myth of the five races of man from the *Works and Days*.<sup>6</sup> Hesiod's story, however, is somehow peculiar and therefore the parallel between his version and Plato's deserves more attention:

Hesiod's *golden race* (lines 110–26) “lived like gods without any care in their hearts free and apart from labor and misery” (112–13; but the same motif of freedom and independence from labor and other evils has already been introduced in lines 91–92). “Every good thing was theirs to enjoy: the grain-giving earth produced her fruits spontaneously, abundantly, freely” (116–18) and they became “divinities,” “guardians of mortal men who keep a watch on cases at law” (122–24; Plato quotes that passage in Book 5, 469a).

In Plato's ideal regime, *aristocracy*, the ruling lovers of wisdom are said to possess some gold mixed in their nature by the god (415a). They are free from any labor and together with their auxiliaries they receive all their supplies from the others in the proper amount. Their only activity is their guardianship and perhaps philosophical contemplation. Yet their rule guarantees that all the citizens of the ideal city are satisfied and happy.

The idea of herdsmanship present in both Hesiod and Plato (also in the *Statesman* and the *Laws*) was obviously a commonplace in the culture of the originally pastoral Greek society. Hesiod's golden race indeed lives a somewhat pastoral life, peaceful, happy, and free from any conflict or other social evils. Plato's picture is similar in many respects, although it also contains some interesting disparities to which we shall return later.

The *silver race* (127–42) is “much worse than the first” (128). The silver child grows up as “a great fool” (131). “They had only a short time to live, and this with much torment because of their folly” (134); and “they committed acts of ruinous *hybris* against one another” (134–35).

The *timocratic* regime “spends all its time in making war” being under the rule of “spirited and simpler-minded” honor lovers who are “afraid to appoint wise men to office” (547e–548a). It collapses because of their excessive pride and ambition, and their becoming envious of one another's private treasures (550b–c).

The contrast with the first stage is in both cases striking. Mutual envy, aggression, hubris (or hybris, in Frazer's transliteration), and violence dominate completely. The childhood of Hesiod's silver race is said to last a hundred years (line 130) and its adulthood is very short (132–33), while Plato's timocratic men are also said to act like children (548b).

The *bronze race* (143–55) is similarly “devoted to doing war's wretched works and acts of hybris” (145–46). They “fell as victims to each other's slaughtering hands” (152).

The *oligarchic* regime's money lovers are equally competitive (553b–e). Their insatiable love of wealth leads to disunity and conflicts within the ruling class and causes its fall (554e–556e).

Although in Hesiod it is said that the bronze race is “one completely unlike the silver” (144), in fact, striking similarities between the second and third stages prevail in both versions. Hubris, violence, and war are dominating and self-destructive characteristics of both the silver and bronze races. In Plato, too, although the timocratic man presents himself as devoted to honor and pride, in fact he is as greedy and obsessed with wealth as the oligarchic man. Unmitigated greed, conflicts, and violence, already proven destructive for the men of silver and the timocrats, here appear deadly for the men of bronze and the oligarchs.

The *divine race of heroes* (156–75), “one much juster and better” (158) is called also “demigods” (159). On some of them Zeus “bestowed the blessing of life” (168–69) and today they “dwell and take their delight with carefree hearts off the Isles of the Blessed” (170–71) where “the grain-giving earth produces a honey-sweet harvest three times a year, a bountiful yield” for them (172–73).

*Democracy* may be called “the most beautiful of all constitutions” (557c), “pleasant” (558c) as well as “fine and vigorous” (563e), and its defining principle is liberty. The democratic society is comparable to “a cloak embroidered with every kind of flower” (557c), and the democratic majority is always ready to “get a share of honey” (565a). The democratic man lives his carefree life “yielding day by day to the desire at hand” (561c), and he calls it “pleasant, free, and blessed” (561d).

What is immediately striking in Hesiod is that the descending sequence is broken in several ways. The historical descent is here clearly reversed: the race of heroes, the only one not named after a metal, is explicitly named “divine” and “demigods” and is shown to be superior and more righteous than its silver and bronze predecessors. The heroic race reflects some of the characteristics of the golden one, especially in its quasi-posthumous life on “the Isles of the Blessed” resembling the lost Eden.<sup>7</sup> Plato's presentation of democracy also discontinues the sequence of constitutions, however. Some elements of democracy identify it

as a “nonconstitution” among other well-defined constitutions with their ruling classes and institutional structures. The overall mood of Plato's critique of democracy is also peculiar. His presentation is full of irony, sarcasm, and grotesquerie but does not seem to be very hostile. For instance, democracy appears to be portrayed as much more friendly than the oligarchic regime, theoretically less corrupted. At first sight, Hesiod's fourth stage may be seen as having very little in common with Plato's, but we shall see that such an impression would be deceiving. Plato's remarks about the democratic life's carelessness, pleasure, honey-sweetness, and even blessedness, borrow a lot from Hesiod's language. The pivotal notion of freedom appears in the first and fourth stages only in both authors. In the next sections we shall try to decipher these peculiarities and to discover some others hidden by Plato.

The *iron race* (176–202) “shall never cease from labor and woe by day, and never be free from anguish at night” (176–77). “The father will quarrel with his sons, the sons with their father” (182). One will be honored “who is a doer of evil and *hybris*” (191–92). “Might will be justice and shame will no longer exist” (192–93, see also 189).

The *tyrannical* regime is founded on its ruler's selfish self-love and unlimited power. The tyrant is shameless, dares “to use violence against his father” and “to strike him if he does not obey” (569b). Everybody lives unhappily and in constant fear, in “the harshest and most bitter slavery to slaves” (569c).

We do not learn very much about the lives of the tyrant's subjects but we may easily imagine what “the harshest and most bitter slavery” may look like. Envy, hate, fear, hubris, injustice, aggression, and violence dominate in both Hesiod and Plato; in the former the previous evils return after the fall of the race of heroes, in the latter the evils clearly achieve their highest intensity. In both cases it is also suggested that the destruction of the last stage may open a new cycle.

These striking parallels as well as some puzzling contrasts could not possibly be unintended by Plato. Starting his story in Book 8, Socrates recalls Hesiod's name (546e), as if making sure that the parallel between Hesiod's myth of five metals and Plato's five-stage classification of constitutions would not escape the attention of the reader, and he will speculate about its meaning, especially the meaning of the fact that Plato's counterpart of Hesiod's race of heroes is democracy. As we shall see, Plato took care to make this speculation fruitful.

## 2. FIVE REGIMES: THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF A DOMINANT CLASS

At first sight Plato's five regimes seem to be smoothly descending, and their decline is presented in all possible terms: historical, political, educational, and psychological. Some suggestions are made that such changes did indeed hap-

pen. There is more and more corruption, less and less virtue and true authority, less and less restraint and concern for the common good in each consecutive regime. The son of an aristocratic man is presented as inferior to his father, the oligarchic son appears inferior to his timocratic father, and so on. In psychological terms, too, man's soul seems to be dominated by its lower and lower parts.

Under closer look, however, the seemingly smooth decline breaks in all those respects. Plato's pattern of historical descent had already been criticized by Aristotle (*Politics* V 12, 1316a–b) as all too rigid, and his critique seemed to be based on firsthand historical evidence obvious to everybody in their times: democracies do not necessarily come into being through bloody rebellions, and they may become transformed into oligarchies, oligarchies into tyrannies, and vice versa. Yet Aristotle's critique to some extent misses the point, because Plato seems to be implying that his attitude to the historical descent and its evidence is deliberately somewhat schematic. In the beginning of Book 8 (543a–544d) Socrates makes a characteristic linguistic turn: he is no longer speaking about the just or unjust *polis* (city-state) but about the more abstract *politeia*, meaning "regime" or "constitution." The shift seems significant. The timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical "regimes" discussed in Book 8 and 9 are not supposed to refer to the practical realities of the existing cities but rather to some more abstract features or "forms" of government. Socrates' typology is based not only on the historical realities of Greece, but also on some universal features of human nature: "Can you name another kind which is in a clearly different class? . . . one may find as many of them among the barbarians as among the Greeks" (544c–d). Socrates presents four pathological "ideal types" of injustice, and the existing regimes presumably more or less fit these four basic idealizations. Thus, not only the aristocratic regime is an ideal model, but the four remaining regimes might be also viewed as some theoretical generalizations, and not as the empirical descriptions of the real cities.

Subsequently, Plato's "educational" sequence is also explicitly shown to be fictitious. The regimes are presented as changing generation after generation, but, under closer look, it becomes clear that not every son must generate a regime different from his father's. The young timocratic man, for instance, is "the son of a good father who lives in a city which is not well governed" (549c), so he does not grow up in the perfect aristocratic polity. The social environment of the timocratic youth described by Socrates resembles rather an oligarchic or democratic order (549d–e). The educational explanation of the political changes should not be taken too literally then.

The reader is encouraged to think about alternative evaluation of the consecutive regimes, different from the simple descending one, and Leo Strauss's association of *Republic* 8 with Hesiod's relationship between the first and fourth stages of his anthropological myth appears very illuminating. To repeat, the silver race is said to be "much worse than the first" (128), but "the divine

race of heroes" clearly breaks the chain of human degeneration as "much juster and better" (158), superior to both the silver and bronze races, and achieving a status very close to the golden one. Only these two are "like gods," called "divine" or "demigods" (112 and 159). Only these two are said to live "without any care," "with carefree hearts" (112, 119, and 170). Only for them "the grain-giving earth produced her fruits spontaneously, abundantly, freely" (116–17 and 172–73). Only on these two almighty Zeus bestowed the blessing of afterlife (122–26 and 167–73).

Strauss is right that the peculiar similarity between these two stages of Hesiod's myth may have something to do with philosophy, which is possible only in the aristocratic and democratic regimes, and may be seen as the key issue of the parallel ("On Plato's *Republic*," pp. 130–31). Indeed, if philosophy is the highest achievement of the human mind, the very essence of humanity, democracy is the only corrupt regime where philosophy became possible and flourished. Democracy, the one presented in Book 8 as well as the actual Athenian democracy, is perhaps not very friendly to philosophy (after all, Socrates was democratically prosecuted), but it is not hostile either. Democratic Athens was the city of Socrates, Plato, and Plato's Academy. In the *Crito* (52e–53a) Plato has Socrates acknowledge that he could not have chosen Sparta or Crete or another place to live in. And in *Republic* 8, the only time philosophy is mentioned among human activities is when the numerous activities of the democratic man are listed (561d). The other warped regimes are shown to be openly hostile to philosophy, such an activity is hardly possible, and nobody listens to any thinkers there. Timocracy, for instance, is "afraid to appoint wise men to office" (while some of the democratic politicians, like Cleisthenes or Pericles, certainly deserved the name of the "wise men"), instead turns to "spirited and simple-minded men who are born for war rather than for peace" (547e) and who "have not been educated by persuasion but by force, because they have neglected the true Muse, that of discussion and philosophy" (548b–c). Indeed, we know nothing, and it does not seem to be an accident, about any philosopher from Sparta, the city-state whose constitution resembled timocracy. The oligarchic man too is brought up "without real education" (559d) and his soul remains "empty of knowledge, fine pursuits, and true reasoning" (560b). Finally, the tyrant must necessarily become the enemy of all who are "brave, proud, wise, or rich," and he must "plot against them until he has purged the city" (567b–c).

Although Strauss's emphasis on philosophy is quite well justified, one cannot resist an impression that Hesiod's contrast between the two praiseworthy stages of human history and its three corrupt stages is presented so comprehensively that philosophy, as the single facet of that contrast in Plato, does not seem to reflect all of its dimensions. Plato's reference to philosophy, while describing the democratic character, is highly ironic. The democratic man's interest in philosophy, like all his interests, is accidental and superficial: he

merely “pretends to spend his time on philosophy” (561d). Obviously, for Plato this is not what philosophy is all about. Moreover, as Strauss himself correctly observes, Plato is concerned with the good of the whole soul (and the whole city as the soul writ large) as well as with the good of each of its parts, not only with the good of its rational part (and the philosophers as its counterpart in the city). The satisfaction of a narrow social group cannot be a sufficient reason to praise the democratic regime’s freedom.

Let us have a closer look at the difference between the races introduced in Hesiod’s myth, then. The race of heroes, in particular its life on the Isles of the Blessed at the ends of the earth, is shown to repeat in many respects the golden age, its freedom, its justice, and its satisfied happiness, while the silver, bronze, and iron races are all presented as terrible, violent, full of evil, pain, and ruinous hubris. That last characteristic, hubris, explicitly ascribed to all three inferior races (lines 134, 146, 191), seems crucial. Already in Homer hubris is opposed to *dike* (justice) and *eunomia* (law and order in a broad, cosmic as well as social, sense) but with Hesiod it seems to assume some special importance. In his presentation, later transformed into a very popular symbolic paradigm in Greek tragedy, hubris signifies those insatiable passions and ambitions which lead to one’s insolence and arrogant pride, a violation of the divine or moral order, and, ultimately, the transgressor’s doom (cf. Ostwald, *Nomos*, p. 72, and Sinclair, *History*, p. 20). True, human beings, especially those of high rank, power, and wealth, and especially when acting together, can succeed in breaking the divine or natural laws and getting their way contrary to justice, but sooner or later they must fall. The ruin of both the silver and bronze races is due to their own “folly” and “ruinous hybris against one another” (lines 134–35). Their degeneration and fall are caused by themselves; they “fell victims to each other’s slaughtering hands” (152), while the golden race “had been hidden under the cover of earth” (125), as if falling asleep, and the heroic race is either “met with the covering darkness of death” (166) or given by Zeus “the blessing of life” (168). The contrast between the intrinsic and extrinsic causes of their fall does not seem to be accidental.

The same pattern of tragic self-destruction appears to be paralleled in the *Republic*. In the beginning of Book 8 it is said that the cause of change in any regime “is to be found in the ruling group itself, whenever discord breaks out in this very group. While it remains of one mind, even if it be quite small, it cannot be removed” (545c–d). Later on, however, the decline of the timocratic, oligarchic, and tyrannical regimes is shown to flow necessarily from their essential principles, and the possibility of the class unity is renounced. The oligarchic regime is probably the best model example of such a necessary discord, an intrinsically self-destructive principle. The rulers of the oligarchic city cannot ever be substantially unified because the intrinsic logic of their greed leads to strife and fierce competition. The oligarchic city must fall “because of its insatiable desire to attain what it has set before itself as the good, namely the need

to become as rich as possible" (555b). Ruthless competition among the oligarchic men makes inevitable the emergence of "drones," the members of the ruling class who are bankrupt and who parasitize on the rest. Thus, although it is suggested that an "excess" in each regime's defining principle leads to its fall (563e), one may say that there is no "excessive greed" leading to a catastrophe of the oligarchic regime because the oligarchic men's greed is by its nature excessive and hubristic, and there is no way to mitigate it and prevent the disaster: "It is impossible to honour wealth in a city and at the same time for the citizens to acquire sufficient moderation" (555c). When the members of the oligarchic ruling class make the accumulation of wealth their chief goal, they become unscrupulous in their methods, and the acquisition of moderate wealth by fair trade is no longer possible. Wealth and luxury are scarce and highly competitive goods, the oligarchic maximizers of wealth may get more riches only from the fellow-members of their class, and no durable unity is possible among them. The intrinsic logic of their wealth-maximizing principle decides that their greed overpowers any possibility of class solidarity, their group becomes less and less numerous and hence weaker and weaker. The oligarchic regime falls when the rich ruling class, while still competing within itself, is no longer able to defend itself, and the growing class of the poor becomes aware of its superiority.

Practically the same may be said about the timocratic and tyrannical regimes. The timocratic men are also "greedy for money, as men are in oligarchies," although "they will prize gold and silver without restraint . . . in secret" (548a). Moreover, their love for honor, glory, and victories seems to lead to another form of fierce competition, strife, and disunity. Again, Plato never says that timocracy is destroyed by "excessive" indulgence in honor because no "excess" is necessary. The timocratic man loves power, always tries to dominate others and to have his own way. Thus, both the timocratic and oligarchic men commit the same hubris against one another as Hesiod's silver and bronze races. The oligarchic and timocratic regimes are founded on the pursuit of the goods which are always in short supply, and the logic of timocratic domination as well as oligarchic exploitation leads to disunity, destructive competition, and natural selection one can neither prevent nor stop. Both regimes seem to have the same self-destructive tendency to disruption built in, both face the same dilemma of limited goods and unlimited desires.

Needless to say, the tyrannical regime represents the same tendency in the highest possible degree. There is the shortest possible supply of the chief good because there is only one place for the absolute ruler. Somehow paradoxically, even here no internal unity is ever possible. The tyrant is "badly governed within himself" (579c), "full of many fears and lust of all kinds" (579b), and intrinsically torn apart by his passions, as if fiercely competing among themselves. Thus, although theoretically the ruling class "cannot be removed," if it "remains of one mind" (545c-d), practically speaking even the "tyrannical rul-

ing class” consisting of the single man cannot maintain its intrinsic unity. Such are the objective laws of scarce goods and insatiable desires, whether they are oligarchic money-loving, timocratic honor-(and-money)-loving, or tyrannical absolute-power-loving.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, the defining principles of the remaining two regimes, philosophical wisdom and democratic liberty, are obviously not as competitive and self-destructive as wealth, glorious victories, and absolute power. Aristocracy and democracy do not follow the same logic of the inevitable downfall. The case of aristocracy does not require any explanation. The philosopher-kings are moderate, just, and concerned with the common good of all their city’s social classes. There is no intrinsic conflict or competition within them, and although their regime also falls, its decay must be ascribed to the imperfect knowledge of its rulers (546a–e). They are mere human beings after all and as such cannot be omniscient.

Speaking about the fall of democracy, Socrates initially opens the same line of argumentation he develops describing the collapse of timocracy and oligarchy, namely that there is a kind of “greed for freedom” (562b), yet he immediately qualifies and finally abandons it. Democracy falls when it “has bad cup-bearers to preside over it” (562d). The “cup-bearers,” demagogues raised to the position of power by the people, “that class of idle and extravagant men, some of whom were very brave leaders while others were their more cowardly followers” (564b), are compared to drones who start to multiply in the oligarchic regime and become the presiding element under democracy. “With few exceptions” (564d), however, Socrates remarks. Apparently, according to him, some democracies may avoid the dominance of the drones. The drones do not tolerate opposition and try to manage everything in the city according to their interests. “With a few exceptions” (564e), Socrates qualifies again. The qualifications recurring in the discussion are very peculiar. Nothing like that appears in the discussion concerning the timocratic and oligarchic regimes. Presumably, if there are relatively moderate “cup-bearers” (who, by the way, do not constitute a ruling class interested in domination or exploitation [558c], and no reason is given why they could not be moderate), and, if they become somehow more experienced and wiser, the fall of the democratic regime could be, perhaps, avoided. Socrates explicitly mentions the latter possibility: when the democratic man grows older he welcomes back some needs he neglected while being young and apparently becomes more experienced, psychologically moderate, and well balanced (561a). Hence, democracy may collapse into tyranny but, unlike the other regimes, it does not have to, because there is no intrinsic contradiction in the democratic men’s free pursuit of their various goals. Democracy appears to be the only corrupt regime which is not intrinsically inconsistent and doomed to failure, the only one in which “few exceptions” of survival are explicitly said to be possible.

Plato's approach to liberty appears to be much more complex here than the traditional interpretations of his critique of democracy suggest. True, the main idea underlying Socrates' and Plato's philosophy, and ancient thought in general, was that the development of moral and intellectual virtues leaves little room for individual freedom. After all, freedom allows the pursuit of good as well as bad ends. Sparta was often praised as a well-governed city efficient in pressure inculcating public morality, while Athens was criticized for her democratic liberality, tolerance, and permissiveness. It was also both Socrates' and Plato's view that most people lack knowledge of what is in their interest, what is good for them, and they need moral guidance and advice in order to be able to discover that.

It seems, however, that to say that the ideal political order is founded on moral perfection is to simplify the problem of political freedom. The aristocracy is built on "consonance or harmony" (430e), and on "unanimity," which "would rightly be called moderation, agreement" (432a). The timocratic regime is criticized for abolishing those values. Under the ideal regime the farmers and artisans are "considered as free men, friends, and providers," while in the timocratic one they are "enslaved and held as serfs and servants" (547c). Clearly, "unanimity," "consonance," and "agreement" entail some degree of freedom, and the absence of freedom is considered a serious political destitution. Some degree of everyone's rational and voluntary consent seems to be suggested as the necessary condition of the good society and moral progress. Freedom is a meaningful aspect of moral and civic maturity. Even the ruled are free to some extent, at least in the sense of not being subject to their rulers' arbitrary desires and whims. Moral and intellectual progress requires some degree of freedom and tolerance. People need freedom as well as wisdom to understand the unavoidable defects of their education, of the traditional moral views, and of the political constitution of their city. Such a critical understanding and any moral and intellectual improvement, although collectively produced, can be achieved only by the individuals themselves.

### 3. FIVE CHARACTERS: THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF A DOMINANT DESIRE

Now, one may wonder whether the same classification, juxtaposing the first and fourth stages of the political process to the remaining, clearly inferior stages, applies also to the sequence of the five political characters dominating in the five constitutions. In Plato's psychology, the three parts of the soul have their own pleasures, desires, and kinds of rule (580d–581c), and each political regime has its own characteristic structure of the soul and its moving forces. The rational part of the soul (*to logistikon*) is in control of the lives of the

lovers of wisdom who rule in aristocracy. The spirited part (*to thumoeides*) moves the timocratic man (550b). The oligarchic man is motivated mainly by the necessary desires of the appetitive part of his soul (*to epithumetikon*) (551a, 558d ff.), while the democratic man seeks also to satisfy his unnecessary appetites, without letting any of them prevail (558d ff, 571b ff.). Finally, some of those appetites, like lust, are lawless and these dominate the soul of the tyrant (571b ff.). In that psychological perspective justice is the healthy state of the soul (444d–e) in which each part does its own job and does not meddle in the tasks of the other parts. Only the rational control of the soul, at the same time taking care of the good of the whole soul and of each part, secures that healthy state and therefore is not only morally superior to any other configuration but also leads to most happiness. The unhealthy soul, in turn, is a soul in which one part usurps the roles of the other parts, establishes its own desire as the dominant one for the entire soul, and as a result all the parts fail to function in their own proper ways. The oligarchic man, for instance, subordinates the rational and spirited parts of his soul to his acquisitive appetites, and his overall motivation, reasoning, and morality become derivative from his desire for money and crudest material interest (cf., e.g., 551a, 553d, 558d).

Again, analogically to the order of regimes, at first sight the order of the parts of the soul and their desires may seem smoothly descending from the heaven of rational control to the hell of lawless, unbridled cravings, but under closer look the descending classification is much more complex and problematic. Thus, although true justice and happiness require psychological harmony in which the rational part of the soul needs the spiritual part as an ally in controlling the multitude of appetitive desires, Plato does not argue that spirit (*thumos*) itself deserves more respect than appetitive desires. There seems to be nothing in the spirited part as such that makes it intrinsically superior to the appetitive part. Spirit is said to be “angry without reasoning” (441c), equally irrational, and unable to join appetites against reason. A hypothesis that spirit may be, by its nature, “some part of reason” is explicitly rejected (440e–441a).<sup>9</sup> Thus, the timocratic man “lacks the best of guardians,” i.e. “reason (*logos*)” (549a–b), is “no longer simple and earnest” but rather “spirited and simpler-minded,” “born for war rather than for peace” (547e), etc. One may suspect that when his ideas about what is honorable or good for war go wrong, his spirited passion may be much more irrational and dangerous than, say, the acquisitive desires of the oligarchic man. In such a case the timocratic society may be simply much more violent and morally fallen than the oligarchic one. And with respect to happiness in particular, which is the crucial aspect of the whole classification, one finds no indication whatever why the timocratic father should be happier than his oligarchic son.

The distinction between the necessary and unnecessary desires, the latter being characteristic of the democratic man, deserves special attention here. The necessary desires are “those we are unable to deny . . . or those of which the

satisfaction benefits us, for we are by nature compelled to satisfy them" (558d–e), and the unnecessary ones are "those which one could avoid if one trained oneself to avoid them from youth, which lead to no good or indeed to the opposite" (559a). Thus, there are two criteria distinguishing the necessary needs and desires from the unnecessary ones. Plato seems to be suggesting that these two criteria necessarily coincide but they are independent to some significant extent. True, most of the desires which we cannot easily give up are at the same time beneficial for us. We cannot get rid of our appetites to eat, to drink, and to sleep, and it is a good thing, too. We are also generally able to get rid of some bad habits and freakish appetites without which we are better off. The two criteria generate, however, two additional classes of desires which are not discussed in the *Republic*. One of them consists of desires which can hardly be eliminated but which are useless or even harmful. The addiction of a lotus eater may be such a case. That class is relatively unproblematic, however. It may be argued that one should not develop such useless or harmful desires in the first place if properly educated from the early years. We may assume that the ancient world did not face as central the much more problematic cases of genetic diseases, innate addictions, crack babies, and the like. Another problematic class seems much more important. What about desires one can (even easily) eliminate but which are beneficial? There seem to be a lot of needs and desires which are artificially acquired and can be easily eradicated but which are clearly good for us. Thus, the oligarchic man is said to be "somewhat squalid" (554a) and negligent, apparently abandoning some universally accepted needs as useless because bringing no profit. While discussing the character of the oligarchic man, Socrates adds another criterion making things even more puzzling. The necessary needs and pleasures are said to be "good for doing work" (559c), and subsequently sex is mentioned among those which are obviously not necessary. One may assume that the oligarchic squalid fellow neglects good manners, personal hygiene, and many other things which the ancient Greeks valued highly but which might be viewed as unnecessary for making money. If the democratic son preserves and respects those unnecessary desires, he must be seen as more civilized than his oligarchic father.

Do the two (or even three, considering the last suggestion) criteria really distinguish the oligarchic father from his democratic son clearly? First of all, it is not even certain that the oligarchic man's dominant desire for money meets Socrates' two criteria. Is his desire for money absolutely "natural," i.e., ineradicable and beneficial? Quite the opposite seems to be the case. Money is such a paradigmatic example of human artefact that can hardly count as an object of a natural, necessary, ineradicable desire. Rather, as it has been already shown, the oligarchic man's desire for money and wealth leads him necessarily, "naturally" to excess and some obviously harmful consequences, namely, the elimination of many members of his social class, its weakness and unavoidable defeat in a bloody revolution. On the other hand, is the democratic man's desire for free-

dom somehow lower, less dignified, less important, or less human than the desire for money? Again, quite the opposite seems to be suggested. In Book 9 (572c) Socrates argues that the major blunder the oligarchic father makes is that he does not appreciate the unnecessary desires. His democratic son is then unable to control his attraction to some more sophisticated forms of desires and therefore falls prey to license and excess. Should the oligarchic man pay more attention to the unnecessary desires then? There are too many doubts and unanswered questions to believe that Plato left them open without having reasons for doing so.

Glaucon's protest against the "city of pigs" (372d) founded by Socrates in Book 2 (369d–371e) indicates that such a city, satisfying only the material needs, and in that respect similar to the oligarchic regime, is not humanly satisfying. After Glaucon's protest Socrates abandons his first "true" city in order to found another one, which is supposed also to satisfy some more sophisticated needs. The whole point of the ideal city is to satisfy the highest needs of man. This is why the "city of pigs" is not a solution. Thus, Socrates does not expel the unnecessary needs from the just political order as somehow inferior or superfluous. Aristophanes' comedies and other ancient Greek sources show as a kind of a commonplace that human needs and desires by nature multiply and generate more and more new appetites and thus can never be completely satisfied or fully suppressed. Those unnecessary needs, although perhaps often superfluous, are nevertheless perfectly human, and perhaps even constitute the very essence of humanity. (Has there been any pig excessively loving freedom or art?) Of course, their excess may be dehumanizing, but the possibility of that excess along with the ability to control them rationally constitute two sides of the rational human nature. The point is not to eradicate the unnecessary needs but, in the language introduced later in the *Laws*, to "practice them properly" (636e, 639b–c).<sup>10</sup>

Especially in terms of the relationship between psychic justice and happiness, which is Glaucon's initial query—which dominates Books 2–4, and may be seen as the main topic of the whole *Republic*—Plato tries to provide a clear grasp of the perfectly just man and city, and their happiness, as opposed to the wholly unjust man and city, and their unhappiness. True, all the people with deviant souls are clearly less well off than the person with a just soul, but it is by no means obvious, and there is no indication that it should be, that the timocratic man is happier than the oligarchic one, the oligarchic man happier than the democrat, etc. Socrates explicitly rejects the idea that every increase in justice must always bring an increase in happiness: it is even mentioned as a just thing that the perfectly just men suffer some injustice and are forced to "live a worse life when they could live a better one" (519d). The sharp and clear contrast between "pure justice," leading to maximal happiness, and "pure injustice," leading to maximal unhappiness, should be absolutely sufficient to make us prefer Socrates' way of justice to Thrasymachus' way of injustice (545a–b).

In Book 9 Glaucon returns to the idea that the descending order of regimes may not be quite obvious in terms of one's happiness, and asks Socrates about a criterion which enables us to judge which way of living leads to maximum pleasure and happiness.<sup>11</sup> From what has been said before, several answers could be plausible. Socrates might have argued, for instance, that the more the rulers or the citizens care for the common good the happier is the city and each and every citizen as well. Similarly, he might have claimed that the more efficient is a regime in orchestrating its citizens' actions the more efficient it must be in providing them with all goods, with satisfaction and happiness. The more the regimes are disorganized the more poverty, fear, and feeling of insecurity their citizens share. These would be the answers perfectly consistent with the whole argument of the *Republic*. Yet Socrates decides to choose otherwise: "What enables us to give a good answer? Is it not experience (*empiria*), knowledge (*phronesis*), and [rational] discussion (*logos*)?" (582a). One should experience various pleasures and different forms of enjoyment and happiness to be able to judge which regime brings about more of them. And here comes another important turn in Socrates' argument. "Consider then which of the three men has most experience of the pleasures we mentioned" (582a). The fourth and the fifth political characters are dropped, and Socrates returns to his earlier tripartite division of the soul. The appetitive part of the soul is redefined as "wealth-loving," because its desires "are most easily satisfied by means of money" (580e–581a), and the oligarchic money lover becomes a representative of all the characters governed by the appetitive part of the soul. After that redefinition Socrates easily proves that the wisdom lovers are better equipped than the honor lovers and the profit lovers to judge the quality of pleasures (582b–d), because only "the philosopher has of necessity tasted the other pleasures, beginning in childhood" (582b), in the long process of his education as a prospective philosopher king.

Socrates' treatment of all the "appetitive" characters does not harmonize with what was said about them earlier, however. True, the democratic and tyrannical men are somehow kindred with the oligarchic man, because the appetitive part of the soul is said to dominate all of them, but they are by no means identical with the "profit lovers." While the tyrannical man's lust may be—very roughly though—interpreted as a species of the oligarchic man's love for wealth and bodily objects, the democratic man's desires, as presented earlier in Book 8, are obviously much more complex and do not fit the simple money-loving pattern. The democratic man satisfies all of his—necessary as well as unnecessary—desires, but they are organized according to the principles of liberty and equality, which have an entirely different nature. Certainly, the ultimate values of democracy are ridiculed in a passage exemplifying Plato's most fantastic sense of humor (561a–b), yet they are never related to the love of bodily objects or profit alone. It may seem that Socrates deliberately "forgets" about the fourth stage of his sequence in order to attract our attention to it. As

has been suggested before, it seems that in his older age the democratic man is well equipped, perhaps best of all, to judge the pleasures. When Socrates is asked whether the wisdom lovers are best prepared to judge pleasures, his answer is clearly negative. He ironically hints that none of the three characters can actually be the wisest or more objective one: "Do you realize, I said, that if you wanted to ask these three kinds of men in turn which of these three kinds of lives is the most pleasant, each would give the highest praise to his own?" (581c–d). Of course, he is a philosopher, so he argues for his style of living, but he ironically suggests that he should not be taken too seriously. His opinion is not completely impartial and reliable because of his philosophical vocation. He is a wisdom lover but he did not experience all kinds of pleasures to be able to judge them, and in his story only the democratic man is called a man "full of all sorts of character" (561e), just like his city. Democracy was earlier described as a regime "embroidered with every kind of character" (557c). What could provide a better opportunity to acquire all kinds of experience and knowledge than the regime which "contains all kinds of constitutions" (557d), and in which everyone can "arrange his own life in any manner" (557b)? If "experience, knowledge, and discussion" are decisive in judging political regimes in terms of pleasure or happiness, democracy seems to be the only regime which prepares one well because only democracy, being "full of liberty and freedom of speech" (557b), provides the required experience and allows the free discussion necessary for any competent judgment.

The complexity of the parallel between Plato's and Hesiod's stories achieves its climax here. The mythical heroes, as we know them from Homer and Hesiod, are spirited and shrewd, but they are dominated neither by a single part of their souls nor by a single desire. They are human after all, and not always perfectly virtuous and wise. Theirs is rather an equilibrium between the three parts of their souls, between different faculties, and between passionate desire and virtuous restraint. Ulysses, Achilles, and other Trojan heroes are equally able to indulge their appetites, to act with anger, and to calculate their plans reasonably and cunningly. And in Book 8 only the democratic man is presented as a "man of great variety full of all sorts of characters" (561e), engaging in various activities, putting desires and pleasures "on an equal footing," and "not disdaining any but fulfilling them all equally" (561b). All desires and pleasures, the democratic man insists, "are equal and must be equally prized" (561c). At one time he indulges himself with food and drink, at another time, he fasts. At one time he takes part in public affairs, then, in turn, he "turns to making money," to physical and military exercise, and sometimes he even "spends his time on philosophy" (561c–d). The democratic man's life is a mixture of all the other characters' lives. Only in the democratic man all the parts of the soul are shown to be active, all kinds of love and aspirations alive.

If justice and happiness mean that the rational part of the soul (and the city) secures that the parts do not clash with one another, the democratic soul (as

well as city) does that, in part at least. It is unable to subordinate itself fully to the rational part, as the aristocratic soul does, but it at least solves the problem of permanent clashes, conflicts, and unavoidable self-destruction. True, the democratic man's reasoning, happiness, and pleasures are often rather chaotic, much less organized and clearly inferior to the wisdom and reasoned happiness of the philosopher-king, but they are still richer than the timocratic, oligarchic, and tyrannical men's single-minded craving and permanent dissatisfaction. There is a significant difference between a genuine wisdom and the democratic man's superficial experience with life's various pleasures, but a dabbler's knowledge is still more than complete ignorance.

The parallel between Hesiod's and Plato's stories returns here with a vengeance. As the one-dimensional, "terrible and mighty" races of silver, bronze, and iron are clearly contrasted by Hesiod with the golden and heroic races, so are the timocratic, oligarchic, and tyrannical men in Plato, presented as equally "simple-minded," and fundamentally different from the comprehensive and many-sided democratic and aristocratic men. The timocrat, oligarch, and tyrant are obsessed with honor or wealth or absolute power, while the democrat and the philosopher-king know and are able to enjoy and appreciate a variety of activities and pleasures.

It is again not an accident that the possibility of "the reaction in the opposite direction," i.e. general political (implied by psychological) regeneration, is associated only with aristocracy and, surprisingly enough, democracy (563e–564a). As the race of heroes interrupts and reverses the declining order of Hesiod's myth, so the democratic constitution and the democratic character in many respects interrupt and may reverse the order of Plato's. If, as the projected introduction of the ideal regime suggests, political regeneration is possible only when "the city and men's characters" are treated as "a draughting board" and first wiped clean (501a), then the democratic constitution, presented both as an anarchic nonconstitution and pluralistic multiconstitution, appears to be the only political state resembling that "clean board" from which the process of regeneration might start.<sup>12</sup> Of course, from that institutional as well as psychological vacuum things may still fall down into a tyranny but it is also presumably possible that the correct political institutions and psychological habits might be reconstructed upon the old ruins. Plato's many other remarks and allusions suggest that very special status of democracy among the other regimes. The democratic rule of the poor is the radical negation, indeed "in the opposite direction," of the oligarchic rule of the rich; the democratic son's character radically contradicts his father's; the democrat "spends his money, effort, and time" (561a), and his desires are "spendthrift" (558d), i.e. radically opposite to the essentially acquisitive desires of all the remaining warped characters. Most importantly, the democratic man is the only one able to "not overstep the boundary of frenzy," and, "as he grows older," he allows some of the previously rejected appetites to return and keeps balance among them (561a–b).

Democratic pluralism in the city and in the soul is far from perfection and true harmony, but it at least bears some potential for a fragile stability and peace.

#### 4. WAS PLATO A DEMOCRAT?

Probably no Plato scholar would dare to give a positive answer to this question, but there is still no clear agreement concerning what the overall character of Plato's political philosophy is. His indictment of democracy became an integral part of the antidemocratic tradition, being frequently recalled by later writers as a firsthand eyewitness condemnation of the Athenian democracy and of democracy in general by one of the most splendid thinkers in history. The antidemocratic interpretation of Plato culminated in Karl Popper's violent attack, demonstrating an "identity between Platonism and totalitarianism."<sup>13</sup> Generating tremendous controversy, it revived the problem of the fundamental meaning of Plato's political philosophy and still leaves many classical scholars split over that issue. Although Popper's extreme line of criticism does not find many advocates today, and the dispute itself is not as passionate as at the time when the totalitarian threat seemed so real, its echoes constantly re-emerge in the contemporary debates concerning Plato's conception of justice and the evolution of his political philosophy.

The foregoing analysis of the various political and psychological ties between the ideal aristocratic regime and its inferior democratic reflection indicates at least that much of the radically antidemocratic interpretations of Plato can no longer be accepted. At the very heart of what was read for centuries as Plato's spiteful attack on democracy, one discovers arguments presenting him not as its enemy, but rather a friendly critic. Several observations, made quite frequently in the literature, seem to support this view.

First, it seems significant that Plato expressed his critique of democracy through the mouth of Socrates, the notorious critic of democracy who was also a great citizen and proved with his life and death his commitment to democratic values. It has been observed by many authors that Socrates proved his preference for democracy with his own life and death. He spent his whole life in democratic Athens and refused to break her laws by escaping after his trial. He could have avoided his execution, but apparently the possibility of fleeing to Sparta or Crete was for him no possibility at all. Much the same could be said about Plato himself. Like his master, he criticized democracy, but his experience with other regimes during his Sicilian adventure and the rule of the Thirty Tyrants in Athens was rather bitter and disappointing. Only in Athens, only under her democratic regimes, which made her the most vibrant intellectual center of the ancient world, could both Socrates and Plato meet and challenge Gorgias, Protagoras, and others.

Second, it is hard to believe that Plato did not have in mind his native city while speaking of democracy and criticizing it, and therefore it seems also significant that most of Plato's dialogues take place in democratic Athens.<sup>14</sup> Of course, there were many reasons to condemn democratic politics in Athens: there were majorities disregarding principles restricting their power, demagogues manipulating democratic rules and abusing the power of language, the lawless behavior of the rich, the corruption of the magistrates, the interests of lobbies prevailing over the common good, and many other abuses which we witness also today. Socrates' and Plato's critique appears to be directed against some of those vices of the Athenian democratic regime, mainly its majority rule and some whimsical changes of policies resulting from it, while basically taking for granted most of its institutions and laws. Both exposed the deficiencies of democracy, not because they definitely preferred another political regime, but because they wanted to educate the Athenian citizens and to improve the existing political order. After all, the Athenian democracy, although not a perfect political regime by far, proved its relative strength and effectiveness under the most severe trials. Despite all its weaknesses, it was not a lawless anarchy, and neither Socrates nor Plato ever said that Athens was the city of chaos and license. Moreover, the Athenians did not lack civic virtues. They frequently displayed their courage, patriotism, respect for law, and devotion to their city.

Third, then, Plato's other dialogues do not seem to be inconsistent with the interpretation of *Republic*, Book 8, more favorable for democracy. In the early dialogues, like the *Protagoras* or the *Apology*, Plato's Socrates, although criticizing the Athenian democracy and democracy as such, never says that any alternative political order would be preferable. In the *Apology*, Athens is referred to as "this great city, so famous for wisdom and strength" (29d), and, if we can rely on Plato's Seventh Epistle, he was quite glad when democracy was eventually restored after the rule of the Thirty Tyrants (324d–e). In the *Statesman*, often coupled with the *Republic* as another face of antidemocratic Plato, it is repeated that "full authority for a man who understands the art of kingship and has wisdom" would be "the best thing of all" (294a), but it is also noted that the ideal is clearly utopian. The art of ruling is so difficult to learn, the true wisdom so rare, and both are so hard to recognize that in practical terms the rule of pure reason does not seem feasible. "The aim of all the actions of men everywhere is to secure for themselves the most tolerable life they can" (302b), hence they pursue not an ideal regime but rather a constitutional lesser evil. If so, the weakness of democracy becomes its virtue: "the rule of the many is weak in every way, it is not capable of any real good or of any serious evil" (303a). Practicality and realism speak for democracy. When in the *Laws* Plato develops his conception of the "mixed constitution," democracy is recalled as one of its two main ingredients. The best political regime should be a combination of individual freedom and its legal and institutional limitations: "a compromise between a monarchical and a democratic constitution, which is precisely

the sort of compromise a constitution should always be" (756e). The Hesiodic kinship, between the perfect "philosophical" kingdom and its democratic distortion, returns here in a new form. Democracy defined in *Republic* 8 as "an emporium of constitutions," containing "all kinds of constitutions" (557d), may be seen as an ironic introduction to the idea of the (best possible) "mixed constitution," which remains Plato's great contribution to Western political theory.

Even if the Hesiodic parallel is not a decisive reason to call Plato a democrat, it is at least one more good reason to argue that he cannot be called an antidemocrat either. Clearly, it is not only true that Plato's declining sequence shows some significant recovery at its fourth stage—precisely as Hesiod's sequence does—but, moreover, the kinship of the first and the fourth stages leaves no doubt. Political peace and everyone's individual satisfaction are possible (although neither guaranteed nor permanent) only in these four societies: Hesiod's golden and heroic races, and Plato's aristocratic and democratic regimes. All the others are simply self-destructive. After a two-thousand-year history of the troublesome relationship between aristocratic ideals and populist realities, Plato's parallel astonishes with its depth and acquires new meanings.

#### NOTES

1. L. Strauss, "On Plato's *Republic*," in *The City and Man* (Chicago, 1964), p. 131.

2. Some scholars emphasize those special difficulties in interpreting Book 8. Julia Annas (*An Introduction to Plato's Republic* [Oxford, 1981]), for instance, calls that part of the *Republic* "both confusing and confused," leaving the reader "unsatisfied and irritated" (p. 294). We shall see that Plato's argument in Book 8 may be perhaps seen as deliberately "confusing," but by no means "confused" and, when rightly interpreted, no longer leaves the reader "unsatisfied and irritated."

3. Such an interpretation of Book 8 is not entirely new. Patrick Coby ("Socrates and the Decline and Fall of Regimes: Books 8 and 9 of the *Republic*," *Interpretation* 21, no. 1 [Fall, 1993]: 15–39) concludes his detailed reconstruction of Book 8 with the following passage: "Because Socrates means to dissuade the tyrant from seizing power, and thus from changing a democratic regime into a tyranny, it could be said that the whole discussion of happiness adds up to a practical, if not theoretical, defense of democracy" (p. 31). Unfortunately, in Coby's reconstruction, there is rather little evidence supporting his conclusion.

4. Cf. M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings of the Athenian Democracy* (Oxford, 1969), chap. 2. T. A. Sinclair, *A History of Greek Political Thought* (London, 1959), p. 19. Although historians unanimously agree on the importance of Homer and Hesiod for Greek political thought, there is relatively little literature supporting and analyzing that issue. Cf. D. Kagan, *The Great Dialogue: History of Greek Political Thought from Homer to Polybius* (New York, 1965), esp. chap. 2; J. L. Myres, *The Political Ideas of the Greeks* (London, 1927), lectures 1–4; M. Ostwald, *Nomos and the Beginnings*, chap. 2.

5. *The Poems of Hesiod*, translated with Introduction and Comments by R. M. Frazer (Norman, 1983), p. 106. *Plato's Republic* will be cited after G. M. A. Grube's edition (Indianapolis, 1974).

6. Curiously enough, some scholars before Strauss associated Hesiod's model of historical regress from the *Works and Days* with Plato's *Statesman* and the *Laws* but not with the *Republic*. Cf. E. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (New Haven, 1957), chap. 2.

7. Because very similar fourfold anthropological myths appear in many early cultures in Asia, for instance in the teaching of Zarathustra and in the Indian *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*, it is suspected that Hesiod's story of the five races is "a fusion of two distinct and incongruous myths," the myth of the Four Ages and the legend of the Age of Heroes (A. O. Lovejoy, G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* [Baltimore, 1935], p. 25).

8. It is another interesting problem whether in his presentation of the three self-destructive regimes Plato attacks rivalry and competitiveness as such. The question must have been quite popular in his times. In the very beginning of the *Works and Days* (lines 11–29) Hesiod introduces two kinds of Eris, the goddess of strife and conflict. One of them "stirs up the evil of war and conflict of battle, and no mortal loves her" (14–15), but the other one "is much better for men" (19). The latter Eris makes everybody "eager to work whenever he sees another prospering" (21–22); she "benefits mortals" when "neighbor is envious of neighbor," "potter fiercely challenges potter, carpenter carpenter, beggar enviously strives with beggar, singer with singer" (23–26). Heraclitus is probably the best known pre-Socratic philosopher maintaining the same distinction between the destructive conflict of ruthless war and the healthy condition of rivalry and economic competition. The question whether Plato would respect that distinction, however, we shall leave for another occasion.

9. The Plato scholars are still split over the interpretation of *Republic* 440a–441a. Terence Irwin suggested that while the rational part is "entirely good-dependent" and the appetitive part "entirely good-independent," the spiritual part may be seen as "partly good-dependent, influenced by beliefs about some kinds of goods" (T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory* [Oxford, 1977], pp. 192, 326–28; followed by J. Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation," *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 1, no. 1 [1984]: 6–7), and hence in some sense rationally concerned with the good and naturally allied with reason. That would make the spiritual part clearly superior to the appetitive part. Irwin did not reconcile his interpretation with the passages suggesting the essential "irrationality" of the spirited part, however, and his account has been questioned by other scholars (cf. M. Woods, "Plato's Division of the Soul," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 73 [1987]: 45; F. D. Miller, "Plato on the Parts of the Soul" (unpublished), pp. 18–20 and note 28; both papers present interpretations closer to one accepted in this paper). Leo Strauss went so far as to suggest that even some kind of superiority of appetitive desires over spiritedness may be possible: "Let us never forget that while there is a philosophic eros, there is no philosophic spiritedness (366c)" (Strauss, "Plato," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays*, ed. H. Giddin [Detroit, 1989], p. 188; cf. also Strauss, "On Plato's *Republic*," p. 110). Finally, Irwin himself, in his most recent impressive general account of *Plato's Ethics* (New York and Oxford, 1995), seems to have changed his view: "The rational part of the soul is guided by reasoning about the good, and the other parts do their proper work when they are appropriately influenced by this reasoning about the good" (p. 281).

10. This is so important an issue that Plato devotes a substantial part of the *Laws* to wine drinking. The Athenian Stranger proves that the regimes which try to discourage or even to ban pleasures altogether—like Sparta for instance, where banquets are illegal—do not solve their problems. People must be exposed to such pleasures in order to be able to "properly" practice, enjoy, and control them. The "proper" enjoyment is conducive to moderation and self-control (cf. Strauss, "Plato," pp. 232–34).

11. We shall leave aside the importance of the shift from happiness to pleasure Socrates makes at this point. The shift may be seen as crucial for Plato's (Socrates') moral theory, and there is a huge amount of literature on it, but it does not seem crucial in the evaluation of political regimes.

12. Ryszard Legutko introduces that brilliant idea in his unpublished paper "Plato's Two Democracies."

13. K. Popper, *The Open Society* (New York and Evanston, 1963), vol. 1, p. 170.

14. There are many interesting accounts of the relationship between Plato's critique of democracy and the realities of democratic Athens. Cf. R. W. Hall, *Plato* (London, 1981), chap. 1; G. Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory* (Methuen, 1986), chap. 1; T. Irwin, "Socrates and Athenian Democracy," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 18(1989): 184–205.