

Rehabilitating the ‘City of Pigs’ The Dialectics of Plato’s Account of his Beautiful Cities

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In this paper, I contend that the standard interpretation of the *Republic*, according to which “the city of pigs” (CP) is an entirely deficient precursor to the one ideally just state, Kallipolis, is untenable. In the vital respect of unity, which for Plato is the defining condition of virtue in the soul and the city, CP is equally if not more just than Kallipolis. In part 1, I outline CP in terms of what I contend are the three organizing principles that secure its unity (“trade specialization”; “right size”; and “modesty”), before proceeding to defend this unity from some typical criticisms. The aim is to show that CP is unified and hence just, which allows us to make sense of why Socrates describes it as “complete” (*telea*), “true” (*alêthinê*), and “healthy” (*hugiês*), despite Glaucon’s protestations. To do so, I will have to first argue against objections from those who interpret CP as a *suggestio falsi*, or an exercise in playful irony, sketched only to establish the need for Kallipolis. In part 2, I then proceed to show that although Kallipolis is in certain respects superior to CP, it suffers from structural disunity relating to its heretofore unnoticed or downplayed geographical and social scissions—scissions that are requisite and unavoidable for its very organization. As such, Socrates tacitly suggests, I contend, that these scissions mark a disunity that results from reneging CP’s third organizing principle: the “modesty” principle. When Socrates, on his interlocutors’ demands, expands CP by allowing in items and conditions of luxury that provoke pleonexia (greed or covetousness) thus giving birth to the “feverish city,” he leads us to see the necessity of a kind of set-up in Kallipolis with a socially and geographically disparate class of guardians that is saturated by disunity. The overall argument of this paper is that Socrates takes us on a dialectical journey, leading us to see that unity and hence justice in each city depends upon each citizen doing her job and no more than her job (i.e., the principle of trade specialization) (433A-B). Both CP and Kallipolis are sketched for this heuristic purpose—to allow us to see this vision of justice. Socrates’ point in taking us on the dialectical journey, I contend, is to enable us to realize not just what justice is but what inhibits or threatens justice—namely, luxury, or more precisely wealth. CP is not a good model to allow us to see this, but this does not render it a *suggestio falsi* or an unrealistic false start. Indeed, on my reading, Socrates is not only serious when he dubs the city of pigs true and healthy, but we have to take these pronouncements seriously in order to properly accompany him on the journey and properly see his vision of political justice and injustice.

Introduction

In this paper, I contend that the standard interpretation of the *Republic*, according to which “the city of pigs” (hereafter CP) is an entirely deficient precursor to the one ideally just state,

Kallipolis, is untenable. In the vital respect of unity, which for Plato is the defining condition of virtue in the soul¹ and the city,² CP is equally if not more just than *Kallipolis*. In part 1, I outline CP in terms of what I contend are the three organizing principles that secure its unity (“trade specialization”; “right size”; and “modesty”), before proceeding to defend this unity from some typical criticisms. The aim is to show that CP is unified and hence just, which allows us to make sense of why Socrates describes it as “complete” (*telea*), “true” (*alêthinê*), and “healthy” (*hugiês*), despite Glaucon’s protestations. To do so, I will have to first argue against objections from those who interpret CP as a *suggestio falsi*, or an exercise in playful irony, sketched only to establish the need for *Kallipolis*. In part 2, I then proceed to show that although *Kallipolis* is in certain respects superior to CP, it suffers from structural disunity relating to its heretofore unnoticed or downplayed geographical and social scissions—scissions that are requisite and unavoidable for its very organization. As such, Socrates tacitly suggests, I contend, that these scissions mark a disunity that results from renegeing CP’s third organizing principle: the “modesty” principle. When Socrates, on his interlocutors’ demands, expands CP by allowing in items and conditions of luxury that provoke *pleonexia* (greed or covetousness) thus giving birth to the “feverish city,” he leads us to see the necessity of a kind of set-up in *Kallipolis* with a socially and geographically disparate class of guardians that is saturated by disunity.

The overall argument of this paper, then, is that Socrates takes us on a dialectical journey, leading us to see that unity and hence justice in each city depends upon each citizen doing her job and no more than her job (i.e., the principle of trade specialization) (433A-B). Both cities are sketched for this heuristic purpose—to allow us to see this vision of justice. Yet, the point of undertaking this journey, for Socrates, is that we realize not just what the ultimate condition of justice *is*, but that we also see what inhibits or threatens justice: luxury, or more precisely wealth. The lack of luxury or wealth in CP is vital to its unity; the denial of luxury and wealth to the citizens of *Kallipolis* is vital to its unity. The problem with the latter, which makes it in this respect inferior to CP is that the set-up required in *Kallipolis* after the introduction of luxury or wealth involves a fundamental, structural disunity between its citizens—a disunity stemming from the

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, ed. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 443C–E; hereafter all in-text references are to this translation of the *Republic* unless otherwise indicated.

² “Is there any greater evil for a city,” asks Socrates, “than that which tears it apart and makes it many instead of one? Or any greater good than that which binds it together and makes it one?” (462A–B).

class divisions that are necessary for preventing wealth from interfering with each citizen doing their job, and for preventing the city from being disunited as a result of external attack.

1. *The “City of Pigs” and its Problems*

The “city of pigs” is the first example of a city created in *logos*, as a thought-experiment that Socrates and his interlocutors hypothesize in their quest to provide a large-scale model in which to locate justice in the human soul. The metaphysical question of what justice is in general—the form of justice that is the same in a city as in a soul—is immediately blurred with the ontogenetic question of where justice comes from. As such, the question of what an ideally just city would look like is connected to the question of how such a city would come into being. Socrates posits that a city (or, rather a *polis*) is formed as a “response to human needs” (369B); CP is the first manifestation of an attempt to meet these needs. Catherine McKeen identifies two regulatory principles that structure CP:

P1: Specialization: Citizens in CP practice just one trade each, and through this specialization labor is thereby divided according to what the citizens are “naturally suited” (370B–C).

P2: Right Size: The city is small in terms of its population, consisting solely of tradesmen and their families. And the city is geographically small as not much land is needed for its small population of farmers, builders, weavers, cobblers, carpenters, metal workers, cowherds, shepherds and herdsmen (370D–E), “wage earners” selling their strength (371E), merchants (371A), and retailers to handle the community’s marketplace (371D). CP has a basic economy and is small in social terms.³

To McKeen’s two organizing principles a third should be added:

P3: Modesty: The city caters for *basic* necessities. The citizens are described as living a happy but austere life with minimally comfortable furniture, adequate clothing for practical purposes, and basic food and drink (372A–B). The city is not organized to provide conditions or objects of luxury; it only includes citizens (and their families) whose trades cater for basic necessities. Excluded from CP are, for instance, artists, prostitutes, chefs to make fancy foods—in short, all the “non-necessary” tradespeople and their crafts that will later be introduced.

³ Catherine McKeen, “Swillsburg City Limits (The ‘City of Pigs’: Republic 370c–372d),” *Polis* 21 (2004), p. 88.

CP is organized around these three principles of trade-specialization, right size, and modesty. Now, it might be objected that P3 is not a separate principle but rather simply an entailment of P2. However, while P3 is clearly a *correlate* of P2—a small *polis* is likely to be one that is basic and modest—, P3 is not a *logical entailment* of P2, since it is perfectly possible to have a small *polis* which was nevertheless luxurious for at least a number of its citizens. McKeen is right to mention that the guiding motivation for the citizens coming together to form this city appears to be “rational self-interest” (McKeen 2004 85; see 369C); but it is important to specify that it is a *modest*, rational self-interest, which does not appear to demand luxury or aggrandizement. These principles order the city and provide for its unity: insofar as the citizens’ basic needs are met, and everyone has a role to play in maintaining the collective, CP attains a form of unity that Socrates suggests is stable and continuous: “And so, they’ll live in peace and good health, and when they die at a ripe old age, they’ll bequeath a similar life to their children” (372D).

Let me now turn to two important and oft-voiced objections leveled at CP *qua* city. Both seek to show inevitable disunity stemming from the putative inadequacy of the city’s basic organizing principles.

1.1 *The Problem of Self-Regulation*

One can imagine all sorts of practical-political problems arising with CP as minimally characterized as it is. One of its glaring features is that it has no government or official body whose task is to govern the citizens and presumably guarantee the city’s law and order. Socrates’ inchoate outline apparently ignores problems such as: What would happen if there were too many people for one trade? Or, how would the city control the aspiring tyrant seeking to oppress the citizens? Socrates seems to simply default to a kind of natural regulation, wishfully or even naively assuming that the citizens would implicitly agree upon their needs through “rational self-interest.”

Before turning to elaborate exactly what the problem posed for CP’s *unity* is here, let me note a few things.

First, the Greek *polis* should not be taken to be straightforwardly akin to our modern concept of “city” or “state.” A *polis* was much more basically a community sharing a social and

geographical space.⁴ This is not to say that issues of law and order were somehow irrelevant. Rather, my point is that we should be careful not to assume that the modern bureaucratic state apparatus must set the standards for law and order in CP, or to immediately assume that a lack of official government already renders CP a non-*polis* proper. In connection, we shouldn't ignore, for instance, the possibility that CP was supposed to represent something like what we would call a genuinely anarchistic *polis* regulated by non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic, free associations. In fact, it is *prima facie* plausible that this is just how Socrates envisioned CP. He certainly didn't think, for instance, that the lack of an official government meant disorder or chaos. This is intimated when he claims that its citizens wouldn't have too many babies because they would be aware of their own limited resources (372B–C)—no need for a government to prescribe such a thing, he suggests; the citizens could collectively realize this for themselves and act accordingly. Second, and moreover, we should be careful not to turn this problem into one of under-characterization. To highlight the indisputable under-characterization of CP is not in itself to highlight a serious constitutive problem with the city since it is not to criticize the basic organizing principles that characterize it (P1–P3). The real problem of self-regulation is not that Socrates simply didn't consider many possible practical-political problems for CP, since he didn't do so for *Kallipolis* either, as I will highlight. The real concern must be whether self-regulation is a sufficient *theoretical* answer to the threat to the city's unity that these myriad practical-political problems pose. Moreover, did Socrates and/or Plato really think that the organizing principles of CP constitute it as a *bona fide polis*, or was the exercise of sketching CP really something else?

Plato commentators prefer to focus on the problem of regulation in relation to what Plato says about appetites. For instance, in his classic treatment, Reeve claims that a significant constitutive problem with CP's unity is that CP supposedly contains “nothing to counteract the destabilizing effects of unnecessary appetites and the *pleonexia* to which they give rise.”⁵ His oft-echoed argument is that on Plato's psychological account of humans, we naturally have appetites that we yearn to fulfill, which left unchecked, lead to *pleonexia* (greed or covetousness). Without some kind of government, the argument goes, unity can't be maintained because there is bound to

⁴ See, for instance, David Melling, *Understanding Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 75.

⁵ C.D.C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 171.

arise conflicts due to the competing *pleonexias* of the citizens. More specifically, Reeve contends, we all have “necessary” and “unnecessary” appetitive desires (as defined in book VIII, 558D–559A). CP caters for citizens’ necessary appetitive desires (for food, shelter, etc.), but not for their unnecessary ones (that’s the whole point of P3). The problem is that unnecessary appetitive desires, for instance, for non-procreative sex, fine foods, extravagantly comfortable living conditions, are *bound* to exist in CP and would have to be kept in check somehow. The form of self-regulation described in CP is not sufficient to counter the destabilizing effects of these *unnecessary* appetitive desires. The claim then is that the citizens simply wouldn’t be able to abide by P3; and since there is no government to enforce modesty, conflict and hence disunity would result. Other notable scholars who have likewise argued that CP is in some sense unrealistic or impossible precisely because it has no form of government to control the citizens’ unnecessary desires include Cooper, Devereaux, and Annas.⁶ By contrast they say, in *Kallipolis* we see the antidote: the rule of a rational philosopher-king, helped by a guardian-warrior class of citizens who together govern the city and ward against the destructive effects of our inevitably destructive desires.

So, is the unity in CP inevitably undermined by a lack of government to control citizens’ appetites? On first blush, we should note that Socrates doesn’t describe the organization of CP as giving rise to *pleonexia*; indeed, it is striking that these citizens don’t appear greedy or out of control at all. It is only *after* luxurious items have been introduced to the city that *pleonexia* arises, due to the proliferation of unnecessary desires that coincides with this introduction. In other words, it is only *after* P2 has been sacrificed and the city expanded that *pleonexia* arises. But at this stage, we are dealing with a different city—the luxurious, feverish city (373B), not CP. The principle of modesty in CP is described as being matched by modesty in the citizens’ desires, in a way that seems to suggest that Reeve et al.’s criticism might be at least *exegetically* misled, if not necessarily philosophically. Both Smith⁷ and McKeen (2004, 71) have made compelling versions of this argument before.

⁶ John Cooper, “Two Theories of Justice,” *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA*, 74 (2000), pp. 5–27; Daniel T. Devereux, “Socrates’ First City in the Republic,” *Apeiron* 13:1 (1979), p. 37; and Julie Annas, *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 77.

⁷ Nicholas D. Smith, “Plato’s Analogy of Soul and State,” *The Journal of Ethics*, 3 (1999), p. 41.

In response, Reeve et al. might argue that although Plato doesn't explicitly state, via Socrates or otherwise, that *pleonexia* would arise in CP, he indirectly suggests that it would do. The suggestion would be that CP can be retrospectively identified as unrealistic in virtue of what the rest of the *Republic* sets out. Barney makes this argument insightfully, so I will now expound her view.⁸

In Barney's assessment, "[the city of pigs] embodies the hypothesis that a city without rational rule could be moderate in its appetites, and that hypothesis is false" (Barney 2002, 220). Human desires cannot ever possibly be moderate or modest, according to Barney's Plato. Rather, there will always be "savage desires"—powerful and vicious, unnecessary appetitive desires—, which of their nature can't be controlled; all we can do is try to limit their damage. Even a strenuous education cannot prevent these desires from arising in the first place (Barney 2002, 219). Since, according to Plato, all of us have these uncontrollable, unnecessary desires, the situation described in CP is either presupposing a false account of human life, or is not a serious suggestion in the first place. Barney suggests that both are true, concluding that, "the city is not a genuine possibility at all" (ibid). For Barney, the rest of the *Republic* shows that the kind of unity Plato envisioned necessarily requires a rational ruler, i.e. the philosopher-king who has acquired knowledge of the form of justice and thus knows how to govern the citizens justly and maintain unity to control these rambunctious desires. The self-regulating CP is thus dismissed by Barney as a *suggestio falsi*, and as an exercise in playful irony on Socrates' part (2002, 221). Without the rational governance of the philosopher-king, Barney's Plato wants us to see, the citizens' savage desires would inevitably disrupt CP's unity. CP, for Barney, simply serves to highlight through its impossible vision of self-regulation of savage desires the necessity of *Kallipolis* where reason (the philosopher-king) with the help of spiritedness (the guardians), mitigate the effects of savage desires. This reading of the *Republic*, it should be noted, leans very heavily on a remark from Socrates' during the discussion of dreams at the beginning of book IX, where he says to Glaucon: "Our dreams make it clear that there is a dangerous, wild and lawless form of desire in everyone, even in those of us who seem to be entirely moderate or measured" (572B). This is what leads Barney to claim that CP farcically

⁸ See Rachel Barney, "Platonism, Moral Nostalgia, and the City of Pigs," *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 17 (2002): 207–27.

suggests that austerity itself could inhibit these savage desires and thus prevent conflict. As she wryly puts it: “Nuts and berries are no substitute for the rule of reason” (Barney 2002, 220).

As clear and elegant as this argument is, let me immediately make a few minor points of caution before I continue to engage with it more directly.

First, in my view we should avoid dismissing Socrates’ apparently serious lauding of CP as “true” and “healthy” (372E) as ironic if we can. Irony is certainly an important Socratic device, but we should be careful not to allow it to function as a handy exegetical tool that allows us to dismiss any comments made by Socrates that don’t fit with our interpretations. If we can show why he might have meant his assessment sincerely, then to my mind that is more a textually responsible course. Second, we should also be careful about assessing CP by the standards of *Kallipolis* as this is potentially question begging. We cannot just assume, without clear textual evidence, that the *Republic* was intended to outline a kind of linear progression from a deficient city (CP) toward an absolute ideal (*Kallipolis*), or that even if *Kallipolis* is ultimately considered the superior *polis*, that it therefore must be superior in every way. And third, though we must agree with Barney that Plato in the *Republic* certainly claimed that most humans are in thrall to their appetites in general (see 588D; 428D), and moreover, that being controlled by one’s desires is not a good way to live (e.g. 586A–B), it’s less clear that he thought that we are all *inevitably* plagued by so-called “savage desires.” As Deslauriers points out, apart from the aforementioned remark at 572B, there is no other place in the text where it is suggested that we are inevitably subject to such savage desires.⁹ Indeed, the set-up in *Kallipolis* precisely presupposes that at least some individuals—namely, philosophers—can be liberated from savage desires if they exist and when they arise. As such, Barney’s claim about the *inevitability* of unity-destroying savage desires is perhaps too strong.

These points aside, the important question is, assuming that savage desires do arise, how are they to be dealt with? Let’s now analyze the details of Barney’s argument that *Kallipolis* represents the only ideal case of a *polis* that could manage these desires through the government of the rational philosopher-kings.

We should be careful to distinguish two conceptually separate components to Barney’s argument:

⁹ Maguerite Deslauriers, “Stories of the Origins of Political Community and Savage Desires,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 17 (2002), p. 234.

- A) A *polis*, on Plato's account, must be governed by reason to ensure unity.
- B) Government by reason must come from an authority external to the citizens being ruled.

The first component is undeniable. At 435–442 Socrates clearly outlines how, of the three general parts of the soul (reason, spiritedness, and appetite), reason should rule over the lower part of the soul (appetite), with the help of spiritedness. Assuming the city-soul analogy, which Socrates invokes to found the discussion (368D– 369A), we can non-controversially infer that Socrates thought that reason should rule in a city. The second component of Barney's argument (B), however, needs to be qualified.

Socrates recognized that rational rule can be imposed on an individual, and analogously on a city, either by himself/itself, or by someone or some faction external to that which is being governed. Yet, of these two options, he is explicit that it is preferable for the control to be internal. Consider 590D: "It is better for everyone to be ruled by divine reason, *preferably within himself and his own*, otherwise imposed from without" (my emphasis). Elsewhere, Socrates even suggests that being ruled by another is in some sense shameful: "Don't you think it's shameful and a great sign of vulgarity to be forced to make use of a justice imposed by others, as masters and judges, because you are unable to deal with the situation yourself?" (405A–B). Indeed, self-control is the lynchpin of unity in the individual soul, for Socrates (see 443D–E). The issue, of course, is that there are at least two alternative yet viable ways of understanding what this means for the vision of a just city. Most commentators identify *Kallipolis* as the ideal case of internal governance by reason: the philosopher-king and the guardians are citizens, after all, and are thus internal to the *polis*. An order "imposed from without" would indicate governance from non-citizens, perhaps a situation where the city was colonized. But surely another viable reading would point to a kind of anarchistic set-up where there is no distinction between the rulers and the ruled, no separate governing class. Indeed, Socrates *could* be read to be suggesting that a situation where a separate governing class was not necessary and citizens could control themselves would be most ideal. And isn't this precisely what we're shown with CP? In CP one faction of the city does not impose law and order upon another; it is somehow shared throughout. This, I hasten to add, isn't to say that *Kallipolis* is not an ideal city. Rather, it is to suggest that CP might yet be one as well.

Most readers of the *Republic*, I imagine, would be inclined to respond that even granting that CP is rationally governed, it is not governed by the right kind of reason. The right kind of reason would be *philosophical* reason, as Socrates outlines in books IX and X. Although it is

interesting to note that the citizens of CP are much like Platonic philosophers insofar as they are seemingly not distracted by bodily desires, are not in rapture of money, are peaceful, and run their city as a response to modest needs (which, for Barney is, of course, good reason for thinking that CP is a *suggestio falsi*), it cannot be suggested that they have arrived at this way of life through reflection, deliberation, or perhaps even experience (of alternative options). The citizens are motivated by rational self-interest—along with history and tradition—, but not by philosophical reason. There is apparently no official education system in CP, which seemingly rules-out the possibility that the citizens could have fostered the kind of thoughtful self-awareness needed for the cultivation of virtues. While Socrates suggests that “a man could free himself [from unnecessary desires] by discipline from youth up” (559A), it is arguable that, for Plato, he could only do so through education—a system for which is lacking in CP. The citizens of CP live the kind of austere life that Socrates lauded as “healthy,” but not intentionally as a result of philosophical reflection or deliberation.

This is an important point. However, despite not being regulated by ideal philosophical reason, on my reading Socrates does take it that rational self-interest is enough to secure some form of unity in CP. This is evidenced not just by his previously cited remarks on it being “true,” “healthy,” and “complete,” but also later at 433A–B where he tacitly recurs to CP saying that justice ultimately stems from P1. The unity in CP might be considered fragile insofar as it depends upon the coherence of individuals’ self-interests, but provided it stays small and modest in terms of what it provides for its citizens, i.e. provided P2 and P3 hold, isn’t it plausible that the self-interest of living in a small tightly knit community might outweigh any other potentially conflicting self-interests? Barney and others downplay the fact that rational self-interest can, and indeed does, provide at least some minimal self-regulation. As I pointed out earlier, the case of families limiting the number of children they have so as not to stretch resources is a case in point: the suggestion is that a social and rational self-interest to avoid resource poverty and conflict rules over an appetitive desire for sex and personal or familial gain (372C). And if this is the case, it seems plausible to think that they could control their desires for food, entertainment, and other such wants similarly. Lastly, it should be pointed out that as an empirical and historical matter of fact, there have been and continue to exist many communities that look quite similar to CP—communities without the state apparatus of an organized or stratified governance—many of which have successfully maintained order and unity. Though some have followed Glaucon in deriding

such communities as “primitive” or “uncivilized,” as I will touch on in the next section, neither Plato nor Socrates does. Indeed, it’s hard not to see these judgments as straightforwardly prejudicial and even perhaps colonialist.

To be clear, my position is not that CP is *perfectly* unified, or that a *de facto* governing class of some sort is irrelevant. My argument is that this objection against CP has been significantly overstated. Moreover, I will argue in section 2 that the unity that Socrates identifies in CP in fact stems precisely from its *lack of a separate echelon of governmental power*. In fact, in *Kallipolis*, the introduction of this form of governance is what necessitates social segregation and disunity. The argument there will be that the set-up of *Kallipolis*, which promises more long-term stability because it is designed in anticipation of dealing with conflict through philosophical reason, nevertheless comes with heretofore-unnoticed disunity stemming from its separation of governors and those governed. The unity in CP is secured by its regulatory principles and the fact that the citizens share a common space and purpose. This unity is stable provided that the advantages of its simple community life and division of labor outweigh potentially conflicting personal interests for wealth or power. Keeping in mind the risk of turning against the community, plus the modesty and small size of CP, it seems fairly unlikely either that it would be invaded or that its citizens would turn against it. Of course, this unity—like the unity in any city—is fragile and finite.

The problem of self-regulation is essentially the problem of how CP could remain the right size without a separate government and maintain unity without this separate government. I have argued, however, that CP is precisely the case of a city run by reason that affords a strong, albeit finite, unity, contrary to claims by Barney and others. Now I will consider a second major criticism leveled at CP in virtue of its size—the problem of “full justice.”

1.2. *The Problem of Full Justice*

The citizens of CP, as noted, are all either tradesmen or related family members. To be a citizen of CP one has to specialize in a trade that satisfies a basic need (P1)—the latter being identified collectively in accord with the citizens’ rational self-interest. But what would happen when someone born into the city is by nature a philosopher or a ruler? What role could they play in CP given that they are supposedly not suited to any of the trades that Socrates outlines? As Barney puts it: “some people are born to rule or to pursue wisdom, and there is no place for them

in the city of pigs” (Barney 2002, 220). This is problematic, suggests Barney, since if the city has no place for such people then if and when they are born into the city, they only have the option of performing a trade for which they are not suited if they are to remain citizens. Not only would this be “unnatural” in the sense both of going against the individual’s nature and the “natural” regulation of the city, it would also likely cause disruption and disunity for the city as a whole when someone is forced to do a job for which they are not born.

Here we are dealing with a constitutive problem relating mainly to P2—the size of CP. As Barney (2002, 223) highlights, it is clearly not sufficient to ignore this possibility: to fail to discuss this inevitability is to fail to discuss human life. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Plato doesn’t claim that every person is predestined for one job only; his claim is rather that each person would do *a* trade for which they are naturally suited (see 370C). At 374B–C, moreover, Socrates is clear that his point is that citizens should focus on just one trade, not that there is only trade for each citizen: they should, “work all [their lives] at a single trade for which [they have] a natural aptitude and keep away from all the others.” So, in the case of the person born to be a philosopher, it might turn out that although she would be best at being a philosopher, she might also be good at farming, for instance, or at least be strong enough to work the land, or if weak then canny enough to work as a merchant or trader. Plato’s point throughout the *Republic* is that citizens doing more than their one specific job is what causes disunity; disunity is not the result of citizens failing to find a job for which they are perfectly suited. At 433A, Socrates puts it like this: “justice is doing one’s own work and not meddling with what isn’t one’s own.” This is echoed at 443C where Socrates asserts: “Indeed, Glaucon, the principle that it is right for someone who is by nature a cobbler to practice cobblery and nothing else, for the carpenter to practice carpentry, and the same for the others is a sort of image of justice—and that’s why it’s beneficial.”

Nevertheless, Barney might retort, in CP as opposed to *Kallipolis*, it is less likely that there will be a job suitable for every citizen, and thus less likely that the city will afford full justice to its citizens and be unified as such. CP’s smallness doesn’t allow for the diversity of human life, and particularly has no place for Socrates’ highest human, the philosopher. Although Barney doesn’t mention it, the problem of full justice is presumably a problem for anyone who isn’t naturally suited to one of the delimited available jobs in CP, and not just philosophers. In fact, if this is a problem that only applies to CP and not *Kallipolis* too we should consider the kind of available jobs in *Kallipolis* that are not available in CP. When CP is modified by Glaucon’s

demand for the introduction of luxury, Socrates shows that it is necessary to sacrifice P2 and expand the city to include all the tradesmen required to produce luxury. Particularly important in this regard are doctors, guardians, and artists. Now consider the question: Is there a problem of full justice if a citizen was born into CP naturally suited to one of these jobs? The answer in the case of artists must be no precisely because of the principle of modesty (P3): art, for Plato, appears to be a luxury (it is introduced as such at 372E-373) that contravenes the city's modesty. Meanwhile, doctors and guardians are only necessary, Socrates implies, when the principle of modesty is sacrificed and luxury is allowed into the city—doctors to cope with the range of illnesses that will likely result from more indulgent lifestyles and diets, and warriors to protect the city's burgeoning objects of luxury or wealth. As a result of the introduction of luxury, the city is completely transformed. As a modest and small *polis*, CP can't provide full justice in the sense of ensuring a perfectly suitable job for everyone (surely *Kallipolis* cannot do this either), and in these cases CP's government by rational self-interest to afford basic necessities does not allow for people who want to work to provide non-basic necessities or wants. But then we should ask: Why should CP have to ensure that all of its citizens are happy or fulfilled in this sense in any case? Barney's criticism can't be simply that CP doesn't ensure that all of its citizens will be happy because it is clear that Socrates doesn't think a city is successful in virtue of making all of its citizens happy: at 420B he unambiguously says exactly that. Furthermore, in those cases where individuals are not suited to any of the jobs in CP and they don't have a place in CP, presumably they are free to leave without necessarily disrupting CP's unity. If, as Socrates argues, unity is maintained primarily insofar as people do a trade for which they are capable, and do not interfere with the trades of others, then it clearly does not depend upon each citizen having their dream job. As such, Barney's criticism does not quite land.

Even though I think Barney's criticism does not affect CP's unity for the above reasons, she is surely right to be concerned that CP can't have a position for philosophers. From the perspective of the rest of the *Republic*, it is undeniably problematic for Socrates that a city has no role for a philosopher: book IX clearly expounds how the philosopher is Plato's *summum bonum* of human life. It must surely be a bad thing that CP has no formal education system—no academy—, as we have already mentioned, as this will mean that citizens (or, at least capable citizens) cannot advance their knowledge or foster their virtues. Given the historical stakes of Plato's argument for the necessity of his academy to counter the putatively degenerative forces of

Homer and tragedy, this is not something that can be brushed aside. Although this limitation with CP does not undermine its unity, it does suggest a clear way in which CP is inferior to *Kallipolis*. It seems to be an unavoidable problem for CP since P3 is a concomitant of P2: if you have a small *polis* you necessarily have a small stock of options as to what citizens can do in this *polis*. This is a necessary drawback of CP at the heart of many commentators' problems with CP: some call it "primitive" as a result (Cooper 2000, 13), others "uncivilized" (Melling 1987, 77). However, whilst P2 and its entailment P3 lead to a problem here, it is not one of unity. It certainly a way in which CP is inferior to *Kallipolis*—with the latter set up to include a rigorous education and improvement of the upper echelons of society—, *Kallipolis* is not more *unified* as a result of being thus more "civilized," "advanced," or "less primitive." Indeed, the sacrifice of P2 and P3 that the set-up of *Kallipolis* is founded upon actually leads to a more serious problem of structural disunity in this supposedly ideal city, as I will now go on to argue.

2. *The Irony of Luxury and Kallipolis' Structural Disunity*

In considering the transition from CP to *Kallipolis*, we must think carefully about luxury. The introduction of luxury into CP transforms the city in virtue of apparently renegeing two of its organizing principles: P2 (right size) and P3 (modesty). Luxury is introduced in many forms (372C–373C): from food, to furniture, to art in many forms and embroidery and fine clothes, to items such as incense and gold, to prostitutes. Importantly, the introduction of such luxury prompts the necessity of two kinds of citizen in addition to the relevant new tradesmen: doctors—due to the increased likelihood of bodily illness caused by luxurious lifestyles—, and an army—because of the prompted need for more land, and the increased likelihood of war and the external threat to said luxury. Glaucon's demand for luxury—an expansion of the kinds of objects of wealth available to the citizens—necessitates the expansion of the city in both geographical terms (more land), and in social terms (more kinds of tradesmen). P2 is sacrificed along with the renegeing of modesty (P3) and thus CP is no more. The most important introduction in this regard is the guardian warriors.

Although *Kallipolis* is premised on the renegeing of P2 and P3, the principle that citizens should specialize in one trade only (P1) is not abandoned: Socrates successfully argues that the guardians would have to be a separate kind of tradesmen (374A–E), divided into rulers and

auxiliaries. Any unity and hence justice in *Kallipolis* is premised upon this division of labor. Subsequent discussion centers on the rigorous education of these guardians since they are the most dangerous citizens in virtue of their prerequisite strength, courage, and (after education) intelligence. If they are not properly educated and guided to protect the city then they could quite conceivably turn tyrannical, and seek to control the city and citizens for their own gain. As Socrates shows clearly, the guardians must be indoctrinated to love the city and its citizens above any idiosyncratic love or desire; cohering community interests must usurp their personal desires. As is well known, Socrates advocates the use of “noble lies” in the education of the guardians: myths they will be told as to their origin, role, and purpose in life (414D–415), as well as austere communal living conditions (416D–417). Socrates is outlining a holistic lifestyle and regimen designed to decrease the likelihood of licentiousness or *pleonexia* on the behalf of the guardians, since *pleonexia* in their case could have truly disastrous consequences for the whole city. Beyond the denial of private property, the guardians are forbidden anything that might trigger *pleonexia*. The communistic living arrangements that Socrates describes as necessary for the guardians are necessary to deter them from identifying anything as a private interest that could take pride of place over and above the citizens and the city itself. The worry is that if the guardians develop a personal set of interests that doesn’t correspond exactly with the community’s set of interests, then they might turn against the city in pursuit of their own gain.

On close inspection, guardians are denied precisely those luxurious things that were introduced into CP and that they were introduced to protect. Consider Socrates’ stipulations for the guardians. A healthy diet is essential: alcohol, sweet-meats, Attic pastry are all out (403D–405B); excess of food is forbidden (416D–417B). The guardians are denied personal wages, private living space or house, ornaments, and any private land (416D–417B). Art that is indulgent or that isn’t strictly designed for patriotic purposes is likewise outlawed (395B). We can also add furnishings, and gold and silver, to the list of guardian contraband (419). Further, guardians are denied the privilege of entertaining guests (419), the freedom to make presents for mistresses, or to spend money on other desires (420A). Indeed, as Adeimantus puts it: they are denied anything that typically makes people “happy” (419). In response to Adeimantus’ complaint, Socrates simply agrees and responds that their goal was not to make everyone happy, but to “mold the model of a happy state” (420C). It should come as no surprise to Socrates’ interlocutors that he rebuffs the call to cater for citizens’ happiness, since he took CP to be an illustration of a just city in his terms

despite acknowledging that its arrangement wouldn't satisfy "some people" (373A). What *should* surprise Adeimantus et al. is that virtually every luxurious thing that was explicitly introduced into CP is denied to this guardian class. The obvious reason why Socrates forbids the guardians from such pleasures and privileges is because he thinks they would encourage or incite them to indulge their desires in a way that might prompt problems for the city's order and unity.

What actually changes from CP to the luxurious ("feverish") city and from the luxurious city to *Kallipolis* is not people's mentality—as if suddenly citizens were being fully characterized in psychological terms, whereas previously Socrates had been working with some radically falsified version of human psychology. Rather, more fundamentally and obviously, what changes are the things available to the citizens. It is the introduction of luxury that turns the city and the citizens "feverish"; it is the "purging" of luxury that restores unity. Before the introduction of objects of wealth there are no objects of desire to trigger feverish *pleonexia*. On my reading, a vital part of what the guardians are denied is luxury, in an attempt to prevent their being feverish themselves. And here we begin to see the irony of luxury in the *Republic*. Glaucon demands the introduction of luxurious things, a demand to which Socrates acquiesces. Immediately, however, Socrates commences upon a drawn-out quest to purge the city of this luxury by showing that the conditions that luxury induces necessitate its own purging—something that he leads his interlocutors to recognize. Socrates puts it like this: "And, by the dog, without being aware of it, we've been purifying the city we recently said was luxurious"—a purification that he continues to outline (399E). The guardians must live in austere conditions to prevent the acquisitive part of their soul from going wild and thus endangering the city and the rest of the citizens; they are denied objects of luxury to inhibit their potential *pleonexia*. The irony is that the guardians are introduced to defend the city's luxury, but their dangerous presence is precisely what necessitates the purging of this luxury.

At this point, one might wonder whether Socrates meant that *Kallipolis* should contain no luxurious things at all or just that the guardians specifically should be denied them. Might some of *Kallipolis'* other citizens be granted indulgence in fine foods, comfortable furnishings, fancy clothes, extravagant art? Not much further on Socrates gives us the answer:

We know how to clothe the farmers in purple robes, festoon them with gold jewelry, and tell them to work the land whenever they please. We know how to settle our potters on couches by the fire, feasting and passing the wine around, with their wheel beside them for whenever they want to make pots. And we can make all the others happy in the same way, so that the whole city is happy. Don't urge me to do this,

however, for if we do, a farmer wouldn't be a farmer, nor a potter a potter, and none of the others would keep to the patterns of work that give rise to the city. (420D–421A)

In this passage, objects of luxury are directly connected to laziness and to citizens not doing their jobs; thus they are prohibited. Producers, Socrates contends, shouldn't be allowed to fall into poverty, but yet they shouldn't be granted wealth or objects of wealth since wealth “makes for luxury, idleness, and revolution” (422A). The guardians indeed are supposed to “guard against” both poverty *and* wealth from “slipping into the city unnoticed” (421E). Socrates continues to stipulate that none of the citizens of *Kallipolis* would want gold—the supreme object of wealth—and even further, and remarkably, that to possess gold would be illegal (422D). Neither *Kallipolis*' guardians nor its producers are granted the wealth prerequisite for luxury out of fear that it would corrupt or otherwise prevent them from doing their job; meanwhile the philosopher-king is described as being exactly the kind of person who would have no interest in any such things.

So, what has happened to all of the luxurious items that were added to CP? What has happened to the robes, the gold, the couches, the feasts, the pastries (not to mention the prostitutes)? All three classes of citizens are forbidden or uninterested in possession of these luxurious objects. Having purged luxury, doesn't Socrates thereby retrospectively eliminate the necessity for most of the enlargements to CP that were precisely prompted by luxury in the first place? If *Kallipolis*' citizens are all denied extravagant foods and lifestyles, then why the need for more doctors? If the citizens are forbidden fancy art, clothes, furnishings and the like, what need does the city have for producers of these things? Most importantly, without any items of wealth or luxurious living conditions, what need is there for the *guardians*? After all, if there are no lavishly festooned houses, fancy foods—indeed no wealth, gold, or luxury at all—then there is nothing to provoke rambunctious desires in people outside the city, and nothing which needs to be protected from external attack. Haven't the guardians become superfluous precisely in virtue of the living conditions that the guardians need? Hasn't Socrates silently and tacitly reinstated both P2 and P3 thereby leading us in a circle back to something like CP?

For standard readers of the relation between CP and *Kallipolis*, whom we encountered in section 1, what Plato has shown us in the discussion up to this point is that *pleonexia* would arise both in CP and in *Kallipolis*. The important difference is that in the latter unlike the former we have a reasonably detailed outline of both the education that citizens, or rather some of the citizens,

would receive, as well as a system of governance—both of which are designed to guard and train against *pleonexia* as well as, of course, to foster virtues more broadly.

However, for guardians to live alongside a separate class of citizens who are allowed to indulge in the fineries of luxury that were added to CP without this triggering the desiring part of the guardians' souls seems implausible. The differences between the already disparate lifestyles of producers and guardians would be heightened if the former were allowed luxuries whilst the latter had to live alongside them and were forbidden from indulging in any form of luxury. Would it make sense for guardians and producers to share the same social space? Socrates clearly didn't think so. Indeed, he tells us that guardians will have to have a separate geographical space from the producers to match their separate lifestyle:

And let's now arm our earthborn and lead them forth with their rulers in charge. And as they march, let them look for the best place in the city to have their camp, a site from which they can most easily control those within, if anyone is unwilling to obey the laws, or repel any outside enemy who comes like a wolf upon the flock. (415D–E)

Now, what is the upshot of this for the central question of unity? Socrates implies that giving up on CP's modesty (P3) in terms of the things available to citizens leads to a reneging of modesty in the citizens' attitudes as well. The citizens become "feverish" when they are allowed or encouraged to indulge in things; with luxurious things come superfluous desires, which leads to conflict and disunity. To guard against this feverishness and the disunity that will likely result, *Kallipolis* is organized into three classes with the guardian class trained to maintain unity. But now here an obvious disunity becomes apparent. How can there be unity between the guardians and the rest of the citizens when the guardians essentially live a different life in a different city?¹⁰ Socrates is so keen to ensure that the guardians are not exposed to corruption-inspiring living conditions or desirable objects that he separates them off entirely and outlines an entirely different way of life for them. Guardians do not share the same social space or engage in the same practices as producers. Their introduction, rather than uniting the city, splits it into two. The citizens of CP are unified by a common geographical and social space, and by a common cause: the basic necessities

¹⁰ Cinzia Arruzza has discussed the tension in the *Republic* between the private and the common, including the geographical/spatial tension created by the living arrangements for the guardians in contrast to those for the producers in her article "The Private and the Common in Plato's *Republic*," *History of Political Thought* 32:2 (2011), pp. 215–33.

of the citizens. The citizens in *Kallipolis* are split up socially, geographically, and have completely disparate causes: the producers must provide for the city's basic needs, the guardians must train and be educated to protect the city. Later in book VIII, Socrates criticizes the oligarchic state precisely in virtue of its scission: "It isn't one city but two—one of the poor and one of the rich—living in the same place and always plotting against each other" (551D). But, Socrates and his interlocutors *apparently* haven't noticed that *Kallipolis* is similarly split: it is not divided by wealth, but more basically by its classes' disparate ways of life—their organization and arrangement. The unity that *Kallipolis* maintains is that which is provided by myth and propaganda designed to instill a kind of patriotic love of the city and a distant fraternity with their fellow citizens. But the unity supposedly afforded by myth is not only precarious, it also clearly cannot overcome the spatial and social distance between the guardians and the other citizens. How and in what sense can it be considered stronger than the unity afforded by shared space and common purpose?

So, now we come full circle to CP. And the following question becomes *apropos*: If luxury—understood in terms of objects of wealth—and the desire for it that it inspires are the root cause of disunity, then why doesn't Socrates reject Glaucon's demand for its introduction into CP in the first place? Isn't his acquiescence to Glaucon an implicit indication that there is something seriously lacking in CP? The answer to the first question, I believe, is also the answer to the second, as I will now argue before concluding.

The main reason that Socrates doesn't reject Glaucon's demand for the introduction of luxury is what we might call a heuristic reason—a reason not to do with CP *qua* city, but *qua* explanatory model. What Socrates actually says when prompted to discuss a luxurious city is this: "Perhaps this isn't such a bad suggestion, either. For by observation of such a city it may be we could discern the origin of justice and injustice in states" (372E). In other words, Socrates doesn't accept Glaucon's demand because he thinks CP is deficient for not having luxury, but rather because he thinks it will be heuristically useful to introduce luxury as this will help to illustrate how disunity might arise. Socrates expressly denies that there is anything wrong with CP. Indeed, later in the text he retrospectively affirms that CP is just. It is ultimately trade specialization (P1) that ensures unity and justice in *both CP and Kallipolis*, he writes:

Justice, I think, is exactly what we said must be established throughout the city *when we were founding it*—either that or some form of it. We stated, and often repeated, if you remember, that everyone must practice

one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited...Then, it turns out that this doing one's own work—provided that it comes to be in a certain way—is justice. (433A–B; emphasis added)

Socrates reiterates this point shortly thereafter: “Then, the dream we had has been completely fulfilled—our suspicion that, with the help of some god, we had hit upon the origin and pattern of justice right *at the beginning in founding our city*” (433A–B; emphasis added). The implication is that injustice arises in CP in the same way in which it arises in *Kallipolis* namely, through citizens either meddling with a job that is not theirs, or simply not doing their job at all. A more plausible account of why Socrates leaves CP behind is that, whilst there is justice (and potential injustice) in this city, it's nevertheless difficult to identify it because it is not being brought into stark relief by the presence of conflict- and injustice-inspiring objects of wealth. Hence, the very absence of luxury in CP is what is responsible for this heuristic problem: there simply doesn't appear to be anything provided for the citizens by CP that would *cause pleonexia* to run amok and thus provoke disunity. Socrates' acquiescence is for the purpose of the discussion of justice, not because he agrees with Glaucon that luxury is necessary or unavoidable. Indeed, clearly Socrates couldn't have thought that luxury was an historical or practical necessity since then he would undermine the very possibility of the austere living conditions that he prescribes for the guardians, and thus the very possibility of *Kallipolis*! And as such, the introduction of luxury and the transition from CP to *Kallipolis* cannot be legitimately interpreted as a straightforward linear progression toward an ideal state: as if we were getting closer and closer approximations to the form of justice. Instead, I contend, Socrates dialectically shows us that the introduction of luxury has disastrous effects and needs to be purged from any ideal city by showing us how luxury triggers *pleonexia* which causes disunity. Socrates reveals to us what he thinks justice and injustice are via the introduction of luxury.

My point then is that we can accept that there is nothing constitutively wrong with CP in terms of unity, and in terms of being a just organization of citizens and yet still acknowledge that it is unilluminating for the heuristic purpose of trying to identify justice and injustice. Notice, in other words, that this objection is not tantamount to saying that there is something deeply wrong with the city of pigs in terms of its unity. As Smith (1999: 43) points out, “An image may be poorly suited for an inquiry into the nature of that which the image imitates, for reasons other than that it is a poor image.” Of course, it would hence be much better if we could all come to renounce luxury, and in general the pursuit of “good” *things*, and instead seek to contemplate goodness itself. In

other words, as Plato clearly suggests in books IX and X, it would be better if we were philosophers. But if *per impossibile*, we all reach Platonic philosophical enlightenment, then the set-up in *Kallipolis* of stratified class control becomes superfluous; CP would be sufficient for us. We could live a happy, austere life free from war and the danger of a guardian class turning tyrannical. However, it is precisely the modesty and smallness of CP that preclude it from being a city in which we could become educated and philosophical in the first place because it only caters for basic bodily needs and no spiritual or intellectual ones. As such, CP is inferior to *Kallipolis* because it doesn't have the means to ensure that its citizens progress beyond rational self-interest; but *Kallipolis* is inferior to CP because although it secures the means for this progression, the organization of its citizens involves inherent division and disunity, and a purging of everything that was supposed to make it distinct from CP in the first place. What emerges from this dialectical journey is not one beautiful city but two, deeply connected images of the same concept: justice. To reject CP as a "false start," as has become orthodox in Plato scholarship, is to refuse to be guided by Socrates and ultimately a failure to see what he wants to make apparent to us.

Conclusion

My aim in this paper has been to challenge the traditional reading of the city of pigs as an unrealistic false start or deficient precursor to the outline of the one ideal state, *Kallipolis*. I assessed some typical criticisms leveled at CP and sought to show that they don't amount to a serious constitutive problem of unity in CP. I sought to illustrate that CP is in fact an ideal city according to Plato's own criterion of unity. In part two of this paper I offered an interpretation of the shift from CP to *Kallipolis* that sought to undermine the hegemonic view that this shift is one of a linear progression from a deficient model to a city-state paragon. In terms of unity, I claimed the exact opposite: the progression is in fact from highly unified to structurally disunited. This, I argued, is due to the introduction of luxury and the abandonment of P2 and P3 and its disastrous consequences.

CP is an integral part of Plato's discussion of justice. It is ultimately "left behind" only for the heuristic reason that it is not a good model in which to identify justice *qua* unity, not because it is not in fact a viable model for a just state. The unity in CP is due to its organizing principles, and the heretofore downplayed or ignored disunity in *Kallipolis*, I have shown, stems from its

renegeing of two of these principles. But this is not to claim that *Kallipolis* is *ipso facto* inferior to CP or that CP is perfect. Indeed, in at least one important respect, *Kallipolis* is more ideal than CP insofar as it has a place for philosophers. My main goal here, however, has been to disrupt the orthodox reading of the journey from CP to *Kallipolis*, which I have argued is over-simplistic and ultimately unjustified. Rehabilitating the city of pigs is necessary if we are to properly appreciate Plato's account of justice.

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