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ASCENT AND DESCENT: THE PHILOSOPHER'S REGRET*

By Allan Silverman

I. Introduction

I want to consider, again, the question of the philosopher's descent to rule the state, both why he should or should not descend, and whether he does descend either to rule or to help create the tripartite Kallipolis. Generally speaking, the argument of Plato's *Republic* teaches that the philosopher who has finally gained knowledge of the Good and the other Forms does whatever he does in virtue of that knowledge. If he should descend then, it is because it is good to do so. But good for whom or how? For himself; for others in the city, especially the nonphilosophers; or because it is good in some impersonal sense? Most contemporary readers, I think, opt for an impersonal conception, though they disagree about what the position amounts to. I will argue for a version of the impersonal conception of the good. At least two difficulties beset the conception: how to make sense of the philosopher's attitude regarding his descent; and how to make sense of the "self" which acts in the light of this impersonal conception. Plato remarks that the philosopher is compelled to rule; he goes to his task "toiling in the service of the state, regarding the task not as a fine thing but a necessity" (Shorey, 540b). For lack of a more precise term, I will speak here of "regret." The argument of the text, especially Glaucon's remark at *Rep.* VII.519d8–9, suggests that the philosopher has to be compelled, that he has regrets, because in descending he acts against his own, personal good. I think that this cannot be right. To help understand the nature of the philosopher's choice and his regret, I will appeal both to the metaphysical nature of the human soul, and to Plato's *Timaeus* and the Demiurgic construction of the cosmos.

About whether the philosopher descends, there is, perhaps surprisingly, more controversy. A surface or "straightforward" reading of the passage and dialogue is that he does descend in order to create or rule a tripartite Kallipolis (*Rep.* VII.519b7–521b11). But many have balked at reading the argument so straightforwardly, urging a more "ironic" or guarded take on the argument. Emphasizing the pessimistic implications of various pas-

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sages alongside the supreme enjoyment that is philosophizing, Leo Strauss and his followers maintain that the philosopher does not descend to rule the city, for the city is against nature and an impossibility.[1] But one does not have to be a Straussian to find reasons not to descend rooted in a pessimistic assessment of the nature of the nonphilosophers. If the philosopher's reason for ruling is to improve the nonphilosophers, then he will not descend if it turns out that the nonphilosophers cannot be improved or helped. Such is the implication of the reading of Christopher Bobonich.[2] In contrast, Plotinians such as David Sedley[3] will find no reason for the philosopher to descend because they think Plato's message is that the philosopher's aim is to "make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible" (*Theaetetus* 176a–c; cf. *Phaedo* 64a on philosophy as the practice of death and dying, i.e., separation from the body and *a fortiori* this incarnate, worldly existence).

A cardinal issue separating pessimists and optimists, such as myself, is their conception of human nature.[4] All agree that Plato's argument concerns the choice of an incarnate human soul, that is, a tripartite soul consisting of an appetitive, spiritive, and rational part. Such souls are dynamic; they mature from youth to old age and are capable of learning, acquiring and losing beliefs and knowledge, as well as appetitive and spiritive desires. Pessimists and optimists agree that, given the physical environment in which all incarnate souls find themselves, and the communal circumstances in which virtually all find themselves, human nature is such that it places obstacles in its own path to becoming just and happy (i.e., acquiring knowledge). Moreover, we agree that there are philosophers, and that the philosopher has been raised in some fashion and is now living in a state of some kind.[5] Finally, we agree that there is no Form

[1] Leo Strauss, *City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), esp. 116–27. At a minimum, it seems plausible to think that there are times when things are so bad on the ground that despite what he understands about the Good the philosopher will not descend. The opening of Book VI of the *Republic* (493e–497a) culminates with the philosopher taking shelter behind a wall so as not to be tainted by the storm of evil around him (496c5–e2). Translations are drawn from *The Republic*, ed. Giovanni Ferrari and Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2] Christopher Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). Bobonich need not accept the antecedent of this conditional. His intricate argument requires more attention than I can provide in the present context. I gesture at our differences in the final section of this essay.

[3] David Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," in Gail Fine, ed., *Plato 2* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 309–28.

[4] See also Myles Burnyeat, "Utopia and Fantasy: The Practicability of Plato's Ideally Just City," in Fine, ed., *Plato 2*, 297–308.

[5] There is a skeptical reading that would deny that there are any embodied philosophers, because embodied souls cannot overcome the psychological, epistemological, and metaphysical obstacles. Others seem prepared to deny that there are philosophers on the grounds that the necessary education requires an ideal state, which in turn can only come about where there are philosophers. See Charles Griswold, "Longing for the Best," *Arion* 11, no. 2 (2003): 101–13; and Allan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 407ff. I do not consider skeptical readings.

of the State, though we draw different implications from this fact. Despite the absence of a Form of the State, both pessimists and optimists agree that the philosopher is faced with the choice to descend to rule a "historical city," a city that exists somewhere at some time. As such, the city will also have nonphilosophers living in it, individuals who have not surmounted the obstacles generated by their own desires, each other, and the physical world in which they live. Pessimists believe that the obstacles cannot be overcome, because they think that Plato is committed either to the doctrine that there is no cessation of evil in this world or to the doctrine that most individuals are by nature incapable of coming to know the Good and thus incapable of true happiness. I think otherwise.[6]

Understanding how human nature can allow for both the possibility of knowledge of the Good and the inevitability of ignorance is key, I will argue, to understanding how the philosopher thinks that he can improve others by going down. This is in large measure a metaphysical question. But it is also, I think, a question of introspective (self-) knowledge. However phrased, it is a crucial part of what is in the philosopher's head at the moment of choice. In Section II of this essay, I will examine the argument leading up to the philosopher's choice. My principal aim here is to show that, in the light of his understanding of the Good, the philosopher descends in order to make as much good as is possible. In addition, I try to secure two theses that are factors in the philosopher's consideration of what it would be to make as much good as he can: (i) in virtue of the nature of the rational soul, each rational agent is capable of becoming a philosopher; and (ii) there is no Form of the State, and *a fortiori* the tripartite city is not an instance of a Form of a (tripartite) State. Thus, the fundamental goal of the philosopher would be to make everyone a philosopher, with the implication that the tripartite city cannot be the city he aims to create, since that city is populated largely with nonphilosophers. The problem is that if this is the situation he faces, it remains difficult to see why the philosopher should hesitate. In Section IV, I try to show why the nature of the physical world (and, in particular, actual political and educational circumstances) virtually precludes the philosopher from achieving the goal of making everyone a philosopher and thereby maximizing

[6] It is beyond the scope of this essay to discuss how pessimists conceive of the rhetorical strategy of the *Republic*. However, I think it is difficult, if not impossible, to offer an impersonal account of the Good while simultaneously thinking that it does not apply to the vast majority of individuals in the state, or to the vast majority of the readers of the *Republic*. Plato's ethical and political theory is utopian or ideal, and his goal is to persuade each reader to aspire to knowledge of the Good, or, as Burnyeat writes: "It is a deliberate attempt to get us—all of us I think he means—a non-human, impersonal perspective on the human" ("Utopia and Fantasy," 307). And while I think Burnyeat overemphasizes fantasy as blueprint, he is right that Plato uses fantasy as a point of departure to encourage and allow *any* reader to adopt an absolute or impersonal viewpoint, a viewpoint that prompts us to regard each person impartially and equally as capable of being happy.

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the good. Here the *Timaeus* is of help, where we find an analogous balancing act between reason and necessity in the Demiurgic construction of the cosmos. Before turning to that dialogue, however, I argue in Section III against a common view of why the philosopher regrets his descent, namely, that in descending he sacrifices his own happiness. On my account, in descending to rule the philosopher does not act against his own interests, he does not sacrifice his own happiness, and thus his regret or the need for compulsion cannot be because he must be forced to opt for the politically or morally virtuous act as opposed to the better activity of contemplation. Rather, once the philosopher has come to know the Good and thus has become happy, there is, for him, no "backsliding" from this condition, and there is nothing he can do (for instance, by contemplating longer) to make himself happier. I conjecture that scholars who view the choice in this fashion are misled by their picture of the Plotinian interpretation and/or their importation of a (mistaken) Aristotelian account of likeness to god and the tension between the morally/politically virtuous life and the theoretically virtuous life. (In order not to complicate further an already complicated argument, I will only touch upon Aristotle's arguments about contemplation and the differences between practical and theoretical reason.) In the final section of the essay, I will contend that the philosopher, realizing that knowledge is possible and ignorance inevitable, descends at no cost to his own happiness. He descends, however, not with the aim of creating the tripartite Kallipolis, but with the aim of creating the anarchy that is (a version of) the city of pigs. His aim then is not to create a city that imitates the Form of the State, for there is no such Form. Rather, his aim is to improve the lot of individuals who live in a community. Such must be his aim, I will argue, if he has taken to heart the impersonal perspective of the Form of the Good along with his knowledge that human nature is metaphysically such that any rational soul is capable of achieving the impersonal perspective. Put differently, recognizing that humans are able to be philosophers because he himself is one, and understanding that the Good bids him to create as much order as is possible, his aim becomes to make everyone a philosopher since that would be to make as much order as he can. Nonetheless, he has to believe that he will not be able to make everyone a philosopher, given what he knows about the obstacles confronting humans in their incarnate existence. The best state he can reasonably hope for is the tripartite Kallipolis. It stands to the "true city" (*Rep.* II.372e), which is no city at all, as better to best. The philosopher's regret, then, is not the regret that he leaves behind contemplation, but that he cannot expect to achieve the truly fine goal of everyone being a philosopher. Perhaps that qualifies mine as an ironic reading. But I hope to show that such an ironic reading gives us the best purchase on how Plato conceives of the regret that attends the philosopher's

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decision to go down, not to something *kalon* (fine), but to something necessary.

II. Self-Interest and the Absolute Perspective

At the end of the Image of the Cave, Socrates declares: "My own view, for what it's worth, is that in the realm of what can be known the thing seen last, and seen with great difficulty, is the form or character of the good. But when it is seen, the conclusion must be that it turns out to be the cause of all that is right and good for everything. . . . I further believe that anyone who is going to act wisely either in private life or in public life must have had a sight of this. . . . It is no wonder if those who have been to the upper world refuse to take an interest in everyday affairs, if their souls are constantly eager to spend their time in that upper region" (*Rep.* VII.517b7–c9).

When, a few paragraphs later, Socrates declares that it is their task as founders not to allow those who have reached this vision to stay there and refuse to go down, Glaucon reacts quite reasonably, it seems: "That seems very unfair! Are we going to make them live a worse life when it is in their power to live a better one?" (519d8–9).

In their classic expositions of the absolute conception of the Good, Sarah Waterlow and John Cooper take the argument of the *Republic,* especially Books VI and VII, to result in a picture of the moral agent who is quite strange to us, for he loses (what we might think of as) his individuality. Cooper describes him as a "high minded fanatic."[7] Waterlow writes: "However, the point at which we find Plato's theory taking off altogether from ordinary thought comes when we turn to the reasons that support and explain the relation just mentioned [between justice in the soul and action for the good of others]. . . . For, as we shall see, these reasons involve the denial of that individuality which, for ordinary consciousness, and in particular moral consciousness, is the most basic fact of all."[8]

Glaucon's response, however, betrays no recognition of this aspect of the ascent to the Good. Rather, he thinks of the individual who has devoted his life to achieving this blessed state. He has excellent reason to do so. Glaucon challenged Socrates to show why one would choose the just life, to say how justice benefits its possessor and to show what effects (for the good) it has on its possessor. To be told that the philosopher ultimately loses his sense of self, or worse, that he acts for the good of others, to his own detriment, would certainly not satisfy Glaucon. "Why should I be just?" is what Glaucon wants to know, "What good does justice do for me, its possessor?"

[7] John Cooper, "The Psychology of Justice," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977): 151–57, at 157.

[8] Sarah Waterlow, "The Good of Others in Plato's *Republic*," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 72 (1972–73): 19–36, at 21–22.

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Indeed, prior to Books VI and VII, Plato seems to accept rational eudaimonism: for each individual, the ultimate end of all his rational actions is his own greatest happiness. From Book IV, we learn that what justice does for its possessor is to make him happy, because in virtue of being just he develops a psychically harmonious soul, and happiness turns out to be this psychic harmony. Psychic harmony is achieved when and only when reason has acquired knowledge of the Good and the other Forms, which allows reason to rule spirit and appetite. Plato seems to argue that only those who enjoy psychic harmony truly qualify as selves, that is, as persons and thus as moral agents at all.[9] Strictly speaking, then, only a just person could ever act *self*-interestedly. All others in some sense act in the interest of some part of themselves, that is, some part of their soul.[10] But, paradoxically, if Cooper and Waterlow are right, precisely these same psychically harmonious souls, in virtue of their knowledge of the Good, are not persons or selves (at least as ordinarily conceived). Thus, the very same phenomenon that constitutes or creates selves destroys them. I will suggest that this paradox of creation and destruction replays itself at the level of the state.

In order to appreciate better how the philosopher, by dint of knowing the Good, can at once lose his individuality and qualify as the only true self, let us briefly consider the evolution of his soul through the course of the *Republic,* beginning, for the sake of time, with Book II.[11]

Glaucon's challenge, like the three "rejected" accounts of justice in Book I, takes the standing desires and attitudes of a mature, reflective, and pleonectically self-interested adult as the touchstone. Socrates responds by constructing a state and developing the soul from the bottom up. The

[9] Christine Korsgaard, "Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant," *The Journal of Ethics* 3 (1999): 1–29, esp. p. 15 and n. 10. A crucial difference between Korsgaard and Waterlow (and others) is that Korsgaard's agent identifies not with reason but "with her constitution, and it says that reason should rule" (15). Compare Waterlow: "For while Plato fully acknowledges the conceptual priority of agent to actions, there is for him something prior again to the agent, namely reason itself . . ." ("The Good of Others," 36).

[10] This must be some part other than reason, it seems, since it appears to be impossible to act in the interests of the rational part alone; for to act in its interests, Plato implies, is, *eo ipso*, to unify the three parts.

[11] The soul explicitly becomes a topic of the discussion with the function argument at I.352d ff. In the preceding pages, the interlocutors assume that each of us acts self-interestedly, and they evince no worries about the "self" in whose interest one acts. Each person aims at the satisfaction of as many of his desires as he can manage. Socrates' focus on the soul, apart from the peculiar beliefs, desires, and reasons of the individual, signals that the inquiry into the nature of justice begins from the nature of the human soul. The soul's function is to care, rule, deliberate, and such, and in general to live. Its virtue enables it to perform its function well, and this virtue or excellence is justice. To live well is to live happily. Before this account, Socrates has "refuted" three previous accounts of justice. In each of them, the proponent takes for granted that we are discussing the justice of a mature individual filled with beliefs and desires. This individual has a view of himself—he acts out of self-interest or apparent self-interest. The problem afflicting the three accounts of Book I is that each, in its own way, helps itself too easily and too soon to the mature self, in the light of whose interests justice is considered. The accounts answer the question "How ought I to live?" not "How ought one to live?"

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nature of the soul is such that it responds first to pleasure and pain; and its desires, the biologically necessary and the acquired, dictate its behavior. Through the joint workings of gymnastic and musical education, the child's desires are molded and values are internalized.[12] In my view, *every* citizen in the state is put through the same *initial* educational regimen.[13] The presence of "other-regardingness," among other features, marks a potential philosopher. In Books II and III, then, the founders adhere to the idea that anyone can turn out to be a philosopher, while simultaneously expecting that only a limited few will turn out to be such. The *realpolitik* of state management quickly segregates the students into different "tracks."

The second stage of development is found primarily in Book IV's account of the tripartite soul. There is so much to say about aspects of the tripartite soul that I will necessarily leave out much that could and should be discussed.[14] With respect to the soul itself, its parts are displayed in cases of conflict: for example, reason and appetite disagreeing about a course of action. Conflict is between parts, and the one subject/one job principle applies severally to these parts each considered as a whole. In the just

[12] From the outside, it appears that the child is being molded in someone's image, perhaps even that the child's desires are being subjugated and repressed. From the inside, the child, it seems, has little awareness of repression and little disenchantment with the imposition of another's viewpoint. See Jonathan Lear, "Inside and Outside the *Republic*," *Phronesis* 37 (1992): 184–215.

[13] This is not widely accepted. There is no conclusive text on the question of whether the children of the lowest (i.e., craftsman's) class receive gymnastic and musical education. While it is clear that the purpose of the educational regimen is to produce guardian warriors—the "luxurious" city requires such guardians because its inhabitants, having given themselves up to the pursuit of unlimited wealth, will find the city at war with its neighbors (*Rep.* II.373d9–10)—it is not the case that only guardians receive such an education. Not only is the regimen designed to find out who is most suited to be a warrior, but the various remarks about fairy tales, the sorts of stories that are appropriate for children to hear, and the noble lie itself all suggest that everyone in the state is liable to hear these tales. Note that the lie is to be believed by everybody in the city (III.414c1–2), and that the second half begins emphatically: "You are all brothers, all of you in the city" (415a2–3). It is true that the child-rearing practices described in Book V rely on a distinction between the children of the better-bred citizens and the children of parents who are not so gifted (V.460c), but this is balanced by the second half of the noble lie, i.e., that a philosophic child can come from any class. Given the role that musical education plays in helping to form and moderate desires, it is hard to see why Plato would not think such education appropriate for those who will eventually comprise the working class. The universality of education is set against the sortition of the students into classes or rankings. Most will "drop out" of school to pursue vocational training, as it begins to appear that they are not gifted enough for the military and when their "natural talent" is determined. (From V.456d10 it seems that those gifted to make shoes are educated in the cobbler's craft.) Little attention is given to the possibility that a person will not want to do what he does best, especially given that that determination again seems to be made not by the individual but by the state, or by its founders. Besides observing their performance in the various tests of raw intellect and physical prowess, Plato draws special attention to a child's capacity to care for and help others. This capacity, like all capacities, is at once inborn and nurtured from the outside. Cf. George Hourani, "The Education of the Third Class in Plato's *Republic*," *Classical Quarterly* 43 (1949): 58–60.

[14] The literature on the tripartite soul is voluminous, but see most recently Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast;* and Hendrik Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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individual or soul, there is no conflict between the parts. Reason rules appetite and spirit in such a fashion that each wants the same thing, or rather each wants what reason wants at least in those cases where all can be thought to have a say.[15] Nonetheless, in the just individual it is precisely because reason, especially, but also appetite and spirit, have more than one task that the *parts* are effaced. Reason has its peculiar excellence, *sophia.* But it is also tasked with the job of ruling the other parts. In ruling, it looks out for the good of the other parts and the individual as a whole. Reason does not privilege its interests at the expense of the interests of appetite, but its interests are privileged. The molding of the soul, at the hands of philosopher-rulers or founders, is carried out with the aim of securing a path for reason to acquire knowledge.

At the end of Book IV of the *Republic,* we still await a specification of what the just soul knows. In Books V–VII, we learn that what reason knows is the Good and the other Forms. The philosopher is naturally drawn to every study and is insatiable in his pursuit of learning (*Rep.* V.475c). The study of the Forms (i.e., philosophy itself) is his most pleasurable activity. Furthermore, the Forms themselves are valuable objects in their own right, and, among them, the Form of the Good turns out to be the *primus inter pares* (first among equals) good. It seems clear that the Form of the Good is not only what it is to be good, it itself is also something good, and by coming to know it one comes to be in possession of a good. There is reasonably broad agreement that the Good is a grand teleological principle embodying Plato's notion that the world as a whole and the world of Forms in particular are well-ordered or structured. The precise form of Plato's teleology aside, the good that one acquires by coming to know the Good is the proper arrangement of one's soul (parts). This arrangement is itself an image of the order among the Forms, and it too is *kata logon,* here "according to Reason" (now in a different sense than *kata logon* as it applies to the Forms), and as a result the soul is *kosmios* and *theios (*ordered and divine*),* to the degree possible for a human soul (*Rep.* VI.500c9–d1). The philosophical nature/person is then internally motivated to pursue the Good and finds it pleasurable to study it, in addition to being benefited by it, since this study provides the internal psychic arrangement that is justice and happiness.

The philosopher will imitate this arrangement among the Forms because "there is no way that one does not imitate that with which he admiringly consorts" (500c5–7). Such a person would also be best at placing the order and harmony that he sees in the world of Forms into the character of

[15] Reason does not, however, wantonly accede to any desire. The kinds of situations that require reason to look out after the good of the other parts are likely to fall into two groups. First, there are courses of action in which desire, spirit, and reason will all want the same thing. Into this group we place actions in which reason itself has a stake or announces, as it were, what it wants. Appetite and spirit echo its decision. The second group of actions are those wherein reason has no direct stake of its own (*Rep*. IV.437c).

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other people, both in public and private—"to practice stamping on the plastic matter of human nature in public and private the patterns that he visions there" (Shorey, 500d4–6). It seems, then, that the knowledge of the Good is such that he is compelled and attracted to it and understands both what it will do for him and what it would do for others. But of course it is not easy to stamp patterns on the ordinary everyday citizens in present-day states. Here the philosopher does not receive a warm reception and in fact is better off "wiping the slate [of the character of his fellow citizens] clean" before he tries to place (impose?) in them the arrangement he himself enjoys (501a2–7).

Reinforcing this pursuit of the Good for others is a passage a few pages earlier in Book VI. Here (496d–e) we find the famous image of the philosopher seeking shelter against the wall from the storm of iniquity blowing around him, content to secure his own fortune, free from injustice and impiety. Adeimantus allows that this is no small achievement. Socrates replies: "And yet not the greatest achievement either—not without finding a political system worthy of him. In one which is worthy of him his own growth will be greater, and he will be the salvation of his country as well as of himself" (497a3–5). The philosopher is in some sense better off by sharing his learning with others. It is better to save both the private and common weal than merely to preserve oneself.

This is the backdrop to the philosopher's choice. By VII.516c ff., someone has led the philosopher out of the cave and to the Good. If he should return to the cave, he will be ridiculed by those ignorant of justice, since they will not appreciate the source of his "blindness." The contrast of the unenlightened with the "illuminated" prompts Socrates to remark on the nature of education. Knowledge cannot be poured into a soul, any more than vision can be poured into blind eyes. "Whereas our present account indicates that this capacity in every soul, this instrument by means of which each person learns, is like an eye which can only be turned away from the darkness and towards the light by turning the whole body . . . the virtue of rational thought is different. It seems that it really is made of something more divine, *which never loses its power,* but becomes useful and beneficial, or useless and harmful, depending on which way it is facing" (*Rep.* VII.518c4–519a1; emphasis added). The nature of the rational soul, then, is such that reason never loses its capacity to know. It awaits redirection. The miserable conditions of the cave are not inevitable. The cave-dwellers are miseducated. True education recognizes that everyone has the power to reason and that reason is such that, by its very nature, it is always capable of coming to understand the Good. *Anyone is thus metaphysically capable of becoming a philosopher.* This too, then, is something the philosopher also recognizes, and it becomes part of his understanding of the Good.

To turn other souls toward the light is tantamount to ruling the state, for nothing less is able to bring about the right educational circumstances.

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Socrates famously declares that it is their role as founders to compel[16] the philosophers both to come to know the Good and then to return to rule. Here Glaucon protests: "That seems very unfair! Are we going to make them live a worse life when it is in their power to live a better one?" (519d8–9). Socrates responds: "Now it is your turn to forget, my friend, that the law does not exist for the exclusive benefit of one class in the city. Its aim is to engineer the benefit of the city as a whole, using persuasion and compulsion[17] to bring the citizens into harmony, and making each class share with the other classes the contribution it is able to bring to the community. The law is what puts people like this in the city, and it does so not with the intention of allowing each of them to go his own way, but so that it can make use of them for its own purposes, to bind the city together" (VII.519e1–520a4). The law, through education and nurture, has made them what they are, and they owe a debt, a debt not owed to a city by a "spontaneous" philosopher (520a5–d4).

I am going to make two controversial assumptions here. First, I think that the surface appeal to the law, and founders, and paying back one's debts is directed toward getting Glaucon's agreement, by which I mean that it plays on the characterization of the interlocutor developed in the course of the dialogue/discussion. And while I concede that Plato develops this sort of characterization with the aim of speaking to those in his audience who share the values of Glaucon, I do not believe that we the readers must accept without question that these values provide the ultimate justification for the philosopher's choice. That is to say, what may persuade Glaucon need not persuade us. Second, I am going to assume that there is no difference between the founders, the law, and philosophy itself (i.e., the fully reflective philosopher). This collapse of voices does not merely signal the impersonal standpoint of reason; it is also a standpoint that the philosopher occupies, given that I think at the moment of choice the philosopher (and reader) appreciates the whole of the *Republic.* Thus, that the law or the founders bid him to descend is equivalent to his knowledge of the Good bidding him to descend. It carries normative force. We may equally call it the Law of Reason. In either case, it seems that the good thing to do, what the Good bids (if you will), is for the philosopher to descend. Since we are asking him to do good, we are not doing him wrong.[18]

[16] See, among others, *Rep*. VI.499b–c, 500d4–5, VII.520a–d, 521b7, 539e2–3, as well as IV.421c and 347c. Compulsion and persuasion, separately and together, are leitmotifs in the *Republic*. There is no obvious (let alone predetermined) way to understand these notions in their many roles in the dialogue. They enter the discussion with the opening exchange between Polemarchus and Socrates (327c–d), along with the idea that some might not listen, even where persuasion seems (and is) possible.

[17] See Section IV below on necessity and persuasion in the *Timaeus*.

[18] On the role of the interlocutors and the dramatic aspects of the dialogue, see Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

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But if this is what the Good bids, then the philosopher actively contemplating the Good will know this. And once he knows this, then given everything we have read, he will want to do the good and hence want to descend. Yet the philosopher is forced, unwilling, to descend. Later in Book VII, when Socrates returns to the philosopher's choice, the philosopher is said to regard it as a burden—he has regrets?—and he descends thinking that he is doing something necessary not fine (*Rep.* VII.540b2–5).[19] There is something about the relation of his reason to the Good that makes him want to stay in study of it. The metaphysics of psychic reason, if you will, assigns to the rational part of the soul a drive or desire to know the Good. Thus, in turning away from the contemplation of the Good, one is acting against this natural impulse. Moreover, insofar as there is no end to philosophical inquiry, there is the rational impulse to continue in one's pursuit of knowledge.[20] In these respects, then, reason must be forced to act against its nature and training. Still, this does not quite capture the full flavor of what is in the philosopher's head, for he knows all this about the metaphysics of the soul. He wants to do the good and he wants to remain in study. The task remains to try to account for the need for compulsion on the founders' part and especially the feel of it on the part of the individuals compelled to descend.

John Cooper, Myles Burnyeat, and Sarah Waterlow have emphasized that, in his contemplation of the Good, the philosopher achieves an absolute and impersonal perspective—no self or other. For Cooper, in contemplating the Good the philosopher comes to want to imitate the order among the Forms by seeking to increase maximally the amount of order in the state (world). Because ruling will do this, it is good to rule. Therefore, even the self-taught philosopher will choose to rule. He thus descends not because he wants to promote his own good, or because he is thinking of the good of others, or because he wants to pay back debts. He aims solely to promote order, and his ruling does this. This seems to me to be

[19] Some have tried to explain away the language of compulsion by treating it as the way in which the philosopher's knowledge of the Good drives him to descend. Fully reflective individuals who understand the Good are compelled by that understanding. I think that there are times when we and Plato might say knowledge compels one to act, especially when we might say that one has to be reminded of what one must do. But I have my doubts about this notion of the compulsion of reason, and I do not think that this is one of those times. One compelled by reason in this manner does not act unwillingly or reluctantly. See Christopher Shields, "Forcing Goodness in Plato's *Republic*" (elsewhere in this volume). While I concur with Shields's account of logical compulsion, and indeed think that something like logical or moral compulsion drives the philosopher who comes to know the Good to want to maximize the good, I think that there is more to the internal state of the philosopher in deciding to go down.

[20] However, once one has achieved the well-ordering of one's soul, and provided there is no moral backsliding, there is no further good one can acquire for oneself through philosophizing. If one thinks Plato is an (extreme) epistemological holist, then there is nothing further to know once one has come to know the Good. The only gain to be had, then, for the individual would have to be the absence of commerce with the physical world, though it is hard to see why that absence has any moral benefit for the philosopher.

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an accurate account of what the philosopher contemplating the Good seeks to do. But we have yet to work back to an account of the necessity and regret he feels.[21]

Once the philosopher has reflected and realized that his ruling maximizes the good, he should go willingly to the task. Cooper's effort to account for the need for compulsion concedes that the philosopher will find in contemplation "the most nearly adequate instances of rational order in the natural world."[22] The philosopher will know this and will act effectively in the light of it. However, it does not follow that he will choose to limit himself to this contemplation. Maybe if he were interested only in his own good, he would; but he wants to maximize the good and thus considers only what will advance the amount of rational order in the world. Since we are considering what will devolve from his ruling an ideal state, it seems safe to assume that he will be able to turn the souls of others toward the Good and thereby promote more order in the world than would be possible were he to remain in contemplation, no matter that (his) contemplative activity itself is the best approximation of the Good. Ruling is educating, and educating is, at the limit, guiding others to the same most adequate approximation of the rational order embodied by the Good. But then why go down with regret?

Cooper seems to me less certain here. He concedes that contemplation of the Good itself is the activity that most closely and perfectly embodies the Good. Thus, no life could be better than this (and this is, of course, what Plato says at *Rep.* VII.519e). Hence, says Cooper, "*if the degree of the philosopher's eudaimonia is judged by comparison with this ideal, Plato's philosophers will settle for a less flourishing existence than they might have had*." But Cooper goes on to take away the account of regret latent in this remark. He reminds us that the philosopher does not concern himself merely with his own good. "His ultimate end is to improve not just the small part of the world that is constituted by his own life, but the whole of it, this part taken together with all the rest. So if a philosopher opted, under the conditions Plato envisages, to ignore everyone else *in order to make his own life realize the good more perfectly and fully*, he would fail to achieve the goal he was aiming at as nearly as he might have done."[23] Since the philosopher experiences regret, yet does not regret that he settles for a less flourishing existence, we need a different source for his regret. Cooper does not speak directly to this issue. One possibility is that the source turns out to be the very indifference or independent attachment with which the philosopher views his endeavor to imitate the Good.

[21] While it is no doubt true that there are unpleasant aspects to the job, they cannot account for the compulsion required to get the philosopher to rule. For he precisely does not consider these aspects of the job, nor the good of others or himself, but just the way in which he can maximize the good.

[22] Cooper, "The Psychology of Justice," 155.

[23] Ibid., 156; emphasis added.

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Maybe he regrets that he has no attachments at all, to self or others. But this seems wrong, and Cooper's concluding remarks suggest the same. For Cooper holds that the philosopher will be attached to this one worldly activity, namely, contemplation of the Good; this is the firmest of his attachments. Recall that Cooper's philosopher is neither an egoist nor an altruist but a "high minded fanatic." Still, Cooper admits, "his fanaticism is such as to allow him permanent and deep interests in one part of his own good, whereas he cannot have any permanent and deep attachments to any other person's good." [24]

This final thought implies that the philosopher faced with the choice between ruling and continuing his contemplation of the Good cannot, in the end, be entirely free of the conception of self and others. The one part of his own good to which he is attached is reason. Other theorists use the language of identification with reason, of allowing the absolute viewpoint to take charge of our souls, and of adopting a nonhuman, impersonal perspective on the human.[25] It is hard to conceive of adopting viewpoints, of attachment to or identification with one part of one's own good in contrast to the other parts,[26] without allowing for some conception of the self that so identifies. To the extent that we are interested in the rational eudaimonist response to Glaucon, this is to be expected. Moreover, it seems that the philosopher who is an incarnate soul with parts, who has come to identify with reason only after decades of living and training, must also understand that it is in his self-interest to contemplate the Good. But recognizing that it is in his self-interest to contemplate the Good is consistent with his reason for acting not being self-interest but the Good itself: for it is good for anyone to contemplate the Good.

III. The Philosopher Out of the State

I think that Plato is best read as having an absolute conception of the Good and, correspondingly, an absolute conception of reason: when a philosopher has ascended to the Good, he both recognizes that the best thing to do is to maximize the amount of good in the world, and desires to do that. He thus descends in order to promote order, and in particular to promote order in others. I think that he must then have a conception of the others in whom he is trying to induce order, and must have reason to believe that by descending he can do so.[27] This reading has been challenged.

[24] Ibid., 157. See also John Cooper, "Two Theories of Justice," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* (2000): 5–27, esp. 22–24.

[25] See, e.g., Burnyeat, "Utopia and Fantasy"; and Waterlow, "The Good of Others."

[26] Someone's permanent attachment to one part of his own good implies that there are other parts which he recognizes, though he has no deep and permanent attachments to them.

[27] For an "expressivist" account of this desire, see Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 308–17; and Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast*, 354–59.

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According to what is labeled, unfairly I shall argue, the Plotinian reading, reason's efforts to achieve the absolute or impersonal perspective on happiness consists in its striving to be "like god," *homoiôsis theô*.[28] Undeniably, the successors of Plato consider him to have identified our final end with becoming like god. They are not wrong, but all the cash value lies in what the divine is, in contrast (say) to being human, in what sense we can become *like* the divine, as opposed to becoming the *same* as the divine, and how we are to parse the force of the participle "becoming," as opposed to "being."[29] The Plotinian Plato emphasizes the identification with reason at the expense of the other parts. It is as though the tripartite soul of Book IV, generally thought to be a Platonic advance over the monolithic "rationalism" of Socrates in Plato's early dialogues, is abandoned. The virtues having to do with the body, the parts of the soul other than reason, and the philosopher's interaction with others in this world are denigrated to the point of being denied any status, according to the Plotinian account.[30] The philosopher thus eschews everything this-worldly and material, both the moral virtues involving the other parts of his own soul and any concern for others.

I do not believe that this is an accurate picture of likeness to god in Plato. Plato's god, the Demiurge, is not so aloof from practical action as the (allegedly) Plotinian reading requires. Before turning to the greatest achievement of the Demiurge, it seems to me worthwhile to digress, first to consider in more detail some of what Plotinus himself says about likeness to the divine.

[28] The Plotinian reading is so-called because of its affinities to some of the remarks of Plotinus and other middle and neo-Platonic successors of Plato. While some may have thought that the true philosopher seeks to escape from this world, I do not think that Plotinus himself subscribed to this "flight." Here the base text for understanding what runs through the mind of the philosopher is the end of the digression of the *Theaetetus*, where Plato has just emphasized that in human life good and evil will always be mixed up, that it is useless to think that evil will ever be eliminated. God, in contrast, is never evil but always just virtuous. "That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like god as possible; and a man becomes like god when he becomes just and pure, with understanding" (*Tht*. 176a8–b2).

[29] It is dangerous to read too much into the *Phaedo*'s "flight from the body." Whatever else the *Phaedo* is, it is a eulogy to Socrates. Like many eulogies, it insists that the eulogized is not gone, he has simply gone to a better place, and that his whole life culminated in precisely what he had spent his life trying to achieve. It is equally dangerous to read too much into the digression of the *Theaetetus*, not least because it has so many echoes of the death of Socrates and the circumstances from which it resulted, and also because it is quite controversial how we are to make sense of its digressive nature in the course of the argument of the *Theaetetus*. Nonetheless, the circumstances mentioned in the *Theaetetus* resonate with some of the circumstances depicted in the *Republic*, and the remarks about the ineliminability of evil seem to be unconditionally true of the human condition, not just true of humans in less than optimal conditions.

[30] In keeping with the notion of likeness to the divine, the Plotinian maintains that in identifying with reason, the philosopher seeks "purely intellectual assimilation to a higher being," "a release from the body's concerns and into the realm of pure intelligibles," and "a god-like state of the rational soul part taken in isolation." Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," 322–23.

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Consider the opening lines of the *Fifth Tractate* of the *First Ennead*, "On Whether Well Being Increases with Time":

> Does happiness increase with time, though it is understood always to refer to our present state? . . . But if it is said that, because we are always aiming at life and actuality, attaining [progressively] to this is greater happiness; first of all tomorrow's happiness will always be greater, and that which comes after greater than what was before it, and happiness will no longer be measured by virtue. Even the gods will be better off now than they were before, but they will not be perfectly well off; they will never be perfectly well off. (I.5.1 and 2; after Armstrong)[31]

For Plotinus, happiness is a state the first stage of which is achieved through a process of purification, the turning away from the bodily and this-worldly circumstances in order to become as like god as possible. In the preceding *Tractates*, Plotinus has identified happiness with the perfect life, that is, the life lived in identification with the suprasensible hypostasis of the Intellect.[32] But this kind of life is not something foreign imported into the philosopher's nature. Rather, "There is no single human who does not either potentially or effectively possess this thing which we hold to be happiness. It is present potentially as a portion of their being or nature, but when present in actuality and where this perfection is fully realized, that man has passed over into actual identification with it (*metabebhke pros to auto*)" (I.4.4). Once having crossed over, Plotinus insists, this state cannot be lost. The identification is complete, and since it lies within, no outside influences can cause its loss (I.4.12). However, and this is the burden of the *Fifth Tractate*, nor can it be increased or altered by time and further acts of any sort: "Happiness has a border and limit (*oron te kai peras*); it is always the same (*kai tauton aei*)" (I.4.6). No one happy person, Plotinus argues, can be happier than another, regardless of the different circumstances that the two might find themselves in, and regardless of how much longer the one might have been in the state of happiness.[33]

Let me refer to this conception of the permanence and nonaggregatability of happiness as "no backsliding." Once one is happy, one is always

[31] Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6 vols., trans. Arthur Hilary Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966).

[32] The three hypostases or principles of Plotinus's metaphysics are the One, the Intellect, and the Soul.

[33] Plotinus can find, and maybe even derives, the nonaggregative and nondurational and absolute conception of happiness from the Stoics. There is controversy over whether happiness is an all-or-nothing affair in the *Republic*. (See, for instance, *Rep*. X.606d6 and VIII.544a7.) If it is all or nothing, one would need to decide whether there is the prospect that a nonphilosopher could be better or worse off. In the final section of this essay, I allow, without argument, that education can improve the lot of a nonphilosopher even if he falls short of becoming a philosopher.

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happy. On this conception, one can never, *pace* Cooper, make one's own life realize the good more perfectly and fully. The properly educated person will have happiness as his sole aim.[34] But having achieved this state, what does the philosopher then do? Plotinus's scale of virtues allows that the political virtues are not merely stepping-stones or perhaps necessary conditions for the purificatory virtues, they also constitute a likeness or image of the Divine. While they must be transcended on the way to the purificatory virtues, nothing prohibits them from being "divinized," if you will, by the philosopher. Plotinus is careful here not to leave the philosopher lost in contemplation. The philosopher's soul is such that it cannot remain in this state, for it will weaken. It has both an inner- and an outer-looking aspect, and when it can no longer look in, when it weakens, the philosopher acts, or produces a *praxis* that is the shadow of contemplation.[35]

The idea that even the Soul, of which our soul is an image, has this dual aspect, reinforces Plotinus's insistence that the philosopher, even after he has achieved his aim, will not always and only contemplate. He will not ignore the body. Nor will he ignore others: "He will give to the body all that he sees to be useful and possible, but he himself remains a member of another order" (I.4.16). The philosopher considers nothing external as constitutive of his happiness, but he would wish (*etheloi*) that all men fare well and that evil befall no one, though how that turns out will not affect his state. "If it be admitted that such a desire would be against reason, since evil cannot cease to be, there is no escape from agreeing with us that the philosopher's will is set always and only inward" (I.4.11).[36]

Frankly, I think the notion that Plotinus's philosopher would not descend to rule is inconsistent with the basic thrust of Plotinus's metaphysical and (hence) his ethical account.[37] The Good or its twin, the One, the highest hypostasis in the system, is so fecund that it overflows, and from this

[34] "And Plato rightly taught that he who is to be wise and possess happiness draws his good from the Supreme, fixing his gaze on that, becoming like to that, living by that" (Plotinus I.4.16). On the way up, as it were, the would-be philosopher/happy person is a rational eudaimonist.

[35] Compare at the level of the Intellectual Principle and Soul, the third hypostasis: "Once more, then: the Intellectual-Principle is a self-intent activity, but Soul has the double phase, one inner, intent upon the Intellectual-Principle, the other outside it and facing to the external; by the one, it holds the likeness to its source; by the other, even in its unlikeness, it still comes to likeness in this sphere, too, by virtue of its action and production; in its action it still contemplates, and its production produces forms—detached intellections, so to speak—with the result that all its creations are representations of the divine Intellection and of the divine Intellect, molded upon the archetype, of which all are emanations and images, the nearer more true, the very latest preserving some faint likeness of the source" (Plotinus, III.8.4.31–43).

[36] Note the tradition's acceptance of the inevitability of evil. Plotinus, then, does not think that becoming like god renders the philosopher inert.

[37] Given that Plotinus's metaphysics and physics, if you will, are predicated on a hierarchical conception of value, with each hypostasis looking toward the good and producing order at the level to which it is assigned, even the political virtues will be images of the divine transmitted to the level of the state and society.

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emanation the remaining elements of the metaphysical order, all of them in differing degrees and manners images of the One or the Good, come to have the reality they do (or can) and thereby come to be good and unitary beings to the extent possible for each. If the purified ascendant is to truly imitate the One and the Good, then he must imitate this fecundity or emanation. He does so in the same manner, if you will, that everything flows from the highest hypostasis; that is, he must descend and produce the appropriate political arrangements, thereby "divinizing" the political virtues from which his ascent started. To think that the purified philosopher does not descend is equivalent to thinking that the Good in Plotinus's system does not overflow. The Plotinian reading of the *Republic* is not then Plotinus's.

I conjecture that the Plotinian reading is the legacy of Aristotle on contemplation and likeness to god. Unfortunately, we do not know what contemplation is for Aristotle. One set of problems arises from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and especially the tenth book, where we are compelled to adjudicate the relation of practical reason to theoretical reason, and in turn the relation of the life of political virtue to the life of intellectual virtue. A second set of problems arises from Aristotle's remarks in the *Physics, De Anima,* and *Metaphysics* about the character of divine contemplation. The two set of problems are related, insofar as Aristotle insists that we are to liken ourselves to this divine activity: "If intellect is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life. But we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human things, and being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us . . ." (*EN* X.1177b30–34).

It is distinctive of Aristotle to draw the distinction between practical and intellectual virtue. It is not found in Plato or anyone else prior to Aristotle, as best we can tell. It thus behooves us to be wary of reading the contest of the last book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (the contest between the political and theoretical lives) back into Book VII of the *Republic.* True, we have there in the *Republic* a distinction between the life of ruling and the life of philosophy, but Plato's *politikos* (nonphilosophical ruler) is vastly different from Aristotle's *phronimos* (politically virtuous man). Moreover, there seems to be little room in the Platonic account for a contest between the moral virtues and contemplation of the Good, since *sophia* or wisdom is treated on a par with the other virtues.

Still, there is an undeniable similarity between the Aristotelian contest of moral and intellectual virtue and the apparent choice between (1) going down and engaging in politics, amid the day-to-day experiences of desire, exchange, and dispute that require the exercise of moral virtue, and (2) staying in contemplation and enjoying that best activity, studying the Good. Here, however, I think the similarity begins to mislead. First, note that the structure of moral virtue in Aristotle does not require intel-

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lectual virtue to be exercised, and intellectual virtue can run free of the practical. This is not the picture of Plato's tripartite soul. The exercise of contemplation directly affects all the parts and the virtues themselves. In contemplating or knowing the Good, one's soul becomes good; that is to say, one's parts become ordered in a way in which psychic harmony is achieved and the virtues are realized.

But there is a second consequence of the Platonic conception that crucially distinguishes it from the Aristotelian picture. Once we have a well-ordered, psychically harmonious soul—that is to say, once we are happy—there is nothing in the Platonic argument that suggests or, I would contend, even allows that there can be backsliding: once happy, always happy. It is not as though further contemplation of the Good makes one's soul more resistant to the dissolving effects of desire or appetite, as though another layer of protection is added each time we contemplate. Nor in this respect can one do any more for oneself—it is not aggregative in the way that Aristotle's picture of the division between moral and intellectual virtue seems to require that the more time spent in contemplation, the happier our lives. Having become happy, we no longer have reason to avoid those circumstances that stand in the way of our becoming happy. Indeed, what we have reason to do is bring about more order in others. We have reason to be like god—not Aristotle's narcissist, but Plato's providential god, the Demiurge.

IV. Help from Above

The chief difficulties facing those who favor an absolute conception of the Good and the concomitant desire to make more of it by ruling the state are: (1) how to reconcile this reading with Plato's remarks about compulsion and the burden of ruling; and (2) how to explain the status of the state and how the nonphilosophers within it, given their ignorance, are benefited by the philosopher's descent. I want to suggest a way to effect this reconciliation, a way that relies, on the one hand, on a comparison between the philosopher and the *Timaeus*'s Demiurge,[38] and, on the other hand, on the possibility that the truly ideal state in the *Republic* is not the tripartite state, but a variant of the so-called city of pigs. That these are related issues—and that their relation reveals why the philosopher descends with regret—is the burden of this section of the essay.

The *Timaeus* itself directs us to think about the *Republic* in contemplating its account of cosmic creation. Perhaps more importantly, the identification of the contemplative philosopher with reason itself suggests this

[38] The Demiurge, in the *Timaeus*, is the divine craftsman responsible for the creation of the cosmos. A host of issues surround the status of the Demiurge. E.g., does he differ from the world-soul? What are we to make of him, if we assume that the Timaean creation story is a myth, i.e., if we assume that Plato thinks that the cosmos is not created?

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course, an identification reinforced by the Platonic motif of likeness to god.[39] Lastly, I think that the *Timaeus*'s account of Necessity or the wandering cause and its role in the physical cosmos offers insight into both the root of the difficulty for improving the lot of the nonphilosophers (namely, the ineradicability of false belief or ignorance—"no cessation of evil") and how the philosopher accommodates this difficulty in his thinking. Detailing the similarities and dissimilarities between the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* would overtax the (already expanded) confines of this essay, so permit me to be declarative in selecting what I take to be the salient connections. First and foremost, both the contemplating philosopher and the Demiurge are simply intelligence—*nous. Nous* is inherently attracted to the Form of the Good, and the Good guides its actions. When acting in a productive fashion, then, both the philosopher and the Demiurge are motivated solely by the desire to bring about the best state of affairs for that upon which they are acting.[40] Second, the Demiurge and the philosopher-ruler are both engaged in a productive activity: the Demiurge creates the cosmos, and the philosopher creates the polis (and, in a different manner, he creates himself). When presented with an opportunity to act, and especially when confronted with a state of disorder, intelligence is moved to act.[41] Moreover, both have raw materials from which they, in a craftsman-like manner, make their products. The Demiurge's raw material is the matter of the cosmos.[42] The raw material for the philosopher-ruler is his own soul and the souls of his fellow citizens. They do not make this raw material, they make it better. And since both are intelligent creators or craftsmen, both have models for their activities. The nature of their models is quite controversial. In the *Timaeus*, there is no Form of the Cosmos. In the first account of creation, the Demiurge looks to a Form, the World Animal Itself, "of which all other living things

[39] See Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness"; and Wilfrid Sellars, "The Soul as Craftsman," in Sellars, *Philosophical Perspectives* (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview, 1967), 5–22.

[40] Compare James Lennox, "Plato's Unnatural Teleology," in Lennox, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 280–302, especially Lennox's Principle P: "If intelligence bestows a certain order on something, that thing has that order because its having that order is best" (282).

[41] I ignore the question of whether either the philosopher or the Demiurge really does, in fact, create. Consider them, therefore, to be hypothetically responsible for their creation. If *nous* acts, then it aims to bring about the best state on that upon which it acts. More vexing is the question of why they create. At bottom, this is to question how one gets from being good to doing good: why does being good or knowing the good lead one to act when, it would seem, there is no necessity that one act at all? (This is related to, but I think distinct from, the worry that one cannot get from the psychological justice of the soul to doing the sort of just actions that are at the root of Glaucon's challenge [*Rep.* II.358b1–367e5].) See Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, 308–10: "Plato seems to assume that the god will want to express his goodness, even when his self-expression does not require it" (309). See also Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast*, 454ff. (esp. 459).

[42] The Demiurge also is said to make the world-soul and the rational part of soul. I do not distinguish the Demiurge and the world-soul, though this is not a universally shared opinion. Note that the "constructed" world-soul concerns itself with both Being and becoming (*Tim.* 37a–c).

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are parts, both individually and by kinds" (*Tim.* 30c). To create a likeness of this image, initially at least, is to create *the* cosmos, a single living creature with a body and a soul (as its parts, as it were). Ultimately, however, the Demiurge makes this cosmic creature, the imitation of the World Animal Itself, by creating the various kinds of living things—images, as it were, of the species and kinds, now understood as Forms, that are the "parts" (in a different sense this time) of the World Animal Itself. The creation of these living things, in turn, introduces the need to create the appropriate bodies for these creatures, whether they are triangles, earth, air, fire, and water, or compounds of them.[43] By creating these, the Demiurge fulfills his intention of introducing order (a best state) into the raw materials by imitating the World Animal Itself.[44]

In the *Republic,* it is also not clear what model the philosopher looks to in considering his product.[45] Since there is no Form of the State, let alone a tripartite one, to what model does the philosopher look and how does he go about making the state?[46] The answer would seem to be the Form of the Good, as well as the Forms especially of Justice, Wisdom, and the other virtues, and the Soul Itself. That is, just as the Demiurge makes the cosmos by making the species of animals (i.e., through its parts), so the philosopher indirectly makes a state by making its "parts," that is, by educating the souls of its would-be citizens. Absent a Form of the State, there is no definition or essence of the state, no political imitation (of the State), and no way to ground the notion of the common good in the

[43] This is not to say that there are no Forms beyond the Forms of living things. In the second telling of the creation (*Tim*. 47e ff.), the Demiurge creates the images of both the living things (the various plants and animals) and the nonliving things (gold, fire, etc.).

[44] With the addition of soul or souls, the nonliving material serves as the bodies for the relevant souls which together comprise the instances of living things whose Forms/Models are the parts and kinds of the World Animal Itself.

[45] Some interpretations of the philosopher's descent seem to assume that there is a Form of the State that is in some sense tripartite. But the central analogy of the soul and the state augurs against such a conception of the state's nature. To think that the Form of the State Itself has a tripartite nature is equivalent to thinking that the Form of the Soul has a tripartite nature. But nowhere in the *Republic* or in any other dialogue does Plato offer this as a definition of Soul Itself. If there is a Form of the Soul, its nature is to be a self-mover. It is, of course, controversial whether there is a Form of the Soul. Both the *Phaedrus* (246 ff.) and *Republic* X (610 ff.) suggest that the nature of the soul is unitary and its essence is to be self-moving. Since souls seem to be primitives in Plato's metaphysics, along with perhaps Forms, particulars, and the receptacle, and since Plato never explicitly postulates a Form of any of these kinds (i.e., there is no Form of Form, or Form of the Receptacle), there is reason to think that there is no Form of the Soul. Given that in the *Republic* the city is supposed to model the soul, this would be a reason to infer that there is no Form of the City. Moreover, if there is a Form of the Soul, since that Form is liable to be unitary and not tripartite, the likelihood is that the Form of the City would also be unitary and not tripartite. Finally, passages like *Rep*. VIII.543d1–544a1 suggest that perhaps there is a better city than the tripartite Kallipolis.

[46] This is a controversial claim, requiring an interpretation of, among other passages, *Rep*. IX.592a–b. See especially Burnyeat, "Utopia and Fantasy," for reasons why one should not treat this "paradigm in heaven" (592b2) as a Form.

essence or nature of the state.[47] There is just the same one best condition that *each* individual soul can achieve. The philosopher-ruler thus focuses on individual souls. His model is the fully intelligent, completely virtuous soul, a soul whose motion and direction, as it were, are in accord with its complete and constant knowledge of the Forms.[48] To put it differently, but, I think, equivalently, he takes to heart the idea of *homoiôsis theô*: he uses his knowledge of the Good and other Forms, along with his self-knowledge, to recreate in others, to the best of his and their ability, an image of reason.[49]

Granting that both the Demiurge and the philosopher are creative craftsmen, it follows (according to the laws, as it were, of Platonic metaphysics) that their creations are imperfect, for everything created is imperfect. Nevertheless, there are, I want to argue, some important differences between the Demiurge and the philosopher with respect to this fact about creations—differences, I believe, that help us to understand the state of mind of the philosopher when he is choosing to descend. Broadly speaking, I want to concentrate on the similarities and dissimilarities between the creative aims of the Demiurge and the philosopher in order to secure an interpretation of why, in the case of the Demiurge, there is no regret on his part in viewing his task, whereas there is regret for the philosopher in deciding to descend to engage in his creative undertaking.

One similarity concerns the role of Necessity in the *Timaeus* and the *Republic.* In the *Timaeus,* the Demiurge, being good and without jealousy (*phthonos*),[50] embarks upon his creative endeavor cognizant of the role that Necessity, or the wandering cause, will play in his creation. He understands that the nature of his raw material, in combination with the presence of purposive intelligence, will introduce a secondary imperfection into his product.[51] The laws governing body, or matter, are such that when he organizes his raw material or creates a given body and sets it in motion, that body will interact with other bodies and set them in motion in ways that are beyond his control. These are the secondary or random motions of bodies that the *Timaeus* labels the "wandering cause" or "Neces-

[47] This is not to say that it cannot be grounded in other ways, e.g., in the Forms of the Good, Justice, and the other virtues.

[48] Cf. Harold Cherniss, "The Sources of Evil According to Plato," in Cherniss, *Selected Papers*, ed. Leonardo Taran (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 258.

[49] I do not believe that there is a Form of the Demiurge. By "image of reason" I do not mean to suggest that there is some paradigm or Form to which a rational soul stands as an image or a participating particular.

[50] "Now why did he who framed this whole universe of becoming frame it? Let us state the reason why: He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything. And so, being free of jealousy, he wanted everything to become as much like himself as was possible. . . . The god wanted everything to be good and nothing to be bad so far as that was possible" (*Tim*. 29d7–30a2).

[51] The first imperfection is due to their being creations, i.e., imperfect in comparison to Forms. I assume that soul is the primary source of motion and thus ultimately responsible for the motions of matter.

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sity." These unintended motions of matter result from the nature of the physical system: the fact that space is a plenum and that bodies (plural) are set in motion by purposive acts on the part of the Demiurge and other intelligent souls. That such motions occur is simply a given, the consequence of the nature of body or matter, acted upon by intelligent souls. Evil souls (i.e., ignorant souls) magnify the phenomenon. Perfectly intelligent souls can do nothing to completely offset the situation. That is to say, given the nature of the raw material, the Demiurge can succeed only for the most part in imposing order on his raw material. He can persuade his material only to a certain extent.[52]

A similar situation confronts the philosopher in contemplating what will happen when he descends. The souls he confronts, namely the souls of his fellow citizens, are as a matter of empirical fact imperfect, because they are embodied. Desire, appetite, and spirit will inevitably lead them to act in pursuit of the ends that appetitive souls and honor-seeking souls set for themselves; and the motions (i.e., actions) that such souls generate will not be fully compliant with reason or intelligence. Moreover, insofar as individuals live together in a society, each individual, even when acting purposively and rationally, will interact with others acting in the same way, often in competition for goods—resulting in unintended consequences for the individual and others. Finally, the philosopher will descend into a state where at least some of the people will be youths—young souls guided primarily by desire and lacking reason. There is nothing he can do to entirely overcome this dynamic situation.

So much for the similarity between the Demiurge and the philosopher. What is the difference? The difference is that nowhere in the *Timaeus* does Plato say or even suggest that the Demiurge regrets or needs to be compelled to create, even though he understands that his creation will be imperfect or, put differently, that his creation will not be fully amenable to the persuasive aspects of reason. But this only raises the bar: what explains the difference between the Demiurge and the philosopher such that compulsion and regret visit the latter but not the former? My answer is that alternatives are available to the philosopher.[53] There are no alternatives for the Demiurge. It is not as though he has some better world in mind that he could create, if his materials were not so recalcitrant, such that he believes that he is settling for some "compromise." That there are no alternatives for the Demiurge means that there is no better world that he could bring into being, and *a fortiori* no better world that he could bring into being if his materials were different. He sets out to do what is

[52] See *Tim*. 48a2–5, 56c3–7, 57d–58c, 68e; *Laws* 896e8 ff.; and *Statesman* 273b–c.

[53] See Thomas Hurka, "Monism, Pluralism, and Rational Regret," *Ethics* 106 (1999): 555–75. Note that while the Demiurge works with material that is amenable to persuasion, at least to a certain extent, the inhabitants of all cities will include some who refuse to listen and are thus unwilling to be persuaded. See *Republic* I.327e, and Strauss, *City and Man*, esp. 124.

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best for the materials at hand, and he accomplishes this aim by introducing the greatest possible order into these materials.[54] He has no regrets and he need not be compelled to his act of creation because he realizes that he is producing the best (and, therefore, for him, only) world possible, despite the fact that, in the unfolding of time, the created cosmos will necessarily tend toward disorder.

In contrast, I think that there are alternatives for the philosopher, and the fact that there are alternatives is crucial, indeed necessary, for the philosopher's regret.[55] The alternative I have in mind is that the philosopher realizes that there is a condition of soul which, given the metaphysical nature of the raw material with which he works, is superior to the condition of most of the souls even in the tripartite Kallipolis, that is, the state consisting of souls most of whom are ruled by appetite or spirit. That is to say, given the philosopher's full understanding of the nature of soul, and the Forms, and the inherent conditions of his raw material, there is an alternative to the tripartite state, namely, a "state" in which each soul is philosophical. The difference between the philosopher and the Demiurge, then, is due to the different metaphysical natures of their raw material and their subsequent knowledge of the raw material with which each works. The philosopher-ruler, or one who has achieved the absolute perspective, knows that anyone can, in principle, take on that perspective, and he knows from his own case that embodied soul is capable of over-

[54] The manner in which he does this is by "copying" the Forms that are parts of the World Animal Itself and the other Forms that are appropriate for the bodies of these animals and the component parts of these bodies. There is no alternative cosmos in part because there is only one model. Still, one might think that there could be alternative raw materials with which the Demiurge could work. Some theorists seem led to this belief owing to their familiarity with the (early) modern doctrines concerning God's (unlimited) powers to create matter, not to mention necessary truths. But Plato never hints that the Demiurge works with anything but what he finds. Nor, I think, could one reasonably argue that he could have worked up this raw material into better *archai*, i.e., imposed upon it better shapes. To want other material is to think that one can determine what the true *archai* are or to fail to recall that the Demiurge has a model which determines the appropriateness of the chosen shapes. See Allan Silverman, *The Dialectic of Essence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), chap. 7; and Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," esp. 321. Investigation of the presuppositions underlying the claims in this paragraph would require discussion of, among other issues, whether the creation is fictional. I think it is.

[55] There is no single word in the *Republic* that "regret" translates. Besides its utility for capturing the sentiments conveyed by the crucial passages in Book VII and the refrain of compulsion, the closest Greek expression is *epitalaiporeô*—to bear some additional hardship or suffering (*talas*). According to the Liddell-Scott-Jones *Greek-English Lexicon*, before its occurrence at *Rep*. 540b2, this word is only found toward the end of Book I of Thucydides (section 123) in the Corinthians' speech to the allies: "As for the future, you must look to that by safeguarding what you have now and by being willing *to face sacrifices*. It is in your blood to regard all kinds of excellences (*aretas*) as the prizes of toil and sweat (*ponoi*), and you ought not to change that way of looking at things even if you have at the moment some advantages in wealth and power" (Warner translation). I find it more than plausible to think that Plato knew this text. Given its place in the account of how Sparta finally thinks of the decision to go to war with Athens, and given Plato's interest in Sparta (and Athens), the idea that the philosopher-rulers are likened to Spartan rulers has appeal. Much more would have to be said to justify this notion.

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coming its real-world conditions, even if only temporarily. I take this commitment to the metaphysics of reason to be the thrust of the passage at *Rep.* VII.518b6 ff., where Plato writes that every soul has the power to learn, that is, the power to be educated toward the Good, should the right teachers be present. This is not to say that the philosopher thinks that conditions in this world will *tend* toward such an eventuality. Rather, it marks only the presence of an alternative he can envisage at the end of a long educational process when he has climbed to the summit. In this sense, then, the philosopher cannot lack self-awareness, for he must reflect that he is a soul with his own history, now as like to the divine as one can be. If, following this strand of Plato's argument, we focus squarely on reason and its relation to the Good, then we must conclude that the ideal situation is one in which every rational soul contemplates the Good; and we must conclude that this is a real possibility. If this possibility were to be realized, this is what it would be to maximize the amount of rational order in the world. This is a fact about reason that reason itself recognizes in full contemplation of the Good. It follows that the ideal circumstance is one in which everyone is a philosopher. While we might describe such an outcome as a community of philosophers,[56] such a circumstance is one in which there is no need of rulers, for each can rule him- or herself. The state evaporates. Plato, then, is committed to philosophical anarchy, the condition in which each soul rules itself. Philosophical anarchy is the ideal nonpolitical condition sought by reason.

This is one alternative and one side of the philosopher's dilemma. The other is the likely outcome that most souls will not make it. This realization arises from considerations that have appeared in the *Republic* up to this point. The first is that the life of the philosopher is not simply the act of philosophical contemplation. This act is atemporal, absolute, and nonhuman. The philosopher, or at least the philosopher under discussion in the *Republic,* has had and continues to have a life, only one part or some parts of which consist in contemplation. Insofar as his reason is human reason, it recognizes that it bears relations to spirit and appetite, that it has a history and a future in which it will yet again be confronted by appetites and spiritive desires, and that as a citizen of the world some of its beliefs will be false, thus setting off the unintended consequences of matter in motion. While human reason endeavors to be like god's reason, it also recognizes that it is not god's. To fail of such self-knowledge is to be hubristic, and *eo ipso* to fail to be fully reflective. At the same time, having achieved psychic harmony, there is nothing more that the philosopher can do for himself, if there is no moral backsliding. Insofar as his understanding of the Good motivates him to promote it, his prime opportunity to do so would be to invest in helping others.

[56] See Fred D. Miller, Jr., "The Rule of Reason in Plato's *Statesman* and the American *Federalist*" (elsewhere in this volume), for a "nation of philosophers" in *The Federalist*.

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The second consideration is of a piece with the first. Just as the philosopher realizes that he is of this world, he also realizes that as a matter of fact the vast majority of his fellow human beings will simply fail to become philosophers. This realization seemingly holds even in the ideal city. At the beginning of Book VIII of the *Republic* (546a1–547a5), Plato reminds us that destruction attends everything that comes to be. Whatever one makes of the eugenics of this passage, there are other reasons for the failure of the majority to become philosophers. The metaphysics of imperfection, of the dissolubility of everything that is composed, goes hand in hand with Plato's skepticism about knowledge of the physical world. Even if one thinks that knowledge of the physical world is possible, it is isolated. Indeed, all human beings are prey to false beliefs about some matters.[57] The sources of this ignorance are multiple. Beyond the imperfection of the physical, there is the fact that humans interact with the world through the senses. The *Timaeus* (esp. 42e–44c) makes most vivid the strand of Plato's thought that finds in the interactions of the senses with the world a source of confusion and false belief. That the problem is especially acute in youths reminds us that in Plato's psychology the young are most malleable because they lack reason, at least in any developed form. Here, I think, is a crucial reason why ignorance is ineradicable from the actual world: in every state, there will not only be some adults with false beliefs about value, there will be youths, i.e., dynamic souls who have yet to mature. As with Necessity or the random element in the Timaean physical cosmos, Plato thinks that once ignorance (i.e., false belief) is introduced into the system, it cannot be eliminated from the system. There is nothing that the philosopher can do to overcome this situation, for even if he were to wipe the slate clean for a moment, he would still be working with immature ten-year-olds living in the actual physical world and interacting with others. Being part of the political and physical system, they will, inevitably, revert to the norm.

The allure of the static moment, so powerful in our thinking about the act of contemplation and the absolute perspective, distracts us from the philosopher's condition in the actual world, where he confronts a dynamic situation with souls whose beliefs and developmental stages are vastly different. Perhaps at the culmination of a great cycle the world might be such that all souls are alike, but in no real state is there this possibility. Similarly, the allure of the absolute perspective, the (self-)knowledge that leads one to conclude that any human soul as such is capable of becoming philosophical, distracts us from the fact that ruling concerns a collective, not the isolation and education of individuals one-by-one. Just as the Demiurge seems not to be everywhere at once—world-construction is a process and not momentary (catastrophic)—so too the philosopher knows

[57] I assert, without argument, that to think a philosopher could be free of all false beliefs would be not to make him like a god, but to make him divine.

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that he cannot be everywhere at once in the state. Not all interactions between the citizens can be controlled. Ignorance, like the random factor, manifests itself in unpredictable ways, and the philosopher knows that his prescriptions can never be precise enough. The richness and variability of human interactions and circumstances cannot be predicted or accommodated from the absolute perspective.

The philosopher knows that ignorance is ineradicable from the actual world, that some souls will fail to be freed from the leaden weights of the sensible realm. This is the *realpolitik,* and it is at odds with his recognition that the best of all worlds is one in which the good is maximized by bringing it about that each soul is ruled by reason. This maximization of the good will not happen. Both considerations have in common the idea that there is an ideal that the philosopher contemplating the Good can recognize and yet also realize that he will fall short of. Both, I suggest, are sources of regret, reasons why the philosopher has to be forced to rule.

Nonetheless, the philosopher recognizes that, given his circumstances and those of the other citizens, it is better to go down to rule. Why is it better? I think that the answer is that the philosopher recognizes that the very same means needed to create a prospect for anyone to become a philosopher will also make for the most good even for those who will not make it—and this means is education. Now this is a persuasive line of thought only if the philosopher can see how his intervention will actually produce an imitation of the Good even in those who are not philosophers.[58] Here I think he can tell himself the following. First, whereas in the physical cosmos there is an inevitable move toward a worse condition (except when *nous* intervenes), in the case of the soul the dynamic is different. Souls as they mature move toward a better condition, namely the inevitable emergence of the rational capacity, whose course and strength can only be augmented by education. Whereas the "natural" course of the physical is toward disorder, the natural tendency of the soul is toward order and intelligence. Any move toward controlling desire is an improvement and a move toward order. Hence, the specification of the different kinds of desires and their "education" (i.e., the control of the necessary desires and the selection/habituation of the optional desires) is appropriately the focus of Books II–X of the *Republic.* From the engaged, this-worldly perspective, the philosopher can reflect on his own education and course of study and see how the process of internalization, especially the taking on of the appropriate beliefs about values, functions to structure the souls of all citizens. The question may then be (on the one hand) whether this is improvement enough given that the nonphilosopher, because his reason fails to know the Form of the Good, follows the values

[58] See Rachana Kamtekar, "Imperfect Virtue," *Ancient Philosophy* 18 (1998): 315–39, on the prospect of virtue for the warrior class.

set by appetite or spirit, and (on the other hand) whether the philosopher can actually instill an intuition of the Good in citizens.

The question is: What constitutes the improvement of these appetitive and spiritive citizens? These citizens believe that honor or pleasure is the good for them. Is this fatal? Well, if they did not believe this, they would not be who they are: auxiliaries and workers. And if they thought that there was something better for them and that they could not achieve it, they would be miserable. Thus, they cannot but value for themselves honor and pleasure. When we speak of a goal and which part of the soul sets it, sometimes, it seems, we assume that each of the parts has something like a rational capacity. This strengthens the account of those who think that at a certain stage a person loses the possibility of becoming a philosopher (or perhaps anything different). If, however, we think that each part is (reasonably) simple—that whenever reason is at work, it is the functioning of the rational part—then even in the case of the nonphilosophers, reason is at work in the setting of goals.[59] It may be that reason is not working perfectly or properly, or at least not on its own proper goals. But the fact that reason is at work allows us to understand how the education of the young and the old alike can be counted as progress toward a better state. The parent who says to his child, "You do not know what is good for you," does not think that the child will adopt the parent's values, certainly not then and often not ever. The parent's values are offered as an alternative, a better one to be sure, in order to start a process which may lead to a change in view, but primarily in order to establish in the child the notion that there is a difference between what *seems* (at the moment) good to/for the youth and what *is* good for the youth. That is, the parent's statement is part of a process whereby the child comes to recognize that whatever one's values, one concedes that there is a difference between apparent and real self-interest. The philosopher, then, relying on the premise that everyone accepts the difference between his real and apparent good (*Rep.* VI.500d), thinks he can instill at least a dim intuition of the Good. Each person's embrace of alternative reasons, or pursuits leading away from the valuation of pleasure and honor, is thus an incremental increase in psychic order.[60]

If the philosopher descends, and if he can begin to pass on his values even to a limited degree so as to provide some citizens with the proper upbringing, he can reckon that (some of) the nonphilosophers are improved in that they can concede (1) that there are different values for different people; (2) that the rule of philosophers makes possible that different people can pursue what each is best at and values most, and that this is a good thing; and (3) that the philosopher-rulers themselves do not

[59] See Lorenz, *The Brute Within*, for a defense of "simple" parts.

[60] See Cooper, "Two Theories of Justice," for an account of how the nonphilosophers can be led to value justice.

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overreach in seeking what they have and value for themselves. Therefore, the nonphilosophers can be brought to see that not everyone overreaches and therefore that overreaching is not necessary for one's good or for their own good. And this is the point of the noble lie—that one should be satisfied with one's own state: in doing one's own and being satisfied with one's own, one imitates justice as far as possible.[61] Finally, the philosopher can reason that by descending he can provide the "substitute reason" necessary for instilling in the young potential philosopher the beliefs requisite for him to develop control over the appetites and the spirit. By the same token, however, the philosopher also offers to the mature but nonphilosophical adults alternatives to their own beliefs about pleasure and honor.

The idea of "substitute reason," of externalizing the values of reason, requires much more analysis than I can provide in this essay. But insofar as the spirit and the appetite always borrow their rationality from reason, and insofar as it is always possible for the rational soul to be persuaded to change (beliefs) for the better (until, that is, it comes to know the Good), and, finally, insofar as knowledge of the Good provides a *telos* or benchmark for progress or ethical improvement, the philosopher can reckon that by descending to rule he will make more good even for the nonphilosophers. We know from the storm passage[62] that there are circumstances so bad that the philosopher realizes that he can do no good, and hence he will not descend into them. But provided that the circumstances surrounding his choice are not that bad, or at least provided that he cannot see that they are that bad, he can persuade himself that in virtually every circumstance, whether he owes something to the state or not, the good thing to do is to descend even if only to help a few. The source of his regret—the reason that the founders, themselves all philosophers, have to compel him to descend—is that they must force him away from a commitment to the maximal outcome as a result of his understanding of the Good and his own soul (i.e., philosophical anarchy).

V. Conclusion

At the moment of choice, the mind of the philosopher is most like that of the Demiurge: both are focused on the Good, both are acting creatively, and both are fully cognizant of the empirical circumstances that will immediately and inevitably surround their creations. Perhaps it should now be said that Plato never leaves open the possibility that either the philosopher or the Demiurge will not create. Put differently but equiva-

[61] The noble lie is the myth that Socrates contrives at the end of Book III (414b–416d), containing the myths that all in the city are brothers born of the same mother-earth and that each is born with a certain kind of soul: bronze, silver, or gold. The city will collapse, according to the myth, if one lacking a golden soul should ever come to power.

[62] See note 1 above.

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lently, Plato never questions the existence of the state or the world. The task is to rationally reconstruct how both come about in such a fashion that they are intelligible and for the best. Why these are linked notions cannot be explored in this essay. In the case of both the Demiurge and the philosopher, I have pointed out that their creations are inevitably imperfect, both because all creations are metaphysically imperfect according to Plato, and because there is an inherent imperfection that cannot be fully overcome resulting from the dynamic nature of souls, matter, and their interaction. In the Demiurge's case, there is no conceivable alternative to his creation. He therefore has no alternative to contemplate and acts purely out of goodness without the need for compulsion or the opportunity to regret that he is producing something that is not all that it could be. He goes to his task not as something necessary but as something *kalon* (fine).

The same is not true of the philosopher. Given the nature of his material, the soul, he can conceive of alternatives: a state of philosophical anarchy in which every person's soul is in a condition resembling his own, namely good; and the tripartite state where the presence of ignorance, owing to the presence of souls who have acted out of desire and spirit without understanding, introduces evil into the state. Still, the philosopher can see how he can bring about either the best or at least a better condition for his fellow citizens by ruling and educating the citizens of the state. That there are these alternative outcomes, or alternative states, is why he can regret his descent, even though it is for the better, and why he can be said to be compelled to descend. He knows that he will inevitably fail to remove all the ignorance, even though he knows that it can be done, for each person, at least temporarily.

Let me conclude, then, by turning back to the *Republic* to suggest that Plato himself envisages an alternative, and better, state than the tripartite one that the philosopher will rule. We have seen that increasing the amount of good requires that the citizens be educated and that the state is necessary for education. Plato, to be sure, devotes the bulk of his energies to describing the process by which the fevered state can be purified, though he never suggests that it will be fully cleansed. If he were to fully cleanse the state (i.e., if education were to succeed completely), the state would evaporate—just as the self evaporates in contemplating the Good. The tripartite state speaks to the education of the young learners and results in a state of mature adults, only a few of whom are fully educated. But there is in the *Republic* a depiction of a state of properly educated adults, namely, the city of pigs (II.369b5–372e1).

The city of pigs is best because it arises out of bodily needs. Plato remarks that it is the minimal condition sufficient to satisfy that which impels us to form a community. Interestingly, Allan Bloom and John Cooper, unlikely bedfellows to be sure, both reject this city as ideal because there is no justice or injustice easily discerned in such a city. Bloom claims

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that there is no justice or philosophy in this city because its inhabitants have no desires of reason, that is, no desire for philosophy.[63] Cooper says that justice is absent because the inhabitants do not have to overcome the tendency, due to the open-ended capacity for pleasure, to act other than to meet their needs.[64] Bloom and Cooper think about this first city, then, as a city where no desire for pleasure beyond minimal bodily needs has yet arisen. In contrast, I suggest that the city of pigs is a depiction of the well-formed community of well-formed individuals whose appetitive and spiritive desires are again minimal because their souls (and bodies) are ruled by reason. I want to suggest that it is a city where a philosopher has achieved his quest, where each inhabitant has returned to a condition where his bodily needs are the minimal ones.[65] If we take the city of pigs seriously, then, Plato seems to be saying that there need not be an incompatibility between soul and body such that the soul cannot be perfected as long as the soul and the body are with one another. When the inhabitants of the city understand how to satisfy their minimal needs, they need not interfere with one another; rather, each does his own thing, minding his own affairs (*Rep.* II.370a). This is, of course, the definition of justice from Book IV. The city of pigs thus stands to the improved tripartite city as best to better. The relation between them provides the political analogue to the psychic alternatives of the contemplating philosopher-ruler. He has to be compelled, and he has regrets, because he is burdened by his knowledge that he will create a better state, but not the best. Nonetheless, descend he does, compelled by his realization that the best cannot be the enemy of the good.

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[63] Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 344–48.
[64] Cooper, "Two Theories of Justice," 12–15.
[65] Cf. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, 344: "There is no need for governance here."

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