REPUBLIC V: THE EQUALITY OF *PHYSIS*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of Plato's proposal for female guardians, which he introduces as the first wave in Book V of the Republic. The proposal for female guardians elicited attention in the early 1970s, because it contained a discussion of gender equality. The thesis specifically focused on the political implications and consequences of Plato's discussion of the idea of justice, the purpose of politics and a conception of gender.

For the purpose of this examination, the thesis was divided into two main sections. First, the thesis systematically catalogued the current commentary on Plato's proposal for female guardians. To facilitate an understanding of this commentary, the thesis explored both the previous theoretical framework and the public issues that provided a context for the recent commentary on Book V. Second, it provided an independent examination of Book V. To more thoroughly understand the proposal, the thesis focused on three aspects often neglected in commentary, but relevant to interpretation: the relationship between *oïkos* and *polis* in ancient Greece, the connection between the first wave and the argument of the Republic and an argument against a literal interpretation of Book V. The independent interpretation of Book V focused on the connection between the function an individual performed in the city and the foundation of politics. For Plato, this foundation was based on organizing the functions in the city according to the need each individual has for others. The proposal for female guardians bases the qualification for ruling and solder-

ing on an understanding of an individual's *physis* or potential that is not connected to gender. This organization of the city by of non-gender specific functions is Plato's idea of justice. Each individual performs the one function which suits him or her in order to be the most useful to each other. The necessity of gender for reproduction complicates Plato's organization by non-gender specific functions. Thus, the proposal for female guardians is not possible, because during their childbearing years guardian women are most useful as bearers of children and primarily would not perform the function based on their *physis*. In addition, the attempt to make all aspects of human life, including one's emotions, gender, and family fulfill the requirement of usefulness questions whether the city in speech is the best city. Thus, an examination the first wave of Book V indicates that the city in speech is neither possible nor desirable. Instead of a literal political manifesto, Book V is revealed to be a discussion of the consequences of implementing an extreme idea of justice in a political regime.

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Introduction

This thesis is an examination of Plato's proposal for female guardians, which he introduces in Book V of the Republic. Although the Republic can be understood on many different levels, including the level of the individual or philosophical *psyche*, the thesis examined specifically the political implications and consequences of Plato's discussion. For the purpose of this examination, the thesis was divided into two levels of analysis. First, it explores the recent commentary on Plato's proposal, in Book V, that introduces women into the guardian class. Interest in this proposal increased in the late 1960s, with the expanding concern for issues of gender and sexual equality. The proposal for female guardians attracted systematic attention, because Plato assigned roles or occupations in a political regime by means of potential; this potential, for Plato, was considered independent of gender. Yet, Plato also did claim that men were superior to women. Much of the ensuing commentary on Book V, which focused on the inconsistency of these two statements, concentrated on whether or not the proposal for female guardians was compatible with modern theories of gender equality. Second, following an exposition of this commentary, the thesis will examine limitations of this commentary and offer an independent analysis of Plato's proposals. This analysis understands the proposals in Book V to be an aspect of the larger discussion in the Republic. This discussion includes the

purpose of politics and the connection between the idea of justice and the foundation of the city. Thus, the intent of this analysis is to examine the commentary on Book V and, in addition, independently to explore Plato's ideas of justice, politics, and gender.

Emphasizing why this analysis focused specifically on Book V of the Republic is important. The interest in Book V originated, in the early 1970s, in response to Plato's discussion of gender and how it relates to the organization of functions, or occupations, in a political system. This interest was fuelled by feminist theories of equality, which also questioned the idea of gender-specific roles, especially the primary role of women as wives and mothers. There was a demand for the full integration of women into economic and political roles which were traditionally reserved for men. Plato became an important philosophical figure in the theoretical discussion of gender equality, because Plato's proposal for female guardians in Book V touches on many important elements of sexual equality. These elements include a discussion of the meaning of gender, or sex differences, and the consequences associated with expanding the political and economic role of women. For this reason, Book V of the Republic is important to a discussion of a theory of gender, which is, in itself, an important element of twentieth-century political theory.

In addition, a focus on Book V of the Republic is significant, because Book V is the pivotal argument of the dialogue. It is in Book V that Socrates discusses the details of the city in speech; a city established to discuss the coming into being of justice and injustice. The foundation of a political regime, Plato suggests, arises from a lack of self-

sufficiency and the need each individual has for others. Justice in the city in speech is established when each individual performs the one function for which he or she is most suited and educated. Plato reassigns functions or roles in the city in speech based on an assessment of an individual's *physis*. *Physis*, which is often translated as nature, can be understood as origin, temper, disposition, or potential. Plato understands *physis* both as an inborn quality and as something which requires the proper education and nurturing. For Plato, this quality is something which is independent of gender and is scattered alike between both men and women. Hence, the title of the thesis is The Equality of *Physis*.

In order to establish the idea of justice in the city, Plato reorganizes human beings into a function based on their *physis*. Plato achieves this organization through the proposals or three waves of Book V. Socrates refers to the proposals as waves, or *kumata*, since they represent a swelling or expansion of the idea of justice into the city in speech.[1] Plato's three waves are (1) the inclusion of women in the guardian class, (2) the community of women and children, and (3) the establishment of the philosopher-king. It is through the three waves in Book V that Socrates discusses the consequences of organizing the city according to an idea of justice. These consequences affect all aspects of human life, including gender relations, the family and politics. Therefore, Book V is an

[1] *Kuma* is the ancient Greek word that describes something which is swollen, such as the swell of the sea or a fetus in the womb.

important element of the dialogue, since it exposes the necessity that creates political regimes and explores the consequences of organizing the regime according to this necessity.

Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter will present the philosophical and historical contexts, which provided the foundation for the commentary on Book V. Following the Second World War, Platonic scholarship was engaged in a debate about whether the Republic was the philosophical basis of totalitarian or liberal political theory. The commentators of this debate, although seemingly divergent, actually interpreted the Republic with the same assumptions of liberal-democratic thought. Because the recent commentary on the proposal for female guardians adopts many of these assumptions, an examination of prior scholarship is an important element in understanding the more recent commentary. The second important context is found in the issues and concerns of feminist theory and the women's movement. These issues include equal payment for similar occupations, equal opportunity for education and employment, and the control of reproduction. To evaluate the recent commentary on Plato's female guardians, understanding the issues and assumptions of feminist theories are important.

The second chapter presents the commentary on the proposals in Book V. To clarify this commentary, the thesis assigned the commentators to one of four main

categories. These categories were created by assessing the commentator's interpretation of Book V on two questions. The first question asks whether the proposal for female guardians is sympathetic or antagonistic to feminist theories of equality; the second question asks whether Plato intended the proposals in Book V as a literal political order. The commentators in the first category understood the proposal for female guardians as both sympathetic to modern theories of gender equality and intended literally. The commentators in the second category, although they disagree that Plato introduced female guardians to establish gender equality, they do agree that the proposal is still sympathetic to feminism and intended literally. The commentators in the third category evaluate the proposal as antagonistic to modern notions of gender equality, but they also agree with a literal interpretation. Finally, the commentators in the fourth category reject the notion that the proposals in Book V are either concerned with feminist issues or intended literally. Instead, they interpret the proposals as exaggerations used to examine the idea of justice and the foundation of politics. This chapter will focus on the main arguments of secondary sources which were concerned with Plato's discussion in Book V.

The third chapter will deal with three major limitations which confine and hinder the commentary on Book V. The first limitation is a tendency of commentators to understand the relationship between the *polis* (the city) and *oikos* (the family organization) in ancient Greece, as similar to the modern relationship between the public and private. The *oikos* was politically significant and it was not understood as either discrete or independent from the *polis.* It is important to explain the relationship between the *polis*

and *oikos* in order to examine the implications of the proposals in Book V. A second limitation of commentary is to focus exclusively on Plato's first wave of female guardians. This chapter establishes that this wave is not an independent proposal; Plato connects it to the other two waves in Book V. In addition, Book V is part of the larger discussion in the Republic about the coming into being of justice and injustice. Chapter three will discuss problems of interpreting the proposal for female guardians independent of this larger context. Finally, the chapter will discuss limitations of a literal interpretation of the proposals. A literal interpretation neglects the dramatic context of the dialogue, which reveals the proposals as exaggerations used to examine politics and the idea of justice. The third chapter will provide a foundation for an independent examination of Book V.

The fourth chapter concentrates on this independent examination of Plato's proposals. First, this chapter focuses on Plato's understanding of *physis* as an inborn nature or potential which an individual's sex does not determine. The importance of *physis*, for Socrates, is that he considers it a more beneficial way to organize the occupations or functions in a political system, than the traditional system of gender-specific occupations. The chapter will discuss the difficulties of assigning functions by *physis*, especially regarding gender and reproduction. Next, the chapter will explore implications and consequences of Plato's organization of functions by *physis*. This will include how Socrates organizes all aspects of human life, including an individual's gender, family loyalties and passions toward the principle of usefulness. Finally, the thesis will

conclude with a discussion of Plato's warning about the consequences of establishing a political system by an idea of justice, which has not been tempered with moderation.

In closing, it is important at the outset of this thesis to stress the difficulty of examining literature that deals with the concept of gender or sex. The ancient Greek term *genos,* which can be translated as gender, is helpful in clarifying the concept of gender. *Genos* is a term which refers to the categories created by distinguishing human beings according to certain similarities or differences.[2] The attributes recognized in the classification by *genos* are variable and often contentious. For example, modern feminist theory distinguishes between sex and gender difference. Sex is understood specifically as the biological or reproductive characteristic of an individual. Most understandings of gender include characteristics or attributes beyond a reproductive role. Gender is understood as the "culturally and socially shaped cluster of expectations, attributes, and behaviours assigned to that category of human beings by the society into which the child was born."[3] Yet, what account for these expectations or attributes is not a fixed principle, but an ambiguous set of values. Therefore, what is valued in the connotation of "female" or "male" is not the same in all political systems or historical cultures.[4] In other words, the

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[2]The term *genos* can be translated as race, clan, family, kind, gender or sex. It is perhaps helpful to mention that the Latin translation of the term *genos* is "genus".

[3]Hester Eisenstein, Contemporary Feminist Thought (Boston: G. K. Hall and Company, 1983), p. 7.

[4]Roger Just in his book Women in Athenian Law and Life aptly discusses the difficulty of a precise understanding of the ambiguous term 'woman.' He states, "can we presume to know in any universal sense what is meant by 'woman' (or for that matter what is meant by 'man')? True both the Greek term *gyne* and the English term 'woman' refer to a human being of female gender. But the connotations of both terms are far more extensive, and there is no certainty that what was brought to mind by the word '*gyne*' in fifth- and fourth-century B. C. Athens was the same as

classification of what it is to be a woman alters and fluctuates with what is valued in the concept of gender in a political and social system. Since this is an examination of an ancient text, the ambiguity of these terms should be kept in mind throughout the following discussion.

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what is brought to mind by the word 'woman' in contemporary western society -- not, that is, unless the meaning of the words is restricted to nothing other than a human being who is biologically female." Roger Just, Women in Athenian Law and Life (New York: Routledge Classical Studies, 1989), p. 7.

Chapter One: The Context of the Commentary on Book V

The Republic is Plato's most extensive dialogue concerning justice and the foundation of politics. Yet until the early 1970s, commentators rarely examined Plato's proposal that women could be political rulers. The recent interest in Plato's proposals emerges out of two historical contexts. The first context is found in the concerns of Platonic scholarship since the Second World War. This scholarship questioned whether Plato's city in speech was the intellectual foundation of modern totalitarian, or liberal, political theory. The new interest in Plato's understanding of women adopts the assumptions of this previous debate. The second important context was the political atmosphere of the woman's movement. This movement was connected to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and was very active by the late 1960s. Its main concern was the elimination of patriarchal barriers that excluded women from roles in education, commerce, and politics and confined them to familial relationships. Feminist political theorists, engaged in the issues of the women's liberation movement, turned their attention to Plato's examination of the role of women in the guardian class in Book V. Thus, to understand the content of the feminist debate about Plato's proposals for the role of women, it is first necessary to understand the context in which this controversy developed.

Platonic Scholarship Prior to The Feminist Debate

The feminist interpretation of Plato emerges during an atmosphere of intense Platonic debate.[1] Following the Second World War and the development of the Cold War, western political theorists were engaged in a debate about the character of totalitarian regimes and the philosophical principles upon which they were founded. Plato's thought became the center of a controversy concerning the philosophical foundation of totalitarian principles. On one side of this controversy is the interpretation that Plato's Republic is an attempt to provide a political program that is "fundamentally identical with totalitarianism."[2] The other side argues that the Republic is not a blueprint for modern totalitarianism, but an "intellectual ancestor of modern democracy."[3] As diametrically opposed as these two views appear to be, they establish the framework of the feminist interpretation. The primary influence of the liberal versus totalitarian debate is that it understands Platonic thought through the assumptions of the liberal-democratic tradition. Second, theorists on both sides of this debate interpret the city in speech as Plato's argument for an ideal political system, which he

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[1]Before the 1970s, there was limited scholarship interested in Plato's proposals concerning female guardians. Adela Adam, considered the earliest feminist commentator on Plato, published Plato: Moral and Political Ideas, in 1913. Yet, it was not until the second period of the women's movement in the 1960s that Plato's understanding of women received systematic and involved attention.

[2]Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 87.

[3]Thomas Landon Thorson, "Introduction," in Plato: Totalitarian or Democrat? Thomas Landon Thorson, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963), p. 10.

intends to be both desirable and possible.[4] To understand the feminist interpretation of the Republic, examining the assumptions of the previous debate which it adopts is important.

Karl Popper was the main proponent of the interpretation that Platonic thought was the forefather of totalitarianism. Popper wrote The Open Society and its Enemies to expose that "we call nowadays totalitarianism belongs to a tradition which is just as old or just as young as civilization itself."[5] The history of civilization is a transition from a closed or tribal society to an open society, which is characterized by free critical thinking, humanitarianism, equality and freedom. An example of the open society is the liberal democratic tradition.[6] Conversely, the modern totalitarian regimes represent the closed society and are found in the social philosophies that Popper calls historicism. Historicism is a prophetic outlook which is non-rational and develops an antagonistic attitude toward the world when it fails to conform with its perfectionist ideals. Rather than arguing for a reasoned response to the problems of social life, historicism preaches a doctrine of submission to the forces that rule society. The very act of preaching such submission, for Popper, "(is) bound to be, whether they like it or not, instrumental in bringing these events about."[7] Hence, the danger that lies in the historicist attitude is

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[4]There is third school of Platonic scholarship during the period following the Second World War. This school held that Plato's Republic is not intended as an ideal city, but must be read in the context of a dramatic dialogue between Socrates and his young interlocutors. This interpretation understands the city in speech to be neither desirable, nor possible. The feminist response to this school will be examined in detail in Chapter Two.

[5]Popper, p. 1.

[6]Popper, p. 9.

[7]Popper, p. 4.

not only the prediction of human impotence, but also the threat of creating a totalitarian revolt against civilization.

Platonic thought is a threat to the open society of liberal-democracies, because Plato's theory of justice is part of a tradition of totalitarianism. The principle conditions which establish totalitarian theory are the strict division of the classes, the identification of the fate of the state with the ruling class, the monopoly of virtues within this ruling class, the censorship of intellectual activities, and the drive for complete self-sufficiency.[8] Any political program that sets up a rigid authoritarian class rule and reflects the above conditions is one that Popper describes as totalitarianism. Plato's proposals in the Republic, according to Popper, fulfilled these requirements. Furthermore, he suggests that Plato's social theory arrests all social change in order to make the city an exact copy of the original idea of the city.[9] This idea was located in the tribal patriarchy of class rule of the wise over the ignorant many.

Popper's examination of the Platonic notion of justice reveals the standard upon which he judges the proposals. According to Popper, even if Plato establishes political rule based on a requirement of wisdom and virtuous behavior, it is still a justification of a political system made in the best interest of the state and not of the individual. In addition, Popper maintains that Plato disguises his authoritarian rule with the claim that the rule of the wise is just. Popper criticizes Plato for equating justice with rule of the

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[8]Popper, p. 86.
[9]Popper, p. 89.

wise, since this is essentially a non-egalitarian proposal. True justice is not synonymous with class rule; it is an "equal distribution of the burden of citizenship, equal treatment of citizens before the law (if laws are non-discriminatory), impartiality of the legal system and equal share in advantages and burden of membership."[10] This definition of justice is found in liberal principles that argue "every man ought to be given . . . the right to model his life, himself, as far as this does not interfere too much with others."[11] In short, Popper's denunciation of Plato's political philosophy is based on the idea that it proposes a non-egalitarian, non-liberal, non-individualistic focus for political rule.

Popper also emphasizes that Plato presented the city in speech as an ideal order intended to establish an actual political regime. Popper states this interpretation with the concise statement that "the Republic . . . was meant by its author not so much as a theoretical treatise, but as a topical political manifesto."[12] Furthermore, Popper interprets the Platonic proposals in the later dialogue the Laws, as an indication that Plato had softened and "had given up all hope of realizing his political ideal in all its glory."[13] He understands Plato's political philosophy as a utopian blueprint, because it is part of the historicist approach which predicts future ends and demands that ultimate political aims are to be decided before any political action is possible. Such a program

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[10]Popper, pp. 89-90.
[11]Popper, p. 165.
[12]Popper, p. 153.
[13]Popper, p. 103.

is fundamentally totalitarian, since in order to implement such a blueprint, there must be a strong centralized rule of the few. Through the interpretation of Plato's theory as totalitarian, Popper reveals another important assumption in his analysis of the Republic. This assumption is that all aspects of the city in speech, including the role of women in the guardian class, are literal political proposals.[14] A literal interpretation, such as Popper's, is based on the idea that the proposals in the Republic represent a desirable and possible political order.

Another modern theorist who viewed Plato as the founder of totalitarian theory was R.H.S. Crossman. Crossman, although less vehement in his denunciation of Plato's philosophy in comparison to Popper, agreed with Popper on two main tenets. First, he considered Plato's philosophy anti-democratic and at odds with liberal principles of political rule. Plato developed anti-democratic sentiments, according to Crossman, from his aristocratic background and his conviction that "the peasant, the craftsman, and the shopkeeper were incapable of political responsibility."[15] Furthermore, he argued that Plato criticized democracy as a misguided political system because the demagogues simply pandered to the worse aspects of the incompetent masses. In order to establish the authority of a morally superior ruler, Plato had to

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[14]Ironically, Popper remains silent on Plato's inclusion of women in the ruling class. Although not liberal-democratic, Plato's radical notions regarding women can be interpreted as reflecting a far more twentieth-century understanding of egalitarianism than Popper is willing to grant Plato. This point will be analysed in greater detail in the following chapter.

[15]R.H.S. Crossman, "Plato and the Perfect State," in Plato: Totalitarian or Democrat? T. L. Thorson, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963), p. 19.

eliminate all notions of egalitarian politics. This ruler "must always be with us: he must direct our whole lives, plan our existence, and order our thoughts and emotions as well as our bodies."[16] The noble lie is nothing more than propaganda, used as a method of persuasion for those who do not suit the rule of reason. Thus, argues Crossman:

> Plato's philosophy is the most savage and most profound attack upon liberal ideas which history can show. It denies every axiom of "progressive" thought and challenges all its fondest ideals. Equality, freedom, self-government -- all are condemned as illusions which can be held only by idealists whose sympathies are stronger than their sense.[17]

Crossman also agreed with Popper's interpretation that Plato's city in speech is an ideal state. According to Crossman, Plato intended the Republic to be a "perfect state in which every citizen was happy."[18] Furthermore, Crossman proposed that Plato established the Academy to produce statesmen who would become political specialists and rule as tyrants.[19] The city in speech was not a transcendent ideal, but contained practical instruments of government. Modern totalitarian regimes utilized these instruments, such as the noble lie or state sanctioned propaganda, to appeal to the

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[16]Crossman, p. 33.
[17]Crossman, p. 39.
[18]Crossman, p. 26.
[19]Plato established the Academy in 387 BCE, outside the walls of Athens. The idea common to both Crossman and Popper is that one of Plato's intentions in founding the Academy was to create "a training ground for young men of leisured classes, who were destined to a political career in their home cities." The evidence they provide for this argument is that nine tyrants of various Greek cities where at once Plato's pupils. Refer to Crossman, pp. 24-25, Popper, pp. 136-137.

emotions of their citizens. Although the rulers of these regimes were not the philosopher-kings of Plato's city, they did employ some techniques practised in the city in speech. Thus for Crossman, Plato's thought is similar to modern totalitarian practices and the principles on which they were founded.

Opposed to Popper and Crossman's interpretation of Plato as the forefather of modern totalitarianism are a group of scholars who argue that this understanding misinterprets Plato's political philosophy. They attack Popper and Crossman's assumption that Plato's wise ruler can be equated with the leadership of the modern totalitarian regimes. Instead, they argue that Plato actually provides a foundation for important liberal concepts, including natural law theory and the understanding that freedom was necessary for the development of moral choice. What is remarkable about this aspect of the debate is that, although these theorists oppose the interpretation of Crossman and Popper, they evaluate Plato's philosophy on the same standards of liberal-democratic principles. In addition, they also agree with the interpretation that Plato intended the city in speech as a proposal for creating an actual regime.

One of the most interesting attacks on Popper is found in John Wild's argument that Platonic thought belongs to the tradition of natural law. Contrary to the charge that Plato was an enemy of democracy, Wild attests that Plato opposed the ruthless imperialism and militarism of Athenian policy in the last years of the Peloponnesian war. Furthermore, Plato's criticism of his own political regime does not necessarily

translate into support for the city of Sparta, nor does it necessarily contradict the premises of modern democracy. Wild understands modern democratic principles to be founded on a distrust of unchecked political power, an abolition of hereditary political tenure, and fundamental equality under God. These principles are found most clearly in an articulated theory of natural law which is "not prescribed by any ruler, class, or arbitrary constitution, but by nature itself and the cosmic powers which produce man"[20] For Wild, the Republic lacked certain elements such as checks on tyranny and faith in the common man, yet Plato's philosopher-kings were not arbitrary rulers. They were guardians of a law of nature which rational discourse discovered. Moreover, these eternal, rationally discovered principles established a morality which was available to all men, since "they all possessed a partly rational nature in common."[21] According to Wild, the notion that Plato instituted the rule of an arbitrary totalitarian regime is misguided. Plato's discussion of the city in speech may contain various aspects which are not compatible with liberal-democratic thought, but it is not fundamentally anti-liberal. Instead, he traces important philosophical and ethical principles of modern liberal theory to Platonic thought.

Another philosopher who argued that Platonic thought was not the theoretical foundation for totalitarianism is H. B. Acton. Acton identifies fascism with the

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[20]John Wild, "Plato as an Enemy of Democracy: A Rejoinder," in Plato: Totalitarian or Democrat? Thomas Landon Thorson, ed. (Englewood Cliffs NJ.: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963), p. 112.

[21]Wild, p. 114.

irrational revolt against reason. " Fascists, themselves, "Acton argues, "in so far as they are aware of their intellectual position, would admit their opposition to rationalism."[22] Such a theoretical position was entirely contrary to Plato's proposition that "the Good is discoverable by the intelligence, and is hence the same for all rational beings."[23] Plato's notion of fixed intelligible values cannot be reconciled with the fascist notion that the leader's opinion is the ultimate criterion of right and wrong. Acton's argument is not as extensive as Wild, but he does identify Plato's philosophy with modern liberalism. He distinguishes some similarities between fascist principles and Platonic thought, such as an inevitable hierarchical organization of the state and the inability properly to educate the average man for political rule. Yet, such identifications are not sufficient to establish Plato as a forefather of totalitarian thought, especially when Plato tempers them with a notion of fixed, intelligible values.

John H. Hallowell argues that the transition from democracy to tyranny, for Plato, is as a process of individual and social degeneration. This degeneration takes place when passions triumph over reason and freedom is reduced to license. True liberty, according to Hallowell, "requires both the knowledge of the good and the will to choose the good when known."[24] The democratic institutions of modern states find

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[22]H.B. Acton, "The Alleged Fascism of Plato," in Plato, Popper, and Politics Renford Bambrough, ed. (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), p. 302.

[23]Acton, p. 307.

[24]John Hallowell, "Plato and the Moral Foundation of Democracy," in Plato: Totalitarian or Democrat? T. L. Thorson, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1963), p. 132.

their essential meaning in the maintenance and increase of this notion of human freedom. The institutions are not ultimate ends in themselves, but a means for establishing true liberty. For Hallowell, the arguments in Plato's Republic are not essentially at odds with liberal democracy. Plato, he argued, believed that a coincidence of political power and the love of the good would rule over an ideal city. The fundamental difference with this view and modern democratic theory is "the faith underlying modern democracy that all men may aspire to that life of virtue Plato would restrict to the few."[25] Furthermore, the tyrannical state of an individual, or a society, is a degeneration from this notion of liberty to a slavery to the passions. This regime dramatically opposes Plato's notion of a philosopher-king or of the good regime.

The debate among scholars concerning Plato's liberal or democratic sympathies reflects the complexity of the Republic. On the one hand, Plato's city in speech contains elements of an egalitarian theory, as exemplified in Acton's idea that all human beings possess the rationality necessary to discover universal principles. On the other hand, Plato also creates a city where the rulers possess political power based on a hierarchical system. Yet, both of the positions in this debate interpret Plato's Republic from the standpoint of whether he supports, or fundamentally opposes, liberal democratic principles. The importance of liberal versus totalitarian controversy is that it establishes the framework of liberal assumptions adopted by many later

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[25]Hallowell, p. 133.

commentators. As will be discussed in the following chapter, those theorists, who interpret Plato as a feminist, argue that he is a supporter of feminist principles of gender equality.[26] Conversely, those who disagree that Plato's proposals are sympathetic to feminism, argue that Plato has no such egalitarian sympathies.

The debate among Platonic scholars, following the Second World War, has a significant implication for understanding the later feminist interpretation. The feminist interpreters focus on the same philosophical assumptions as this previous debate. In addition, the intention behind their interest in Plato's proposals is similar. The debate which surrounds Platonic interpretation reveals important public issues of the historical period of that interpretation. For example, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, political commentators in England "consistently pointed to Athens as a key example of civic lawlessness, political disorder, and the absence of personal security and . . . intended their books to serve as unabashedly antidemocratic polemics."[27] Philosophical interest in the eighteenth century centered on proving the inherent evil of republicanism and justifying the benefits of monarchy. It was the rise of fascist regimes that generated the controversy concerning Plato's totalitarian sympathies. Thus, the concerns of Platonic scholarship reflect the general concerns of current issues

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[26]Interestingly, the liberal versus totalitarian debate does not discuss Plato's proposal concerning the extension of the right to rule to some women. Only John Wild suggests that Plato's philosophy recognize a doctrine of rights and that Plato's theory extended these rights to women. Wild, p. 116.

[27]Frank M. Turner, The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 189.

in political and social policy. This analysis will now turn to why, in the early 1970s, the interest in Plato's proposals concerning women came to the forefront of Platonic scholarship.

The Political and Social Issues of Feminist Platonic Scholarship

The women's movement, concerned with altering the role of women in society and expanding their influence in the political system, is divided into two distinct periods.[28] The first period was the women's suffrage movement of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Following the extension of full voting privileges to women, there was a languishing interest in women's issues until the second period which began in the 1960s. This second period grew out of a connection to the issues and theoretical assumptions of the Civil Rights Movement.[29] By the late 1960s, the woman's movement became involved with the development of essential aspects of public policy. Two important issues for women were equal wages for similar jobs in the labour force and equal access to education. Both issues reflect an assumption that we should extend notions of equality to women, since women possess the same

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[28]Scholarship on the women's movements refers to these two historical periods as the first and second waves. To avoid confusing this terminology with Plato's reference to the three waves in Book V, the term 'wave' has been replaced with the term 'period'.

[29]Rochelle Gatlin, American Women Since 1945 (Jackson Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 1987), p. 77.

potential as men. For this reason, women should not be segregated into certain social or economic roles because of biological differences. A third issue focused on women's control of reproduction by greater access to birth control and abortions, as well as creation of child-care centers. The fourth issue concerned the demand to establish separate areas of education devoted exclusively to the experiences of women, which some feminists understood to be profoundly different from men. These last two issues reflect the assumption that there is a significant difference between men and women. The ambiguity in promoting both "sameness" and "difference" points to the paradoxical problem of feminist theory and of the feminist debate about Plato's proposals in Book V.

It is important to outline the main issues which developed in the feminist movement in order to establish a context for feminist Platonic scholarship. In the early 1960s, women were a politically unorganized majority, but hardly the contented majority propagated by the myth of the 1950s happy housewife heroine.[30] At the same time as there was a serious under-representation of women in positions of economic and political power, there was also a strong discontent with traditional exclusion of minorities in the decision making process of American politics. The first organized articulation of this dissatisfaction was not concerned with the position of women, but

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[30]In 1960, thirty-six percent of women more than sixteen worked outside their homes in non-career occupations in factories and as domestics, secretaries, teachers, and nurses. For further information, refer to Barbara Sinclair Deckard, The Women's Movement (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), pp. 339-342.

with the discontent of African-Americans expressed in the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, the Civil Rights Movement increased politicization of college students and "many young women learned both the rhetoric and the organization of protest."[31]

The 1960s provided an environment for the resurgence of the women's movement. There were rapid technological advances, such as effective birth control, which allowed women to delay marriage and motherhood; this allowed for more leisure time and greater freedom. The second period of the women's movement developed in an atmosphere which diminished the role of the family in women's lives.[32] Early proponents of the 1960s' women's movement were "primarily white, middle-class women who apprentice in the Civil Rights Movement during their college days and had a degree of wealth which allowed them access to the new technologies."[33] They were supporters of liberal doctrines that stressed that women had the same capacities as men and considered gender irrelevant in the participation of individuals in society. They criticized the segregation of genders into certain roles by virtue of reproductive roles or familial obligations. To argue these points, the early leaders of second period of the women's movement emphasized the right of women to self-determination, equal access to the labour market, and a liberation from the constraints of family obligations.[34]

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[31]Deckard, p. 342.

[32]Joyce Gelb and Marian L. Palley, Women and Public Policies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 18.

[33]Gatlin, p. 78.

[34]Plato also proposed a connection between the notion of gender equality and the destruction of the family, with his proposal of the community of women and children in Book V. Plato's understanding of the link between these two issues will be developed further in the third chapter of this analysis.

The focus of the women's movement underscores its adoption of liberal theory. One of the earliest successes was the ratification of the Equal Pay Act of 1963. This act made it mandatory to pay men and women equally for any of the jobs which it covered. Yet, like most of the early successes of feminist lobbying, this Act was tempered by a moderate report which the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women released in the same year. This report argued for a voluntary acceptance of equal opportunity for women and emphasized that women were fundamentally responsible for homemaking. Therefore, although there was a recognition that women had an equal right to employment, the difference in a woman's reproduction function was the justification for a limitation of this right. This inconsistent treatment of women's issues emphasized the lack of cohesion and the theoretical tension which exists in the women's movement. On the one hand, the potential of women was considered equal to men and, therefore, women could perform a variety of roles from which they were traditionally excluded. This argument competed with the idea that women were significantly different from men and, therefore, women and men should have different roles. This tension leads to diverse and often contradictory theories of feminism and the movements which they inspired. The liberal-feminist and the moderate wing of the movement represented the former response, which focused on the essential "sameness" of men and women. The latter response found expression in a variety of theories of radical feminism.

In 1965, the National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed to combat gender discrimination and to promote the enforcement of Title VII, which made it illegal to discriminate against women in hiring and promotions.[35] This organization became the primary association for the moderate wing of the women's movement. It is worthwhile to quote in entirety the eight principles of their Bill of Rights, drafted at the 1967 convention, as it emphasizes the important issues of the moderate movement:

1) an equal rights amendment to the constitution
2) enforcement of sex-based employment discrimination
3) maternity leave rights and social security benefits
4) tax deductions for child and home care expenses
5) establishment of child care centers
6) equal and unsegregated education
7) equal job training opportunities and allowance for poverty-stricken women
8) right of women to their reproductive lives.[36]

These proposals of NOW reveal the basic assumptions underlying their protest. The first of these assumptions is the liberal belief in self-determination for women in political, economic, and social roles. In order to adopt this assumption, women must claim that "first and foremost, (they) are members of the human species and therefore have the rights due to all human beings."[37] Each individual should be able to determine

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[35]Deckard, pp. 342-348.

[36]Joyce Gelb and Marian L. Palley, p. 30.

[37]Rosalind Delmar, "What is Feminism?" in What is Feminism? Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), p. 18.

his or her social and political role. The second assumption is that government should enforce these rights and eliminate any discrimination which hinders the full participation of women in economic and public institutions.

Underlying the liberal feminist argument is the assumption that the qualification for a particular function should be based in an individual's competence regarding that specific function. Criteria such as race, religion, gender, or ancestry are not normally about the assessment of potential. For this reason, each individual should be considered separately so that "an outstanding individual should not be penalized for deficiencies that her sex as a whole might possess."[38] In order to have the liberty to determine this role, liberal feminists focused on issues which gave women freedom to control their reproductive capacities. There was a demand for access to abortion as well as the creation of institutions to care for children. This would allow women the freedom to pursue occupations other than the traditional role of wife and mother. This belief in individual freedom of self-determination translates to public pressure in important areas of policy: property rights, equal rights in education and career opportunities, and family planning. There is a focus on similarities between men and women. These similarities become the philosophical justification for the extension of women's roles in the public world.

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[38]Alison Jagger, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," in Feminism and Philosophy M. Vetterling-Braggin, F. Elliston, and J. English, eds. (Totawa: Littlefield, Adams, and Company, 1977), p. 7.

As much as NOW represented the views of the liberals and moderates in the women's movement, it was a thoroughly unsatisfactory organization by the standards of the radical wing of the movement. This movement identified more closely with the left-wing of the Civil Rights Movement and did not set up independent women's organizations until the late 1960s. There were two responses by the left-wing of the women's movement. The first, known as Marxist feminism, understood women's issues within the larger struggle of restructuring society into a communist model. The classical Marxist-feminists viewed the oppression of women as a direct result of the institution of private property and monogamous marriage designed to consolidate wealth into hands of the few. The man was supreme authority in his family and he delegated to his wife the role of propagating future heirs for his property. For Marxist feminists, the first condition for women's liberation was to bring women into public industry and free them from financial independence on their husbands. Furthermore, women's liberation was dependent on the state assuming the responsibilities and functions that the family previously performed, such as child care and education.[39]

Dissatisfied with this analysis, later socialist feminists altered the classic Marxist approach. Although they agreed that women's liberation required the entry into public production, they did not see this as a sufficient condition for liberation. This group believed that sexism would continue to exist despite public ownership of property. The

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[39]Jagger, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," pp. 9-10.

change in family relationships was not primarily for economic liberation, but for the development of women's consciousness. For this group, the necessary condition for women's liberation was "direct cultural action in order to develop a specifically feminist consciousness in addition to transforming the economic base."[40] The focus of later socialist feminists was the idea that important subjective factors created revolutionary change. Liberation would require a total transformation of all relationships, not only economic but also sexual and familial. In this theory, women were "different" from men and liberation was dependent upon a recognition of this difference.

Radical feminism saw the women's movement not as a subsidiary issue of the Civil Rights Movement or of Marxist engineering, instead they argued the oppression of women was the essential problem of social injustice. Radical feminists also rejected a theory which only extends rights, which men now enjoy, to women. Such theories, they argued, entrenched inequalities in the existing patriarchal structure. It is not greater access to the male world that radical feminists demand, but an elimination of that world by a complete change in the dependent role of wife, mother and homemaker.[41] This change was necessary because the roots of women's oppression, for radical feminists, are found in the biological differences between men and women. Women's subjection lies in the weakness which results from childbirth and dependence

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[40]Jagger, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," p. 17.
[41]Gatlin, pp. 130-131.

on men for physical survival. Radical feminists understand the family as a biological, not economic structure. Liberation of women, therefore, would require a biological revolution, in which technological intervention would eliminate the fundamental inequality of bearing or raising children.[42]

Radical feminist theory found expression in small groups of women who were dissatisfied with the decision-making structure of NOW. They criticized the hierarchical structure of moderate organizations as elitist and essentially masculine in conception. Instead, they formed cooperative groups with no formal structure organized to emphasize female modes of conflict resolution. One such group, which called itself "the Feminists," was established to fight against "oppression in male and female role divisions and to define their goal in the annihilation of sex roles."[43] Their protests centered on fighting for the right to abortion and destruction of marriage, which they claimed was a slavery like practice that entrenched the inequalities between men and women.[44] Unlike the liberal feminist demand to extend of equality rights to women, the radical feminist argued for a massive restructuring of all social relationships and a rejection of patriarchal power in all forms -- including the military, universities, government, romantic love, all literary works by men, and above all the notion of the family.[45] The radical movement emphasized the differences between men

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[42]Jagger, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," p. 13.
[43]Deckard, p. 354.
[44]Deckard, p. 355.
[45]Gatlin, p. 130.

and women. The ways women differed from men were not understood as inferior; instead, they created specific feminine values. Latter radical groups, such as Lesbian Separatists, even argued for separate and matriarchal societies which excluded men.[46] Radical feminism focused not on the "sameness" of the genders, but instead argued for a "valorization of female being."[47]

Yet, feminists remained united by the belief that the position of women in society is unjust, because the treatment of women is unequal and inferior to men. Radical, socialist, and liberal feminists accept the assumption that gender roles, or the position of women in society, are constructed socially and can be disassembled and reorganized. The liberal feminists argue that the position of women is fundamentally unjust, because their natures are not different from men. For this reason, social and political institutions should not be discriminatory. Radical feminists argue that the position of women is fundamentally unjust, because the very structures of society are masculine and the difference in female natures justifies an entirely new set of social structures. What both interpretations reject is that the role of women in society is based on a concept of natural and biological necessity that is beyond the control of human intervention. Feminist theory would argue that women, like all human beings, can discover and alter the conditions of humanity in order to fulfill individual or

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[46]Gatlin, p. 134-35.

[47]Nancy F. Cott, "Feminist Theory and Feminist Movements: the Past before Us," in What is Feminism? Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, eds. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1986), p. 59.

collectivist goals. There is an agreement on the basic assumption that human beings are able to alter these relationships.

The debate concerning Plato's proposals for female guardians in Book V is connected to these feminist issues. The discussion of Plato's first wave is important, because it includes elements which are essential to the feminist understanding of gender equality. The first issue is the identification of the similarity of natures of both female and male guardians, "since they (female guardians) are competent and akin to the men in their nature."[48] It is education and potential that are essential in the development of character suitable for a particular occupation. For this reason, Plato sets up a guardian class consisting of both men and women. This aspect of Platonic thought is used to support the argument that Plato would be sympathetic to feminist policies which argued for equality of opportunity for employment and education. Yet, Plato also raises the idea that there exists biological differences between men and women. Not only do men and women have different reproductive functions, but that in the performance of all functions women are weaker than men.[49] This distinction of differences provides a difficulty in assigning the same occupations to both men and women, since one's sex would be relevant in the potential for an occupation. Plato's city in speech includes a

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[48]Plato, The Republic of Plato Allan Bloom, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1968), line 456b. All quotations from the Republic will hereafter be from Allan Bloom's translations unless otherwise stated.

[49]On line 454e, Plato describes the significant difference between men and women as dissimilar sexual or reproductive roles, in which "the male mounts and the female bears." Again, on line 455e, Socrates describes a further distinction between men and women who "participate according to nature in all practices . . . but in all of them woman is weaker than man." Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 454e, 455e.

discussion of the important tensions of the diverse feminist theories of gender equality and of the issues and concerns of the second period of women's movement.

Conclusion

The debate concerning Plato's treatment of women in the city in speech originates in two important contexts. First, this debate emerges within a thirty-year controversy concerning Plato's totalitarian or liberal sympathies. The assumptions of this previous controversy provided the framework for the commentators on Plato's proposal for female guardians. Plato is assessed as a supporter, or an opponent, of feminism based on whether the commentator focused on liberal or non-liberal elements in his theory. The feminist commentators also accepted the previous interpretation of the city in speech as a literal political manifesto. The second context was the historical development of the second period of the women's movement in the 1960s. This movement was based on a rejection of the traditional exclusion of women from certain occupations because of their sex. The woman's movement demanded a change in women's roles in education, commerce and politics as well as family relationships. With these two contexts as a foundation, feminist commentators turned their attention to Plato's examination of the role of women in the first wave of Book V.

Chapter Two: Commentary on Plato's Proposals in Book V

This chapter presents the debate on the proposal for female guardians which Plato introduced in the first wave of the argument in Book V. Modern commentators, who examine this proposal, are assigned to one of four main categories. These categories were created by assessing the commentator's interpretation of Plato on two main questions; first, whether the proposal is considered to be sympathetic to concerns and issues of modern feminism and second, whether Plato's intention was a literal attempt to create a political order. Those who interpret Plato as a feminist and those who interpret him as opposed to feminism assess the proposal by means of classical liberal criteria, such as equality of rights, equality of human beings, individualism, and social justice. These two categories also agree that Plato intended his city in speech to be a literal examination of a possible and ideal city. Another category consists of commentators who interpret Plato's proposal as intended for a purpose other than gender equality, such as for the unification of the public and private spheres. For this category, although Plato did not introduce female guardians to liberate women, the proposal is not ultimately antithetical to feminist concerns. They also interpret the proposal as a literal examination of an ideal city, which is intended to establish harmony between conflicting elements in society. The final category differs from the

other three. This category interprets Plato to be both unconcerned with feminist issues and not intend the proposal literally. Instead, the commentators in this category argue that Plato introduces female guardians to question political idealism.

Plato: The Feminist

This category of commentators argues that Plato intended the proposal to create a perfectly just city where all members can fulfill the occupation that naturally most suits them. Justice, as defined by Plato in Book IV, is that "each one must practice one of the functions in the city, that one for which his nature made him naturally most fit."[1] In Book V, Socrates extends this definition, with regard to defence and rule of the city, to include women as well as men. Women, in the city in speech, are emancipated from the duties of housework, child care, and property maintenance and take their place in politics and battle. They assume Plato made this change in the role of women under the banner of justice. Plato is a feminist, for many commentators, because he was the "first advocate in human history (to propose) a measure of gender equality."[2] This interpretation of gender equality is based on an understanding of the similarities between men and women. In addition, the exclusion of women from certain

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[1]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 433a.

[2]Natalie Harris Bluestone, Woman and the Ideal Society (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), p. 3.

occupations is considered unjust. The principles used to evaluate Plato's proposal are similar to those employed by the previous interpreters who assessed Plato as a liberal. Plato is a supporter of feminism, because he supports the liberal principles of equality, individualism, equal access to employment and education, and social justice.

In 1973, Christine Pierce published the first article focusing on Plato's feminist sympathies. In this article, Pierce argues that Plato introduces women into the city in speech to provide equal opportunities for men and women to excel to their potentials. Plato does this, she contends, by making an argument for judging a person's talent based not on their sex, but on their own merits. The basis for her argument is the section in which Socrates and Glaucon agree that there is no occupation which naturally suits women, not even "weaving and the care of baked and boiled dishes."[3] To Pierce, this meant that ultimately there is no occupation which is sex-specific, or belongs to a woman because she is a woman or conversely, to a man because he is a man. This includes even those occupations which traditionally belonged to a woman based on her femininity. Pierce interprets Plato's notion of *physis* as a potential which is detached from one's sex. Plato's understanding of sex differences, argues Pierce, is that these differences are as relevant to assessing an individual's potential as the differences in the length of his or her hair.[4] Pierce interprets Plato's understanding of *physis* to be based

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[3]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 455c-456d.

[4]Pierce is referring here to the Republic, line 454c, where Socrates maintains that determining the nature or potential of a shoemaker by whether he had long hair or was bald would be ridiculous.

on individual evaluations. A woman's *physis* could the same as a man's because, "women were included in the class of human beings, their nature and goodness were the same as a man's."[5] There is, therefore, underlying Pierce's interpretation an argument in Plato's Republic for the notion of equality, specifically in this case for women, but logically one could extend this argument to apply to all human beings.

For Pierce, Plato's argument for the establishment of occupations based solely on merit accommodates what later commentators will call the anti-feminist principle.[6] The anti-feminist principle refers to Socrates' argument that woman's nature is inferior to man's nature in all pursuits.[7] Pierce's interpretation of this principle is that men may be better than women in general, but that generalizations are not relevant in particular cases.[8] It is the particular case where talent or potential is judged, be the person male or female. Ultimately, in Pierce's understanding, Plato is advocating a political system where it is the individual and not a class or sex, which defines one's proper place in the society. Plato is a feminist, she argues, because the proposal is a vindication of

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[5] Christine Pierce, "Equality: Republic V," in The Monist vol. 57 (1973), p. 7.

[6]The term 'anti-feminist principle' was coined by Barbara and George Tovey in the article "Women's Philosophical Friends and Enemies," in The Social Science Quarterly vol. 55, no 3 (1974-75), p. 596.

[7]This passage will become the focus of the debate concerning Plato's seriousness regarding the proposals. The first relevant line is 455c, in which Socrates questions Glaucon with the statement, "do you know of anything that is practised by human beings in which the class of men doesn't excel that of women." The second line 455e, states that "woman participates according to nature in all practices, and man in all, but in all of them woman is weaker than man." Bloom correctly translates the second passage using the singular English nouns woman and man for the Greek *gyne* and *andros*. Other translators, such as Paul Shorey, will incorrectly translate the singular Greek nouns to the plural in English. This mistranslation will provide further evidence for the argument that in this section Plato is attempting to establish that women, as a class, are inferior to men as a class, but the best individual could be a woman.

[8]Pierce, p. 2.

women and supports the liberal principle that each person should be at liberty to fulfill his or her potential.

Pierce also believes that Plato is a feminist because he supports sex equality in education. The political program in the city in speech assesses an individual's potential through "equal opportunity education (which) provides the empirical mechanism to measure the abilities of each individual, male or female."[9] It is through proper educational programs that the potential, or *physis*, of the individual can be determined and then directed toward the proper sphere for his or her nature. This is only possible if women receive the same training as men. Education, therefore, provides the method that allows women to develop their latent potential. Equal access to education, as was discussed in the previous chapter, was a key issue of the second period of feminist movement.

Another facet in which Pierce's argument provides the prototype of the feminist commentary is her exclusive focus on the first wave of Book V and her subsequent dismissal of any connection between this wave and the following two waves.[10] Pierce maintains that Plato distinguishes among the waves and between the relative immensity of some waves in comparison to others. "Implementing justice," she comments, "by the elimination of arbitrary criteria for social roles must be separated from the issue of

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[9]Pierce, p. 3.
[10]Pierce, p. 5.

marriage and family relations."[11] For this reason, although sex equality may be related to changes in the structure of the family, any corresponding changes to the family do not have to reflect the communal relations which Plato suggests. In other words, it is possible to argue for sex equality and to segregate this notion from all of the other proposals, or consequences, that Plato presents in Book V. Pierce establishes Plato's feminism on a circumscribed reading of the first wave of Book V and an assessment that this wave supports modern feminist issues and understanding of human nature.

Brian Calvert agrees with Christine Pierce's emphasis on elements of Book V that give weight to individualism, self-development, and equality. The main focus of Calvert's argument is the dispute over Plato's intentions regarding sex equality. In the first section of Plato's argument, women can rule, because they have the same natural capacities as men. Sex differences do not disqualify a woman from the ability to guard and rule in the city.[12] The foundation of this argument is Socrates' assertion that gender is as relevant in the skill of a ruler, as the length of hair is relevant to the skill of a cobbler. In this first argument, Plato apparently reveals himself to be appealing to "justice and . . . (as) an advocate of the rights of women."[13]

The second argument, the anti-feminist principle, highlights Plato's notion that men are superior to women. Calvert states that it is this second argument which results

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[11]Pierce, p. 6.
[12]Brian Calvert, "Plato and the Equality of Women," in Phoenix vol. 29 (1975), p. 232.
[13]Calvert, p. 231.

in the misogynist reading of Plato. Such a reading, though, would be contradictory to the previous principle of justice that Plato proposed in the first argument. For Calvert, the anti-feminist principle is not as contradictory to the original argument as it appears. Even if one accepts the notion that men are superior to women in all cases, this does not mean that every man is superior to every woman. Once again, the commentator interprets this passage as an argument concerning a generalization and not as a distributive claim that the very best woman is always inferior to the best man.[14] It is proposed, Calvert suggests, to appease the chauvinistic tendencies in his audience and to get Glaucon to accept the idea that women would be admitted into the guardian class.[15] For Calvert, the anti-feminist principle is a rhetorical technique introduced to convince a hesitant male audience to accept the demands of justice; this includes allowing women, if they are talented, to rule.

Steven Burns supports Calvert's assessment of Plato's feminism, since he also agrees that Plato's notions create a political system where each individual can develop his or her potential. Burns interprets the idea of *physis* as a potential that exists in different degrees in each individual. It may be true that men on average are stronger than women, but this does not disallow the possibility that the strongest individual could be a woman.[16] Furthermore, for both Burns and Calvert, even if it is true that

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[14]Calvert, p. 236.

[15]Calvert, p. 240.

[16]Steven Burns, "Women in Bloom," in Dialogue vol. 23 (1984), p. 237.

men are generally physical stronger than women, this does not logically entail that men are stronger mentally, emotionally, or morally.[17] Political rule, especially if one accepts the third wave of the philosopher-king, is based on intellectual and not physical strength. The *physis*, or potential, of men and women for political rule is equal. Even Plato's own negative comments against women cannot take precedence over the logical necessity of this argument. For Calvert and Burns, Plato is a feminist, because giving similar potential the same education and opportunity to perform the same functions is just.

Barbara and George Tovey argue that Plato's support for feminist issues does not develop out of a concern for the liberation of women, but for the liberation of moral and intellectual virtues. Tovey and Tovey interpret Plato's argument for identical virtues in men and women to mean that the relevant characteristics for rule are identical for both men and women. They base this understanding on the same passages as Pierce. For example, line 454e states that in sexual relations "the female bears and the male mounts." With regard to sexual relations, the potential or *physis* of men and women are different and relevant to the role they will undertake. With regards to rule, Plato states, "there is no practice of a city's governors which belongs to woman because she's woman, or to man because he's man."[18] Consequently, men and women have the same *physis* with respect to the requirements of rule. Equal education is

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[17]Burns, p. 137.
[18]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 455e.

required for all human beings in order to discover if the individual has this potential to rule. For the Toveys, even if Plato's notions are not flattering to women, or egalitarian in the liberal sense that all human beings have the right to self-government, there is an argument for equal access to education for all human beings.

Like Calvert, the Toveys recognize that Plato also harbors the anti-feminist principle, which states that in all pursuits, including ruling capacities as well as baking cakes, men have a superior ability in comparison to women. They interpret this anti-feminist principle as a "Trojan horse" employed to convince Glaucon to accept that there are some women who are capable of ruling.[19] The anti-feminist principle is a rhetorical technique that tricks misogynists into accepting the rational argument that men and woman are equal with regards to the capacity to rule.

Another commentator, Anne Dickason, disagrees that misogynist comments in Plato's thought are simply rhetoric. She accounts for Plato's anti-feminist comments by tracing two contradictory understandings of human biological origins in Platonic thought. For Dickason, the idea of equal training in the Republic develops out of the Symposium's myth of the hermaphroditic nature of primordial human beings.[20] If the gods created both men and women as equally whole beings with the same nature, they

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[19]Tovey and Tovey, p. 596.

[20]The myth of the hermaphrodite was presented in the Symposium, by the interlocutor Aristophanes. The hermaphrodite had characteristics which were both male and female, as well as both sexes' bodies joined back to back. The hermaphrodites were split into two separate individuals as a punishment from Zeus, when they tried to climb to heaven to reach the gods. In this myth, the male and female were created and punished simultaneously. Plato, The Symposium. Walter Hamilton, trans. (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1951), lines 188e-192e.

should, as Plato indicates, "receive equal education and treatment before the law."[21] But, if women are reincarnated inferior men, as presented in the myth of the Timaeus, Plato can argue for unequal access to education and roles.[22] For Dickason, this accounts for the change of the functions of women from the Republic to the Laws. Logically, it can also account for why, in his argument for female guardians, Socrates presents the anti-feminist principle. The important point, argues Dickason, is that there is an inherent liberalism in the Republic, since regardless of whether men are presented as generally more superior than women, Plato clearly argues that there are some women suited to be guardians.[23] Hence, those women must receive the same education as the men who are also guardians by nature. Plato's general anti-feminist comments cannot be used as a justification to undermine his entire theory.

Christine Garside Allen also supports this notion that Plato is a feminist because he argues for equal opportunity and education. Allen does not even recognize that there are inconsistencies in Plato's support for women, even within the first wave of Book V. This is because she establishes her interpretation of Plato's notion of equality, not on the idea of an equal *physis* between men and women, but on the idea of equal *psyche*. She argues that Plato's purpose or ultimate goal of life is an education that

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[21]Anne Dickason, "Anatomy and Destiny," in The Philosophical Forum vol. 5 (1973-74), pp. 48-49.

[22]In the myth of the Timaeus, each star was allotted a soul, which was separated and incarnated first as a man. If a man lived a good life, his soul would return to his star. If he failed to live well, they would reincarnate him first as a woman and then if necessary, as an animal. The incarnation of a woman, in this myth, is actually a punishment for those who do not live a worthy life. Plato, The Timaeus Desmond Lee, trans. (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1965), line 42.

[23]Dickason, p. 52.

orients one toward the good. Even if women are physically or morally inferior to men, as stated in the myth of the Timaeus, all human beings are alike because they have an eternal soul. It is as desirable for a woman to be reunited with the eternity of the forms as a man, even if achieving this goal is harder for her. As Allen states, "it is not possible to appeal to Plato for support in radicalizing the position of women, without also dealing with his claim of the immortality of the soul."[24] In this interpretation, Plato is a feminist, because he believes in an eternal soul, which is the buttress for feminist notions of equality and equal access to education and occupations.

Gregory Vlastos emphasizes the feminist aspects of Book V with his assessment that Plato would agree with the liberal principle of equality of rights before the law. These important liberal rights are discovered in Plato's argument, according to Vlastos, in seven areas: right to education, vocational opportunity, unimpeded social intercourse, legal capacity, sexual choice, ownership or disposition of property, and political rights.[25] Some of these rights are extremely limited in Plato's city in speech. For example, it is difficult to see how Vlastos can interpret Plato's community of property as an argument for liberal rights, since guardians cannot own any property. Vlastos, though, argues that Plato does establish sex equality, since both women and men equally cannot own property. The necessary condition for sex equality is the

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[24]Christine Garside Allen, "Plato on Women," in Feminist Studies vol. 2 (1974), p. 132.

[25]Gregory Vlastos, "Was Plato a Feminist?" in Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Press, 1994), pp. 12-14.

notion that both sexes experience equal restriction and liberation.[26] On the right of education and vocational occupation, `Vlastos argues that Plato maintains that both sexes qualify equally to the extent even of exercising naked together. Anything less, Vlastos states, "would have been discriminatory (to females)."[27]

Vlastos understands the purpose of these rights as the foundation of a theory of social justice. Social justice, Vlastos states, is that "the rights and duties justly allocated to citizens of the polis would be all and only those which would enable each of them to make the greatest personal contribution to the happiness and excellence of the whole polis, their own included."[28] Dale Hall also understands that Plato's intention in the city in speech is to establish a city according to nature and justice. Hall states, "no element of the *kallipolis* is antipathetic to nature and Socrates reveals that political justice is the natural ordering principle."[29] This natural ordering principle is not a complete liberation of human desires, but of the rule of reason over the desires.

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[26]Interestingly, Vlastos admits that the right to the guardian occupations (executive, legislative, and judicial) will extend to professions such as economic planning, censorship, direction of schools and sports, supervision of the military and religion. He does not mention that Plato is silent on the gender of all of the trades in which most of the citizens will engage. Vlastos does not address the problem which arises if only some professions are open to women. If equality exists for only guardians, does Plato still qualify for supporting the right to vocational opportunity? The same problem exists if private ownership exists for the artisan class. Yet, Vlastos is one of the few commentators who extends the argument for gender equality to include the restructuring that Plato makes in the second wave of Book V. Some commentators admit that gender equality might require changes to the family, but they do not agree that these changes will necessarily reflect those in the second wave. For commentary, refer to Gregory Vlastos, "Was Plato a Feminist?" pp. 13-16. Christine Pierce, "Equality: Book V," p. 6. Barbara and George Tovey, "Women's Philosophical Friends and Enemies," pp. 593-94.

[27]Vlastos, p. 12.

[28]Vlastos, p. 21.

[29]Dale Hall, "The Republic and the Limits of Politics," in Political Theory vol. 5 (1977), p. 298.

Plato is an advocate for the human excellence of both men and women. The city in speech reflects, for both Vlastos and Hall, an ideal political order that is based on natural justice and results in the happiness of both the individual and the city as a whole.

R. J. Nelson extends Vlastos' notion that Plato would support feminist causes, to argue that Plato would be a supporter of affirmative action. Nelson makes this claim by taking Plato's argument for sex equal occupations and education in the guardian class to be a standard for all occupations. In other words, if Plato can argue that men and women should have the same occupations and education if they have the same *physis*, then "Plato might well be set as a standard for women's rightful status in all intellectual and cultural pursuits including business, professions, and science."[30] For Nelson, not only do women have the right to the same occupations as men, but he believes that Plato would support the idea that the state should enforce this right for all occupations. Of course, Plato does not address the gender make up of the occupations of the artisan class and is silent on whether women would be considered equal in these pursuits. Such silence, on the part of Plato, does not hinder Nelson from claiming the Republic as "a quintessential champion of affirmative action."[31]

Dorothea Wender also asserts that Plato is a feminist because he focuses on the notion of equal access to opportunities for employment. Equal access is dependent on

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[30]R.J. Nelson, "Plato's Women," in New York Review of Books Oct. 25, 1984.
[31]Nelson, p. 25.

the idea that the potential (*physis*) for virtue and ability is equal in both men and women. This idea of potential, for Wender, does not mean that Plato promises equality between men and women, only that there will be an equality of opportunity in education and a liberation from the usual female occupations of domestic work.[32] It is the focus on this third aspect which furthers Wender's interpretation more than most other commentators. She places Plato's feminism not only in an argument for equality of opportunity, but also that "women be freed from domestic work, childbearing, and tyranny of husbands."[33] Wender is not alone in this interpretation of Plato's feminism as liberation from domestic chores. Martha Lee Osborne also argues that Plato's presentation of the "ideal state" is a "communal plan of living which had freed women from household responsibilities."[34] This understanding of Plato's feminism is fairly unique, since such freedom from household responsibilities is found in the second wave of Book V. Most of the commentators, excluding Vlastos, focus on the first wave and dismiss the other two waves as nonessential in Plato's plan for female guardians.[35]

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[32]Dorothea Wender, "Plato: Misogynist, Paedophile, and Feminist," in Arethusa vol. 6 (Spring, 1973), p. 75.

[33]Wender, p. 76.

[34]Martha Lee Osborne, "Plato's Unhanging View of Women: A Denial that Anatomy Spells Destiny," in The Philosophic Forum vol. 6 (1974-75), p. 450.

[35]Wender and Osborne's interpretation of Plato's feminism contains the same error of extending the freedom of guardian women from domestic duties and motherhood responsibilities to women in general. The second wave of Book V also focuses exclusively on the guardian class in the city in speech. This is the same error that Vlastos makes when he does not recognize that Plato specifically mentions property or sexual equality for only the guardians.

Natalie Harris Bluestone is another commentator who considers Plato a feminist. Her book, Women and the Ideal Society, is the most extensive examination of the issue of Plato's feminism. She examines all major commentary on Plato's proposals concerning women from 1870s to the late 1970s. Bluestone does not offer an extensive argument for her own understanding of Plato's feminism. Yet, through her analysis and criticism of other commentators she reveals her belief that Plato argues for truly just practices by understanding "what is natural as opposed to what is merely conventional, legal, or customary."[36] Bluestone believes that Plato is a feminist, because the first wave sets up a city where the roles of men and women are not based on convention, but on each individual's aptitude or *physis*. Bluestone reiterates the argument that the differences which exist between men and women are not relevant to the governing of the state. If they were relevant, or if logically or in practice Plato did not seriously intend women to play a role in governing, argues Bluestone, Plato's "placing (women) among the philosophers would undermine his whole theory of justice."[37] Bluestone's argument in support of Plato's feminism echoes that of Pierce and Calvert. Plato is a feminist because the *physis* of a particular individual man or woman could be equal. In addition, Plato establishes this notion of equality as part of a theory of justice.

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[36]Bluestone, p. 11.
[37]Bluestone, p. 49.

This is not to argue that Bluestone understood that the liberation of all women (or of all men) was part of Plato's notion of justice. Instead, Plato establishes gender equality in an elitist manner for the best and the brightest of both sexes. Such elitist notions do not undermine, for Bluestone, the argument that Plato understood that a woman could be considered among the best. What made each individual capable of ruling was separate from their gender. It is because one's potential was separate from his or her gender that Plato was "perhaps the most daring innovator the world has ever seen."[38] In fact, argues Bluestone, Plato touched on all the major contemporary issues of gender equality in his argument in the Republic. These arguments include Plato's discussion of educational policies, the debate of nature versus nurture, notions of equality, individualism, and state intervention in equal opportunity of vocation and child-care. The issues addressed in Book V deal with the problems and issues of the modern feminist debate. For Bluestone, although Plato's solution to these dilemmas reveals elitism and anti-liberal notions of confining citizen liberty, Plato ultimately was a feminist because he addressed the matter of sexual equality as an important element of justice.

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[38]Bluestone, p. 71.

Plato: The Accidental Feminist

There is a second group of feminists, who argue that Plato's intention was not to establish gender equality. Instead, the proposal for female guardians was the result of a different purpose. For Susan Moller Okin, Plato intended to create a society which was based on the unity of the entire community. For both Monique Canto and Wendy Brown, Plato was trying to change the relationship of the public and private, by either a synthesis or a reconciliation of the male and female aspects of human being. Plato was not interested in the elimination of institutions which were oppressive to women, or in redressing the unequal balance of power relations between men and women. In addition, Plato was not interested in creating a society based on the freedom of individual self-development. For this reason, Plato cannot truly be considered a feminist. Yet, these feminist commentators do not think that Plato's proposals for women were ultimately incompatible with feminism. Although Plato did not intend to create a society based on the equality of gender, the resulting community of guardians is consistent with feminist principles. Therefore, these commentators understand Plato as a supporter of feminist principles, by default or accident. These commentators differ from the next category of commentators who find his proposals thoroughly inconsistent with feminism. Furthermore, the commentators who argue

that Plato's feminism is incidental still accept the interpretation of Plato's city in speech as an ideal which he intends as a literal proposal.

In her book, Women in Western Political Thought, Okin describes Plato's depiction of women as an "enigma." On the one hand, he can assert that the souls of women are created from the most wicked and irrational men, as is presented in the Timaeus. On the other hand, he presents proposals for equality of roles and education in Book V of the Republic, because men and women have a similar *physis*. For Okin, these two seemingly contradictory arguments actually reveal that Plato's proposal for female guardians was based on an entirely different motive than for the liberation of women from an oppressive political and social structure. Plato does not reveal any concern for women or their position in society. Overall, Plato's prevailing depiction of women is extremely deprecating. Yet, she believes that comments, like calling cowards or the plunderers of the dead "womanish," were not particular to Plato, but part of his culture.[39] The general misogynist comments that run throughout Plato's dialogues do not distinguish Plato from the tradition of his contemporaries.

At the same time, Plato does propose in Book V that women should not be excluded from opportunities in the city because of their sex. Okin argues that Plato's proposal for female guardians develops from the second wave of the community of women and children. In other words, Okin understands that Plato's proposal for

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[39]Susan Moller Okin, Women in Western Political Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 22.

female guardians as the result of his attempt to abolish private property and families. As Okin states:

> it is clear that conventional marriage and women in her traditional role as guardian of the private household were seen by Plato as intimately bound up with the whole system of property which separated citizens from each other and made them hostile and envious, and was the greatest impediment to the unity and well-being of the city.[40]

Okin suggests that the unity of the city is the genuine purpose of Plato's introduction of female guardians. Property, which includes women and children, is the cause of faction and violence, because each man is concerned with separating from others what he considers his own. The family and other patriarchal structures create a city which lawsuits, complaints, and assaults have divided. If the city eliminates private property, Socrates suggests, these divisions would "vanish from among them (the guardians) thanks to their possessing nothing private but the body, while the rest is in common"[41] Plato, then, abolishes families for the unity, or good, of the community.

The inclusion of women in the function of a guardian is a result of the abolition of the family and communal ownership of property. The important function of women in the patriarchal family was to provide legitimate children as heirs of the *oikos*. If the city abolishes the *oikos* because it is hostile to the unity of the city, there remains no

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[40]Okin, p. 32.

[41]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 464d.

domestic role for women.[42] If the relationship of women in the guardian class to a particular man, child, or household is no longer crucial, there is "no alternative for Plato but to consider women as persons in their own right."[43] By default, women become liberated from the patriarchal family structure and are considered for occupations from which they were previously excluded. To do this, Okin insists, Plato had to consider that male and female virtue was similar.[44] In addition, Plato lessened the importance of reproductive functions, so that women could develop their potential. For Okin, this argument is unique among political philosophers.

Therefore, although Plato did not intend to liberate women, he still is an important philosopher for theories of feminism. Plato does question the implications of a woman's reproductive role and the conventional and institutional consequences of this role. This connection between a woman's biological role and the social oppression which result from it is the focus of concern of modern radical feminists. Radical feminists claim that the roots of oppression are biological in origin, since childbearing leaves women weak and dependent on men for protection.[45] Modern Marxist and radical feminists also question the role of the family and the liberation of women from

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[42]Okin's understanding of the connection between the abolishment of private property and the establishment of gender equality echoes the argument of Marxist Feminists. Marxist Feminists believe that female oppression is the result of private property and the need to reproduce heirs for the male dominated property system. The elimination private property would result in the liberation of women.

[43]Okin, p. 39.

[44]Okin, pp. 39-40.

[45]Jagger, "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation," p. 12.

familial roles. Plato, therefore, becomes an incidental feminist who unintentionally liberates women not from a cave, but as Okin stresses, from "a coffin within the cave (where they were) unable to make out even the shadows."[46]

Monique Canto is another feminist commentator who understands Plato's intentions as not antithetical to feminism, yet not concerned primarily with feminism. Canto interprets Plato's proposals for female guardians as an attempt to politicize reproduction. The importance of this attempt, for Canto, is the idea that women are the heart of the city. The erotic necessity which attracts men to women is the foundation of both the public and private spheres. The public could not exist without the private, since it is women's reproductive capacity that produces citizens. The public, in turn, creates boundaries around the private in order to control the reproductive process. Birth becomes a matter of deliberate public policy. Plato's policy for controlling *eros* is especially violent, since he wants to eliminate the "otherness" of women, which leads to *eros* in the first place. Plato does this by eliminating all private pain or pleasure, so that no citizen may say of an object or person sought by their desire, that "this is mine, this satisfies my desire . . . (which is) basic to the most human reality of the community present in the city."[47]

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[46]Okin, p. 58.

[47]Monique Canto, "The Politics of Women's Bodies: Reflections on Plato," Arthur Goldhammer, trans. Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), p. 55.

Plato introduces female guardians into the city in speech in an attempt to overcome the conflict between the private and the public. This conflict is dependent on the violence which arises from the erotic desire to possess a particular woman, so that no one else can possess her.[48] The city needs the reproductive capacity of women, but at the same time, this capacity creates divisions within the city. Plato's solution is to allow women in the city, but to destroy their capacity to create divisions by removing any association they have with luxury and rivalry. This is accomplished, argues Canto, by Plato's attempt to bring women into the public sphere. The idea of equality is possible, if the city gives women the education needed to govern, as well as all the resources of war.[49] The city includes women and their reproductive capacities, but women are no longer more destructive than men. This unity is possible, because no one recognizes women as different from men. Plato's general image of political reality is a "well compounded bowl . . . (which) he seems to have conceptualized as requiring a mixture in which otherness must be present and its effects dealt with one way or another."[50]

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[48]The conflict between the family and the city was not as diametrically opposed in ancient Athens as Canto makes it appear. It was the *oikos* which provided the foundation of citizenship in Athens, since citizens were only those men born from male citizens and legal daughters of citizens. Women in ancient Greece did experience some segregation, but it is possible this was more to ensure the legitimacy of the child, than for erotic purposes. This idea will be further developed in the following chapter. For further information, see W.K. Lacey, The Family in Classical Greece (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 159.

[49]Canto, p. 64.

[50]Canto, p. 57.

Plato's attempt to prevent disunity creates a city which has both male and female guardians. For Canto, Socrates does not establish the city to address the inequalities experienced by women, but to address the inherent conflict of the public and private. Yet, the proposals do provide women with the education and resources which allow for the possibility of political equality between men and women. The only way feminist politics is possible, argues Canto, is if women "with their bodies, their work, their labour and their voice are present in a place where everyone can see them."[51] This is accomplished in Plato's city, since women will be present everywhere and are even seen naked beside men exercising in the gymnasium. Canto believes Plato is not hostile to feminism, even if the city in speech is not intentionally feminist in its conception. The city in speech creates the situation in which sex equality becomes a political possibility.

A different understanding of Plato's solution to the conflict of the public and private is proposed by Wendy Brown. Brown, as opposed to Canto, presents Plato's resolution of the conflict not as mere reconciliation, but as an attempted synthesis of male and female. This synthesis becomes embodied in the philosopher. Philosophy, argues Brown, is a rejection of classical masculine values of sophistic speech and agonistic political action. Rather than celebrating expressions of masculinity, Socrates seeks alternative political truths, which are criticized even by his contemporaries as

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[51]Canto, p. 50.

effeminate or weak. Brown argues that Platonic philosophy is not dependent on a straightforward rational discussion. Instead, Plato uses many elements in his dialogues which are considered non-rational or feminine.[52] Plato introduces these elements, such as imagery, myth, and allegory when the dialectical mode of inquiry is lost on Socrates' interlocutors, or they begin to withdraw from the discussion.[53] Plato's world of discursive thought is not an understanding of the world based on absolute truths, but offers an experience which is beyond words. This experience does not result in the sophistic wielding of power, but seeks harmony and stability over violence and conflict. Many feminist organizations stress a similar emphasis on unstructured conflict resolution in an attempt to avoid what was considered masculine forms of debate and confrontation.[54] This interpretation of Plato's philosophy identifies with the feminism of difference, which later radical theorists and the groups they fostered emphasized.

Brown identifies philosophy with femininity, because it is divorced from politics and the public world. At the same time, it is not strictly private, or located in the sphere of the feminine. Socratic philosophy was located in the marketplace, which was neither public nor private and was concerned with both the necessities of the body, as

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[52]An example that Brown cites for criticism of Socrates and philosophy, by his contemporaries, is presented in the Gorgias. On lines 484d-485d, Callicles attacks Socrates' philosophy calling it a pretty thing for a young boy to engage in, but an embarrassment for an older mature man. Philosophy, in Callicles estimation, is not something which a courageous and distinguished man would pursue. Plato, The Gorgias W.C. Helmbold, trans. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1952). For further discussion, see Wendy Brown, "Supposing Truth Were a Woman . . . " in Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), p. 161.

[53]Brown, p. 166.

[54]Deckard, p. 355.

well as the economic life of the city. For Brown, Plato's solution to the power struggles of the city is to abolish private ownership and public participation. The citizen loses both his *oikos* and the established *nomos* of the city, in order to believe in new myths of a new city. The new myths attempt to reduce the distance between men and women by subverting the conventional masculine politics and focusing on the qualities of the feminine. The guardians, both male and female, own nothing and have no power over any other. They, like the women of Plato's Athens, are separated from the masculine foundation of politics -- glory, greed, and power. The guardians, though, do not lose their masculine strength, but like guard dogs embody both fierceness and gentleness simultaneously.

Plato did not include women in the guardian class in order to liberate women from the oppressive situation of conventional politics. His purpose was to "expunge the sources and causes of power struggles from every corner of his ideal city."[55] The desire men have to use women's bodies for reproductive purposes is one of the primary sources of conflict in the city. In order to undermine this desire, Plato subverts the conventional assumptions about gender. In other words, Plato is not questioning gender roles for any notion of justice, but to undermine the sources of conflict and create a unity within the city. Other than including women in the guardian class, Plato perpetuates the misogynist tradition of Greek society. An example is the anti-feminist

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[55]Brown, p. 176.

principle, which suggests that women are always weaker than men. Yet, Plato recognizes that to undermine conflicts in the city, he must not only include actual women in the guardian class, but also create a class of human beings which embody both male and female characteristics. An intention of feminine equality does not motivate Plato's ideal city, but it is not contrary to modern notions of feminism. For Brown, Plato resolves political conflicts in the city in two ways. First he includes women in the ruling class; second, he cultivates female traits of gentleness, discussion and discourse in the rulers of the city. Thus, there is a strain of feminism in Plato's ideal city even if it is not intentional.

Plato: The Anti-Feminist

The third category of commentators proposes that Plato was not only uninterested in feminist concerns, but that he was essentially antagonistic to the issues of feminism. There are two arguments against Plato's support of feminism. First, there are commentators who contend that Plato's theory harbors elements which are contrary to notions of equality. Plato is considered sexist because only a very few, if any, women would qualify to rule. This group criticizes Plato by accepting liberal definitions of politics, such as democratic rule of equally self-governing beings. For these commentators, feminism is based on "the modern liberal argument that women

should have the equal opportunities with men because they lead stunted and unhappy lives and lack the means for self-development."[56] For these commentators, there is an irrevocable connection between liberal concepts and feminist theory. In addition, as the first chapter argued, this group is similar to those commentators who argued Plato was a supporter of totalitarianism. Radical feminists, such as Page duBois and Nancy Tuana, present the second argument. These commentators criticize Plato's inclusion of women in the guardian class as an attempt to destroy unique feminine characteristics. This second argument focuses on the assumption that women are essentially different from men. Although these commentators differ in their understanding of feminist equality, they agree that Plato falls short of any tangible support for women's issues. Instead, Plato's argument is a misogynist program which is derogatory and destructive to women.

The first commentator to dismiss any notion that Plato was a supporter of feminism was Julia Annas. Annas is also one of the most ardent critics of Plato's proposals for women guardians. For her, it is wrong to think of Plato as the first feminist for three important reasons: his argument for female guardians is flawed, the inclusion of women in the guardian class is not based on female needs, and the whole plan of the city in speech is essentially authoritarian. The idea that the argument for female guardians is flawed develops from Annas' understanding of the anti-feminist

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[56]Julia Annas, "Plato's Republic and Feminism," in Philosophy vol. 51 (1976), p. 313.

principle. For Annas, Plato introduces this principle to argue that there is no natural function for women. For those who argue that Plato was a feminist, this logically entails that there are no occupations which naturally suit either men or women. Women can participate in all functions in the city, even if as a class they are weaker than men. Annas understands this principle differently; for her, to argue that there are no functions or roles in which women excel, does not logically entail that there would be no roles or functions in which men excel.[57] In fact, with the second premise, Annas maintains men would excel in everything at the expense of women, since they also have no specific functions. What Plato accomplished is an elimination of functions that belong to women, because they are women. All functions, therefore, are male functions and women will do them, but with less capacity and skill than men.[58] This proposition, for Annas, is hardly supportive of feminist ideals.

Plato is also anti-feminist, according to Annas, because he speaks of women with contempt. Even in the argument for female guardians in Book V, Socrates dismisses men who plunder corpses with the derisive comment that "it is the mark of a small, womanish mind."[59] Thus, Plato equates cowards with woman. Later in the Republic, at line 563b, Socrates attributes the decline of democracy to excessive equality and freedom in the relationship between men and women. Annas also points

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[57]Annas, p. 309.
[58]Annas, pp. 311-312.
[59]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 469d.

out many other examples of Plato's misogyny, such as the theory in the Timaeus which states that any man who lived well would return home to his native star. If the man failed to live well, he "would be changed into a woman at his second birth."[60] For Annas, such remarks, coupled with the anti-feminist principle, reveal that Plato did really believe that women were inferior to men. The argument that women were inferior in all things, therefore, is not interpreted as a rhetorical device to convince a misogynist audience. For Annas, it is Plato who is the misogynist.

Another way Plato falls short of supporting the feminist cause is that the entire argument of the Republic is not in any way based on female desires or needs. The ideal state has nothing to do with the emancipation of women, nor was the Republic written to "change the present state of affairs on the ground that women suffer from being denied opportunities that are open to men."[61] Plato did not intend the Republic to enhance the position of women in society, or to redress the injustices which affect women. One example is found in Plato's proposal for the abolition of the family. The abolition of the family is not intended, as many radical feminists would argue, in order to achieve personal liberation and the self-development of women.[62] Plato's purpose is to subsume the individual further into the control of the city's eugenics program and to manipulate sexuality. Annas does not understand Plato's proposals as incidentally

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[60]Plato, The Timaeus line 42.

[61]Annas, p. 312.

[62]An example of the radical feminist notion that calls for the abolition of nuclear families is found in Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), pp. 206-210.

feminist, because they do not address feminist issues. The entire program of the Republic, for Annas, is to set up an authoritarian regime, where the city discounts the interests of the individual and justifies all policies by their usefulness to the state. Such measures are not compatible with the feminist argument for equal opportunity and individual development.

Elizabeth V. Spelman also disagrees that Plato's proposals are compatible with feminist principles. Her problem with Plato's argument for female guardians is that it does not provide a foundation for an egalitarian society. What is essential, according to Spelman, in Plato's account of female guardians is that the ideal society recognizes that people with different natures should do different things for the mutual benefit of all. It would follow then, if women have the same natures as men, they should also do the same things. Plato disconnects a human being's potential from his or her body. As Spelman states, "a difference in bodily features is not necessarily a sign of a difference in nature; what is crucial to his ability is whether two people have the same soul or mind."[63] Spelman understands that Plato's idea of *physis* as equivalent to the notion of a soul or mind. It is, then, one's soul that determines one's position in Plato's ideal society.

There are two separate difficulties with Plato's argument for female guardians based on the idea of equal souls. The first difficulty, for Spelman, is whether it is true

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[63]Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Hairy Cobblers and Philosopher Queens," in Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1994), p. 89.

that bodies are distinct from souls. Plato points out that there are two important ways in which one's body uniquely qualifies one for a function in the city. First, men are physically stronger than women and suit certain functions which require brute strength -- such as arm to arm combat of ancient Greek warfare. Second, since only women can bear children, the function of motherhood is exclusively feminine and entirely dependent on her body.[64] Bodies do matter in many functions of the city and they are not completely separate from potential. Spelman also questions whether Plato was genuine in his argument that men and women have equal souls. The female philosopher-ruler, for instance, will have a female body but she will possess a soul which is very different from the souls of the typical Athenian woman. The understanding of women in ancient Greece was that their soul could not "resist the temptations of the body, (it was) a soul that doesn't know and doesn't care about the difference between appearance and reality."[65] The women who become guardians and philosophers will be those women who have a man's *psyche*. They will not be really women at all.

For Spelman, it is hardly a feminist argument that denies the unique qualities and talents of women and admits equality only for those women who become like men. "Surely we ought to ask," Spelman says, "what kind of feminism is it that would gladly argue for a kind of equality between men and women of a certain class and at the same

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[64]Spelman, p. 34.
[65]Spelman, p. 101.

time for radical inequality between some women and some men and some women and some other women . . . "[66] She believes that this kind of power, authority, and inequality of human beings is contrary to the basic principles of feminism, which argue for the equality of all women. Plato's argument is for the rule of an elite. All other forms of sexism remain intact for the many. For Spelman, this type of oppressive political order is not the kind of power and authority which feminists should support.[67]

Janet Farell Smith argues that Plato not concerned with gender equality or the eradication of sex discrimination in his proposals for women guardians. The arguments for female guardians, in Book V, are made "in the service of Plato's larger aim, which is to arrange hierarchy, social power, and control, so that the 'best' rules over the worst, with reason, according to nature."[68] However, she admits, Plato is the first western philosopher to recognize that cultural, social, and political relations are important in developing what each society will understand as natural. Plato's proposal for female guardians does radically alter the relationship between men and women, as well as between parents and children. Accordingly, Plato's underlying motivation for proposing these changes is to question the Greek assumption of what is considered natural by presenting an alternative view. Yet, these radical changes in the role of women are not sympathetic to women, since Plato understands women as part of

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[66]Spelman, pp. 104-5.

[67]Spelman, p. 46.

[68]Janet Farell Smith, "Plato, Irony, and Equality," in Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1994), p. 27.

property relationships. Thus, Plato adds to his general ambivalence and often misogynistic and derogatory comments about women, by continuing to objectify women in order to question the assumptions of his society.[69]

Smith is also critical of Plato's understanding of human beings, especially women, as dependent on a concept of *physis*. Smith understands Plato's idea of *physis* to mean both what a person does and what a person is actually capable of doing. He diminishes an understanding of human beings to a potential, or ability, which they possess. It is through this reduction, argues Smith, that Plato can create an understanding of human beings where there is no distinction between male and female activities, or between male and female humans.[70] Yet, Plato himself undermines this notion with the anti-feminist principle which states that women are weaker than men. For Smith, "if weaker is taken to mean 'generally inferior' including intellectual ability, then the thesis that women should be equally educated falls prey to a series of reductios."[71] For example, generally inferior could mean intellectually, emotionally, or morally inferior. This understanding of "weaker" further complicates the idea that a woman's body size limits her ability to be efficient in warfare. In this interpretation, a woman would not be suitable for many other occupations, including philosophy which requires intellectual and moral fortitude.

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[69]Smith, p. 27.
[70]Smith, p. 34.
[71]Smith, p. 28.

Smith, though, is more sympathetic to Plato's proposals than most commentators who view him as antithetical to feminism. For Smith, even if Plato did not argue for sex equality in order to create an egalitarian society, "his seriousness in eliciting the best from the population overrides prejudice on sex or class differentials."[72] What is particularly important in Platonic thought is not that he supported the modern notions of gender equality, but that he questioned whether traditional Greek notions of gender were essentially natural. Smith does emphasize that Plato is not supportive of the modern understanding of gender equality which is based on the idea that women should be free, autonomous subjects. Instead, his purpose is to arrange society in a way in which everyone performs the particular function which suits them.

Another feminist, who argues that Plato's use of women is ignominious, is Lynda Lange. Lange accounts for Plato's inconsistent treatment of women, by arguing that Plato's intention behind the proposals in Book V was to "remove the contradiction between public and private life for the guardians, by raising familial impulses from the private to the public sphere."[73] It is the second wave of Book V, the elimination of private property, which necessitates female guardians. Plato abolishes private property, according to Lange, because he wanted to avoid conflicts which interfere

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[72]Smith, p. 36.

[73]Lynda Lange, "The Function of Equal Education in Plato's Republic and Laws," in The Sexism of Social and Political Thought L. Clark and L. Lange, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 11.

with the performance of the duties of the guardians. For Plato, anything which was formerly called "my own" for the guardians would now be community property and called "our own." Hence, the subservience which women owed men is now transferred to the city, which assumes a patriarchal authority for one's life from childhood to choosing one's sexual partners. As Lange points out, one can hardly label a philosopher a feminist who argues for the community ownership of women and children.[74]

Lange also questions the validity of Plato's argument for female guardians, since he includes the anti-feminist proposal. It is true, she admits, that Plato is distinguished from his contemporaries with his suggestion that it was possible for some women to have the potential to be a guardian. Yet, she is sceptical about whether any women would actually fulfill the requirements of a guardian. This is because even if some women are superior to some men, women are inferior to the best men. This, for Lange, "does not necessarily imply that any of them will become guardians."[75] Richard Lewontin's linguistic analysis further complicates Lange's questioning of whether any women would actually qualify to be guardians. Lewontin points out that Plato rarely refers to female guardians with the feminine form -- *tas phulakidas*. Instead, Plato

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[74]Lange, p. 9.
[75]Lange, p. 4.

calls women a possession of men, even in his guardian class.[76] The genitive declension makes it appear as if Plato is not serious about his proposal that women fight in wars with their male compatriots as equals; instead, they appear to be included in the guardian class merely as companions of the male guardians.

The final element which disqualifies Plato for feminist support is his notion of justice which does not involve an idea of fairness. The idea that justice should focus on the liberation or dignity of the individual is, as Lange points out, based on a modern assumption that if it is possible for human beings to function as equals, than it only fair that they do so.[77] For Lange, Plato was never concerned with including women in the good life. His ultimate position on women was derogatory, in that he considered them weaker, cowardly, hysterical, and prone to luxury. The intention behind the inclusion of women, if Plato even implies this, is for the greatest good of the city which is achieved by an unadulterated unity. In order to undermine the conflicts which arise from the tension between the public and private, the city makes public everything that was private, such as property, wives and children. Plato's theoretical focus, argues Lange, is not compatible with the issues and policies of modern feminism.

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[76]This interesting analysis of Plato's terminology reveals how entrenched the idea of ownership of women was in Platonic thought. Even when described as having an equal or similar *physis* to men, Plato still describes women as male possessions. This linguistic irregularity is not found in Bloom's translation. Lewontin is incorrect in stating that it is only in line 457c that Plato uses the female form of guardian - *tas phulakidas*. Plato also uses this term in line 459d. Yet, in most instances, for example see lines 456b, 457a, 454e, Plato does use the genitive form of women with the masculine noun for guardian to indicate possession -- *phulakon gunaixi*. For further discussion, see Richard Lewontin, "Plato and Affirmative Action," in New York Review of Books (Jan. 31, 1985).

[77]Lange, p. 5.

Three other feminist commentators agree with the position that Plato was not only incompatible with feminism, but that he was anti-feminist in essence. These commentators argue that feminist theory is not compatible with Plato's theory of creating female guardians by eliminating the special excellence of the feminine. Page duBois, Nancy Tuana, and William Cowling all propose that Plato's thought was both derogatory to women and conclusively destructive. This destruction takes place through what duBois calls the "appropriating of the female powers of reproduction to the male philosopher."[78] The male philosopher, who Socrates describes as midwife erotically implanting his seed or words in the souls of young men, appropriates the imagery of the female. What is reproduced, as Tuana and Cowling describe this appropriation, are not children but wisdom and truth.[79] The pursuit of truth is a strictly masculine activity, as it takes place within the friendship of equals, both of whom must be men. The female is not necessary in this endless process of purely masculine reproduction, since the reproduction of children is less important than the reproduction of ideas. Masculine philosophy overtakes and replaces the whole process of birth and reproduction, which is the power and domain of women.

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[78]Page duBois, "The Platonic Appropriation of Reproduction," in Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1994), p. 144.

[79]Nancy Tuana and William Cowling, "The Presence and Absence of the Feminine in Plato's Philosophy," in Feminist Interpretations of Plato Nancy Tuana, ed. (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1994), p. 256.

This imagery of the masculine appropriation of the feminine powers is presented mainly in the two Platonic dialogues, the Theaetetus and the Symposium. Yet, this appropriation is also part of the Republic's sublimation of the private sphere sexual relations, birth, and child rearing to the public power of the city. Plato's theory, Tuana and Cowling argue, is a "celebration of abstract thought (which) misplaces the body."[80] There is no longer any activity which belongs to women, or to which she alone can excel. The female guardians are no longer women, but women who are like men. These feminists do not accept the idea that the stripping of the female of her otherness, or a reduction of woman to a defective male, can be considered consistent with feminism. Tuana and Cowling do not understand feminism as compatible with a notion of the "sameness" of men and women. Instead, they emphasize the different powers of the feminine with regards to male domination. Plato's intention, for those who regard him as an anti-feminist, is to reaffirm male power and authority.

Plato: The Non-Feminist

The final group consists of those commentators who conclude that the proposals are both oblivious to the concerns of feminism and that Plato did not intend the proposals literally. Commentators such as Leo Strauss, Allan Bloom and Arlene

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[80]Tuana and Cowling, p. 244.

Saxonhouse do not agree with the "Accidental Feminist" category of commentators, who argue that, although Plato was not ultimately concerned with the status of women, his proposals do create a society which recognizes gender equality. This final group of commentators is significantly different from the feminist commentators who argue that Plato is simply for, or against, feminist principles. In contrast to the former commentators, this group of commentators argues that Plato is not concerned with the position of women, but that the dialogue with Glaucon is a discussion of the origin and limitations of politics. Plato's intention is antagonistic to feminism, not because there are flaws in his argument for female guardians, but precisely because these flaws reveal the "essential limits, the nature, of the city."[81]

Leo Strauss bases his interpretation of the Republic on the notion of Socratic irony. Irony, argues Strauss, consists in speaking differently to different people.[82] Writing is essentially defective, comments Socrates in the Phaedrus, because it is equally accessible to all who can read and it says the same things to everyone.[83] The dialogue form overcomes some of these limitations, since Socrates says different things to different interlocutors. Only with this understanding of Socrates' irony, argues

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[81]Leo Strauss, The City and Man (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 138.

[82]Socrates discusses the idea of irony or concealing the truth from certain individuals in Book V. He tells Glaucon that one cannot directly expose another's opinion as ignorant, since the one who opines will get harsh and dispute the truth. Instead, Socrates states "will we have some way to soothe and gently persuade him, while hiding from him that he's not healthy." See Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 476d-e.

[83]See Plato's Phaedrus lines 275e --"a writing cannot distinguish between suitable and unsuitable readers. And is it is ill-treated or unfairly abused it always needs its parent to come to its rescue; it is quite incapable of defending or helping itself." Plato, The Phaedrus Walter Hamilton, trans. (Markham Ontario: Penguin Books, 1973).

Strauss, is it possible to interpret Plato's intention in each dialogue. For Strauss, although the proposals in Book V concern the art of war, they are essentially comic in nature. Plato's proposals are akin to the subject matter of Aristophanes' comedy the Ecclesiazusae, which also includes women in politics and the destruction of the *oikos*. The ridiculous aspect of both the Ecclesiazusae and the Republic is that they treat subject matter which is impossible, as if it were possible. For Strauss, the proposal for female guardians is introduced to ridicule impossible ideals and to highlight the nature of politics.

These impossible ideals, for Strauss, are the three waves of Book V. The first wave of female guardians is a questioning of the customary relationships between men and women. The customary relationship of marriage and families is considered unnatural and opposed to what Socrates describes as the natural relationship of roles that are not determined by sex.[84] Socrates presents this upheaval of custom and tradition as natural, because it is both possible and desirable. Yet, according to Strauss, the discussion in the dialogue reveals precisely the opposite; the waves are neither possible, nor are they desirable. They are not possible, because to have each individual practice what he or she is fitted to by nature, attention must be drawn away from the body.[85] The fact that women are significantly different with regards their role

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[84]The relevant line in the Republic reads, "they'll (the guardians) do what's best and nothing contrary to the nature of the female in her relationship with the male, nothing contrary to the natural community of the two with each other." Plato, The Republic of Plato line 466c.

[85]Strauss, p. 138.

in procreation becomes less important than the fact that women are weaker physically. Thus, Socrates' city is impossible because it "abstracts from the most important bodily difference within the human race."[86] It is also undesirable, argues Strauss, because in the attempt to make the city united, Socrates takes the most intimate aspect of human beings and publicizes it. Sexual and familial relations become what is useful to the city and considerations of what is beautiful, special, or sacred are superseded by mathematical unity.

The purpose of Socrates' proposal is not to establish an ideal state, but to discuss the idea of justice with a young aristocrat. Plato establishes the city in speech to reveal how the just individual, or the just city, closely approximates justice itself. Justice is understood as a form, class, or *idea* of things "which are united by the fact they all possess the same looks, or the same character or power."[87] The *idea* of justice is something which transcends everything which men can ever achieve; as Strauss argues, "we have learned that justice is not possible in the sense that it can come into being."[88] The three waves, the coincidence of the philosopher-king, community of women and children, and female guardians are the method that Socrates uses to show Glaucon the limits of what human beings can create under the *idea* of justice. One

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[86]Strauss, p. 117.

[87]The ancient Greek term *idea* is a derivative of the aorist infinitive (*idein*) of the verb *horao*, which means to look or to see. *Idea* is the look or appearance of a thing. It refers to a type or species of anything classified together by a common "look." For further discussion, refer to Strauss, p. 119.

[88]Strauss, p. 121.

consequence of the establishing the *idea* of justice in a political system is the connection between violence and foundation of the city, expressed by the necessity to expel everyone over the age of ten. This expulsion would only be possible with a great deal of violence. The three waves are dependent upon the same conditions of violence.

Allan Bloom supports Strauss' interpretation of the Republic as a discussion, not of an ideal city, but of the limitations of politics. Bloom argues that never does Socrates say that the city is natural, or that man is by nature a political being. In fact, Bloom says, "there is not even the slightest indication that there is an idea of the city or of the best city."[89] Socrates creates the city in speech to teach Glaucon about the life of politics versus the life of contemplation. The possibility of the city is not even particularly important, as Socrates tells Glaucon, "it makes no difference whether it exists, for it can exist in the soul and that is enough."[90] It is because Bloom interprets the Republic as an exploration of the limitations of politics that he understands Plato's introduction of female guardians as not intended to either address female concerns, or indirectly to establish equality. Instead, Plato uses the proposals to "lay bear the absurdity of trying to make politics total, of trying to make an equal distribution of all things rare, special, and splendid, of allowing nothing to escape or transcend the political order."[91]

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[89]Allan Bloom, "Response to Hall," in Political Theory vol. 5, no 3 (1977), p. 316.

[90]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 592a.

[91]Allan Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," in The Republic of Plato Allan Bloom, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 326.

Bloom also agrees with Strauss that the first two waves of Book V of the Republic resemble Aristophanes' Ecclesiazusae. Aristophanes was also the author of the comedy the Clouds, which, Bloom notes, was highly critical of both philosophy and Socrates.[92] Bloom interprets Plato's proposals in Book V as a response to Aristophanes' comedy which also introduced similar proposals of women rulers and the abolition of private property and the family. Aristophanes was, according to Bloom, Socrates' most dangerous accuser and Book V can only be understood as Socrates' contest with the poet in which "he tries to show the superiority of the philosopher to the comic poet in deed; he does so by producing a comedy which is more fantastic, more innovative, more comic, and more profound than any work of Aristophanes."[93]

Bloom understands the comical aspect of the Republic in Plato's attempt to politicize the erotic. In order for men and women to exercise naked together, there must be an elimination of the emotion of shame which always accompanies the attraction between men and women.[94] Although Socrates admits that exercising naked was once considered shameful or barbaric among Greeks, Bloom believes that it is easier to consider homosexual relationships non-political, because these relationships do

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[92]Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," p. 380.

[93]Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," p. 381.

[94]Shame is the emotion that accompanies the public revelation of something private, which is not accepted publicly. In addition, a shameful thing is something that goes against public custom or *nomos*. For further discussion, see Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," p. 382.

not produce children.[95] The attraction between men and women is essential to the continuation of the city. For Bloom, Socrates deals with the problem of erotic attraction in two ways. First Socrates allows women into the guardian class by educating and training them in the same way as men. Socrates eliminates the significance of differences between men and women by focusing on constant contact. Second, Socrates creates a system of eugenics where marriages are arranged according to lots, not according to desire or need. Both proposals are insufficient to control *eros* or to establish gender equality. This is because, as argued by another supporter of Bloom's argument, the guardians may have nothing of their own but "they still possess their own bodies."[96] It is through our bodies that the significant difference between men and women is experienced as erotic attraction. For Bloom, the proposal for female guardians is both logically, and in practice, ridiculous.

Another way in which Bloom understands Book V to be a comedy is Plato's statement that the differences between men and women are as relevant as the difference between bald and hairy cobblers. This is fundamentally false, as even Socrates points out, because there are two important differences between men and women. The first is

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[95]In Athens, homosexual relationships did have political significance if they involved two Athenian citizens. Any citizen who sold himself as a catamite could have his right to participate in the Assembly revoked. This was because the passive role of a catamite was considered to deprived a man of the ability to control personal impulses, which disqualified him from taking a rational role in the management of the city. A catamite was considered to be behaving like a woman and, therefore, ineligible for participating in political decisions. For further discussion, refer to John J. Walker, "Laying Down the Law," in Before Sexuality D. Halperin, J. Walker, and F. Zeitlin, eds. (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1990), pp. 178-191.

[96]Walter Soffer, "Socrates' Proposals Concerning Women: Feminism or Fantasy," in History of Political Thought vol. 26, no. 2 (Summer 1995), p. 166.

that "women bear and men mount."[97] The second is the anti-feminist principle that "in all of them (practices) woman is weaker than man."[98] The anti-feminist principle, argues Bloom, makes it highly improbable that any woman would ever be considered for membership in the higher classes. As Walter Soffer points out, the test case for gender equality is the military, which is an occupation where physical strength and speed are paramount. Unlike Brian Calvert, Soffer believes that even the strongest woman will always be weaker than the strongest man.[99] Women are allowed in the guardian class as breeders; they are only included among "the guardians not because they possess the same capacities as men, but precisely because they are different, because they can bear children and men cannot."[100]

Plato cannot be a feminist, because the first wave is not a literal proposal. Instead, Bloom argues, Plato introduces the proposals to compete with the Ecclesiazusae by using extreme examples to point out absurdities. For Bloom, the most absurd is the introduction of the philosopher as a king. The philosopher differs from women in the city by the fact that he is not even useful to the city, whereas women are necessary for its preservation. Far from being useful, the philosopher is actually dangerous to the city; the philosopher questions the essential beliefs of the foundation and laws of the city. At the same time, the philosopher is similar to women

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[97]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 454e.
[98]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 455d-e.
[99]Soffer, p. 163.
[100]Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," p. 383.

because he, like women, can be a philosopher in any city. Sexual attraction and bearing children know no limits of laws or country. Likewise, philosophy is not dependent on any city and exists whether the city in speech exists or not. The philosopher-king is simply a paradox used by Socrates to emphasize the limitations of any public attempt to control that which is private.[101]

Another commentator, Mary Nichols, addresses Plato's argument for drawing attention away from the importance of the human body in roles, or functions, in society. Nichols does not agree with the suggestion that Plato lessens the importance of the body or gender for purely authoritarian power. She does argue that Plato's intention for establishing female guardians is not to establish an egalitarian society. The disregard for the human body is to impose an artificial homogeneity on the city. This homogeneity "arises from a denial of the body, since only the body stands in the way of complete unity."[102] The city in speech tries to achieve a unity free of conflicts which arise, as Socrates argues, from "giving the name of 'my own' to the same thing . . . (of) one man dragging off to his house whatever he can get apart from the others . . . with separate women and children, introducing private pleasures and grief of things that are private."[103] The reason for the argument for female guardians is to deny the body and set up the qualifications for roles based on the idea of *physis*.

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[101]Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," pp. 384-392.

[102]Mary Nichols, Socrates and the Political Community (Albany: State University of New York, 1987), p. 99.

[103]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 464d.

Traditional roles for men and women were established, in ancient Greece, primarily by means of their different roles in procreation. Women, who possessed the role of the nurturer, were thought to be closer to physical nature and to have less of a desire for eternal, unchanging principles. Therefore, women were considered different, not only in body, but also in character.[104] In Plato's attempt to create an artificial unity, he does not "harness any feminine characteristics in the city he is founding . . . he even denies, on line 455a-b, that there is anything peculiar to women."[105] By subverting the feminine world of reproduction through a mathematical eugenics program, Plato actually denies what is truly natural -- the ties between mothers and their children. Plato highlights the denial of this natural bond in the problem that his city has in dealing with the incest taboo. If everyone is supposed to consider all citizens mother, father, brother, or sister than all marriages, even those sacred ones organized by the philosopher-king, would be incestuous. By treating men and women as if they had the same nature, Plato also denies that there are natural relationships into which human beings are born.[106]

Therefore, for Nichols, Plato's program in the city of speech establishes a simple artificial pattern on what is naturally complex. The relations between human beings, as well as the diversity and complexity of each individual, cannot be but

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[104]Nichols, Socrates and the Political Community p. 103-104.
[105]Nichols, Socrates and the Political Community p. 105.
[106]Nichols, Socrates and the Political Community pp. 106-107.

destroyed in a system such as Plato's city. Nichols argues, that to make every single person "the same" is to destroy what is unique.[107] For this reason, Plato's reforms cannot be founded on any altruistic notion of justice or to develop individual self-fulfilment. For Nichols, the city in speech is tyrannical because it provides an example of the destruction necessary to free men and women from their conflicting and chaotic passions. Socrates highlights this destruction in the proposition that the city should expel everyone over the age of ten. Such an expulsion would surely mean mass murder, since as Nichols argued, there are very few things as natural as the bond between a mother and a child: How many mothers would willingly leave their children to the care of the philosopher-king? Plato's intention, in the city of speech, is not only to show that the unity sought by men is impossible, but to question its desirability.[108]

The best guard against such a tyranny of unity, for Nichols, is found in the character of Socrates himself. Socrates is the antithesis of the philosopher-king of the Republic. As Nichols states, "he is typically described as erotic."[109] The philosopher-king is preoccupied with reducing *eros* to mathematical equations that serve the unity of the city in speech. They use the good as a pattern for ordering the city, themselves and all citizens. It is by means of different speeches with different interlocutors that Socrates discusses the things which matter most: justice, love, piety or virtue. Through

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[107]Mary Nichols, "The Republic's Two Alternatives," in Political Theory vol. 12, no. 2 (May 1984), p. 264.

[108]Nichols, Socrates and the Political Community p. 123.

[109]Nichols, "The Republic's Two Alternatives," p. 268.

the character of Socrates, Plato offers an alternative to the philosopher-king's rationalism and strict control of human passions. For Nichols, Socrates' character counteracts the tyranny of the city of speech and serves to make human beings aware of the heterogeneity of the world and the diversity of the human *psyche*.[110]

Arlene Saxonhouse is the final commentator studied who understands Plato's proposals to be unconcerned with feminist principles and not intended literally. One cannot interpret Plato as a feminist, because Socrates does not introduce the laws and changes to the role of women to advocate any particular role for women, but to explain the nature of politics. For Saxonhouse, Plato is not serious about the proposals of the three waves and it is a misinterpretation to understand the city in speech as an ideal city. There is nothing natural or ideal about the city, nor does a human being need any city to survive.[111] It is also a misinterpretation to understand that Plato intended the proposal for female guardians in order to emancipate women. Instead, argues Saxonhouse, Plato introduces the first wave of female guardians to highlight the connection between women and the philosopher.[112] The philosopher is also alien to the public world of political power. The actual concern of Book V is to create an artificial public unity, which is based on a destruction of all that is private -- women, the family, and the philosopher.

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[110]Nichols, "The Republic's Two Alternatives," pp. 270-271.

[111]Arlene Saxonhouse, Women in the History of Political Thought (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1985), p. 3.

[112]Saxonhouse, Women in the History of Political Thought p. 50.

Thus, for Saxonhouse, the proposals in Book V are not only oblivious to feminist concerns, but actually tantamount to a destruction of women. Plato, she says, is not serious about his proposal concerning female guardians, because the system of equality which he establishes in Book V becomes the very reason for the destruction of the city in Book VIII. The destruction of the city arises from the desire women have for luxury and from treating women as equals, when they are not equal. The intention behind the proposal for female guardians is to create an artificial unity within the public sphere. Anything which is concerned with the private becomes elevated, not in an attempt to improve its status, but to destroy it. Plato establishes the proposals for equality, according to Saxonhouse, in order to de-sexualize the female in an effort to control *eros*. Sexuality and *eros* are connected to desire, which can be unconnected with the authority and power of politics. The only way women can be equal to men is if women are recognized in the same way as men. It is the recognition of the difference between the sexes which leads to *eros*. Female guardians, therefore, are only possible if one disregards a woman's sexuality and her ability to bear children. In order to accomplish this, Plato destroys women by forcing them into the public sphere, not as women but as inferior men.[113] Jean Bethke Elshtain supports Saxonhouse's interpretation, since she agrees that Plato's intention in introducing the first wave was to create a unified city, which is only possible if the "private life, loyalty, and purpose

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[113]Saxonhouse, Women in the History of Political Thought pp. 47-48.

are absorbed into the public domain."[114] For both these commentators, women are damaged or destroyed in the greatest degree by the unity of the public and private.

In addition, Saxonhouse argues that Plato's subordination of feminine excellence to the unity of the city is an injustice repeated in the third wave of the philosopher-king. The changes forced on the philosopher, so that he fits into the city, is similar to the alteration forced upon women. Both the female and the philosopher live apart from the world of politics. The philosopher is concerned with universal truths that go beyond the particulars of the city. Saxonhouse, agreeing with Bloom, argues that the philosopher is beyond the views of the city, and like a woman, can perform his special excellence privately and irrespective of the political regime.[115] In order to fit into the artificial unity of the city in speech, Plato removes the philosopher from his natural environment and undergoes a metamorphosis "from a lover and pursuer of truth into a teller of lies."[116] He abandons the quest for wisdom and becomes reduced to planning sexual encounters between the citizens. The philosopher, along with the female, is altered in order to fit uncomfortably into the public world of politics.

The three waves build upon each other in Plato's attempt to destroy the distinction between the public and the private. Plato is not interested in developing a society which improves the social and political status of women. Plato uses women,

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[114]Jean Bethke Elshtain, Public Man and Private Woman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 31.

[115]Saxonhouse, Women in the History of Political Thought p. 51.

[116]Saxonhouse, Women in the History of Political Thought p. 52.

according to Saxonhouse, as a symbol for a critique of his democratic society which was devoted to the political life of ambition, money and warfare. The purpose of this symbolic examination is to point out that "politics is fundamentally imperfectable and must always be plagued by the conflicts between the public and the private, between opinion and wisdom, between warfare and weaving."[117] The differences that exist among human beings account for what is unique and valued in the private world. It is precisely because someone is my husband or my son that makes him special to me. Ultimately, Plato introduces the proposals in order to examine what a completely rational and well-ordered political unity would entail. The consequences of destroying everything private for this unity are far-reaching and lead to a questioning of the whole idea of political idealism. As Elshtain comments at the end of her book:

> By demonstrating what a thorough going rationalistic, meritocratic order would require, namely, the application to and assessment of all human beings on a single set of formal and abstract criteria, Plato reminds us that the grounding of our lives can never be totally rationalized, if we consider our individual identities, our relations with others and our particular histories to be essential and important not contingent and trivial to us.[118]

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[117]Arlene Saxonhouse, "The Philosopher and the Female in the Political Thought of Plato," in Political Theory vol. 4 (1976), p. 211.

[118]Jean Bethke Elshtain, Public Man and Private Woman p. 41.

Conclusion

Two main criteria categorize the modern commentary on Plato's proposal regarding female guardians. The first is whether the commentator interprets Plato's proposal as supportive, or at the very least sympathetic, to feminist issues. The second main criterion is whether the commentator understands Plato's intent behind the proposals to be a serious examination of what is politically possible and desirable. The first category of commentators, those who interpret Plato as a feminist, supports both criteria. They interpret Plato as supporting liberal ideas such as equality of right for education and occupations, individualism, and social justice. They also understand Plato's intention for introducing the proposals to be a serious attempt to establish a possible and desirable city. Another category of commentators, those who disagree that Plato is a feminist, judges his proposals according to the same criteria which the feminist supporters employed. This category understands Plato's argument to be against feminist concerns, because his proposals are contradictory to the essential elements of feminist theory. They do agree, though, with the understanding that Plato intended his proposals in Book V literally. The third category differs from the first two, in that they understand Plato's feminism as unintentional. The real motive for establishing the first wave was, for these theorists, not to liberate of women from oppression, but for completely independent concerns. Yet, for them, Plato's proposals

are not contradictory to the ideas of sex equality; Plato can be considered sympathetic to modern feminism. This category also agrees with the first two groups, in that Plato was serious about setting up an actual, possible political regime. The final category of commentators differs significantly from the former categories. This category argues that Plato did not intend the proposals in Book V to be sympathetic to women; instead the proposals are destructive to both men and women. The proposals are destructive because they propose extreme political solutions. It is because of the excess of these solutions that the final category does not interpret the proposals literally. Instead, they argue, Plato is using the three waves in Book V to discuss the limitations of extreme political solutions to every societal problem.

Chapter Three: Limitations of The Commentary on Plato's Proposals

Three assumptions reveal the limitations of the commentary on Plato's proposals for female guardians. First, many commentators do not take into account the ancient Greek understanding of gender. The ancient Athenians regulated the relationship between the genders with a specific tradition and set of laws, which Plato examines and alters with the proposals in Book V. The Athenian *nomos* of the relationship between men and women differed from the modern relationship. Although women did not engage in the political assemblies, their role in the city had important political significance. Plato's restructuring of the roles of men and women is important when understood in the context of the actual situation he was questioning. Second, some commentators discuss the proposal for female guardians as if it were not part of a larger discussion, both in Book V and in the dialogue of the Republic. Book V opens with a reminder of the force of political rule, which founds authority on the threat of violence and the force of custom and law. Plato's three waves are an examination of these customs and the consequences of altering custom and law. Third, commentary on Plato's proposals is based on the assumption that they are ideal principles which Plato intended literally. This assumption is inadequate, since it does not examine Socrates' own discussion concerning the possibility of the proposals. In addition, a literal understanding

does not examine whether Plato's notion of the best city is one which is desirable. What becomes apparent in an examination of the proposals is that Plato did not intend them literally, but as exaggerations used to explore political ideas.

The *Oikos* and *Polis* in Ancient Greece

There are two important concepts in ancient Greece which are essential, but often neglected, in an interpretation of Plato's proposals. The first is the understanding of the traditional relationship or the *nomos* between the genders in ancient Greece. *Nomos* is the traditional set of custom and laws. With regard to the roles of men and women, *nomos* prescribed gender-specific functions, which were considered to benefit both sexes. Furthermore, it was one's gender that naturally qualified the individual for a specific function in the city. Plato's proposals question both the naturalness and the benefit of Athenian *nomos*. Plato argues that the qualifications for functions in the city are determined not by sex, but by *physis*. The notion of *physis* relates to an individual's potential or inborn quality and is usually translated as "nature." A second important context is an understanding of the connection between the *oikos* and *polis* in ancient Athens. The relationship between the *oikos* and *polis* is often, in modern interpretations, misconstrued as reflecting a liberal understanding of the public and private. The *oikos* or family in ancient Greece had important political significance and was not

considered divorced from the *polis*. Furthermore, the *oikos* and the *polis* did not represent a dichotomous relationship, as does the modern public and private. Instead, they were considered interconnected aspects of human life. In addition, the traditional roles developed in the *oikos* and *polis* were considered natural and beneficial. By restructuring functions based on *physis,* Plato questions both the *nomos* of the relationship between men and women in Athens, and the benefit of the traditional regulation of functions in the *oikos* and *polis*.

Plato's discussion of the relationship between the *nomos* and *physis* in the foundation of a political system reveals an important implication for feminist theory. The first wave in Book V questions the *nomos* or customary laws of Athens, which regulated the role of women in the city. In ancient Athens, women did not have a voice or participate in the political life of the city. A woman's particular sphere of competence and authority was situated within the *oikos*.[1] The functions women performed in the *oikos* were those duties for which they had special and unique capabilities. Those duties or occupations include, as Socrates specifically mentions, "weaving and the care of baked and boiled dishes."[2] They also included the management of household slaves, the maintenance and upkeep of the household, and the bearing and care of children. This last aspect, the bearing of children, was considered to be the fulfilment of the fe-

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[1]Just, pp. 36, 39.
[2]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 455c.

male role.[3] The specific male roles of competence were those functions which were external to the *oikos* and were located in the political aspect of the *polis*, such as law-making, governing, and warfare. The ancient Greeks defined and understood the difference between men and women by these distinct functions they performed in the life of the city.

In ancient Greece, the differences between men and women and the roles they performed were understood to be determined by nature. They viewed the female as naturally and fundamentally different from the male.[4] Many examples of ancient Greek literature highlights this understanding of the differences in temperament and functions of men and women. For example, Aristotle discusses the natural differences between men and women as a relationship between a "naturally ruling element (the male) with the element which is naturally ruled (the female) for the preservation of both."[5] Sophocles begins his play, the Antigone, with a discussion between the sisters Ismene and Antigone. Ismene refuses to challenge the decrees of the king, because as she states, "we who are women/ Should not contend with men; we who are weak/ Are

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[3]The nebulous concept of marriage underlines the role of women as child bearers in ancient Greece. The concept of marriage in ancient Greece was bound up with the notion of citizenship, since only children who were born by a legal marriage, or *engue*, were citizens. The city did not recognize a claim of citizenship for children who were born from other unions. The continuation of a family and its property -- the *oikos* -- was also dependent on the heirs of these legitimate marriages. Furthermore, marriages were not considered established until children were born. For example, if a husband died before his wife had children, she would return to her father's *oikos*. If children were born before he died, she remained in the care of the *kyrios* of her husband's *oikos*. Just, pp. 47-50.

[4]Saxonhouse, p. 177.

[5]Aristotle, The Politics Ernest Barker, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), line 1252a24. (My emphasis).

ruled by the stronger, so that we must obey."[6] Xenophon, in the Oeconomicus, describes the interaction of men and women to be a natural relationship established by the gods who "yok(ed) together female and male, as we call them, so that the couple might constitute a partnership which is most beneficial to each of them."[7] This partnership, from the beginning, was one in which the gods "designed the nature of women for the indoor work and concerns and the nature of the man for the outdoor work."[8] In this way, the ancient Greeks understood a woman's function as the maintaining of shelters, making clothing and preparing food. Consequently, her temperament was one which was less hardy than the male, who had to develop courage to perform tasks in the more treacherous outdoors. Her constant supervision of the children made her more nurturing and more fearful than her partner. The laws which assigned women and men to different functions were considered proper and sacred, since different practices were reserved for different natures. Furthermore, these differences and the distinctive roles men and women performed were beneficial for both genders.

It was Socrates' attempt to change the details of the organization of begetting and raising of children that was the impetus for Adeimantus' demand to begin the discussion of the three waves. It is the organization of conceiving and raising children that "makes a big difference, or rather, the whole difference, in a regime's (*politeia)*

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[6]Sophocles, "The Antigone," in Three Theban Plays Theodore Howard Banks, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), line 60.

[7]Xenophon, Oeconomicus, Sarah B. Pomeroy, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), line VII. 18.

[8]Xenophon, Oeconomicus, line VII. 22.

being right or not right."[9] Adeimantus' reference to the connection between the *polis* and the organization of the begetting and raising of children reveals two important issues. First, the *politeia,* constitution, or government is the principle which is responsible for organizing political life, as well as regulating those aspects which modern theory does not consider to be political. What is now referred to as public and private were considered to be intimately connected in ancient Greece. The organization of the family had political implications and consequences. Second, a judgement on the "rightness" of the city is tied to the organization of the procreation and education of children. For this reason, an *oikos*, was an essential component of the organization of the just *polis*. What modern theorists consider public and private spheres, in ancient Greece was not believed divorced from each other, but interconnected aspects.

Plato's creation of the city in speech reveals the foundation and purpose of a political system. The city which Socrates and his interlocutors produce is founded on their agreement that human beings form cities because of the necessity each human being has for others. As Socrates states, "each of us isn't self-sufficient and is in need of much."[10] The organization of this necessary relationship is the basis of both the *oikos* and the *polis*. According to Socrates, a city is established "when one man takes on another for one need and another for another need, and, since many things are needed, many men gather in one settlement as partners and helpers, to this common settlement

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[9]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 449d.
[10]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 369b.

we give the name city . . . "[11] Bloom's translation of the word 'settlement' in the previous quotation is vague. The Greek word for 'settlement' is *oikesin*. *Oikesin* is a term which means a dwelling or house. It is a derivative of the term *oikos,* which was a family unit consisting of a *kyrios* or head of the household, his wife, children, and slaves. A healthy city based on absolute necessity for food, clothing, and shelter could be as few as four or five men, as Socrates admits, performing the functions of farmers, artisans, or merchants. Socrates does not specifically mention a role, or even the sex of women, in the healthy city. Yet, there are women in the healthy city, since the sexes lived together in *hedeos sunontes* or sweet intercourse and produced children. The only regulation of sexual relationships for those who lived in the healthy city was that they "did not produce children beyond their means, keeping an eye out against war and poverty."[12] In Athens, *sunontes* was the term for an Athenian man and any woman, who was not an *aste*, living together without a legal contract of *engue*.[13] Such an arrangement did not have political regulations, since the city did not recognize their children as citizens. In the same way, the healthy city did not require regulation of sexual relationships for the purposes of citizenship. The relationship between the sexes was based on what Glaucon called "erotic necessity" and not political requirements.[14]

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[11]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 369c.
[12]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 372b.
[13]The term *aste* meant city-dweller. It described a woman who was the daughter of an Athenian citizen married by *engue*. For further reference, see Just, p.21.
[14]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 458d.

The first city in speech, this healthy city created by Adeimantus and Socrates, discloses the interconnected relationship between the functions of the *oikos* and the *polis*. The healthy city was concerned with occupations directly involved in fulfilling the basic requirements of human life. The healthy city consists of functions which are either directly part of the functioning of the *oikos* or subsequent to it. These include the production of food and clothing, house-building, tool-making, shepherding, trading, and wage-earning. The production of food and maintenance of the household was exclusively part of the functions of the *oikos*. The secondary elements of trading and marketing, which originate in the *agora* were limited, in the healthy city, to providing necessities which they could not produce within the city. The role of exchange such as importing or exporting was, in ancient Greece, still considered part of the proper function of the *oikos*.[15] Therefore, the healthy city in speech was one which consisted of the functions of the Greek *oikos*. Furthermore, although Socrates does not mention the role of women in the healthy city beyond childbirth, the sphere of the *oikos* was considered to be a woman's sphere of competence in which she had some authority. The different occupational functions in the healthy city, such as farming, making clothes, trading, and marketing were occupations which women participated in or from which

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[15]Aristotle in the Politics discussed the role of the *oikos* in ancient Greece in detail. The first Book of this text is entitled "The Household and the City." In this Book, Aristotle divides the art of acquisition into two sections. The first are those objects necessary for life, which can be stored. These correspond somewhat to the first aspects of the healthy city. The second art of acquisition concerns the art of exchange, which requires merchants, tradesmen and wage-earners. Both types of acquisition are still properly considered within the sphere and influence of the *oikos*. For further discussion, see Aristotle, lines 1256a1-1258b9.

women traditionally were not excluded.[16] The healthy city, reflecting the traditional *oikos* of ancient Greece, was one in which women could be considered capable of most, if not all functions.

Those occupations which are distinct from the functions of the *oikos* develop in the unhealthy or feverish city. They become part of the city based on Glaucon's demand for those things which are luxuries or not based on necessity. They include the imitative arts, education, hunting, medicine, philosophy, guarding and ruling.[17] These are the functions of the city which, in ancient Athens, men occupied exclusively. Women were, according to Athenian *nomos*, excluded from participating in any of these functions. The first wave is Socrates' attempt to persuade of Glaucon to admit women into these traditionally masculine functions. For Socrates, there is nothing about the nature of a woman that denies her the proper *physis* for the function of medicine or of guarding.[18] Except for reproductive roles, one's sex no longer determines the function in the city that each person performs. An individual's *physis* or potential

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[16]There is some controversy whether women in ancient Athens were secluded entirely within the household or whether they did participate in some economic activities of the city. Roger Just in Women in Athenian Law and Life addresses this controversy with the evidence of the movement of women outside the *oikos*. His evidence includes literature, portraiture, and legal documentation. The female *aste* appears to have attended religious festivals, weddings, and engage in some economic activity in the marketplace. Ancient Athenian practice only allowed women to make limited contracts and to trade up to the value of one *medimnus* (approximately eight days worth of food) of barley. A woman was limited, but not entirely excluded from the occupation of trading and marketing. As Just indicates, there may have been a significant difference between the economic behaviour of poor and wealthy women and a secluded wife may represent the ideal Athenian wife. For further information, refer to Roger Just's chapter, "Freedom and Seclusion" in Women in Athenian Law and Life. pp. 105-125.

[17]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 373b-374d, 376c, 389b.

[18]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 454d, 456a.

determines one's function.[19] The masculine functions of the *polis*, such as the military or ruling, are no longer considered to be the exclusive excellence of men. Socrates understands women to have the capacity to perform these functions and therefore, the city could no longer exclude women from participating in any functions in the city. Conversely, men are also admitted to functions which traditionally were female roles.[20] For Plato, the regulations of ancient Athens, which excluded women or men from these gender-related functions, were not based on nature, but on convention.

It is this *nomos*, or the custom of gender-specific functions, which Socrates questions with the creation of the city in speech. The Athenian understanding of the relationship between men and women, as Plato claims, was not natural but based on an *ethos* or habit. The Athenian regulation of gender-specific roles, according to Socrates, was not based on nature, since "woman participates according to nature in all practices."[21] Plato's understanding of the natural relationship between genders is that they differ only in reproductive functions. Yet, the foundation of his city on this new concept of what is natural does not negate the requirement for *nomos*, since the city in speech also requires an enforcement of this new understanding of *physis* by the rulers.

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[19]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 456a-b. The difficulties and consequences of including women into the function of a guardian will be addressed in detail in the next chapter.

[20]The function of nurses is an example of this extension of the role of men to include traditionally feminine functions. In the city in speech it is the function of nurses to take over the responsibility of caring for the children. Socrates states, "as the offspring are born, won't they be taken over by the officers established for this purpose -- men or women or both, for presumably the offices are common to women and men . . . " Plato, The Republic of Plato line 460b.

[21]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 455e.

For example, a mother in the altered organization of reproduction in the city in speech is not even able to recognize her children. Plato replaces the natural recognition a mother has for her child with a new convention of maternal uncertainty.[22] The fact that the new *nomos* regarding reproduction is based on the myth of a rigged eugenics program reveals the use of lies in the relationship between what is considered natural and custom. In the best case situation, Socrates hopes, the rulers will not remember that the custom is based on a lie.[23] The connection between *nomos* and *physis* is not a dichotomy, but rather a symbiotic relationship. A change in the understanding of what is considered to be based on nature leads to a change in the normative customs or laws of the city.[24] Furthermore, the lies administered by the rulers enforce these changes.

Plato's discussion of the foundation and functions of the city reveals a limitation of some commentary on Book V. For many commentators, the purpose of Plato's city in speech is to resolve the conflicts which arise from the tension between the public and private. Commentators, such as Monique Canto and Wendy Brown, argue that one of the essential political problems for Socrates was the desire to recognize something as

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[22]There is rarely uncertainty in the identification of a particular child by his or her mother, since naturally women know their children. Thus, an inability of a woman to recognize her children must be based on convention and not nature. For further discussion of this point refer to Saxonhouse, Women in the History of Political Thought pp. 44-45.

[23]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 413b.

[24]Socrates emphasizes this point by first referring to the relationship of men and women as a drama, but concludes his treatment of the first wave by calling it "the women's law." What Socrates has accomplished is to replace the traditional law with a new custom or *nomos*, which reflects a notion of justice based on performing one particular function. Plato, The Republic of Plato line 457b.

my own at the expense of others in the city. [25] For Canto and Brown, Plato's solution to these conflicts of the city was to blur the understanding of what is considered mine by extending the *oikos*, the sphere of private, to the public sphere of the political. Thus, the *polis* and *oikos* became indistinguishable. Gender equality was simply an unintentional or incidental result of this blurring. For Saxonhouse, there is no gender equality in Plato's proposals, since the purpose of the city in speech was to create an artificial unity at the expense of both women and philosophers. The limitation of this interpretation rests in the modern assumption of a separation of politics from a citizen's private life. Yet, the ancient Greek understanding of the *oikos* was not as separated from the *polis* as the modern understanding of the public and private. The *oikos* was a crucial part of the *polis* and fulfilled specific functions, which were understood to be politically significant. This understanding differed from the modern liberal view that politics is something distinct from one's private life and should not interfere, except in a limited way, with the private life of its citizens. Plato's questioning of the roles of women and men in the city in speech is not so much a blurring of the public and private (since these were already blurred in ancient Greece) as it was a questioning of what constitutes the qualification for these roles.

The purpose of the *polis*, for Plato, is discovered in the roles of men and women. The origin of the city is the use that each of us has for others. It is this need

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[25]Brown, pp. 174-175. See also Canto, pp. 60-61.

which requires "one man (to) take on another for one need and another for another need."[26] It is out of necessity that each individual is assigned to a particular function in the city. The relationship between men and women and the function that they perform in the city also is created from this necessity we have for others. In ancient Athens, they organized and regulated the traditional roles of men and women by their consideration of what was natural and beneficial. Plato questions the naturalness, usefulness, and benefit of the ancient Greek understanding of gender-specific roles. Instead, Plato discusses a city where each person performs the function for which he or she is best suited.[27] It is not one's sex that best determines his or her qualification of a particular role in the city, but potential and education. Therefore, the proposals of the city in speech questions the usefulness of gender-specific roles and establish a new tradition which Plato considers to be more beneficial.

The commentary on Plato's discussion of female guardians often neglects significant contexts that are essential in interpreting the proposals of Book V. First, the relationship between men and women in ancient Greece reveals the interconnected aspects of the *polis* and *oikos*. The *oikos* was a component of the *polis* and it had important political functions. Women, therefore, although not involved in the assembly, were

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[26]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 369c.

[27]Plato's definition of justice is to fulfill the one particular role that naturally suits each individual. Refer to the relevant line: "to each one of the others we assigned one thing, the one for which his nature fitted him, at which he was to work throughout life, exempt from the other tasks, not letting the crucial moments pass, and thus doing a fine job." Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 374b-c.

essential in the understanding of citizenship and played a significant role in the *polis*. Furthermore, the organization of the function of the raising and bearing children was significant in understanding justice in the city. Plato's proposals question the tradition regulation of gender-specific roles in the city. A change in this relationship between men and women, for Plato, points to a second important aspect for interpretation. The city was founded upon the need each of us has for one another. Plato, in questioning the *nomos* of Athens, attempts to restructure one's function in the city by evaluating each individual by their potential. Gender does not determine this potential, Plato argues, since an individual's nature or *physis* determines it. Thus, Plato indicates the connection between what is considered natural and the establishment of law and convention. Finally, Plato restructures the functions of men and women to question the benefit and usefulness of the Athenian *nomos*. He does this by establishing a city which he organizes by the most useful and beneficial method.

Female Guardians: A Constituent of the Dialogue

Another important element for an interpretation of Plato's proposals in Book V is that the introduction of female guardians takes place in a more extensive discussion of the Republic. Many commentators inadequately interpret Plato's treatment of female guardians by detaching it from the remainder of Book V. A second deficiency is

to discuss Book V as if it were not part of a larger dialogue. Plato indicates the connection between the proposals in Book V and the rest of the dialogue in two ways. The first is by means of dramatic context. The demands of the majority turn away Socrates, at the beginning of Book V, from his intended discussion; this is reminiscent of the beginning of the Republic and indicates a return to previous themes. The second method is Socrates' reintroduction of the previous analogy of the guard dog. This indicates a return, not to the beginning of the dialogue, but to the origin of the city in speech. The reappearance of previous themes of the Republic has important implications for the interpretation of proposals in Book V. Another deficiency of interpretation is to fail to understand the three waves as parts of an interconnected whole. Plato indicates this interdependence by means of the order in which Socrates introduces the proposals, as well as the details within the three waves. Therefore, the background against which Plato introduces the proposals provides important elements that are essential in the interpretation of the first wave of Book V.

The three waves of proposals in Book V are introduced into the dialogue as an extraneous discussion forced upon Socrates, who appears to be unwilling to provide details of the city in speech. Instead of continuing the discussion of the five types of souls and their corresponding regimes, Adeimantus and Polemarchus interrupt Socrates with the claim that Socrates is robbing them of a whole section of the argument.[28] This

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[28]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 449c.

interruption reflects the beginning of the dialogue, when Glaucon and these same two men originally detained Socrates and voted for him to remain in the Piraeus. In the first detainment, at the beginning of the dialogue, they only undertake the appeal to a majority vote after a threat of violence and an appeal of persuasion. The mixture of persuasion and force is a dramatic representation of the foundation of a political community.[29] In the second detainment in Book V, Socrates compares the interruption to a *parakalountes*. *Parakalountes* is an ancient Greek word that describes the summons one receives to attend a trial, usually in defence of a friend. Socrates, by demand of the majority, is forced to come to the aid or defence of his argument. This legal terminology recalls the actual defence of the Apology, in which Socrates defends himself against the charges that he was corrupting the young and recognizing non-sanctioned gods. The charge of corruption could arise from either a questioning of the traditions and customary laws (the *nomos*) of the community as well as the city's sacred religion.[30] At the point when Socrates wanted "to avoid the swarm of arguments" detailing the city in speech, his young interlocutors unanimously drive him back into the particulars of the city in speech.[31] The particulars of the three waves question the *nomos* of

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[29]For further discussion of the significance of the initiation of the dialogue see Strauss, pp. 63-65. Bloom, "Interpretive Essay," pp. 311-312.

[30]The charge against Socrates, for which they condemned him, is reported in the Apology as "Socrates is guilty for corruption the minds of the young, and of believing in supernatural things of his own invention instead of the gods recognized by the State." Plato, "The Apology," in The Last Days of Socrates Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant, trans. (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1993), lines 24 b-c.

[31]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 450a.

Athens. The discussion in Book V highlights the danger of questioning the traditions and laws of the city which eventually had Socrates put to death.

Plato also indicates the potential threat that the discussion of the three waves raises against the traditions and customs of Athens with Adeimantus' interruption of Socrates. Adeimantus reprimands Socrates for "taking it easy" and "robbing us of a whole section of argument," because Socrates has introduced proposals which are extraordinary as "though (they) were something quite ordinary."[32] *Phaulos*, the word that Bloom translates as ordinary, also contains the connotation of something that is common, insignificant or trivial. For Adeimantus, the proposals are not trivial, but extremely significant, since communities could be created in many different manners or ways. Furthermore, Adeimantus insists on returning to a discussion of the particulars of Socrates' city, because the particular details of the just city will "make the whole difference in a regime's being right or not right."[33] This is important because the discussion of the city in speech originated in an examination of the idea of justice. The three waves reveal the particulars of a just city. The details are significant precisely because what could be deemed trivial, such as the manner in which citizens hold property, is essential to the organization of both the *polis* and *oikos*. Adeimantus' intervention discloses that one cannot challenge the ordinary traditions and practices of the city

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[32]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 449c.
[33]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 449d.

without a detailed examination of what the changes would entail. Furthermore, it is in the examination of the changes Socrates makes to the *nomos* of ancient Greece that allows for an evaluation of justice in the city in speech.

Plato also implies a second return in the outset of Book V, not to the beginning of the dialogue, but to the inception of the city in speech. Socrates, himself, indicates this return in his response to Adeimantus' interruption, when he states "how much discussion you've set in motion, from the beginning again as it were, about the regime I was delighted to think had already been described . . . "[34] At this point of the dialogue Socrates intended to discuss the decline of justice in the four deviant regimes, but instead they induce him to "go back again and say what perhaps should have been said then in its turn."[35] Plato indicates a return to the discussion of the city in speech, which Socrates introduced in Book II. Socrates and his interlocutors originally fabricated the city on the need each of us have for others. The original city is based on satisfying human needs with simple, unadorned necessities and relationships in which the citizens "live out their lives in peace with health, as is likely, and at last, dying as old men, they will hand down other similar lives to their offspring."[36] This original healthy city includes farmers, herdsmen, craftsmen, wage-earners, merchants, and tradesmen, but is significantly lacking politicians, judges, or a guardians.[37] Socrates

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[34]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 450a.
[35]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 450c.
[36]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 372d.
[37]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 369d-374a.

does not introduce these functions until Glaucon demands that Socrates introduce relishes into his healthy city.

The proposals of Book V are necessary because of the second feverish city of relishes. Socrates makes the connection between the three waves in Book V and the feverish city through his discussion of the first wave, which introduces women into the category of guardians. Socrates introduces the function of guardians into the feverish city in Book II, because the pursuit of wealth made it impossible to satisfy the members of the city with simple sufficiency.[38] The guardian becomes a function for which certain individuals would specialized in Socrates' system of justice. Socrates compares the character of the guardian to a guard dog, who "is as gentle as can be with their familiars and people they know and the opposite with those they don't know."[39] Socrates returns to the analogy of the guard dogs when he describes the female drama, or the first wave of Book V. Female guard dogs, Socrates stresses, are not used differently from male guard dogs, "except that we use the females as weaker and the males as stronger."[40] The necessity for guard dogs reveals that it is not the healthy city which Socrates is detailing in Book V, but a city which has a connection to the unhealthy city full of luxuries, adornments and ultimately warfare. Three waves in Book V are not a description of an ideal city, instead they develop in response to the luxurious city that

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[38]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 373b-d.
[39]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 375d-e.
[40]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 451c.

Socrates describes as feverish and in opposition to the previous true, healthy city.[41] The three waves become the means of transforming this feverish city into the just city. Therefore, an interpretation of Plato's proposal for female guardians must be understood in the context of the illness which Socrates distinguishes in this second city in speech.

A second important aspect of interpretation, often neglected by commentators on the Republic, is the interdependence of the three waves of Book V. Some commentators disregard the second two waves as unnecessary or irrelevant to Plato's argument for female guardians. Other commentators are simply silent concerning the relationship between the proposal for female guardians and the second two waves. A third response of commentators is to argue that, although changes in the relationship between men and women may affect marriages and the family, these changes do not have to reflect the second two waves.[42] For example, Drew Hyland states explicitly that Socrates intends the first wave seriously because it is natural, while the second two waves are extreme and impossible. [43]Another response by some commentators is to focus on the connec-

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[41]The discussion of the healthy city is set aside by Glaucon's concerns. As Socrates indicates, "we are, as it seems, considering not only how a city, but also a luxurious city, comes into being . . . Now, the true city is in my opinion the one we just described -- a healthy city, as it were. But, if you want to, let's look at a feverish city, too." Plato, The Republic of Plato line 372e.

[42]Pierce argues that "the Platonic proposals regarding each can be discussed on their own merits, i.e., we can assess the extent to which each engages in abstraction, and if abstraction implies impossibility." Refer to Pierce, p. 6. See also Annas, p. 308.

[43]Hyland adds that by "looking at what Socrates says of each of the waves separately, we shall discover that he has very different attitudes regarding the possibility for each of them." Drew Hyland, "Plato's Three Waves and the Question of Utopia," in Interpretation vol. 18, no. 1 (Fall 1990), p. 91.

tion between the first two waves and neglect their connection with the final wave of the philosopher-king. For example, Susan Moller Okin understands the proposal for female guardians as a secondary, dependent element in Socrates' argument, because "if for the female guardians the relationship to particular men, children and households has ceased to be crucial, there seems to be no alternative for Plato but to consider women persons in their own right."[44] These commentators interpret Plato's argument for female guardians as a separate and distinct proposal from one, or both of the other two waves.

However, Plato reveals the connection between each wave and the other two in two instances. First, Plato indicates the connection with the dramatic introduction of the waves at the beginning of Book V. Adeimantus interrupts Socrates' discussion not with a question about the first wave of female guardians, but with a question about the second wave of the community of women and children. Socrates first presented the proposal to hold women and children in common in Book IV. This second proposal was the one sufficient thing on which he could create unity in the city in speech. The one sufficient thing was the guardian's education and rearing which he organized so that "the possession of women, marriage, and procreation of children must as far as possible be arranged according to the proverb that friends have all things in common."[45] It is the section concerning the particulars of the "begetting of children -- how

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[44]Okin, p. 38. See also Wender, p. 83.
[45]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 423d-424a.

they'll be begotten and, once born, how they'll be reared" which Adeimantus and Polemarchus accuse Socrates of trying to rob them.[46] Adeimantus' question has two sections; first, he asks how the city will organize the begetting of children. This is, in essence, a question concerning the relationship between the sexes for the purpose of reproduction. The second question follows from the first, since it concerns how they will raise the children once they are begotten. It is the education and rearing of children which is a significant aspect, for Socrates, in creating a unified city. Although the notion of female guardians, or the female drama, is chronologically anterior (as children have to be born before they are raised) it is introduced in response to education -- the one sufficient thing required to preserve the regime. Thus, Plato intimately connects the first wave to the second wave of the community of women and children.[47]

There is, moreover, an important connection between the first two waves and the final wave of the rule of the philosopher-king. Socrates reveals the third wave to be the smallest change which could bring about the "most closely approximating what has been said . . . (for) a city to come to this manner of regime."[48] The possibility of

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[46]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 449c.

[47]There are important implications relevant to modern feminist theory which emerge from an understanding of the interconnectedness of the three waves. The first important implication is the connection between the first wave of female guardians and the second wave of the elimination of marriages and the family. For Plato, this change was necessary to establish a city which was based on utility and benefit. In contrast, feminist theory proposes the elimination of marriage for the greater self-realization on the part of individuals. Marxist and radical feminist saw the destruction of marriage as an essential component of sexual equality, since they understood marriage as inherently patriarchal and believed that it institutionalized the sexual and economic oppression of women.

[48]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 473a-b.

the first two waves coming into existence depends upon the coincidence that those who are philosophers "rule as king or those now called kings and chiefs genuinely and adequately philosophize . . . "[49] The rule of the philosopher is the smallest change in the political regime, but Socrates also describes it as the biggest wave, or *kuma*. Socrates refers to the *kuma* as a wave of laughter which will drown him in ill-repute. Yet, the word *kuma* also contains the connotation of something which is swollen, as in a wave of the sea, a flood, or a fetus in the womb. The imagery of swelling, especially of a fetus, hints at the connection between the final wave and the first wave of female guardians. Socrates often describes himself as a philosopher who is a midwife in the birth of ideas.[50] The imagery of birth is also crucial in the first wave, which describes the relationship between the sexes.

There is also an overlapping between the second wave of community of women and children and of the third wave of the rulers. The rulers, in line 458c, of the second wave are already present in the city and distinct from the guardians; they are those who are responsible for education and organizing the rigged lottery system of marriages. Also, the rulers are the only members of the city, who know the lies necessary for establishing the city. Socrates presents the three waves, as if the previous two waves

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[49]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 473c-d.

[50]One of the most significant passages in which Socrates compares himself to a midwife is in the Theaetetus. He states, "my midwifery has all the standard features, except that I practice on men instead of women and supervise the labour of minds, not their bodies." Plato, The Theaetetus Robin Waterfield, trans. (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books, 1987), line 150b.

build upon each other to result in this last, largest swelling of the third wave. Sequentially the third wave should be the final wave, yet it is the wave which makes the previous two possible. For this reason, the wave of the philosopher-king is also the first wave. Therefore, the three waves in Book V are not sequential, nor discrete and independent proposals; instead they have to be interpreted as an interdependent totality.

The interdependent connection of the three waves has three important consequences for the interpretation of Book V. The first consequence is Plato's association of the three waves with previous themes of the Republic. A return to the beginning of the dialogue, signified by the dramatic context of Book V, points to the atmosphere of persuasion and violence which underlies the discussion of the city in speech. Plato hints that an alteration of *nomos* concerning the relationship between men and women has political consequences which are potentially violent. A second consequence is that, although the waves establish the just city, Socrates develops them in response to the excess and ill-health of Glaucon's city. Socrates reveals the proposal for female guardians as part of the cure of problems which Glaucon unleashed in the feverish city. Finally, Plato indicates that each wave is dependent on the changes of the other two waves. The introduction of female guardians entails not only a change in the relationship between the sexes, but also affects the arrangements of marriage and the family. The inclusion of women in the guardian ranks vacates their traditional role, such as child-care and maintenance of the household. For Plato, it is the king who reassigns

and takes on much of the responsibility for this role.[51] These responsibilities, which the philosopher-king assumes, affect not only the organization of the *oikos*, but also enforce a transformation of the *nomos* or customs of the citizens to emulate new functions for both men and women in the *polis*.

Problems with a Literal Interpretation of Book V

Much commentary on Plato's proposals is limited in a third way. This limitation is the interpretation of the three waves as literal proposals evaluated as actual, viable political solutions. This interpretation is predominant in three groups of interpreters: those who assess Plato as a feminist, anti-feminist, and accidental feminist. As was discussed in Chapter One, the literal interpretation of Plato's proposals was also indicative of the previous debate between those who argued that Plato's theory was either totalitarian or liberal. This type of interpretation presumes that Plato's city in speech is an ideal or possible political order. There are difficulties with a literal inter-

[51]The movement of women into non-traditional roles has an important consequence in modern society, since someone has to be responsible for the role of raising and educating children. The solution for both Plato and most feminist theorists is an intervention of the rulers, who assume these responsibilities. For example, the Bill of Rights passed by NOW in 1967, had as the fifth demand the establishment of child-care centers maintained and paid for by the state. In addition, feminist activists also demand state intervention to enforce changes in attitudes and opinions about women in modern culture. This demand includes the censorship of material which is seen as demeaning to women, pressure for affirmative action, and laws regulating behaviour in the workplace to eliminate sexual harassment. It is the government which they view as the institution that is responsible for bringing about such changes. Plato's third wave highlights the dependence of changes in the *nomos* concerning the relationship between the genders on an interventionist political rule.

pretation of the proposals using Socrates' own criteria of evaluation. Socrates evaluates the proposals by whether they are (1) possible or (2) the best. An examination of the proposals by these criteria reveals problems with a literal interpretation, since the proposals fail to meet with Socrates' criteria. Instead of literal political solutions, Socrates uses the proposals to examine political possibilities.

Plato reveals the inadequacy of a literal interpretation of the proposals, by means of the criteria Socrates introduces in Book V. Socrates hesitates in presenting the details of the city in speech because "it could be doubted that the things said are possible; and, even if, in the best possible conditions, they could come into being, that they would be what is best might also be doubted."[52] Socrates defines his two criteria of whether the proposals are possible or the best in a very specific way. Socrates claims the first wave of female guardians is possible, or *dunata*, because of the law that assigns the same practices to the same *physis* is set down according to nature.[53] Hence, what is considered natural is a priori considered possible. Glaucon's insistence that they abandon the discussion of all the good things in the city complicates Socrates' definition. Instead of discussing Socrates' understanding of what is natural, Glaucon suggests that they "try only to persuade ourselves that it is possible and how it is possible, dismissing all the rest."[54] Therefore, there is a movement from the consideration of a

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[52]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 450c-d.
[53]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 456a-c.
[54]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 471d-e.

possibility understood as natural to an understanding of what is necessary to bring the city into being.

It is through Glaucon's demand to know how the city could come into existence that Socrates reveals his intention behind creating the city in speech. His intention was not to create an actual city, but to use the idea of the city in speech to discuss the idea of justice. On line 472c, Socrates admits that he did not intend the discussion of the city in speech to prove that the city was possible, but to create a pattern. Socrates uses this pattern to seek "what justice itself is like, and for the perfectly just man, if he should come into being, and what he would be like once come into being; and, . . . looking off at what their relationships to happiness and its opposite appear to us to be . . . "[55] Plato did not discuss the city in speech to use it as a blueprint intended to establish a city, or even to prove that he could establish such a city. Instead, the city in speech is, according to Socrates, like a painting of "what the fairest human being would be like."[56] Such a painting would be no less fair even if someone could prove that the beautiful man in the painting could not come into being. In the same manner, the beautiful city or *kallipolis*, would be no less fair if it could not be established literally.[57]

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[55]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 472c.

[56]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 472d.

[57]Socrates does suggest that, although the city may not be possible, there is one step that would cause the closest possible approximation to the city in speech. This change is the third wave of the philosopher-king. The coincidence of philosophy and politics occurs when cities are willing to be ruled by philosophers and the philosophers are willing to rule. This coincidence is unlikely for two reasons. First, the city believes the philosopher is dangerous, or simply useless. Second, the philosopher would not rule unless compelled to do so. The consequences of this coincidence will be dealt with in detail in the following chapter. For further discussion, refer to Strauss, pp. 120-125.

The important question about the proposals is not whether they can be established literally; instead, the important question is whether the city in speech is truly the fairest city.

The second reason Socrates hesitated to introduce the three waves was that they could be doubted to be the best. The best, or *aristoi*, of Greek society were the nobility, or those who had characteristics which were both heroic and noble. The ancient Greeks connected noble characteristics to bravery and virtue, especially in battle. In opposition, Socrates judges his proposals as the best, or *aristos*, since "there is nothing better for a city than the coming to be in it of the best possible women and men."[58] These best possible men and women are not nobles, but the guardians, who both possess the proper *physis* and receive the correct education. This education consists of anything which would create the best men and women, including both sexes exercising naked together in the gymnasium. Socrates admits the shamelessness of this proposal, but he dismissed this as unimportant, since what is "beneficial is fair (*kalos*) and the harmful ugly."[59] Thus, Socrates is willing to allow anything in the city, no matter how shameful, disgusting, or humorous, if the practice is beneficial. The concept of usefulness, which was the reason for categorizing human beings into one specific job specialization in the city, Socrates now expands to subsume the noble, holy, or sacred. He now calls the marriages of the eugenics program, deemed to be beneficial, *hieros* or

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[58]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 546e.
[59]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 457b.

sacred.[60] Therefore, Socrates understands *aristos* or *hieros* as anything that is beneficial for the city.

Plato develops the details of what is beneficial for the city in the three waves of Book V. The first wave of female guardians reorganized individuals into the function which most suited him or her. This would be the most effective method of specializing each citizen according to the idea of justice that each individual performs one particular function. The second wave, Socrates claims, is not simply beneficial for the city, but is also the "most advantageous of all for both the city and the guardians."[61] For Socrates, the proposals are advantageous for the individual and the city. Furthermore, although Socrates did not compose the city in speech to create happiness, unintentionally it does create a life for the auxiliaries which "appears far finer and better than that of Olympic victors."[62] The city provides the auxiliaries with everything useful or necessary for life as well as a worthy burial. Happiness, in Socrates' understanding, is to receive these necessities of life, such as housing, food, clothing, as well as prizes and honour from their fellow citizens. By the process of elimination, happiness does not include anything eliminated from the guardian class, such as family, children, possessions, and long-term sexual relationships. For Socrates, such attachments are a "foolish adolescent opinion about happiness."[63] The city in speech is the best city, because

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[60]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 458b.
[61]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 466a-b.
[62]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 466b.
[63]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 461b.

it establishes a pattern based on obtaining maximum usefulness of citizens by classifying them into the one function.[64]

Instead of understanding the proposals literally, the three waves are exaggerations used to question the assumptions of political systems. Many commentators, who do not understand the proposals literally, argue that Plato intended them to be ridiculous or comical.[65] These commentators interpret the three waves as exaggerated proposals or suppositions which Plato takes to the utmost extreme. It is the excess of the three waves that incites laughter in Book V and makes the proposals akin to a comedy.[66] Comedies also provoke laughter by using extreme and ridiculous examples of human experience to examine those experiences. It is for this reason that some commentators compare the proposals in Book V to Aristophanes' Ecclesiazusae. Aristophanes' play, like the Republic, reorganizes the roles of women and men in the city in order to cure conflicts and political strife.[67] The interpretation of the proposals in Book V as a comedy is intended to draw forth the same comparison. Plato is also exaggerating aspects in the city in speech, in order to make them easier to see. Socra-

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[64]This redefinition of *aristos* as usefulness raises the question of whether the city is even desirable. This idea will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

[65]For reference see, Strauss, pp. 62-63; Bloom, "Response to Hall," p. 325; Saxonhouse, p. 176.

[66]Specifically, Socrates mentions that the first wave of female guardians and, especially, the final wave of the philosopher-king would evoke laughter. Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 451a, 473b.

[67]There are some striking similarities between Aristophanes' play and the Republic. In the Ecclesiazusae the women become rulers in order to set up a community of property and sexual relationships that solves all conflicts in the city. Unlike the proposals in Book V, the Ecclesiazusae is a gynaecocracy and digresses into a brazen outpouring of sexual intrigue and gluttonous banquets. Aristophanes, The Ecclesiazusae David Barrett, trans. (Markham: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 241-246.

tes tells us, on line 368d, that the intention of the city in speech is to make "bigger and in a bigger place" letters in order to help men who don't read little letters from afar. What they make "bigger" in the city in speech is the reorganization of human beings into a useful function. The excessive solution of the proposals in Book V raises the question whether Plato intended the proposals as literal solutions to political concerns. Instead of a literal discussion, Plato indicates that the proposals are an examination of the idea of justice both in the city and in the individual.

Conclusion

The commentary on Book V often neglects significant contexts which are essential in an understanding of Plato's proposal for guardian women. The first limitation is to understand the relationship between the genders as a reflection of modern understanding and custom. The *oikos* and function of women, in ancient Athens, were politically significant and not a distinct or separate sphere from politics. Therefore, although Plato was rearranging the roles of men and women, this alteration was not identical to the modern demand to allow women access to the public sphere of modern liberal-democracies. Second, Plato indicates an interdependence among all three waves. A change in the *nomos* regarding the relationship between the sexes necessarily affects the organization of the family. In addition, a certain type of political rule is

necessary to reorganize these relationships. To focus exclusively on the first wave of female guardians neglects important implications of this altered *nomos*. Finally, a suggestive reason for an inadequate treatment of Plato's proposals is that many commentators interpret the proposals literally. Socrates, himself, raises doubts whether the proposals are possible and defines the best as that which is most useful. Plato examines justice and politics through an exaggeration of assigning human beings into functions defined by usefulness. This examination reveals both the problems of classifying human beings by *physis*, as well as the lies and potential for violence that exists in the creation and maintenance of political order.

Chapter Four: Plato's Discussion of *Physis* and Function

The proposal for female guardians in Book V raises two consequences important in understanding of Plato's city in speech. First, Socrates founded the city in speech on a lack of self-sufficiency and need each individual has for others. Traditionally in ancient Greece, the city organized this need each individual has for others by gender-specific functions. Plato questions the usefulness of this traditional organization by redistributing the functions in the city based on *physis*, which he separates from gender. This organization creates a city in which each individual becomes the most useful to others, because he or she performs one specialized function. Yet, there is a difficulty in organizing all functions by *physis*, since the city must also accommodate the classification of *genos* for the purpose of reproduction. The first part of this chapter discusses the difficulty of reconciling the classification of *physis* with the classification of *genos*. The second part of the chapter will deal with the consequences of this classification by usefulness. This is highlighted in Plato's understanding of gender or *genos* as the useful function of bearing or mounting. Any other aspect or attribute associated with gender, such as the nurturing of women or courage of men, Plato excludes from his understanding of gender. Furthermore, the rulers eliminate or redirect any other classification of human beings, such as a member of an *oikos*, toward one useful function. This

is achieved, for Plato, through lies, persuasion, and even compulsion. The importance of Plato's proposal for female guardians is that it is part of a more extensive discussion of the consequences that result from understanding human beings as useful functions in a political system.

Female Guardians and *Physis*

Plato's support for female guardians is based on the idea that *physis* is inborn potential which one's sex does not determine. Yet, even commentators who interpret Plato as supporting feminist ideas, like Bluestone, recognize contradictions or inconsistencies in Plato's treatment of female guardians. The first inconsistency is Plato's general disparaging presentation of women in the dialogue.[1] More significant for a discussion of gender equality is the anti-feminist principle which establishes that in all practices man is superior to woman.[2] Those commentators who assess Plato as a feminist regard the anti-feminist principle either as an attempt to appease misogynist interlocutors, or as a general statement not relevant to the talents of a particular woman. Those commentators who argue that Plato is not a feminist find the principle contrary to any notion of feminist equality, since it asserts the superiority of men. The consequence of

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[1]For example, even in Book V, Socrates characterizes those who strip the dead in warfare as having "the mark of a small and womanish mind." Plato, The Republic of Plato line 469d.

[2]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 455d.

the tension between Plato's assertion that women participate in all practices and his statement that they participate in a lesser capacity than men, calls into question a classification of human beings according to the function they perform in a city.

Although most commentators do recognize the inconsistency in Plato's presentation of the first wave, by attempting to account for the inconsistency, or to use it to dismiss Plato's argument, they do not explore the implications of the contradiction. The main element of Socrates' argument for female guardians rests in his assertion that "if we use the women for the same things as the men, they must also be taught the same things."[3] Socrates evaluates women in the same way as men, by what function they are used for within the city. The interlocutors conclude that "a woman doesn't differ in her nature very much from a man," and hence, "there is no practice of a city's governors which belongs to woman because she's woman, or to man because he's man; but the natures are scattered alike among both animals . . . "[4] In Socrates' argument, the means of evaluating a woman's function in the city is dependent on whether she has the *physis* suited to that function and receives the proper education. The difference in the bodies between men and women, the fact that women bear and men mount, becomes secondary to Socrates' assertion that "men and women have the same nature with respect to guarding a city, except insofar as the one is weaker and the other stron-

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[3]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 451e.
[4]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 452c, 455d.

ger."[5] The anti-feminist principle, focused on in much of the debate among the feminist commentators, is revealed to be part of a more complex argument in which Plato understands the difference between men and women as body size and strength. Bodies, whether female or male, are secondary to one's *physis* and ultimately to one's function in the city.

Plato embeds his notion of *physis* in an understanding of human beings as the type of potential they possess for a function. The idea of *physis* involves two main elements. The first element is the possession of an inborn character or seed that has the potential to develop toward a particular function. Socrates' description of the philosopher in Book VI highlights the importance of *physis* as a quality with which one is born. There are few perfect philosophers, Socrates insists, since it is a *physis* which is "born only rarely among human beings."[6] In addition, this inborn potential is not sufficient for the categorization of a philosopher, but must be accompanied by the proper education. "Every seed or thing that grows," Socrates adds, "we know that the more vigorous it is, the more it is deficient in its own properties when it doesn't get the food, climate, or place suitable to it."[7] In order to be classified according to a particular function each individual must possess the potential and receive the proper education. For this reason, women, if they are assessed according to a function in the same man-

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[5]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 456a.
[6]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 491a-b (my emphasis).
[7]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 491d.

ner as men, must receive the same education as men. Otherwise the *sperma*, the seed of potential within a woman, will not develop into the proper capacity for a function.

The second important element of assessing an individual's *physis* concerns how Socrates describes the discovery of this inner potential. Socrates complicates the argument that men and women do not differ in their *physis*, with an explanation of how the rulers discover an individual's *physis*. The means of determining one's *physis* is threefold:

> one learns something connected with that thing easily, the other with difficulty; the one, starting from slight learning, is able to carry discovery far forward in the field he has learned, while the other, having chanced on a lot of learning and practice, can't even preserve what he has learned; and the bodily things give adequate service to the thought of the man with the good nature while they oppose the thought of the other man.[8]

An evaluation of the proper *physis* for any function depends on how easily and independently one can learn, as well as if the capability of his or her body adequately serves his or her mind.[9] What is revealed by this section is that one's body is relevant for the determination of an individual's *physis,* since it is the third element in the as-

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[8]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 455b.

[9]Bloom's translation of the third requirement of the service of the body obfuscates the Greek. Plato does not mention specifically that the body gives service to the man with a good nature. Paul Shorey translates the same line more literally: "and that the bodily faculties of the one adequately served his mind, while for the other, the body was a hindrance." This raises the possibility that the body of someone who could learn easily and on his or her own still did not meet the proper requirements. In other words, women could have the proper gentle and fierce character of a guardian, but still not possess the bodily requirements of sharp-senses, strength and speed. Socrates divulged the bodily requirements of a guardian on lines 375a-e. Plato, The Republic Paul Shorey, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), line 455c.

sessment of *physis*. The function that Socrates is using as an example of gender equality is the guarding of the city, a function in which the size and strength of one's body are of utmost importance. The fact that women are physically smaller or weaker cannot be overlooked in the determination of their capacity to meet the requirements for guarding. If the rulers evaluate a woman against men upon a strict requirement of bodily strength, there would be few, if any, women who would be stronger and larger than the strongest and largest men.[10] For this reason, when Socrates turns to the test case of soldiering, the difference in strength between men and women is not as irrelevant as the difference between long-haired and short-haired cobblers.[11]

Plato does address the problem of whether women would qualify for the guardian class. Instead of evaluating women in the guardian class against men, the rulers judge women against other women. As Socrates states, "won't these women be the best of the women?"[12] The women in the guardian class are the most qualified in terms of learning capacity and bodily capabilities in respect to all other women. They would

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[10]Lange, p. 4. Allan Bloom presents a similar argument; he argues, since the best at anything are men and the guardians are the best of the best, it would follow that few, if any, women would qualify. Bloom, "Interpretative Essay," p. 383.

[11]The only attributes relevant for an evaluation of an individual for any function 'C' are how quickly and independently one learns and if she or he has a body suited to that function. All aspects which are irrelevant to the performance of function 'C' are considered also irrelevant in the evaluation of whether an individual is suitable for function 'C.' Plato's example is the length of a cobbler's hair. The length of one's hair would affect neither the capacity to learn, nor the bodily requirements of the function of a cobbler. Therefore, hair length could not an aspect which is relevant in determining if an individual qualifies to be a cobbler. Plato, The Republic of Plato line. 454c.

[12]Plato clearly makes a distinction in this passage between female and male guardians, since in the previous line Socrates asks "aren't they (*outoi aristoi* -- the male guardians) the best among the citizens?" Interestingly, Socrates still does not refer to the best women as citizens, but as women or wives (*gynaikes*). Plato, The Republic of Plato line 456e.

be women who were both gentle and fierce, as well as the strongest and fastest in comparison to other women. This reveals the essential and significant difference between men and women. We do not understand or classified a woman as a woman, because she is smaller or weaker than a man. Differences in bodily size and strength occur among men, themselves, and are not the essential aspect in the classification of male and female.[13] The classification of a human being according to a sex is dependent upon the fact, which Socrates raised and glossed over, that "it looks as though they (men and women) differ in this alone, that the female bears and the male mounts."[14] Plato reintroduces the unique and specific excellence of a woman, her reproductive capacity, into the guardian class. In addition, Socrates reveals that during their childbearing years the best women engage mainly in the function of reproduction, since according to the eugenics program in the second wave "the best men have intercourse as often as possible with the best women."[15] Since the women in the guardian class are the best women, they will actually be having most of the children.[16] Yet, the female guardians are still

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[13]The word which Plato uses to distinguish men from women is *genos*. Bloom translates this word as class, but it also means gender, family, species, or descendent. It is a term which denotes a classification of anything by certain predetermined criteria. The use of this term to distinguish human beings into male and female, is one which already emphasizes that their sexual and reproductive capacity can distinguish human beings. *Genos*, in ancient Greek, also contains a classification based on understanding characteristics of sexual identity, including those discussed in the previous chapter, such as a propensity to emotion, cowardice, and cunning.

[14]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 454e.

[15]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 459d.

[16]For Plato, the relevant years of proper childbearing are for a woman "beginning with her twentieth year, (she) bears for the city up to her fortieth year; and a man, beginning form the time he passes his swiftest prime at running (approximately 30), begets for the city up to his fifty-fifth year." Plato, The Republic of Plato line 460e. (my emphasis)

guardians, since they possess the *physis* of a guardian and receive the education and training of a guardian.

The classification of human beings into guardians reveals another consequence of creating categories by function. In order to determine if an individual has the proper potential which the city can educate for a particular function, the qualifications for the function must already exist. In other words, in order to assess if someone is a guardian, there must already be an idea or *telos* of what constitutes a guardian. Plato indicates this by introducing the notion of the *physis* for a guardian in Book II. A guardian required a soul which was inclined to be both gentle with their own and cruel to their enemies, as well as a body which endowed with sharp senses, speed, and strength.[17] The requirement of these qualifications is dependent on the need the city developed for warfare when it overstepped the boundary of necessity. For this reason, the function of a guardian is based on what is useful to the city. Other functions, such as a farmer, merchant, or artisan were also founded on the same requirement of usefulness. Plato circumscribes the idea of function by an understanding of what is useful or beneficial to the city. Human beings, evaluated to meet certain criteria, are judged by a standard of usefulness. Aspects of human beings which are irrelevant to this standard of usefulness are not considered in the classification into a certain function in the city.

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[17]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 375a-c.

The notion of *physis*, which places an individual into a function based on usefulness, is determined by means of classifying or categorizing human beings. The first level of classification is that of an *anthropos* or human being. An *anthropos* is a category which separates a particular mammal from all other animals or things, based on certain characteristics, such as rationality, the ability to speak, or the possession of an opposable thumb. The second level of classification is that of a guardian or *phulax*. A *phulax* is a description of certain *anthropoi*, who have the characteristics of a mixture of gentleness and cruelty, as well as sharp-senses, speed and strength. To be classified as a guardian is to be described within the confines of this characterization. Another level of a category is based on classifying the *phulakes* into a specific *genos* or gender. A female guardian is an *anthropos* who is both gentle and cruel, as well as able to bear. It is this ability to bear children, which distinguishes the female guardian from the male guardian. The male guardian, also gentle and cruel, is classified by his reproductive capacity as the gender which mounts. The understanding of male or female is a classification of guardians into a subcategory based on a reproductive capacity.

Plato highlights this understanding of classification by his example of the guard dogs. First, there is a category of a dog as a mammal distinct from all other animals, because of certain characteristics, such as hunting in packs. Guard dogs are similar to the human guardians, because they are further classified by a coincidence of gentleness and cruelty which is useful to the city. In addition, we can classify dogs into either

male or female, based on the role of each sex in reproduction. The significant aspect of the category of male or female is that it is secondary and subservient to the category of guarding. Plato classifies the *anthropoi* in the same manner; the male or female category is secondary to the category of a guardian. For Plato, *phulax* is the foremost category, since it is the most useful way to organize the functions in the city. This is based on Plato's understanding of a new *nomos*, which establishes each individual's function based on his or her *physis*. Plato's city in speech is an understanding of human beings, in which an individual's function of usefulness takes precedence over all other possible classifications of human beings. Furthermore, this classification into functions establishes an equality of those *anthropoi* who possess the same *physis*. It is important to emphasize that Plato does not establish an equality of gender. What is considered equal in the city in speech is not *genos*, but *physis*.

In the second wave, Plato points out the difficulty of assigning human beings into a function in the city. In this wave, Socrates eliminates or redirects other aspects of human life from those who are guardians. Although sex is essential to the continuation of the city, Socrates limits the relationship between men and women to temporary mating experiences. The difference between men and women is understood only as their respective sexual reproductive roles. Parents neither raise nor recognize the children who are the result of these unions. Plato radically alters the role of mother or father; this role was traditionally a significant aspect of the understandings of one's gen-

der. In addition, Plato excludes other attributes understood as an essential, specific component of one's gender in ancient Greece, such as the nurturing character of women or the virtue of men. Furthermore, the second wave also eliminates the remainder of the *oikos* including ownership of property and family cults. It is not only the wider understanding of oneself as a male or female that Plato excludes from an individual's identity, but also an identification of oneself as part of a family. What Plato makes clear, in his categorization according to *physis*, is the connection between reorganizing the qualifications of a function in the city and the concomitant loss of identity from aspects of human life other than that function. This includes meaning which results from the former classification of belonging to a family as a mother, father, son, daughter, or grandparent. To classify *anthropoi* by the function of guarding is tantamount to an understanding of an individual guardian as the characteristics of a guardian.

Plato's argument does not fully reconcile the assessment of functions in the city with a classification of human beings by their *physis*. The discussion in Book V resolves that the city should include women in the guardian class, because those women who are chosen to live and guard with the male guardians are "competent and akin to the men in their nature."[18] It is an individual's *physis* which determines what is consid-

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[18]The Greek word that Bloom translates as 'akin' is *suggeneis* which, like the English, refers to one's ties of kinship or family. A person who would be considered *suggeneis* is someone who is considered a member of one's family or one's own. The *suggeneis* for a guardian are all others who share the same characteristics of gentleness and cruelty. Plato, The Republic of Plato line 456b.

ered one's own and not an identification with a *genos* or an *oikos*. An individual's identity is understood as the characteristics of their *physis* which determine his or her own function. This identification is especially problematic for women, because even though *physis* and not *genos* primarily should categorize women, the city still requires their reproductive capacities. It is only after a female guardian reaches the age of forty that the function for guarding (which is based on her *physis*) takes precedence over her function of bearing children (which is based on her *genos*). Because female guardians are the best women, during their childbearing years they are more useful to the city as bearers than as warriors.

Yet, after the age of forty, a female guardian is no longer qualified to bear children. This is significant since, for Plato, the requirements for the most important function of the philosopher-king are the proper *physis* as well as age and education. The female guardians would possess such requirements, since the older guardian women are perfected by age and, as Socrates stressed, "when such men are perfected by education and age, wouldn't you turn the city over to them alone?"[19] Although Socrates mentions only the age of men specifically in this passage, he stresses later to Glaucon, "don't suppose that what I have said applies any more to men than to women, all those who are born among them with adequate natures."[20] Therefore, even though a female

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[19]Socrates characterizes the *physis* of the philosopher as "a rememberer, a good learner, magnificent, charming, and a friend and kinsman of truth, justice, courage, and moderation." Plato, The Republic of Plato line 487a. (my emphasis)

[20]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 540c.

guardian's *genos* is extremely relevant to the city, childbearing is not the only function she performs. After the age of forty, since the female guardian would have the proper *physis* and maturity, she would be able fully to participate in the function of guarding or of ruling.[21] Yet, between the years of twenty and forty, the function of bearing children creates a different function for female guardians than for male guardians. There exists, in Plato's city in speech, an irresolvable problem of classifying *anthropos* by *physis*, since, for the purpose of reproduction, there must be a primacy of *genos*.[22] Hence, the role of women in the city in speech remains problematic in Plato's theory, since women (and men) cannot be entirely classified by their *physis*.[23]

Plato introduces two important consequences by means of his assessment of men and women by their potential or *physis*. First, a woman's body and her reproductive capacities make it difficult for women, during childbearing years, to fulfill the function of a guardian. Because of the importance of reproductive function and the necessity to

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[21]Plato highlights this point in his treatment of the role of women in the Laws. In this dialogue Plato limits the involvement of women in offices and the military to those who are past the childbearing and rearing age. In other words, women may enter the public world after their responsibilities in the private are completed. In line 785b Plato states, "a woman may hold office from the age of forty, a man from thirty . . . for women, whatever military serve it may be thought necessary to impose (after they have finished bearing children) should be performed up to the age of fifty." Plato. The Laws. Trevor J. Saunders, trans. (Markham Ontario: Penguin Books, 1970).

[22]Radical feminists claim that the root of female oppression is found in a woman's biological role. We would achieve true equality, they argue, through a biological revolution that would liberate women from the responsibility of bearing or raising children. Radical feminist resolve the inherent tension between the potential women may have for various functions and her reproductive capabilities, which is unresolved in Plato's treatment of female guardians, by means of technological innovations.

[23]Of course men also perform a reproductive or *genos* function that is independent of their *physis* function. For the organization of the city, the male reproductive function is not as problematic as women. This is because the time required to perform the male function is relatively insignificant in comparison to time required to perform the female role.

create new citizens, the city categorizes women initially according to their *genos*. In other words, no matter what *physis* a woman possesses, between the age of twenty and forty, her unique capacity to bear children remains of paramount importance to the city. It is usefulness to the city that determines the function one performs in the city. Plato understands an individual's gender as the useful reproductive function of bearing or mounting. In addition, Plato considers any other aspect or characteristic of an individual useful only for the function he or she provides the city. All identification outside that function becomes problematic, because it conflicts with the categorization by a particular function. It is the attempt to classify human beings by characteristics of a function that erodes the understanding of the diversity of human experience and raises the question of whether anyone would want to live in such a united *polis*.

Female Guardians and the *Sumphorai*

Plato's discussion of the problem of human passions in the city in speech reveals another important implication for organizing the functions in a city based on *physis*. The passions, such as love, envy, jealousy, greed, pity or fear, are problematic elements which Socrates refers to as illnesses or *sumphorai*. The passions, and particularly the very problematic passion of *eros*, are politically dangerous, since they are not necessarily political, nor confined to a particular regime. One loves and is loved be-

yond the boundaries of political regimes. In addition, Socrates attempts to undermine the passions in Book V in order to redirect these emotions toward the usefulness of the city. The equality of the guardian class is dependent upon creating a class of human beings who identify only with their function and its usefulness in the city. To create this equality, Socrates must redirect the characteristics of the wider classification of *anthropos* to the more limited classification of *phulax*. Socrates achieves this redirection by the end of Book V, where he uses all aspects of *anthropos* which are not necessarily useful to the city, including one's gender, one's passions, and one's family. This examination of the consequences of the details in the city in speech is important. As Socrates stated in the outset of Book I, the discussion of the Republic was "not about just any question, but about the way one should live."[24]

The passions are dangerous to the city because the loyalties they inspire are not only irrelevant to the demands of the city, but often antithetical to these demands. The passions are based on the desire of the soul to "embrace that which it wants to become its own."[25] The perception of something as "my own" is part of the private pleasures and grief which undermines a city based on utility.[26] Socrates states, the passions are dangerous because, "when someone's desires incline strongly to some one thing, they

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[24]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 352d.

[25]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 437c.

[26]Socrates states that the city is drawn apart by each citizen giving the name of "my own" to different things, with "one man dragging off to his house whatever he can get his hands on apart from the others, another being separate in his house with separate women and children, introducing private pleasures and griefs." Plato, The Republic of Plato line 464c-d.

are therefore weaker with respect to the rest, like a stream that has been channelled off in that other direction."[27] It is passionate love that requires, as Martha Nussbaum states, "a unique (or at least not readily replaceable) value to be ascribed to a person who is not under our control."[28] One of the most troublesome emotions for the city is that of *eros*. *Eros* is a type of love characterized by an obsessive desire for sexual possession.[29] Other passions, such as jealousy and grief, are intricately connected to the passion of *eros,* since these emotions are derived by the actual or feared loss of the beloved. It is the belief that one cannot replace the beloved that leads to these emotions; one would not fear losing an easily replaceable person. No other person in the city could fulfill the desire which it inspires and consequently one treats the beloved exclusively from all other human beings. Thus, *eros* is problematic in the city, since it is destructive to a notion of egalitarian interaction among guardians.

The city in speech also alters other relationships which are based on recognizing certain people as unique. Socrates' argument against private property and personal *oikos* is based on the argument that pleasures and griefs of things which are private induce factions among the citizens. This faction erupts from the identification of certain people as one's own. The identification of an individual with his or her own or

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[27]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 485d.

[28]Martha Nussbaum, "Women's Lot," in New York Review of Books (Jan. 30, 1986), p. 8.

[29]*Eros* is particularly problematic for Plato, because the desire of *eros* is specifically sexual and there is "no greater or keener pleasure than the one connected with sex." In an effort to regulate procreation politically, especially in a system such as a eugenics program, *eros* would have to be controlled. Plato, The Republic of Plato line 403a.

suggeneis results in strong attachments, often based on obligations or responsibilities. In other words, the bond a mother has for her child is dependent on the recognition of the child as her own.[30] Therefore, the mother then treats that child preferentially. The attachment a child has for his or her mother is dependent on the recognition of this particular woman as mother -- an irreplaceable, and hence, a special woman.[31] The recognition of someone as a member of your *oikos* threatens notions of equality or loyalty to the city, since the family members will desire preferential treatment for their own. This preferential treatment will undermine the selection and training of each individual for the function which best suites them. For this reason, the attachments to an *oikos* can conflict with the establishment of justice in the city in speech.

The problem of *sumphorai* is embedded in the tension between what one identifies as one's own and what one excludes from this identity. The recognition of a child

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[30]This is not to suggest that the modern understanding of attachments between parents and children was identical in ancient Greece. In fact, assessing what parents experienced as an emotional attachment to their children in ancient Greece is difficult. There was a bond based on obligations and responsibilities. For example, the attachment a mother had to her child's welfare was connected, at least to some degree, on her dependence on her children (especially her eldest son, who would become her *kyrios*) after her husband's death. For the fathers, children were necessary to carry on their *oikos*. Yet, there are some instances in literature which indicate a stronger bond, beyond one of necessity. For instance, in the closing scene of Euripides' Medea, Jason laments the death of his children, (who are children of a barbarian woman and therefore not recognized as heirs) because he "loved them (*philei autous*)." Therefore, although equating modern and ancient emotional experiences of parenthood is incorrect, there are indications of some a type of emotional attachment. See, Euripides, Medea Rex Warner, trans. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1993), pp. 45-46.

[31]It is well documented that children's responsibilities to their parents were a primary obligation in ancient Athens. In fact, abuse or neglect of one's parents could result in the denial of the right to address the *ecclesia*. In addition, there were numerous instances in Greek mythology in which committing matricide or failing to avenge such a murder brought about the scourge of the Furies. The most famous tragedy of this obligation was Aeschylus' Oresteia. For further information regarding children's obligation to their parents refer to Winkler, p. 188.

by his or her mother is a natural connection which exists even prior to the development of a family. It is the organization of a family which creates exclusive sexual relationships between men and women, thus allowing men to recognize children as their own.[32] The ancient Athenian associated the city with the organization of the family, because citizenship in the city was based on membership in an Athenian *oikos*. Yet, the family attachments or obligations which result from recognition of another as a member of your *oikos* is not always, or even necessarily, useful to the city. As Allan Bloom argues, "attraction and love in themselves know no limits of propriety, exigency, law, or country."[33] The *sumphorai* are politically dangerous for two reasons. First, the intensity of desire urges one beyond the necessity which created the need for the city. As Socrates pointed out in the development of the unhealthy city in Book II, excess creates faction and warfare. Second, the passions of love, envy, or greed are also not necessarily useful to the city. As long as one identifies a particular household, object, or child as unique, the desire to treat this individual or thing differently will conflict with the demands of the city. In addition, the object of the passions, especially *eros*, can be outside the boundaries of the city. Plato's solution is to cure the *sumphorai* with a *pharmakon* that makes them useful to the city.

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[32]Interestingly, Plato does not address the "natural" relationship between a mother and child. The changes of the first two waves in the guardian class, Socrates claims, will do "what's best and nothing contrary to the nature of the female in her relationship to the male, nothing contrary to the natural relationship to the natural community of the two with each other." Socrates is suspiciously silent regarding the relationship of children to their mothers. Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 466d.

[33]Bloom, "Interpretive Essay," p. 384.

Socrates' elimination of the family actually begins in the first wave of Book V. The classification of an *anthropos* by *physis* locates an individual's identity in the function he or she performs in the city. An individual recognizes his or her own (*suggeneis*) to be others who possess the same *physis*. This classification by *physis* undermines an individual's identification with other kinds of categories that identified a person in a category of a gender or a particular family. One important reason for categorizing an individual by political functions in the city is to redirect emotions away from their *oikos*, to those who perform the same function in the city. This identification of members of a *physis* as my own is essential for the guardians. The guardians possess the potentially dangerous ferocity that causes factions which originate in the separation of something as my own. The emotions such as *philia,* which emanate from the identification of someone as my own, are redirected toward those who are classified according to the same function. This results in a unified city and undermines the potential for faction.

Socrates solidifies the breakdown of the family in the second wave of the community of property, women, and children. In the guardian class, the city now undertakes everything which the *oikos* managed previously. The rulers in the city organize and plan marriages, sexual relationships, and the raising of children. The city in speech understands gender as the simplest reproductive function, which would fulfill the city's need for children. The marriages of guardians are temporary and do not al-

low the guardian to identify the partner as unique. The children of these unions are not recognized as special or singled out by any particular parent. Socrates claims that this will allow for all guardians to recognize each other as brothers, sisters, fathers or mothers. In other words, the guardian class becomes a *oikos*, founded on an identification and recognition by function. The recognition of all members of your *physis* as your own overtakes the attachments and obligations which result from a recognition of a particular child or parent as one's own. The guardian class is egalitarian, because no one distinguishes or treats any particular guardian as unique. This is the best regime, according to Socrates, because "when one of its citizens suffers anything at all either good or bad . . . all will share in the joy or pain."[34]

This egalitarian society is possible, according to Socrates, with one small change, that those who are "the philosophers rule as kings or those who now called kings and chiefs genuinely philosophize."[35] These rulers, as Socrates discussed in the second wave, are responsible for redirecting the passions of the guardians from a unique individual toward the community. The alteration of *eros* emphasizes how the rulers dominate the redirection of the passions of the guardians. One power of *eros* is based on its focus toward one specific human being. The multitude of partners arranged by the guardian's sacred marriages do not take into account the desires or affections of the best guardians. The short unions result in children and not emotional at-

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[34]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 462d.
[35]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 473c-d.

tachments to the sexual partner. The rulers redirect and use *eros*, which does develop among the guardians, to provoke acts of bravery; the rulers allow no one to refuse the kiss of those who win them as rewards of valor.[36] The rulers can harness the power of *eros* because its source is found in the desire for a particular person who is not under the hero's control. These acts of valor place the beloved under our control, thus resulting both in victory at war and in the lessening of the power of *eros* over the lover.[37]

The philosopher-kings also redirect bonds away from natural parents and children and toward the conventional children and parents of the guardian class. The redirection of family bonds is possible when the rulers remove the children of the sacred marriages from their biological mother. They then give these children to officers who perform the function of raising children. These officers would be those who had the *physis* to most expertly fulfill the function of raising and educating children. In addition, the rulers destroy any child who is born from a union other than one arranged by the eugenics program. A father or mother is a guardian who was a bride or bridegroom in the tenth and seventh month before one's birth.[38] The rulers now extend the fear and shame which previously controlled a son's behaviour toward his father toward all older men. The philosopher-kings will prevent the violence of striking an older man

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[36]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 468c.

[37]Plato diminishes the power of *eros* for those beyond childbearing age in a different manner. There is no longer any taboo of a multitude of sexual partners, because the city destroys these children. Not recognizing a partner as a special individual, or not desiring a beloved who is conventionally unattainable undermines *eros*.

[38]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 461d.

because, "shame prevents him from laying hands on parents, fear that the others will come to the aid of the man who suffers it, some as sons, others as brothers, and others as fathers."[39] All guardians treat each other as members of the same *oikos*; an *oikos* formed by one's *physis* and not birth.[40] It is the philosopher-king, furthermore, who is able to distinguish to which *physis* and function each member of the city belongs. It is the responsibility of the rulers to redirect the passions and attraction of citizens toward their useful function in the city.

The *pharmakon* accomplishes this redirection of the passions. Socrates calls the passions, especially *eros*, misfortunes or illness. It is the philosopher-king who cures the *sumphorai* through the drug or *pharmakon* of lies.[41] This drug, which alleviates the city of the problem of the passions, is the lie of one's birth -- both in the myth of the metals as well as the rigged eugenics program. The drug or cure of lies is an attempt to make the citizens healthy by preventing "some madness or some folly when they attempt to do something bad."[42] What is considered bad is that which turns one away

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[39]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 465b.

[40]There is a fluidity between different classes in the city in speech. The rulers will move to the artisan class any child born in the guardian class, who does not possess the *physis* of a guardian. An artisan with the *physis* of a guardian will join the guardian ranks. This flexibility is presented in detail in the myth of the metals in Book III. Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 414a-d.

[41]On line 396d, Socrates states that the sensible man will imitate the "good man most when he is acting steadily; less and less willingly, when he's unsteadied by diseases, loves, drink, or some other misfortune." Thus, Socrates categorizes *eros* with *sumphorai,* or other chance events, diseases, or misfortunes. The use of lies, therefore, is akin to drugs which cure men of love. Incidentally, this passage is referring to Socrates' censorship of poetry, which depicted imitations of bad characteristics in human beings or gods. In line 495d, he states that good men should not imitate women or slaves in poetry. This deprecating reference is the type of inconsistency of Plato's support of feminist issues which many commentators interpret as Plato's dismissal of women. Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 396d, 495d.

[42]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 382b.

from their function. The passions, when unleashed, throw the city into disorder in the same way they allow the appetitive aspect of the soul to rule over the reasoning aspect. The philosopher-kings rule the passions and use preventives to redirect the passions toward a useful purpose for the city. To produce health, Socrates has stated in Book IV, is "to establish the parts of the body in a relation of mastering, and being mastered by, one another that is according to nature . . . "[43] Health, of the city and the individual, is a redirection and ordering of one's passions. Furthermore, this health is dependent upon the necessity of the *pharmakon* of lies. It is the philosopher-king who is responsible for implementing the lies which create and maintain the city in speech.

The first two waves of the city of speech are dependent upon the third wave of the philosopher-king. Without the philosopher-king, the redirection of the passions toward a function, rather than an *oikos* could not be accomplished. By becoming king, the philosopher also becomes useful to the city. Adeimantus, in Book VI, interrupted the discussion of the characteristics of the philosopher to comment that those who linger on philosophical pursuits are "quite queer, completely vicious, or useless to cities."[44] The coincidence of philosophy and ruling creates a philosopher the many recognize as useful, rather than useless to the many. This usefulness comes from the philosopher's knowledge of the art and practice of how to rule the city. The philosopher-king has a function in the city determined by *physis* and education in the same manner

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[43]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 444d.
[44]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 487d.

as all other functions. Yet by becoming king, the philosopher who was the lover of wisdom and hater of falsehoods, is transformed into the proclaimer of lies. The philosopher spends his time, not contemplating eternal unchanging *ideas*, but arranging sexual unions and the day to day maintenance of the city.[45] The philosopher, if he or she becomes king, acquires a function which is useful to the city. This function is dependent upon the alteration of the *telos* or purpose of a philosopher and the corresponding redirection of a philosopher's *eros* from the *ideas* to political concerns. It is a function which is not one the philosopher accepts readily. Instead, the city must compel the philosopher to become kings.

Plato indicates this compulsion in two instances. The first is in the image of the city as a ship in Book VI. The masses ridicule and scorn the philosopher, the true pilot of the city, as useless. The philosopher, though, is the only one who knows the true art of piloting the city. Yet, the philosopher will not beg the masses to let him rule. Just as begging the sick man to let him practice medicine is not natural for the doctor; begging to rule is not natural for the pilot. Rather, says Socrates, it is natural that "every man who needs to be ruled (to go) to the doors of the man who is able to rule, not for the ruler who is truly of any use to beg the ruled to be ruled."[46] The possibility of the useful philosopher is dependent on persuasion; it is people, the ruled, who must approach and convince the philosopher to rule over them. Socrates is more direct later in

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[45]Saxonhouse, "The Philosopher and the Female," pp. 50-52.
[46]Plato, The Republic of Plato lines 489a-c.

Book VI, when he tells Adeimantus that even more than persuasion, it is compulsion that forces the philosopher to become king. This truth is that "neither city nor regime will ever become perfect, not yet will man become perfect in the same way either, before some necessity chances to constrain those few philosophers who aren't vicious, those now called useless, to take charge of a city, whether they want to or not . . . "[47] This second example hints at threats of violence, more than persuasion. For Socrates, the perfectly just city is one that requires lies of the rulers to persuade the many to be ruled; it also requires violence and persuasion by the many in order to compel the philosopher to rule.[48]

To resolve political conflicts, Plato reclassified human beings by means of a useful, predetermined function and redirected their emotions toward this function. What is not considered useful are many aspects of human experience. The experience of what it is to be a woman or a man is understood as mere sexual intercourse. The experience of "parenthood" for a woman is pregnancy and labour. For a man, there is no experience of "parenthood" at all. The city in speech restricts the diversity of experiences of human life for a purpose of prior, teleological usefulness. The city was founded, it must be recalled, "because each of us isn't self-sufficient but in need of much."[49] The city in speech is a city where each member, at the proper time (*kairos*),

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[47]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 499b.

[48]For further discussion of the violence and compulsion necessary to establish the philosopher as king, refer to the discussion in Strauss, pp. 121-126.

[49]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 369b.

does the one task which all other members require. This is accomplished most efficiently, for Plato, by eliminating anything which hinders or is not necessary for the accomplishment of this function.

The purpose of discussing the city in speech was to "watch a city coming into being in speech . . . (so that) we would also see its justice coming into being, and its injustice."[50] Justice is found, as Adeimantus suggests after the creation of the healthy city, "somewhere in some need these men have of one another."[51] This need resulted in the ordering of every individual into the one function, which he or she suited. In this way, each *anthropos* was as useful as possible. Yet, Adeimantus' suggestion appears to offer only a partial answer. If justice is found in the use each of us have for another, than the interlocutors could discover injustice in what the city does with human beings, and aspects of human beings, which are not useful to the city. The city destroys the children who are not born within the eugenics program. It alters an individual's identify to make it useful politically; this includes an identification with an *oikos* and its family cults and an understanding of gender beyond biological reproduction. The philosopher-king even directs one's passions, such as *eros* and *philia*, so that they become ordered to political necessity. Such a city is satisfactory, as Strauss emphasizes, only to those "who are willing to destroy the family as something essentially

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[50]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 369a.

[51]Socrates does not discuss Adeimantus' response to the question of where justice and injustice arise in the city. It is at this moment that Glaucon interrupts their discussion to demand a city which contains relishes and warfare. Plato, The Republic of Plato line 372a.

conventional and to exchange it for a society in which no one knows parents, children, brothers and sisters who are not conventional."[52]

The proposals in Book V reveal that the establishment of justice has consequences significant enough to raise questions about whether the city in speech is the best city. The three waves in Book V are necessary to transform the feverish city into the perfectly just city. Yet, Plato reveals the three waves, as a cure or *pharmakon* to the excesses of the feverish city, to be equally excessive. This is emphasized in Plato's use of the word *pharmakon*. A *pharmakon*, in ancient Greek, can mean both a drug or a poison. In many instances, the same substance is used as both, depending on the quantity or amount administered. Thus, rather than curing the disease, the *pharmakon* can bring on illness. What becomes apparent in the discussion of the just city is that the city in speech is not the perfectly good city. The perfectly good city, Socrates stated in Book IV, is "wise, courageous, moderate, and just."[53] The city in speech lacks the required element of moderation. The establishment of a good city, for Plato, must also include moderation in the cure for the illness of the feverish city. Therefore, rather than understanding the city in speech as an ideal or utopian city, one can question whether it is a desirable regime.

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[52]Strauss, p. 127.
[53]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 427e.

Conclusion

Plato's discussion of the details of the city in speech in Book V is part of a more extensive discussion concerning the meaning of justice. Book V, like the beginning of the dialogue, reminds the reader of the force of majority rule and veiled threats of violence which compel Socrates to discuss the city in speech. The city in speech, based on the principle of usefulness, questions the traditional organization gender-specific roles. The proposal for female guardians is an extension of the classification of individuals by their potential or *physis*. Plato reveals that this classification is problematic, since the importance of the category of *genos*, at least for a woman's childbearing years, undermines the primary classification by *physis*. Second, the classification of *anthropoi* into functions based on usefulness regulates all other aspects of human life secondary to the one's function. This redirection and control of all elements of human experience results in a circumscription of the complexity of the larger category of *anthropos*. The discussion in Book V reveals the violence and destruction which are necessary to eliminate all human characteristics except usefulness. It reveals consequences of redirecting or attempting to eliminate other aspects of human life which are beyond a useful function. In conclusion, the city in speech questions the desirability of politics, which arises out of the need each individual has for others, as the principle qualification for organizing all aspects of human life.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The discussion of the Republic examines both the idea of justice and Glaucon's question of whether justice is better than injustice. Socrates creates the city in speech, not to discuss a literal political regime, but to discover justice as a principle of usefulness, in which each performs "one of the functions in the city, that one for which his nature made him most naturally most fit."[1] For Plato, the most beneficial method of organizing these functions is to classify individuals by their potential or *physis.* What is significant in Plato's classification system is that gender does not determine potential. It is Plato's questioning of the *nomos* of gender-specific functions that attracted the attention of modern theorists, who also question the assumptions of gender-specific roles. Initially, this thesis focused on the recent commentary which evaluated the proposal for female guardians. The thesis then turned to an independent examination of Book V and the larger discussion of justice and politics in the Republic. Therefore, the scope of this thesis included both an analysis of the secondary commentary on the proposal for female guardians, as well a discussion of the idea of justice and its consequences in Plato's Republic.

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[1]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 433 a.

Prior to a discussion of the commentary on Book V, this thesis introduced two contexts that established the assumptions and main preoccupations of the current debate. The first context was the scholastic debate that focused on whether Plato was the forefather of totalitarian or liberal political thought. The importance of this previous scholarship was that it interpreted the Republic by the principles of modern liberalism, such as equality, individualism, equal access to employment and education, and social justice. Much of the more recent commentary, which began systematically to examine Book V in the early 1970s, also focused on a liberal interpretation of Plato. In addition, these later commentators appropriated the assumption that Plato intended the proposals as literal solutions to political problems.

This thesis also stressed that feminist theory and the issues of the women's movement provided a second important context for examining the recent commentary. By the late 1960s, the women's movement demanded changes to political and social policies that reflected gender-equality in education and employment. On of the main arguments for this demand was the understanding that women had the potential to perform a variety of roles from which they were traditionally excluded. It is the similarity of this argument to Plato's proposal for *physis* equality, or the equal potential of men and women, that attracted many commentators to Book V.

The major interest of the commentary on Book V focused on whether Plato was sympathetic to contemporary feminism. Although very few commentators would unreservedly label Plato a feminist, they understand his proposal as sympathetic or

antagonistic to feminism, based on the commentator's understanding of what was necessary for gender equality. Those commentators, who understood Plato as sympathetic to feminist theory, base this support on Plato's statement that women can participate in all the same functions as men. The foundation of this argument is Plato's supposition that both men and women could possess the *physis* which suits each particular function. Since this notion of *physis* is separated from gender, they interpret Plato's argument as asserting that each individual, man or a woman, "must be judged on their own merits."[2] In opposition to this argument are those commentators who do not agree that Plato was sympathetic to feminist issues. They base their argument on the fact that Plato's notion of *physis* created a hierarchy of functions. The equality of *physis* was considered antithetical to feminist theory, because it was not an argument for the equality of all women. As Elizabeth Spelman argues, "what kind of feminism is it that would gladly argue for a kind of equality between men and women of a certain class and at the same time for radical inequality between some women and some men . . . "[3] These commentators do not base equality on a separation of potential from

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[2]Pierce, p. 3.
[3]Spelman, pp. 104-105.

gender, but a recognition of equality of all human beings.[4] Plato's proposal for female guardians, for this category, falls short of any tangible support for feminist issues.

The third category consists of those commentators who separate Plato's intention from the consequences of his proposal. For this category, although Plato was not interested in issues of gender equality, his proposal is not ultimately antithetical to feminism. Plato's intention, argue commentators such as Susan Moller Okin, is to change the relationship between the public and private to create a unity within the *polis*. One limitation of this interpretation is that it identifies the modern understanding of the public and private with the ancient Greek *polis* and *oikos*. It was the political importance of the *oikos* that points to the significance Plato's changes in the first wave. Plato questions the usefulness of organizing citizenship (the begetting of legitimate children) through the *oikos*. Instead, Plato establishes the begetting and raising of children on the standard of usefulness to the city. This idea of usefulness was the foundation both of the city and of the organization of functions in the city by *physis*.

The final category consists of those commentators who stressed that Plato's proposals in Book V were not an isolated argument, but part of the larger discussion of

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[4]Another insufficiency this commentary finds in Plato's proposal for female guardians is that he does not incorporate the modern feminist argument that it is fair, or morally right, to allow women to participate in the political and economic system. This understanding of gender equality is similar to John Rawls' argument that the classic liberal notion of justice as an equality of right has to be combined with a notion of morality. Rawls derives the concept of justice out of a primitive notion of morality in that "fundamental to justice, is the concept of fairness which relates to right dealing between persons who are in co-operation with or competing against one another, as when one speaks of fair games, fair competition, and fair bargains." For further discussion on the idea of justice as fairness, refer to John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness," in Philosophy, Politics, and Society P Laslett and W. G. Runciman, eds. (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1964), p. 144.

idea of justice and politics in the Republic. For this category, Socrates created the city in speech and the proposals in Book V to discuss the consequences of establishing perfect justice in the city. Rather than actual political solutions, this category argued the proposals were exaggerations which attempted to "lay bear the absurdity of trying to make politics total, of trying to make an equal distribution of all things rare, special, and splendid, of allowing nothing to escape or transcend the political order."[5] For this category, Plato cannot be a feminist, because Plato did not intend the proposal for female guardians literally. Instead, he introduces it as part of a larger discussion intended to reveal the limitations of the life of politics in comparison to the life of contemplation.[6]

Following the discussion of commentary on Plato's proposal for female guardians, this analysis turned to an independent examination of the three waves in Book V. This examination revealed many consequences that resulted from assigning an individual to a certain function based on his or her *physis*. The purpose of the classification of individuals by *physis* developed out of the necessity which created the city. The city and the function each individual performs in the city developed out of

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[5]Bloom, "Interpretive Essay," p.326.

[6]Allan Bloom, quoting Xenophon, claims that the discussion of the Republic was an attempt to temper the political ambitions of the young Glaucon as a favour to his brother Plato. The passage of Xenophon to which Bloom is referring regards Glaucon's ill-timed attempt to become an orator and statesman of Athens, even though he was less than twenty. Xenophon states that Socrates was the only one who took an interest in Glaucon and "for the sake of Plato and Glaucon's son (the elder Glaucon who was Plato's grandfather) Charmides, managed to check him." Refer to Xenophon, Memorabilia E. C. Martinet, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1923), lines III. vi. 1-4.

the need and corresponding use each individual has for others. The classification of individuals by *physis*, for Plato, is the most beneficial or useful method of organizing the functions in the city. In this way, each individual will fulfill the requirements of justice, which is to perform the one, useful function that suits him or her.

A classification of human beings by this principle of usefulness reveals two consequences of Plato's idea of justice. First, Plato's reorganization of the city contrasts sharply from the ancient Greek *nomos*, in which functions or roles in the *polis* were based on an individual's gender. Plato questions the traditional assigning of functions based on *genos*, because he did not consider this organization the most advantageous way to order the city. Yet, Plato cannot entirely establish the classification of functions by *physis*, since the important function of reproduction has to be based on *genos*. Even if a female guardian has the potential for guarding, during her childbearing years, she is more useful to the city as a bearer of children. The significance of this difficulty is that, for the purpose of classifying human beings, there remains a tension between *genos* and *physis*; an individual's function cannot be based on strict requirements of *physis*. *Genos,* even if understood only as sexual or reproductive capacity, is also necessary to the city.

The understanding of *genos* as a function, either to bear or to mount, points to the second consequence of Plato's idea of justice. Plato's city in speech is based on the idea of usefulness. The city alters or eliminates any aspect of a human being which is

not useful to the organization of the city. Plato redefines *genos*, traditionally associated with certain character traits, as an individual's reproductive function. Thus, he restricts the meaning and experience of woman or *gyne* to the function of bearing children. For the same reason, the man or *andros* is understood as only an experience of the function of mounting. Plato approaches and restricts other aspects and experiences of *anthropos* to fit the same principle of usefulness. With the second wave, the rulers eliminate the identification with a particular *oikos* and any attachments and demands that this identification creates. The rulers use the passion of *eros*, which results from the desire to possess a particular individual, to incite acts of valour. By the end of Book V, Plato makes all experiences and aspects of *anthropos* conform to a teleological principle of usefulness, including gender, emotions and family identity.

The consequences of the proposals in Book V emphasize the importance of understanding the city in speech as a discussion of justice, rather than as a literal political proposal. The proposals establish the idea of justice, based on the principle of usefulness, to the extreme. It is the consequences of reorganizing and restricting all aspects of *anthropos* to this idea of justice that questions whether the city in speech is a desirable city. As Socrates states in his warning concerning the deterioration of democracy, "anything that is done to excess is likely to provoke a corresponding great change in the opposite direction -- in seasons, in plants, in bodies, and in particular,

not least in regimes."[7] The city in speech qualifies as an example of such an excessive regime. Instead of interpreting the city in speech as an example of political idealism, this analysis proposed that Plato presented the city in speech as a call for moderation in the establishment of justice.

In summation, the purpose of this analysis was twofold. First, it was an examination of the recent commentary on Plato's proposal for female guardians. The theoretical interest in understanding issues of gender equality fuelled interest in the first wave of Book V. Plato's treatment of women in Book V touches upon some essential elements of gender theory, such as questioning the tradition of gender-specific roles and discussing the meaning of gender. Second, the thesis focused on an independent examination of the proposals in Book V. It discovered that Plato's notion of *physis* was based on his argument that justice was the ordering of each individual into one particular function. That proper function was based on a notion of *physis*. Yet, Plato's organization of functions still must account for gender. Furthermore, Plato's narrow definition of gender as sexual reproduction highlights the extreme to which Plato's city is organized. This excessive organization of the city raises doubts about whether the city is possible or the "best." Thus, the enduring importance of the Republic is this warning about the consequences of implementing philosophical or theoretical ideas in a political regime, without tempering these ideas with moderation.

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[7]Plato, The Republic of Plato line 563 e.

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