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Internalization and the Philosophers' Best Interest in Plato's *Republic*

Abstract: I argue that it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis because that life is the best available to them. Although the life of pure contemplation of the Forms would make them happiest, I make the case that, on Plato's view, this life is not an option for them because of the essential psychological connections that he posits between the individual and the city. To make this argument, I first draw on Plato's city/soul analogy to explore why it is in reason's best interest to rule the soul. The answer, I claim, rests in the interconnectedness of the three parts of the soul. If reason does not rule the soul, Plato says that reason will be ruled by another part of the soul and will be forced to serve the ends of the ruling part, which is worse for reason than ruling the soul. Similarly, the philosophers must rule or be ruled. I argue that, as we would expect from the city/soul analogy, Plato thinks that it is worse for the philosophers to be ruled by another part of the city than to rule Kallipolis. This is because, on Plato's view, individuals internalize their culture, and if the philosophers do not rule, they internalize an unjust culture, which adversely impacts their ability to contemplate the Forms. However, if the philosophers rule Kallipolis, they internalize a just society, which best facilitates their contemplating the Forms. The upshot is that, due to the interconnections that Plato sees between psyche and city, he thinks that ruling Kallipolis is the best option available to the philosophers.

Keywords: Plato, Republic, philosopher-king, compulsion to rule, city/soul analogy

In the *Republic*, Plato sets out to prove that it is in one's best interest to be just. Specifically, he aims to prove that the just person is happier than the unjust person (352d), even if the just person has a reputation for total injustice and the unjust person has a reputation for total justice (367b). Yet, as Plato says, a just law requires the philosophers to rule Kallipolis because they owe the city for their education (520b-c), but ruling does not seem to be in their best interest, since it takes them away from that which makes them happiest – namely, contemplating the Forms (519c-d). Hence justice seems

to require the philosophers to act contrary to their best interest. It does not, therefore, seem to be in their best interest to be just.

In this paper, I argue that, on Plato's view, it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis because that life is the best available to them. Although the life of pure contemplation would make them happiest, I argue that this life is not an option for them because of the essential psychological connections that exist between the individual and the city. To make this argument, I first draw on Plato's city/soul analogy to explore why it is in reason's best interest to rule the soul. The answer, I claim, rests in the interconnectedness of the three parts of the soul. If reason does not rule the soul, Plato says, reason will be ruled by another part of the soul and will be forced to serve the ends of that ruling part. It is therefore reasonable to think that, for reason, being ruled is worse than ruling the soul. Similarly, philosophers living in a city must rule or be ruled. I argue that, as we would expect from the city/soul analogy, it is worse for philosophers to be ruled than to rule. This is because, Plato thinks, individuals internalize their culture, and if the philosophers do not rule, they internalize an unjust culture. According to Plato, this is much worse for the philosophers than ruling Kallipolis.

The paper proceeds as follows. In Section 1, I set out the argument that it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule, and I show that the current solutions to this problem fail. Then, in Section 2, I argue that it is in reason's best interest to rule the soul. I then draw on the lessons from this discussion to argue, in Section 3, that it is the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis.

1. The Problem and Some Attempted Solutions

In the Allegory of the Cave in Book VII, Socrates claims that the philosophers, after seeing the Form of the Good, must be compelled to descend back into the Cave to rule Kallipolis (519c-d). To this, Glaucon responds: “You mean we are to treat them unjustly, making them live a worse life when they could live a better one?” (519d8-9).¹ Here Glaucon raises the concern that compelling the philosophers to rule Kallipolis is unjust because ruling is not in their best interest. Socrates’s reply to Glaucon’s concern focuses on whether it is unjust to make the philosophers rule, not on whether it is in their best interest. He says, “[o]bserve, then, Glaucon, that we won’t be unjustly treating those who have become philosophers in our city, but that what we will say to them, when we compel them to take care of the others and guard them, will be just” (520a6-b1). He goes on to say that philosophers owe the city for their education, an education that makes them best suited to rule, and that it is a just law that requires them to rule (520a-c, e). In fact, he even seems to grant that it is not in the philosophers’ best interest to rule, saying “[i]f you can find a way of life that is better than ruling for those who are going to rule, your well-governed city will become a possibility” (520e4-521a2). It therefore seems that Plato has undermined his goal of showing that it is in one’s best interest to act justly, since the philosophers act justly but seemingly against their best interest in ruling Kallipolis.

Some readings of the *Republic* accept the idea that Plato has undermined his goal. For example, Julia Annas (1981) says that the philosophers “do not go down [to the

¹ All quotations from the *Republic* are from C. D. C. Reeve (trans.), *Plato: Republic*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004.

Cave] because it is better for them; they would be happier and better off doing philosophy... They go down because they realize that that is best – simply *best*, not best *for* any particular group of people.”² In other words, on Annas’s view, the philosophers are willing to rule because it is just and impersonally best, even though it is not best for them. In contrast to Annas, who finds a motivational basis for the philosophers’ ruling in the impersonal good, others claim that Plato has simply failed to provide a sufficient motivational basis for the philosophers to rule, since it is not in their best interest.³

Other readings of the *Republic* claim that it is in the philosophers’ best interest to rule, which makes them willing to rule. Many of these readings argue that the philosophers are willing to rule because their needs are met by the city, they are given time to do philosophy, and they avoid the “greatest punishment for being unwilling to rule [which] is being ruled by someone worse than oneself” (347c3-5).⁴ To these wages of ruling, Reeve (2007) adds that the philosophers are willing to rule because they see ruling as choiceworthy, since justice requires ruling and justice, as a state of character, is “one of the finest goods, choiceworthy for its consequences, certainly, but ‘much more so’ (as Adeimantus puts it at *Rep.* II, 367c8) for its own sake.”⁵ In a different vein, Terence Irwin (1995) contends that the philosophers prefer to rule because they understand that ruling is just and that just actions are part of their happiness.⁶

Christopher Buckels (2013) objects to these readings on the grounds that they fail to account for Plato’s insistence that the philosophers are compelled to rule.⁷ After all, if

² Annas (1981), p. 266-267 (italics hers).

³ See, for example, Rosen (2005) and Aronson (1972).

⁴ See, for example, Reeve (2007), Reeve (1988), Mahoney (1992), Davies (1968), and Cross and Woosley (1964).

⁵ Reeve (2007), p. 204

⁶ Irwin (1995), p. 301.

⁷ Buckels (2013), p. 66.

the philosophers are willing to rule, then why must they be compelled? I think that Buckels dismisses these readings too quickly, since as I discuss below, we can reasonably claim that, for Plato, the law requiring the philosophers to rule compels them to rule, even if they desire to rule. Yet even so, these readings must still account for the fact that the philosophers do not want to rule. As Glaucon says of the philosophers, “each of them will certainly go to rule as to something compulsory” (520e2-3), and as Socrates claims, the philosophers will be “least eager to rule” (520d2). These readings have trouble accounting for that. For example, if the philosophers’ needs are provided for by the city, they have time to do philosophy, and they avoid the greater punishment of being ruled by worse people, then why are they not more eager to rule? Further, if just actions like ruling are part of the philosophers’ happiness, as Irwin contends, then why are they not at least somewhat eager to do that which partly constitutes their happiness?⁸

Buckels presents his own solution to explain how it is in the philosophers’ best interest to rule. Following Eric Brown (2000), he says that the founders of Kallipolis, in establishing the law requiring the philosophers to rule, establish a just law, although not one required by justice. Because this law has been established, Buckels asserts that the philosophers have only two choices: to obey the law or to disobey it.⁹ The philosophers,

⁸ Irwin (1995, 301) says that the philosophers are not eager to rule because the tasks of ruling are themselves disagreeable and are not choiceworthy in their own right. But I do not see how this helps. The philosophers should be at least somewhat eager to do that which *partially constitutes* their happiness, even if ruling only partially constitutes their happiness insofar as it is just.

⁹ This is the third of Buckels’s three answers to the question of whether the philosophers should act justly (p. 78-80). I focus on his third answer because only it could plausibly show that ruling is in the best interest of the philosophers. Buckels’s first answer is that philosophers benefit from acting justly, since just acts harmonize the soul, but of course a life of pure contemplation could benefit them more. His second answer is that justice itself is not directly responsible for the philosophers’ living a worse life; rather, the just law commanding the philosophers to rule is responsible for that. Buckels admits that justice may still be indirectly responsible for the philosophers’ living a worse life, which is why he moves to his third answer. Yet the second answer has a deeper problem than Buckels notices. Even if we accept that justice is not directly responsible for the inferiority of the life of ruling, ruling is still an inferior life for the

as just people, will obey the just command to rule (520d-e), and Buckels explains why as follows: just actions produce harmony in the soul – i.e., just actions produce justice in the soul, and philosophers always act to produce harmony in their souls. Hence, according to Buckels, the philosophers will reluctantly obey the command to rule because, although they prefer to contemplate the Forms, they always act to produce harmony in their souls, which requires obeying just laws. Yet, in doing so, Buckels claims that the philosophers *do* act in their best interest because disobedience to a just law would be an unjust act, and unjust actions disharmonize a soul on Plato's psychology. In short, according to Buckels, refusing to obey the just law to rule Kallipolis would corrupt the philosophers' souls. Thus it is better for them to rule and maintain harmony in their souls.

Buckels's solution is an important one. On my view, it rightly focuses on the options available to the philosophers and claims that the life of pure contemplation is unavailable to them. However, I think that his solution does not go deep enough. On Buckels's view, a contingent fact restricts the philosophers' options – namely, the fact that the founders established the just law requiring the philosophers to rule. If the founders had not established that law, then it would not, according to this solution, be in the philosophers' best interest to rule the city. Thus the founders would have acted against the best interest of the philosophers in enacting the law in the first place.

This may at first seem to be a virtue of Buckels's solution. After all, in responding to Glaucon's concern that compelling the philosophers to rule would be treating them unjustly (519d), Socrates responds: "You have forgotten again, my friend, that the law is not concerned with making any one class in the city do outstandingly well,

philosophers on this solution. Hence ruling, and so being just, does not seem to be their best interest, even if justice itself is not directly responsible for that situation.

but is contriving to produce this condition in the city as a whole..." (519e1-3). Here Socrates could be interpreted as saying that the law is not concerned with the best interest of the philosophers but with the best interest of the city, and hence it acts against the former for the sake of the latter.

But that interpretation reads too much into the passage. After all, Socrates does not say that the law sacrifices the best interest of one class for the best interest of the city. Instead, he says that the law contrives to make the city as a whole "do outstandingly well," and it is an open question whether, in doing so, the law still supports the best interest of the philosophers. In fact, what Socrates goes on to say is important. Starting with the previous quote, look at how it continues:

You have forgotten again, my friend, that the law is not concerned with making any one class in the city do outstandingly well, but is contriving to produce this condition in the city as a whole, harmonizing the citizens together through both persuasion and compulsion, and making them share with each other the benefit they can confer on the community. (519e1-520a2)

It is possible that the harmonization of the citizens of Kallipolis *is* in the best interest of each class of citizens. After all, Socrates mentions only a positive feature of this harmonization for the individual citizens: they share with one another the benefit that each is able to confer. Further, the idea that this harmonization would be in the best interest of everyone fits well with the city/soul analogy and Plato's idea that harmony in the soul is in the best interest of each part of the soul.

As I go on to argue, Plato does think that harmonization amongst the classes of the city, which requires the philosophers to rule, is in the best interest of the philosophers. Thus, for Plato, the law requiring the philosophers to rule not only contrives to make the city do outstanding well but also serves the best interest of the philosophers. The argument presented in this paper agrees with Buckels that the philosophers do not have available to them the life of pure philosophy, which is crucial in explaining both why the philosophers are reluctant to rule and why it is in their best interest to do so. However, the argument here does not attribute the philosophers' restricted options to a contingent law established by the founders but rather to a deep feature of Plato's human psychology: the interconnectedness of psyche and city. As I demonstrate below, on Plato's view, if the philosophers do not rule, a disharmonized city inevitably results, and a disharmonized city necessarily adversely affects the philosophers' souls. As a result, the fact that it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule is not a contingent fact but is rather a fact that is necessary given the nature of human society and psychology.

Before turning to the main argument, it is worth noting the advantages that the solution presented in this paper has over Buckels's solution. First, as just mentioned, Buckels's solution says that it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule because of a contingent law. I think that it is preferable to ground the philosophers' best interest in human psychology, as this paper does, rather than in a contingent law. Yet I can say more than just that Buckels's solution is too contingent. On Buckels's solution, if the founders had not established the law requiring the philosophers to rule, it would not be in their best interest to do so. As a result, in establishing a just law, the founders deprived the philosophers of what could have been a better life for them. It seems to me that there

is still some tension between justice and the philosophers' best interest if, in establishing a *just* law, the founders make unavailable to the philosophers a better life. The solution in this paper has no such tension.

Next, recall that Buckels rests his case on the idea that a certain act of disobedience – refusing to rule – would corrupt the philosophers' souls. Yet even if we accept, with Buckels, that just actions produce and maintain harmony in the soul and that unjust actions upset that harmony, it is not clear that refusing to rule would be enough to *corrupt* the philosophers' souls.¹⁰ After all, there are surely degrees of unjust actions, and refusing to rule does not seem bad enough in itself to corrupt the philosophers' souls, particularly if the philosophers then perform other just actions and continue to engage in contemplation of the Forms, which could restore the harmony in their souls. On the view that I present, in contrast, what could corrupt the philosophers' souls is not simply their refusal to rule but rather the results of that refusal – namely, the disharmony in the city that would result. (Yet, as we will see, the argument in this paper does not require disharmony in the city to actually *corrupt* the philosophers' souls.)

2. It is in Reason's Best Interest to Rule the Soul

In 368c-369b, Socrates suggests that he and his interlocutors examine justice in cities in order to illuminate justice in individuals, on the grounds that justice in cities is bigger and therefore easier to observe. If we take this city/soul analogy seriously, it indicates that if it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule the city, then it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul. In this section, I show that a parallel argument can

¹⁰ I thank Samuel Baker for this suggestion.

be constructed that seems to show that it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul. I then demonstrate that this argument goes wrong in assuming that reason can perform its proper work of contemplating the truth unaffected by the other parts of the soul.¹¹ If we take the city/soul analogy seriously, we then have good reason to think that the original argument – that it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule the city – is similarly flawed, and in the next section, I argue that is so.

Recall that, for Plato, the human soul is composed of three parts: reason, spirit, and appetite. According to Plato, justice is the harmonious state of a person's soul, in which each of its three parts performs its proper work (441d-e; 443c-e). Plato claims that reason's practical work is to rule the other parts of the soul (441e). However, he also claims that reason's proper work is to contemplate the truth, which is a theoretical pursuit detached from the practical work of ruling the soul, just as the philosophers' contemplation of the Forms is a theoretical pursuit detached from the practical work of ruling the city. Hence a tension exists between the theoretical and practical conceptions of reason as well as of the philosophers. As a result, we can construct the following argument that it is not in the best interest of reason to rule the soul. Reason's proper work and fundamental desire is to contemplate the truth. As Socrates says, reason is "always wholly straining to know where the truth lies..." (581b6-7). Because reason's fundamental desire is to contemplate the truth, and because doing so is at odds with the practical work of ruling the soul, it is not in the best interest of reason to rule the soul. Reason would be better off just contemplating the truth.

¹¹ Following Samuel Baker (2015), I translate *ergon* as "proper work" rather than "function." Yet note that the argument of this paper does not depend upon that interpretative decision.

This argument exactly parallels the above argument that it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule the city. In each argument, ruling is best for the whole but not for the ruling part. It is best for the city for the philosophers to rule, but not best for the philosophers. It is best for the soul for reason to rule, but not best for reason. Or so the arguments go.

If reason could be independent of the other parts of the soul, this argument would have significant force. After all, reason could then exclusively satisfy its fundamental desire to contemplate the truth unaffected by the other parts of the soul, and so ruling the soul would not be in reason's best interest. However, reason cannot be independent of the other parts of the soul while embodied. As Plato makes clear, one part of the soul rules in every person. Reason rules in the just person, and in each of the unjust character types, the spirited or the appetitive part rules. The ruling part directs the soul towards the ruling part's particular aspirations and desires, using the other parts of the soul to satisfy those aspirations and desires. For example, the oligarchic man, who is governed by the appetitive part, uses reason to provide him with effective strategies to obtain more money (553b-d). Thus reason either rules the other parts of the soul or is ruled by one of them. Reason has no other option because it cannot be independent of the other parts of the soul.

Between these options, I claim that it is in the best interest of reason to rule the soul because this option gives reason the most opportunity to contemplate the truth. To see this, first notice that reason can contemplate the truth while ruling. After all, on Plato's view, reason's ruling produces justice in the soul, which is each part of the soul doing its proper work. Since reason's proper work is to contemplate the truth, that

contemplation must be compatible with ruling. Further, reason can contemplate the truth much less well when ruled by another part of the soul. As mentioned above, if another part of the soul rules, it enslaves reason, taking reason over for its own purposes. This is because the ruling part of the soul sets the agenda, and so the soul that is ruled by the spirited or appetitive part focuses its resources, including the resources of reason, on obtaining honor or satisfaction of appetites, respectively. Thus instead of contemplating the truth, reason is forced to develop money-making schemes or to determine how to achieve victory in battle. As a result, reason is not free to contemplate the truth. However, if reason is ruling, it sets the agenda, and so its aims are the dominant aims of the soul. Thus reason can direct the other parts of the soul in such a way that it maximizes its ability to contemplate the truth.

The lesson to take on board is this. The above argument that it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul fails to recognize the interdependence of the parts of the soul. Once we recognize that reason must rule the other parts of the soul or be ruled by them, we see that reason is better able to contemplate the truth when it rules, making ruling the better of the two options available. Ruling is therefore in reason's best interest.

From the city/soul analogy, we would expect something similar for the philosophers: like reason, the philosophers either rule the other parts of the city or are ruled by them, and the former is better for the philosophers. This is the position that Plato seems to take in 347b6-c5, where Socrates says: "... good people won't be willing to rule for the sake of money or honor... So, if they are going to be willing to rule, some compulsion or punishment must be brought to bear on them... Now, the greatest punishment for being unwilling to rule is being ruled by someone worse than oneself." I

will now show that this expectation, grounded in the city/soul analogy, is vindicated. The argument that it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis goes wrong in precisely the same way as the argument that it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul.

3. It is in the Philosophers' Best Interest to Rule Kallipolis

In this section, I argue that, just as reason cannot be independent of the other parts of the soul, the philosophers cannot be independent of the other parts of the city because they are psychologically connected to their culture. As a result, the philosophers' two available options are to rule or be ruled, and I demonstrate that it is in their best interest to rule.

3.1 The psychological connectedness of individuals and cultures

As Jonathan Lear (1992/1998) argues, Plato's psychology essentially involves dynamic interactions between the individual and his culture. These dynamic interactions are of two sorts: internalization and externalization. *Internalization* is the process of taking cultural influences into the psyche, and it is largely an unconscious process – i.e., we internalize culture before understanding its significance. Plato's paradigm example of internalization is imitation, and he claims that through imitation, particularly during youth, one becomes a certain type of person. For example, speaking of the guardians, Socrates says,

... if they imitate anything, they must imitate right from childhood what is appropriate for them – that is to say, people who are courageous, temperate, pious, free, and everything of that sort. On the other hand, they must not be clever at doing or imitating illiberal or shameful actions, so that they won't acquire a taste for the real thing from imitating it. Or haven't you noticed that imitations, if they are practiced much past youth, get established in the habits and nature of body, tones of voice, and mind? (395c3-d2)

Here Socrates says that the guardians must imitate what is appropriate, lest they shape their psyches badly by imitating bad models. He then claims that this is a general point. If we practice imitations much past youth, they become part of our character. In other words, we internalize our imitations, particularly the ones practiced during youth.

As Lear points out, the idea of internalization makes sense of Plato's emphasis on education and censorship. On Plato's view, education does not just increase one's learning; it also shapes one's psychology. In support of this point, consider Plato's idea that we should continue educating and ruling over children "until we establish a constitution in them as in a city. That is to say, we take care of their best part with the similar one in ourselves and equip them with a guardian and ruler similar to our own to take our place. Only then do we set them free" (590e3-591a3). Here Plato says that if we use reason to educate and rule over children properly, which presents them with good models to internalize, the result is that reason will rule their souls. Or consider Plato's idea that musical education is the most important (401d). Socrates says, "... because rhythm and harmony permeate the inner-most element of the soul, affect it more powerfully than anything else, and bring it grace, such education makes one graceful if one is properly trained and the opposite if one is not" (401d5-e1). Here Plato claims that, if we internalize rhythm and harmony – if they "permeate the inner-most element of the

soul” – the result will be harmony in the soul. Hence, for Plato, proper education is crucial to the proper development of our souls because we internalize the models that we are given. Further, Plato views censorship as a necessary component of his ideal city because, unless bad cultural influences are eliminated, people in the city internalize them. This leads to bad psychological consequences, as illustrated by the fact that, in Books VIII and IX, regimes containing negative cultural influences – i.e., all of the unjust regimes – produce related pathologies in the psyches of their citizens.

Of course, culture is not independent of the individuals in it. Just as culture influences individuals, individuals also form and influence culture via *externalization* – i.e., the psychological process by which a person’s psyche shapes the outside world. According to Lear, externalization explains how the pathological psyches in Books VIII and IX, themselves the products of pathological regimes, give rise to regimes that are even more pathological, thus resulting in the picture of political decline that Plato paints in those books. Further, Lear says that externalization accounts for the fact that there are as many character types as there are forms of government. After all, a regime does not spring up from oaks or rocks but from the characters of its citizens (544d-e), and whichever character type is the influential one in a city shapes a regime in its likeness through externalization. This idea is important for our purposes, as it explains why the city is inevitably in a state of disharmony unless philosophers rule. As Socrates says, “[u]ntil philosophers rule as kings in their cities, or those who are nowadays kings and leading men become genuine and adequate philosophers so that political power and philosophy become thoroughly blended together... cities will have no rest from evils” (473c11-d6). Externalization explains this by saying that harmony in the souls of the

rulers brings harmony to the city, whereas disharmony in the souls of the rulers brings disharmony to the city, resulting in “no rest from evils.”

Hence internalization and externalization are dynamic interactions between psyche and city. Culture shapes psyche, and psyche shapes culture. This means that the city/soul analogy is not a mere analogy but is instead an “isomorphism,” a term that Lear uses to emphasize the fact that the city/soul analogy must hold because of our dynamic psychologies. As Lear puts it, “[p]syche and polis, inner world and outer world, are jointly constituted by reciprocal internalizations and externalizations; and the analogy is a by-product of this psychological dynamic.”¹² Hence Plato’s strategy of looking for justice first in the city because it is bigger does not rely on the idea that justice in the city and justice in the individual must be similar because we use a single term to denote each, contrary to critics of the analogy like Bernard Williams (1973). Plato’s strategy is rooted not in semantics but in his psychology, for justice in the city is there and has the character that it has because the just citizens have that same character.

Thus for Plato, justice in the city is harmony amongst the three parts of the city; it is each part doing its proper work. Similarly, justice in the individual is harmony amongst the three parts of the soul; it is each part performing its proper work. However, because the psyche shapes the city through externalization and the city shapes the psyche through internalization, harmony in the city and harmony in the individual are only possible “if there is a larger harmony – between inside and outside – which encompasses and explains them. Justice, when properly understood, is each part, inside and outside, doing its own task.”¹³ Once we understand this, we see that harmony in the soul

¹² Lear (1992/1998), p. 227.

¹³ Lear (1992/1998), p. 239.

generally depends upon harmony in the city. This explains why, in unjust regimes, “only a very small group... associate with philosophy in a way that is worthy of her...” (496a11-b1), a group composed of those with the best natures who for various reasons have avoided politics. (But importantly, as we will see, even this group is substantially affected by negative internalization.)

3.2. The Philosophers Must Rule or Be Ruled

In this section, using the idea of internalization, I argue that the philosophers have just two options: to rule or be ruled. To start, just as reason must coexist with the other parts of the soul, so the philosophers must coexist with the other parts of the city. As Socrates says, “...a city comes to exist, I believe, because none of us is individually self-sufficient, but each has many needs he cannot satisfy” (369b7-8). Moreover, the other parts of the city provide for the philosophers' basic needs. Hence, to have their needs met, the philosophers must live in a city.

Further, the interdependence in each case goes deeper than mere coexistence. In the case of the soul, I have pointed out that reason must not only coexist with the other parts of the soul, it must also rule them or be ruled by one of them. Further, as I have shown, to be ruled is not a mere formality. The ruling part of the soul sets the agenda for the soul, and so if reason is ruled by another part of the soul, the ruling part coopts reason for its own purposes. Similarly, due to Plato's dynamic psychology, the philosophers do not just coexist with the other parts of the city but are also psychologically interdependent with them through internalization and externalization. Hence the philosophers must either rule the other parts of the city or be ruled by one of them. As in the case of reason,

to be ruled is not a mere formality. If another part of the city rules, that part of the city sets the agenda, and the philosophers are then adversely affected by internalizing the resulting unjust regime.

This point challenges the central assumption of the argument that it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule. To see this, recall Glaucon's reply to Socrates's claim that the philosophers must rule: "You mean we are to treat them unjustly, making them live a worse life when they could live a better one?" (519d8-9). The better life to which Glaucon is referring is the life of pure contemplation of the Forms. Glaucon therefore assumes that this life is available to the philosophers. If the argument of this paper is correct, this assumption is where Glaucon goes wrong. Because the philosophers are psychologically dependent on the other parts of the city, the life of pure contemplation is simply not available to them, since that life requires that their souls be unaffected by the injustice in the city that results if another part of the city rules. Hence, just as the above argument that it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul gets its force from wrongly assuming that reason can be independent of the other parts of the soul, so the argument that it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule gets its force from wrongly assuming that the philosophers can be independent of the other parts of the city.

Of course, I have not yet shown that ruling the city is in the best interest of the philosophers. Instead, if what I have said so far is right, it is no longer obvious whether or not ruling is in their best interest, since the life of pure contemplation is unavailable to them. If the philosophers rule the city, they internalize a just society but must spend time away from contemplation when it is their turn to rule. If they do not rule, they avoid the

burden of ruling but internalize an unjust regime. As I argue in the next section, between these options, it is better for the philosophers to rule.

3.3. Why It is in the Philosophers' Best Interest to Rule

We are now ready to see why it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis. As I just argued, due to the interconnectedness of psyche and culture, the philosophers' only viable options are to rule the city or be ruled by another part of the city. I will establish that it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule by arguing that, on Plato's view, internalization is such a strong process that ruling is better for the philosophers than internalizing an unjust regime.

To start, once again return to the soul. As I argued above, when reason rules the soul, it is able to contemplate the truth effectively. After all, when reason rules the soul, the soul is just, which is a harmonious state in which each part of the soul does its proper work, and reason's proper work is to contemplate the truth. Hence reason must be able to contemplate well while ruling the soul. Further, I claimed that reason can better contemplate the truth if it rules than if another part of the soul rules because, if another part rules, it uses reason for its purposes, which negatively impacts reason's ability to contemplate the truth.

I claim that, as we would expect from the city/soul analogy, we can make similar points about the philosophers' ruling. To start, when the philosophers rule the city, the city is just, which is a harmonious state in which each part of the city does its proper work (433d-e).

Further, the philosophers' (most) proper work is to contemplate the Forms. Socrates makes this clear when he sets out to define what a philosopher is (474b-480a). He first says, "...someone who is ready and willing to taste every kind of learning, who turns gladly to learning and is insatiable for it, *he* is the one we would be justified in calling a philosopher" (475c6-8). Socrates clarifies this by adding that the true philosophers are "[t]he lovers of seeing the truth" (475e4). Then, at the end of this discussion, Socrates says, "...those who in each case are passionately devoted to the thing itself are the ones we must call, not 'philodoxers,' but 'philosophers'" (480a6-7), where the preceding discussion makes clear that the "things themselves" are Forms (475e-476a; 479d-480a). Because philosophers by nature are lovers of truth and are devoted to the Forms, we should conclude that their (most) proper work is contemplating the Forms. This is supported by the city/soul analogy: contemplation is the philosophers' (most) proper work, even though they must rule the city, just as pursuing truth is reason's (most) proper work, even though reason must also rule the soul. Since the philosophers' proper work is to contemplate the Forms and since each part of the city does its proper work when the philosophers rule, the philosophers must be able to contemplate the Forms well while ruling. This is accomplished by having the philosophers take turns ruling, which allows them to devote themselves exclusively to contemplation when it is not their turn to rule.

Finally, just as reason is better able to pursue truth when it rules the soul, the philosophers are better able to contemplate the Forms when they rule the city. This is because, if another part of the city rules, the resulting regime is unjust, and internalizing an unjust regime negatively impacts the philosophers' ability to contemplate the Forms.

To see this, note that internalization is a very strong process for Plato. As I discussed above, receiving a proper education and imitating only what is appropriate matter so much to Plato because, through internalization, they shape our character. Plato thinks that we need good models to internalize if we are to become just people. This also holds for those with a philosophical nature – i.e., those capable of becoming philosophers. As Socrates says, few people have the appropriate nature to become a philosopher, and there are many sources of ruin for these few (491a-b). He then says, “Well, then, if the nature we proposed for the philosopher happens to receive the proper instruction, I imagine it will inevitably grow to attain every virtue. But if it is not sown, planted, and grown in a suitable environment, it will develop in entirely the opposite way, unless some god comes to its aid” (492a1-5). Here Socrates says that a person with a philosophical nature will inevitably become just through proper education; however, in an unsuitable environment, without receiving that education, he will become exceedingly unjust. It is reasonable to think that an unjust environment is an unsuitable one. Hence, someone with a philosophical nature becomes unjust when he is nurtured in, and so internalizes, an unjust environment without the proper education to counteract it.

Of course, as Plato thinks, children are more psychologically malleable than adults and so are more prone to take in the positive and negative influences around them. For example, in 540e-541a, Socrates claims that the philosophers must send all people over the age of ten out of the city in order to establish a just society. This indicates that the psyches of those under the age of ten are malleable enough to internalize the just society sufficiently while those over the age of ten are not. Since the impact of internalization is strongest in youth, you might wonder whether negative internalization is

actually problematic for those who are already philosophers. If the souls of philosophers were not negatively impacted by the unjust societies around them, then it would seem that, for those who are already philosophers, it is not in their best interest to rule the city. After all, they could then spend all their time contemplating the Forms without the unjust society around them affecting the harmony in their souls.

Crucially, Plato does not hold this view. Instead, Plato thinks that the philosopher in an unjust society is affected by internalization to such a tremendous degree that it is clearly not in his best interest to live in an unjust society. This comes out in the following passage where Socrates discusses what it is like to be a philosopher in an unjust city.

Socrates: ... Now, those who have become members of this little group have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession philosophy is. At the same time, they have also seen the insanity of the masses and realized that there is nothing healthy, so to speak, in public affairs, and that there is no ally with whose aid the champion of justice can survive; that instead he would perish before he could profit either their city or his friends, and be useless both to himself and to others— like a man who has fallen among wild animals and is neither willing to join them in doing injustice nor sufficiently strong to oppose the general savagery alone. Taking all this into his calculations, he keeps quiet and does his own work, like someone who takes refuge under a little wall from a storm of dust or hail driven by the wind. Seeing others filled with lawlessness, the philosopher is satisfied if he can somehow lead his present life pure of injustice and impious acts, and depart from it with good hope, blameless and content.

Adeimantus: Well, that is no small thing for him to have accomplished before departing.

Socrates: But no very great one either, since he did not chance upon a suitable constitution. In a suitable one, his own growth will be fuller and he will save the community, as well as himself. (496c5-497a5).

In this passage, Plato likens the philosopher's life in an unjust city to being in a storm, vividly illustrating that it is a life full of difficulty. The philosopher is in a storm in the sense that he is powerless to control the raging injustice of society around him. He desires to put an end to the injustice, but he is not strong enough to do anything about it. Further, he sees "others filled with lawlessness," and as a result, Plato thinks that the philosopher struggles against substantial negative internalization, which is why he "is satisfied if he can somehow lead his present life pure of injustice and impious acts." Thus, in an unjust society, the philosopher must struggle mightily against the negative influences around him in order to maintain harmony in his soul. On the philosopher's behalf, Adeimantus claims that this is no small accomplishment, but Socrates counters that it is no great accomplishment either. In a "suitable constitution," in a just city, the philosopher's "growth will be fuller," and although Socrates does not elaborate on what this means, he plausibly at least means that, in a just city, the philosopher's growth in virtue and knowledge will be fuller, since this growth would be most important to Plato. Thus, in a just city, the philosophers are better able to perform their proper work of contemplating the Forms, since in a just city, there is no storm from which to "take refuge" – i.e., there is no injustice from which to protect their souls. As a result, the life of ruling a just city is one in which the philosopher's "own growth will be fuller and he will save the community, as well as himself." In other words, the life of ruling a just city is in the best interest of *both* the philosopher and the city.

To reinforce the idea that the philosophers must carefully guard themselves against negative internalization, consider 591d-592a. Here Socrates claims that a just person will guard against disturbing the constitution within himself by making sure not to possess too much or too little money, and he will do the same with respect to honors. As Socrates says, “where honors are concerned... [h]e will willingly share in and taste those he believes will make him better. But those that might overthrow the established condition of his soul, he will avoid, both in private and in public” (592a1-4). This passage makes clear that the maintenance of harmony in the soul is not easy and could be overthrown by the negative influences of money and honors. Hence, in an unjust society where such negative influences abound, maintaining harmony in the soul would be difficult even for the philosophers.

We now have our desired conclusion: it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis. This is because, on Plato's view, we are psychologically connected to our society, and hence the life of pure contemplation of the Forms, disconnected from societal influences, is simply not available to the philosophers. Instead, they must either rule the city, which allows them to internalize a just city, or be ruled by another part of the city, which results in their internalizing an unjust city. I have argued that the former is better for the philosophers. As Plato thinks, the life of philosophers in an unjust city is a difficult life in which they are content just to maintain the harmony in their souls. In contrast, in Kallipolis where the philosophers rule, they are able to “grow more” in knowledge and virtue because they are better able to contemplate the Forms. This is because, when it is not their turn to rule, they can contemplate the Forms free from the negative effects of an unjust society on their souls.

This brings us back to Socrates's response to Glaucon's concern that to make the philosophers rule is to make them live a worse life. Recall that response:

You have forgotten again, my friend, that the law is not concerned with making any one class in the city do outstandingly well, but is contriving to produce this condition in the city as a whole, harmonizing the citizens together through both persuasion and compulsion, and making them share with each other the benefit they can confer on the community. (519e1-520a2)

As I said in Section 1, this passage is consistent with the idea that the law requiring the philosophers to rule is in the best interest of the philosophers. In contriving to make the city do "outstandingly well," the law may also contrive to make each part of the city do as well as possible. That is what I have argued with respect to the philosophers. By "harmonizing the citizens together," the rule of the philosophers sets the conditions that help them to best contemplate the Forms. This is exactly what happens in the soul as well. By harmonizing the parts of the soul together, the rule of reason sets the conditions that help reason to best contemplate the truth. The upshot is that Socrates says it exactly right when he goes on to say, speaking to the philosophers in Kallipolis, "But both for your own sakes and for that of the rest of the city, we have bred you to be leaders and kings in the hive..." (520b5-7). The law that the philosophers must rule is for the sake of the city, for the sake of the philosophers, and for the sake of the other parts of the city. The interconnectedness of psyche and polis in Plato's psychology reveal that these do not come apart.

Interestingly, this discussion helps to illuminate what Socrates says to the hypothetical philosophers of Kallipolis just before he says that they rule for their own sakes and for the sake of the rest of the city. He says to them,

When people like you come to be in other cities, they are justified in not sharing in the others' labors. After all, they have grown there spontaneously, against the will of the constitution in each of them. And when something grows of its own accord and owes no debt for its upbringing, it has justice on its side when it is not keen to pay anyone for its upbringing. But both for your own sakes and for that of the rest of the city, we have bred you to be leaders and kings in the hive, so to speak. (520b1-7)

The other cities to which Socrates refers in this passage are unjust cities, since the philosophers there emerge against the constitution of those cities. Socrates says that philosophers in unjust cities are not required by justice to "share in others' labors," since they do not owe those cities a debt for their upbringing. Further, as the above discussion of 496c-497a brings out, it is in the philosophers' best interest not to labor in unjust regimes but rather to protect themselves from the negative impact of internalizing the injustice around them. Notice, then, that the requirements of justice and the best interest of the philosophers in the unjust city align: they are not required by justice to engage in unjust regimes, and it is not in their best interest to do so. Socrates then immediately contrasts this case to the situation of the philosophers in Kallipolis. In Kallipolis, Socrates suggests, justice requires the philosophers to rule because they owe a debt to the city for their education, and Socrates says that they rule for their own sakes as well as for the sake of the city. Hence, in Kallipolis, the requirements of justice and the

philosophers' best interest also align but in the opposite direction: justice requires them to rule, and it is in their best interest to do so. I have shown why it is in their best interest.

3.4. Responding to Objections

In this section, I respond to two objections to my argument: 1) that I have not adequately accounted for the fact that the philosophers are compelled to rule, and 2) that for all my argument shows, it is in the best interest of a philosopher to avoid ruling by forcing other philosophers to rule.

Objection 1: If it is the philosophers' best interest to rule, as I have argued, then why does Plato insist that the philosophers are compelled to rule? Any compulsion that forces one to act in one's best interest must surely be weak.¹⁴

Response:

If we accept the claim that any compulsion that is in line with one's best interest must be weak, we make it impossible to adequately explain, on Plato's behalf, both how the philosophers are compelled to rule and how it is in one's best interest to be just. Fortunately, I doubt that we must accept this claim. As I mentioned above, it is plausible that, for Plato, the law requiring the philosophers to rule compels them to rule, even if they desire to rule. Although I cannot defend this idea fully here, I can make two points in its favor. First, just before Socrates says that the founders of Kallipolis compel the philosophers to rule, he states that the founders compel the philosophers to see the Forms:

¹⁴ I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to answer this objection.

“[i]t is our task as founders, then, to compel the best natures to learn what was said before to be the most important thing: namely, to see the good; to ascend the ascent” (519c9). As C.D.C. Reeve (2007) points out, the philosophers love learning and so would love to see the Forms, and so this passage provides strong evidence that, for Plato, compulsion can align with desire.¹⁵ (On Reeve’s view, the compulsion of the law stems from its rational prudence,¹⁶ but we need not commit ourselves to any particular explanation.) Second, the words translated as “compel” in 519c and 520a are “*anagkasai*” (ἀναγκάσαι) and “*prosanagkazontes*” (προσαναγκάζοντες), respectively, both of which are related to the word “*anagkē*” (ἀνάγκη). Yet “*anagkē*” is sometimes translated as “necessity,” such as in 617d-e, where Plato discusses Necessity as a goddess and says that a soul “choose[s] a life to which he will be bound by necessity [ex *anagkēs*]” (617e2-3). Because it is also natural to hear this semantic fluidity between “compulsion” and “necessity” in the cognates of “*anagkē*,” it is not unreasonable to suppose that, in 519c and 520a, the laws established by the founders “compel” the philosophers in the sense of necessitating their actions, and one can be necessitated to act in accord with one’s desires.¹⁷

Of course, it is not enough to establish that the philosophers can be compelled to act in line with their desires. We must also explain why the philosophers “will certainly go to rule as to something compulsory” (520e2-3) and will be “least eager to rule” (520d2). In fact, Plato says that a well-governed city is only possible if the rulers prefer to do something other than ruling (521a). If it is in the philosophers’ best interest to rule, as I have argued, then why do they “go to rule as to something compulsory”?

¹⁵ Reeve (2007), 201.

¹⁶ Reeve (2007), p. 200-201.

¹⁷ I thank Samuel Baker for this second point.

Since it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule, and they presumably know it, they will surely have some internal motivation to rule. Yet having some internal motivation to rule is consistent with not wanting (on balance) to rule, and we see this clearly once we remember that the life that includes ruling Kallipolis is not the best life imaginable for the philosophers but is rather the best life *available* to them. Nearly all of the views that claim that it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule, such as Reeve (2007), leave out this important point and, as a result, have trouble explaining why the philosophers do not want to rule. For example, if the philosophers rule willingly because their bodily needs are met by the city, they get to spend time doing philosophy, and they are not then ruled by a worse ruler, we might reasonably expect them to be at least somewhat happy to rule, even if they do not consider ruling to be a great good (520d1). Yet when we remember that the philosophers want to live the best imaginable life – the life of pure contemplation of the Forms – then it is easy to see why they go to rule as to something compulsory: they want to keep contemplating the Forms and wish that the life of pure contemplation were available to them.

Interestingly, Buckels (2013) claims to have solved the compulsion problem, and his solution has a similar structure. Recall that, on his view, it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule because that is the best life available to them, since not ruling would mean disobedience to a just law, which would corrupt their souls. Buckels solves the compulsion problem by saying that the philosophers rule reluctantly because they prefer to contemplate the Forms but will always act to produce harmony in their souls, which requires obeying the just law that they rule.¹⁸ On Buckels's solution, the philosophers surely have some internal motivation to rule in virtue of the fact that they know that it is

¹⁸ Buckels (2013), p. 80.

in their best interest. They want to have harmony in their souls and so want to do that which they know is necessary to have harmony in their souls. On both of our solutions, then, the philosophers rule reluctantly because they want to have the best imaginable life of pure contemplation; yet they have some internal motivation to rule because ruling is in their best interest, since it offers them the best available life. (Of course, the philosophers also have internal motivation to obey the just law requiring them to rule in virtue of being just people.) Yet remember that, although Buckels and I give structurally similar solutions to the compulsion problem, we give different solutions to the problem of why it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule, and I argued in Section 1 that we should prefer the solution that I give.

Objection 2: This paper has only demonstrated that it is in the best interest of each philosopher that the philosophers rule Kallipolis. Thus, for all that has been shown, it could be in the best interest of each philosopher not to rule himself but to force other philosophers to rule. If that were so, it would undermine the idea that it is in an individual philosopher's best interest to be just and hence undermine Plato's goal of showing that it is in one's best interest to be just.¹⁹

Response:

The first thing to note is that living in society requires cooperation, and it is reasonable to think that not performing one's fair share of the work would result in punishment or other significant negative consequences. As a result, an individual philosopher's refusal to rule would plausibly result in worse consequences for that

¹⁹ I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to answer this objection.

philosopher than taking his turn ruling. Further, it is implausible to think that a philosopher could manipulate other philosophers into taking his turn, given that the other philosophers prefer to contemplate the Forms themselves and know that each individual philosopher is required to rule and is capable of ruling.

You might worry, though, that a sufficiently large group of philosophers could band together to force the other philosophers to rule in their stead, and being large enough, they could do this without being punished or suffering other negative consequences. Why is it not in the philosophers' best interest to form such a group? I think that there are three complementary answers.

First, it is reasonable to think that the resulting division amongst the philosophers would require diligence and effort to maintain, to ensure that the group forced to rule continues to rule well and does not rebel against the oppression. That diligence and effort by the philosophers not ruling would likely prevent them from having a life of pure contemplation. Second, it seems significantly more unjust to band together to force other philosophers to do extra ruling than simply to refuse to rule, and this injustice would likely substantially disrupt the harmony in the souls of the philosophers in the oppressing group, thus plausibly making it more difficult for them to contemplate well than if they took their turns ruling. Finally, it is reasonable to think that the philosophers care both about justice and about one other, such that the promotion of justice and one another's interests brings them some happiness. Thus the philosophers plausibly derive happiness from obeying the just law to rule insofar as it promotes justice and from taking their turn ruling insofar as it benefits the other philosophers by giving them time to contemplate. The latter is similar to the way in which family members take joy in promoting the

interests of other family members even when it involves sacrifice. In fact, it seems to me that the objection under consideration only seems powerful if we imagine that the philosophers are out only for themselves and do not care about those around them, which is implausible.

Why specifically should we think that the philosophers care about one another? To start, they are educated together and so likely form strong bonds through that education and through the common experience of contemplating the Forms. Further, Plato seems concerned to have all of the citizens of Kallipolis, not just the group of philosophers, identify with one another. As Socrates says in the first part of the myth of the metals, he wants the citizens to “regard the other citizens as their earthborn brothers” (414e5-6). Further, Socrates later says that the citizens will “call ‘mine’ the very same thing... [and] experience to the fullest the sharing of pleasures and pains...” (463e4-464a6). Hence, because the philosophers identify with their fellow citizens, they will plausibly derive happiness from doing their share in benefiting their fellow citizens.

I have just listed a few reasons to think that it is in the best interest of each individual philosopher to rule rather than to force other philosophers to rule: a) the effort required to force others to rule, b) the disruption to the harmony in the soul that plausibly results from unjustly forcing others to rule, and c) the happiness that the philosophers would experience from promoting justice and the best interests of those that they care about and identify with. Yet note that, if you are unconvinced by this, you could then take the argument of this paper to reveal the hole in Plato's argument that it is in one's best interest to be just. Recall that, in the city/soul analogy, reason is analogous to the class of philosophers. Thus, for the reasons given in this paper, you could accept that

Plato has successfully shown both that it is in the best interest of reason to rule the soul and that it is in the best interest of the class of philosophers to rule the city. You could then claim that Plato has failed to show the further point that it is in each philosopher's best interest to rule. Yet as just argued, I think that there are good reasons to embrace instead the idea that Plato has, in fact, shown that it is in each philosopher's best interest to rule.

4. Conclusion

In the *Republic*, Plato sets out to prove that being just, rather than simply seeming just, is in one's best interest. Yet it may seem that his proof fails when he compels the just philosophers to rule Kallipolis, since it seems that ruling is not in their best interest because they would much prefer to contemplate the Forms. Contrary to this worry, I have argued that it is in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis.

To show this, I first relied on the city/soul analogy. The city/soul analogy indicates that if it is not in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis, then it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul. In fact, as I showed, a parallel argument can be constructed that would putatively show that it is not in reason's best interest to rule the soul because it would much prefer to devote itself exclusively to contemplating the truth. The problem with this parallel argument, I demonstrated, is that it assumes that reason can be independent of the other parts of the soul. That assumption is false. As Plato makes clear, reason must either rule the other parts of the soul or be ruled by one of them. Between these options, it is in the best interest of reason to rule the soul, since reason is

then most free to contemplate the truth. This is because, if another part of the soul rules, the ruling part coopts reason, using reason to advance the ruling part's agenda.

I then argued that, as expected from the city/soul analogy, it is also in the philosophers' best interest to rule Kallipolis. First, I showed that the philosophers, like reason, must either rule or be ruled. This is because, on Plato's view, we are psychologically connected to our society through internalization and externalization, and hence the philosophers' psyches are affected by the state of the society around them through internalization. This means that the life of pure contemplation of the Forms is not available to the philosophers, since that life would require an impossible psychological freedom from society. The upshot is that the philosophers must either take up the burden of ruling Kallipolis or contemplate the Forms in an unjust regime, where they are affected by negatively internalizing the unjust society around them. I have shown that the former is in the philosophers' best interest. First, in ruling Kallipolis, the philosophers still have ample time to contemplate the Forms because they take turns ruling, and when they contemplate, they can do so well because they have the benefit of internalizing a just society. Further, as Plato makes clear in 496c-497a, the philosophers in an unjust regime live a difficult life because they are negatively impacted by the injustice around them through internalization. As a result, they are content just to maintain the harmony in their souls. Plato then claims that they would "grow more" – i.e., grow more in knowledge and virtue – if they lived in a just regime. We should therefore conclude that the philosophers are better able to contemplate the Forms while ruling Kallipolis than while living in an unjust society, due to the substantial negative impact on their souls of internalizing an unjust society. Thus the philosophers in

Kallipolis rule for their own sakes as well as for the sake of the city, thanks to Plato's dynamic psychology that harmonizes the best interests of both.²⁰

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