

# PRISONERS AND PUPPETEERS IN THE CAVE

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PERHAPS some justification is required for the appearance of yet another essay on Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The question around which the majority of discussions of the Cave revolves is that of its parallelism to the Line. This question can be understood as having two parts: do both the Cave and the Line have four parts or stages, and if so, is there one-to-one correspondence between the parts of the Line and the stages of the Cave? At present, the orthodox interpretation answers each of these questions affirmatively.<sup>1</sup>

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I would like to thank Rachel Barney, Richard Kraut, Ian Mueller, and David Sedley for valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper. I have not been able to do justice to all of their concerns here. All references to the *Republic* conform to the edition of the text recently produced by S. Slings (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>1</sup> Positive replies to each are given by: Proclus, *In Rep.* i. 287. 20 ff. and 292. 22 ff. Kroll; J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato* [*Republic*] (2 vols.; Cambridge, 1902), ii. 156–63; J. Gould, *The Development of Plato's Ethics* [*Development*] (Cambridge, 1955), 174 ff.; J. Malcolm, 'The Line and The Cave' ['Line'], *Phronesis*, 7 (1962), 38–45 and 'The Cave Revisited' ['Cave'], *Classical Quarterly*, NS 31 (1981), 60–8; R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* [*Republic*] (London, 1964), 215; A. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* [*Republic*] (Chicago, 1968), 403–4; T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory* [*Moral*] (Oxford, 1977), 221; N. P. White, *A Companion to Plato's Republic* [*Companion*] (Indianapolis, 1979), 184 ff.; V. Karasmanis, 'Plato's *Republic*: The Line and the Cave' ['Line'], *Apeiron*, 21 (1988), 147–71; C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* [*Philosopher-Kings*] (Princeton, 1988); G. Fine, 'Knowledge and Belief in *Republic* V–VII' ['Knowledge'], in S. Everson (ed.), *Companions to Ancient Thought*, i. *Epistemology* (Cambridge, 1990), 85–115; M. A. Lizano-Ordovás, 'Eikasia und Pistis in Platons Höhlengleichnis' ['Eikasia'], *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 49 (1995), 378–97; T. A. Szlezák, 'Das Höhlengleichnis', in O. Höffe (ed.), *Politeia* (Berlin, 1997), 205–28 at 212. Although J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* [*Introduction*] (Oxford, 1981), 254–6, acknowledges that 'the Cave does not divide neatly into four sections', she ultimately concludes that 'the states do correspond'.

Those who have disagreed with either aspect of the orthodox interpretation include: A. S. Ferguson, 'Plato's Simile of Light', *Classical Quarterly*, 15 (1921), 131–52, and *ibid.* 16 (1922), 15–28 ['Simile 1' and 'Simile 2']; R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* [*Dialectic*] (Oxford, 1941), 192 ff.; H. W. B. Joseph, *Knowledge and*

As both proponents and opponents of the orthodox interpretation realize,<sup>2</sup> the major difficulty for this reading lies in coming up with an account of *eikasia* that adequately suits both metaphors. The problem is that on this interpretation, the lowest part of the Line, *eikasia*, must correspond to the lowest region of the Cave, the state of the prisoners, and if the Line's account of *eikasia* is taken at face value, then we should say that the prisoners are looking at shadows and reflections (509 D 10–510 A 1). This much surely sounds right. The prisoners, after all, are said to be looking at shadows on the wall in front of them (515 B 9–C 2). However, Socrates also says that the prisoners looking at the shadows are 'like us' (515 A 5), and *we* surely do not spend our time looking exclusively (or even in large part) at shadows and reflections. For this reason heterodox interpretations have been offered which deny the parallelism between the two, and orthodox interpreters have worked hard at developing an acceptable account of *eikasia*.

In this paper I am simply going to take the parallelism between the Line and Cave for granted<sup>3</sup> and offer a new solution to the difficulty concerning *eikasia*, but I shall do so *en passant*, focusing my immediate attention on a second question that, although having almost as long a history as the first, has generally had a more derivative status in recent discussions. This concerns the political content of the Allegory of the Cave. Few, if any, today would dispute that the Cave has political meaning,<sup>4</sup> but there has been

*the Good in Plato's Republic [Knowledge]* (Oxford, 1948), 34–41; R. Ferber, 'Notizen zu Platons Höhlengleichnis' ['Notizen'], *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie*, 28 (1981), 393–433 at 398–400; C. Strang, 'Plato's Analogy of the Cave' ['Analogy'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 4 (1986), 19–34.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Annas, *Introduction*, 255; Cross and Woollsey, *Republic*, 227–8; Ferber, 'Notizen', 399–400; Fine, 'Knowledge', 232; D. Hall, 'Interpreting Plato's Cave as an Allegory of the Human Condition' ['Interpreting'], *Apeiron*, 14 (1980), 74–86 at 75–6; Joseph, *Knowledge*, 34; Karasmanis, 'Line', 147–8; Lizano-Ordovás, 'Eikasia', 381; Malcolm, 'Line', 42; Robinson, *Dialectic*, 192 ff.; C. P. Sze, 'Eikasia and Pistis in Plato's Cave Allegory' ['Eikasia'], *Classical Quarterly*, NS 27 (1977), 127–38 at 127; J. R. S. Wilson, 'The Contents of the Cave' ['Contents'], *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, suppl. 2 (1976), 117–27 at 118.

<sup>3</sup> For a recent defence of parallelism, see Karasmanis, 'Line', 147–51.

<sup>4</sup> See *Rep.* 7, 516 C 8–D 4; 517 D 4–E 2; 519 C 1. Ferguson, 'Simile 2', suggested that the Cave is to be understood exclusively in political terms, arguing that it is not parallel to the Line and has no significant epistemological meaning. Hall, 'Interpreting', sets up a contrast between Ferguson's exclusively political reading and competing exclusively epistemological readings which he attributes to others, e.g. Adam and Cross and Woollsey. I think most scholars today would agree that this

some disagreement over what this meaning is. These various political interpretations can best be categorized by their responses to two questions. The first is easy to formulate: whom are the prisoners meant to represent? In other words, what does Plato mean when he says that the prisoners are 'like us'? The second is less straightforward but could be put like this: in the allegory, Socrates describes a sort of causal interaction between the prisoners and the puppeteers; whether they intend to do so or not, the puppeteers are responsible for the shadows that the prisoners observe. Does Plato intend this interaction between the puppeteers and the prisoners to symbolize a manner of interaction that actually takes place between two groups of people in the polis? If so, it becomes important to determine whom the puppeteers are meant to represent. The alternative is to say that this is an insignificant feature of the allegory and that Plato is really only interested in contrasting the political and/or epistemological condition of one group, the bound prisoners looking at shadows, with that of another, the freed prisoners looking at the puppets and fire. I think there is a more or less orthodox position on these matters that goes like this. The prisoners represent the ordinary man, i.e. the majority of men in the polis, whose mental state could be characterized as unreflective belief.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the interaction between the puppeteers and the prisoners is meant to illustrate the influence that certain kinds of people have on the ordinary man that is responsible for those unreflective beliefs. These people—the puppeteers—are generally identified with one or more of the following: legislators and politi-

contrast is artificial. The Cave is clearly intended to have both epistemological and political content.

<sup>5</sup> Annas, *Introduction*, 255; Bloom, *Republic*, 404; M. F. Burnyeat, 'Culture and Society in Plato's *Republic*' ['Culture'], *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, 20 (1999), 215–324 at 240; Cross and Woosley, *Republic*, 223; Ferguson, 'Simile 2', 21; Fine, 'Knowledge', 232; Irwin, *Moral*, 221; Lizano-Ordovás, 'Eikasia', 386; Malcolm, 'Line', 43, and 'Cave' 60; Robinson, *Dialectic*, 201; H. L. Sinaiko, *Love, Knowledge and Discourse in Plato [Love]* (Chicago, 1965), 174–6; L. Strauss, *The City and Man [City]* (Chicago, 1964), 125; Szlezák, 'Das Höhlengleichnis', 209; White, *Companion*, 186. Hall's view ('Interpreting', 77) is along similar lines, as is Reeve's (*Philosopher-Kings*, 51), who thinks the prisoners represent those men gripped by unnecessary desires. Karasmanis ('Line', 160 ff.) endorses the orthodox view but presents a much more sophisticated account of what the ordinary man is like. Few have explicitly opposed this part of the orthodox view: D. W. Hamlyn, 'Eikasia in Plato's *Republic*' ['Eikasia'], *Philosophical Quarterly*, 8 (1958), 14–23 at 22; Strang, 'Analogy', 29.

cians;<sup>6</sup> poets, painters, and musicians;<sup>7</sup> sophists and orators.<sup>8</sup> I shall argue that this orthodox view has things exactly backwards. The allegory is essentially democratic; one should understand the puppeteers to be the multitude of the polis and the prisoners to be primarily the politicians but also the artists and sophists, since in a democratic society the former exercises a considerable influence over the latter. Moreover, the multitude of ordinary citizens is at the level of *pistis* in so far as most men have views on what is right and wrong, whereas those interested in catering to the masses—whether by making a political career or otherwise—are at the level of *eikasia* in the sense that they are striving to figure out what the multitude wants and thinks; they are, so to speak, forming opinions about opinions.

The orthodox interpretation draws its general credibility from two considerations. First, we are explicitly told that the allegory is given so that we might ‘compare our nature concerning education and lack of education to this sort of experience’ (514 A 1–2). This suggests that the ascent out of the Cave symbolizes the progress of one’s education. As the prisoners are said to be ‘bound since childhood’ (514 A 5), they must represent the starting point of one’s educational journey. However, sophists, politicians, and artists are surely not at the starting point of education. Plato might consider them to be many things, but it is hard to see how he could deny that they are more educated than the ordinary citizen. Therefore, we should not lump them together with the craftsmen and other members of the polis; rather, we should place the former at a higher level in the Cave than the latter. To this is added a second consideration. Plato, in the *Republic* and elsewhere, draws our attention to the influence that this group has on the general public. The sophists are described as foreigners who wander from city to city selling wisdom without themselves knowing the moral import of their wares.

<sup>6</sup> This is generally the view taken by Straussians: Strauss, *City*, 125; Bloom, *Republic*, 404. This is also the view of Ferguson (‘Simile 2’) and Cross and Woozley (*Republic*, 221). Szlezák (‘Das Höhlengleichnis’, 209) also seems close to this opinion in so far as he takes the puppets to represent the state laws, as does Annas, who says that the prisoners are being ‘manipulat[ed]’ in so far as they are ‘political conformists’ (*Introduction*, 257).

<sup>7</sup> e.g. Bloom, *City*, 404; Burnyeat, ‘Culture’, 241; Cross and Woozley, *Republic*, 223; Ferber, ‘Notizen’, 406; Joseph, *Knowledge*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Burnyeat, ‘Culture’, 241; Cross and Woozley, *Republic*, 221–3; Ferber, ‘Notizen’, 406; Joseph, *Knowledge*, 39.

Although their nomadic existence disqualifies them from making political contributions to the city, they are able to draw many devoted students and are often accused of deceiving them.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in the *Sophist* they are called ‘imitators’ who practise the craft of making copies (εἰδωλοποιικὴν τέχνην, 235 B 8–9) and are said to ‘run off into the darkness of what is not’ (254 A 4–5; cf. 266 A ff.). Politicians are often associated with sophists.<sup>10</sup> Their influence over the citizens is witnessed by the comparison between them and steersmen; that this influence is not always positive is clear enough.<sup>11</sup> In the *Politicus*, politicians who lack knowledge are called ‘imitators’ and are said merely to preside over ‘great images’ (εἰδώλων).<sup>12</sup> The poets, too, are famously likened to imitators and copy-makers, and like the sophists they are unable to say whether these imitations are morally good or bad.<sup>13</sup> These artistic likenesses are received into the souls of their listeners—especially children—without them realizing it.<sup>14</sup> All three of these can be held accountable for unreflective beliefs in so far as each of them uses persuasion that enslaves the recipient by creating unreasoned belief.<sup>15</sup>

These are certainly important observations, but I think they have misled scholars in the past into viewing the puppeteers as essentially representative of this group. I would like to begin my campaign against this orthodox reading with several observations about the allegory itself. I shall then turn to consider the two foregoing considerations along with other possible objections and deal with the issue of *eikasia*.

It is impossible to identify the prisoners without determining the purpose of the guessing game that they are said to be playing.<sup>16</sup> The

<sup>9</sup> *Ap.* 19 D ff.; *Prot.* 313 C ff.; *Tim.* 19 D–E; *Rep.* 10, 600 C–D.

<sup>10</sup> e.g. *Gorg.* 519 C; 520 A.

<sup>11</sup> *Polit.* 297 E ff. Cf. the public opinion that Pericles corrupted the Athenian people, *Gorg.* 515 E.

<sup>12</sup> *Polit.* 293 E ff.; 300 D–E; 303 C. Cf. *Meno* 99 C, where good politicians are said to have only right opinions.

<sup>13</sup> *Rep.* 10, 595 A–602 B; *Tim.* 19 D–E; *Laws* 2, 670 E; 4, 719 C.

<sup>14</sup> *Rep.* 2, 376 E ff.; 3, 392 C ff. At 3, 401 C we are told that we are affected by artists ‘without realizing it’ (λανθάνη). Cf. *Laws* 2, 670 D.

<sup>15</sup> Persuasion used by sophists: *Gorg.* 453 A ff.; *Phdr.* 260 C; *Phileb.* 58 A; *Polit.* 304 C–D; *Soph.* 222 C ff., *H.Ma.* 304 B; by legislators: *Laws* 4, 722 B. Persuasion is said to ‘enslave’ at *Phileb.* 58 B 1. The kind of belief produced by persuasion is contrasted with that produced by genuine teaching at *Polit.* 304 C–D; *Theaet.* 201 A ff.

<sup>16</sup> Hamlyn (*Eikasia*, 19) observed that this guessing game has been ‘unjustly

game itself is concisely described at 516 C 8–D 4 and 516 E 7–8. The prisoners are said to be engaged in a competitive activity that consists in both identifying the shadows and predicting which shadows will come next.<sup>17</sup> Not everyone is equally good at this activity, and those who excel at it receive rewards: honours, praises, or prizes. Then, at 517 D 4–E 1, Plato translates the Cave imagery into real terms: the Cave is compared to ‘courts and elsewhere’. The subject matter of the competition is justice—both ‘the shadows of justice and the figures they are shadows of’—but an important qualification is added: they are competing ‘about this: how these things are understood [*ὑπολαμβάνεται*] by those who have never seen justice itself’. What kind of competition is this and what does this qualification mean?

The orthodox interpretation must respond in this fashion: this guessing game represents the kind of activity by which ordinary citizens—e.g. cobblers, horse-trainers, and other craftsmen—take over the beliefs of sophists, politicians, and poets in an unreflective manner. The qualification is meant to remind us that these ordinary men are inheriting their beliefs from other men who themselves do not really understand these matters. However, this interpretation faces serious problems. The language of competition is a far cry from the unreflective, passive absorption that the orthodox interpretation requires. How could merely taking over another’s ideas be competitive, and how could it lead to honour and prizes? Nor is it clear on this interpretation what the game’s focus on predicting future events should symbolize; it rather appears as a disposable piece of the imagery. Finally, and this is surely decisive, we are told that when the philosopher re-enters the Cave, he will be compelled to take up his ‘same seat’ (516 E 4) and participate in the same activity as the prisoners; in fact, we are told that once his eyes become accustomed to the darkness, he will

neglected’ (though cf. Ferguson, ‘Simile 2’, 23–4). The neglect has for the most part continued (one exception is Lizano-Ordovás, ‘*Eikasia*’, 382).

<sup>17</sup> Note the appealing connotation that Timaeus Grammaticus’ *γνωμονεύοντα* has at *Rep.* 7, 516 E 7 (cf. the manuscripts’ *γνωματεύοντα*): the hapax *γνωμονέβειν* ought to mean ‘to measure by means of a sundial’, i.e. to discern something about the sun by means of its shadow. Slings surprisingly does not report the Timaeus variant, nor does he comment on it in his ‘Critical Notes on Plato’s *Politeia*, VII’, *Mnemosyne*<sup>4</sup>, 54 (2001), 409–24. Perhaps he thinks that since it is otherwise unattested, it is simply the result of a scribal error.

even outshine the others in this activity.<sup>18</sup> Surely, the activity in which the philosopher excels is *not* the unreflective taking-over of beliefs.

The philosopher is compelled to go back into the Cave in order to *rule*. Hence, the activity in which the prisoners are engaged must at least include ruling the polis. This comes out most clearly at 520 c 6–d 2, where Socrates says that the ideal city

will not be governed [*οὐκ ἴσεται*] in the dream-like manner that many cities nowadays are by men fighting with one another over shadows [*σκιαμαχούντων τε πρὸς ἀλλήλους*] and quarrelling over the rule as if it were some great good.

The prisoners represent political contenders occupied with the struggle for power in the polis. The present honours that serve as rewards are political honours, which philosophers, knowing the value of the contemplative life, despise.<sup>19</sup>

This also helps account for the focus on predicting future events that is central to the game. As Plato explains in the *Theaetetus*, there is a quite general connection between future time and any *tekhnē* aimed at answering the question ‘What is useful?’ His first and

<sup>18</sup> *Rep.* 7, 516 E 3–517 A 2; 517 D 4–E 1; 519 D 4–7; 520 C 1–D 5. David Sedley tells me that there is a widespread assumption that two returns to the Cave need to be distinguished. The first (*Rep.* 7, 516 E 3 ff.) describes Socrates’ own life, namely how he returns from his voyage of enlightenment to the non-ideal Athens and interacts at a non-governmental level with his fellow citizens, who are quite hostile towards him for his efforts. The second (*Rep.* 7, 519 C 8 ff.) is about a fully educated philosopher being compelled by the city to take up an active political role in Kallipolis because he owes it to the city. But there is something not quite right about this assumption. It seems to me illegitimate to distinguish the kind of activity performed after the first return from the kind performed after the second return, i.e. regarding the former as apolitical and the latter as political. In both cases we are told that the activity performed after the return will be the very activity performed by the prisoners. In the first case this is illustrated at 516 DE 4, where we are told that the person in question takes up ‘the *same* seat’, and in the second case at 519 D 4–6, where Socrates says that the philosopher should ‘go down again to those prisoners and *share in their labours and honours*’ (*πάλλιν καταβαίνειν παρ’ ἐκείνους τοὺς δεσμώτας μηδὲ μετέχειν τῶν παρ’ ἐκείνους πόνων τε καὶ τιμῶν*; cf. 516 C 8–D 4). Moreover, it is not clear that in the second case Kallipolis is already up and running. The source of compulsion is not Kallipolis itself but Socrates and Glaucon acting as the *founders* of the city: ‘It is our task *as founders* to compel the best natures’ (*ἡμέτερον δὲ ἔργον τῶν οἰκιστῶν τάς τε βελτίστας φύσεις ἀναγκάσαι*, 519 C 8–9) first to ascend to the Good and second to come back down into the Cave.

<sup>19</sup> *Rep.* 7, 516 C 8, 519 D 6, 521 B 9 and 540 D 5. Cf. Arist. *NE* 1095<sup>b</sup>23. With this the Straussian interpretation which identifies the politicians with the puppeteers is ruled out (cf. Ferber, ‘Notizen’, 406). For language of competition in politics, cf. *Alc. I* 122 B 3.

last example of such a *tekhnē* is legislation.<sup>20</sup> The prisoners in the Cave should be seen as possessing something that at least resembles such a *tekhnē*. For we are told that there is something that passes for wisdom there (*τῆς ἐκεῖ σοφίας*, 516 c 5), and this can only be the ability to identify and predict successfully. This might tempt one to conclude, as D. Roochnik has done recently, that the prisoners are in fact quite competent politicians in so far as they can effectively determine what is beneficial to a city,<sup>21</sup> but Plato's careful language urges us to resist this temptation. The prisoners do not possess wisdom *per se* but rather 'what passes for wisdom there'. Plato is using 'wisdom' here, as he often does,<sup>22</sup> in a contemptuous manner. But what kind of wisdom is fitting for prisoners?

In *Gorgias* 517 B–C Socrates provides a useful distinction between two kinds of political ability. One is mere service (*διακονία*)—'satisfying the city's appetites' (517 B 4–5). Socrates is more than willing to concede that actual politicians are quite skilled at this. Indeed, it is a talent for which men receive great praise (*Gorg.* 518 c 6; 519 A 5–6). But true statesmanship has more to do with a second ability that could be characterized as the proper use of persuasion and compulsion. A true politician would use persuasion and compulsion to 'redirect [*μεταβιβάζειν*] the city's appetites' to the betterment of the people (517 B 5–6),<sup>23</sup> yet no politician has ever accomplished this. Plato certainly does not mean to deny that actual politicians do persuade and compel the people; this, after all, is the vehicle of law.<sup>24</sup> They simply do not do so to the betterment

<sup>20</sup> *Theaet.* 178 A 8–10; 179 A 5–8.

<sup>21</sup> D. Roochnik, *Beautiful City: The Dialectical Character of Plato's Republic* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), defends the Straussian position that the *Republic*, despite all appearances, in fact aims to make a case for democracy by demonstrating the foolishness, impracticability, and injustice of the alternatives. Part of the common strategy (cf. Strauss, *City*, 124; Bloom, *Republic*, 407) to this end is to agree with Glaucon at 519 D that forcing the philosophers back into the Cave is unjust. Roochnik looks to provide further support for this position by contending that the philosophers are not even needed in the Cave, since 'there is already "wisdom" (*sophia*: 516 c 5) in the cave; it belongs to the prisoner . . . This amounts to something like "practical wisdom"' (75–6). The 'there' is meant to distinguish practical wisdom from the theoretical wisdom that is found outside of the Cave. My own view (also Ferguson's, 'Simile 2', 18) devalues this 'wisdom' considerably: it is not sufficient for justly ruling the polis.

<sup>22</sup> e.g. *Theaet.* 176 c 6; *Rep.* 4, 426 c 6; 6, 493 A 6 ff.; 8, 568 A 11 ff.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Laws* 1, 650 B 6–9.

<sup>24</sup> Law, we are told (*Rep.* 7, 519 E 4; *Laws* 4, 718 B 2), is part persuasion and part compulsion, but compulsion is meant as a last resort when persuasion has failed (*Laws* 2, 660 A 5; *Polit.* 296 B 5; *Rep.* 6, 492 D 5; 8, 554 D 1–3). Philosophers and

of the people. At first glance it would seem that neither of these abilities has anything to do with the activities of the prisoners. The prisoners are, after all, chained up; how could they satisfy anyone's desires or compel anyone to do anything? Moreover, the description of the prisoners' activity does not at all suggest that they are engaging in any form of gratification, compulsion, or persuasion. Rather, they are said to be occupied with an activity that is more immediately epistemic than pragmatic—that of identifying and predicting the shadows. But it is important to see that each of the abilities discussed in the *Gorgias*, when performed correctly, has an epistemic element. In order to satisfy the appetites of the multitude, one must first recognize what these appetites are. Likewise, in order to redirect the city's appetites in a beneficial way, one must first know what is beneficial to the city. In other words, the former ability requires that one know what *appears* good to the masses, whereas the latter requires that one know what *is* good for them. It is these epistemic abilities that are likely candidates for the 'wisdom' in the Cave.

Let us first consider the ability to persuade and compel the multitude to become better and its epistemic counterpart of recognizing what is good for the multitude. The ability to persuade and compel does play an important role in the Analogy of the Ship (488 A–489 C),<sup>25</sup> a passage that throws a substantial amount of light on the Cave, though few scholars connect them.<sup>26</sup> Here Socrates seeks to help Adeimantus reconcile the public perception of philosophers as utterly useless with Socrates' own thesis of philosophical rule. He likens democratic Athens, a polis ruled by the multitude, to a ship and its owner. The shipowner's features mirror those of the multitude: he is 'in terms of size and strength superior to all on board, but he is somewhat deaf and likewise sees very little and his knowledge of sailing is also such' (488 A 8–B 2). The poor sight and especially hearing are probably meant to stand for the multitude's deficiency in reason, since without these faculties one cannot be reasoned with. The shipowner is accompanied by a crew of sailors

lawgivers try to use persuasion: cf. *Laws* 6, 773 D 6; *Soph.* 265 D 7. One of the momentous differences between the ideal aristocracy and oligarchy is that in the former education takes place by persuasion, in the latter by compulsion (*Rep.* 8, 548 B 4–C 2).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Polit.* 299 B 2 ff., where political revisionists, i.e. philosophers, are again called 'stargazers'.

<sup>26</sup> One exception is the brief discussion of Karasmanis, 'Line', 160.

that bear many resemblances to the Cave's prisoners. Like the prisoners, the sailors serve primarily to represent politically ambitious citizens of the polis as well as the philosophers. Again, the sailors are said to be in competition with one another (*στασιάζοντας*, 488 B 3; cf. 520 D 1) and in the critical *tekhnē* of navigation the majority of sailors are uneducated (488 B 4). In fact, they deny that there is anything to be known beyond their own ability (488 D 9–E 1). This ability, however, is not navigation itself but a 'clever[ness] at persuading or forcing the shipowner to let them rule' (488 D 2–3). But this use of persuasion and compulsion does not presuppose any epistemic discovery. The sailors certainly do not know what is good for the shipowner (there is no indication that the sailors are even redirecting the shipowner's appetites, let alone doing so to his betterment). Nor is it clear that the sailors are even concerned with discovering and satisfying the appetites of the shipowner (though this is perhaps one way to persuade him).

It is only with the former ability to *serve* that Plato stresses the epistemic aspect. This ability makes an appearance at 493 A ff.,<sup>27</sup> where Socrates describes a knack that, as he repeatedly says,<sup>28</sup> gets called 'wisdom'. This knack involves

learning the moods and appetites of a large and powerful beast that is being reared—both how one should approach it and how one should handle it, as well as when it becomes most difficult or gentle and from what, and the sounds [*φωνάς*] it is accustomed to utter in each of these states, and again what kind of sounds uttered by another pacify it or get it worked up. (*Rep.* 6, 493 A 9–B 5)

What is being described here is the service that a politician performs for the multitude, a service that requires that he first 'understand the mood and pleasures of the masses who gather from all quarters' (493 C 10–D 1). Once he knows this, he can go on to pacify the city and make it gentle by satisfying its appetites. I propose that this is the servile wisdom that the prisoners possess.

This identification underscores a connection that Plato frequently draws between ordinary politics and servitude. In the *Gorgias* Socrates emphasizes that in contrast to true statesmanship, service is 'fitting for slaves and the unfree' (*δουλοπρεπείς . . . καὶ ἀνελευθέρους*, *Gorg.* 518 A 2), and such a connection is also central to

<sup>27</sup> Ferguson ('Simile 2', 18) also connects this knack to the wisdom in the Cave.

<sup>28</sup> *Rep.* 6, 493 A 9, B 6, C 10–D 2.

a passage in the *Theaetetus* (172 c ff.) that has important parallels to the Cave. The passage is an interlude brought on by Theodorus' remark that he and Socrates have the leisure (*σχολήν*) to make a brief detour into a different matter. This prompts Socrates to remark that leisure in discussion is peculiar to philosophy—or at any rate is a privilege not enjoyed by politicians and rhetors. Socrates then goes on to contrast the upbringing of the politician with that of the philosopher, just as he did in the Cave. Like the prisoner, the politician is described as having been subject to this upbringing 'since childhood' (*Theaet.* 172 c 9; 173 a 4). Again, one of the explananda of this passage in the *Theaetetus* as well as in the Ship and the Cave is why the philosopher appears ridiculous in certain public contexts when he is forced to compete against non-philosophers.<sup>29</sup> Most strikingly, politicians and rhetors are likened to the unfree (*οϊκέται, ἰμοδούλου*), and philosophers to the free (*ἐλευθέρους*), and yet the former are said to think themselves wise.<sup>30</sup> Socrates makes it clear that they owe their lack of freedom to their service to a judge, presumably a jury of ordinary citizens, and the wisdom they are so proud of is simply the ability 'to flatter their master with words and gratify him with deeds'.<sup>31</sup> This again is the ability to serve that Socrates distinguishes from the true craft of statesmanship in the *Gorgias*.

All of these considerations support the following interpretation of the prisoners' activity and its corresponding wisdom. Initially, the Cave represents an ordinary Greek city, i.e. a city that is badly governed. It is badly governed because

whoever most pleasantly serves and gratifies the men who are governed in this way [viz. badly: *κακῶς*, B 10] by intercepting and predicting their wishes and is clever at satisfying these wishes, this man will be both 'good' and 'wise' in important matters and will be honoured by them. (*Rep.* 4, 426 c 2–6)

This variety of bad government involves, as we have seen, two activities: the epistemic activity of recognizing the wishes and desires of the multitude and the pragmatic activity of fulfilling them. The Cave, like the Line, is concerned only with epistemology. Hence, the activity in which the prisoners compete involves determining

<sup>29</sup> *Theaet.* 172 c 4–6; Ship: *Rep.* 6, 487 d 1–5; 488 d 4; 488 e 2–489 a 2; Cave: *Rep.* 7, 517 a 2–6, d 4–e 3. Cf. *Polit.* 299 b 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Theaet.* 172 d 1–2; 172 e 5; 173 b 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Theaet.* 173 a 2–3, reading *χαρίσασθαι* with BTWP.

the multitude's present desires and predicting their future desires. The wisdom that corresponds to this activity is simply the ability to do this. They are concerned with mere appearances, namely what appears good to the multitude, or as Plato puts it, they are competing 'about this: how these things are understood [*ὕπολαμβάνεται*] by those who have never seen justice itself'.

If this suggestion is correct, then the puppeteers must not represent the politicians, sophists, and poets as the orthodox interpretation suggests. Rather, they stand for the group to which the politicians, sophists, and poets cater—namely, the multitude consisting in large part of the polis's many craftsmen. This makes good sense of the strong connection Plato establishes between the puppets and the handcrafts. We are told that the puppets have been crafted (*εἰργασμένα*) of stone and wood and other materials. Moreover, there are puppets of *σκεύη*—artefacts or equipment<sup>32</sup>—and of animals. All of this is well suited to help the reader associate the puppeteers with the multitude of craftsmen who make artefacts, use equipment, train animals, etc. It also fits quite nicely with Plato's frequent criticisms of the majority of men for presuming themselves capable judges in important matters. This has been made clear enough above as far as political issues are concerned, but it also applies to art and rhetoric. Plato emphasizes that artists aim at what 'appears beautiful to the majority who know nothing' (*Rep.* 10, 602 B 2–3), and this sentiment is retained in the *Laws*, where we are told that 'it is laughable how the great multitude [*ὁ γὰρ πολὺς ὄχλος*] supposes it can adequately know what is a good harmony and rhythm and what is not' (670 B 8–9; cf. 659 B 5–C 2). Likewise, orators only need to know 'what *appears* just to the crowd [*πλήθει*] who will be judging' (*Phdr.* 260 A 2).

As I stated at the start, I do agree with the orthodox interpretation regarding the parallelism between the Line and the Cave, and as we saw above, the major problem for parallelism involves coming up with an account of *eikasia* that fits both the bottom segment of the Line and the state of the prisoners in the Cave. In this section I

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Plato's definition of *σκεῦος* as 'what has been assembled or fabricated' (*τὸ σύνθετον καὶ πλαστόν*, *Soph.* 219 A 11). And *Charm.* 173 B 7–C 2: 'And would there be equipment [*σκεύη*], all clothing and shoes and all the things skilfully crafted [*τεχνικῶς εἰργασμένα*] for us, and much else too, because we are employing true craftsmen [*ἀληθνοῖς δημιουργοῖς*]?' Cf. *Rep.* 2, 373 A 2; 381 A 6; 3, 414 D 8; 10, 596 B 1 ff.; [Plato] *Crit.* 409 D 1.

shall show how the reading of the Cave proposed above can better deal with this problem thanks to an improved account of *eikasia* that it suggests.

Many accounts of *eikasia* have been proposed over the years. It is most commonly described as the inability to distinguish between an appearance and its original, i.e. between appearing to be *F* and being *F*. The orthodox account takes this to amount to the unreflective acceptance of others' beliefs: if someone can make a thing *appear* good to me, then I will uncritically assume that it *is* good.<sup>33</sup> Hence, according to the orthodox view, *eikasia* is identical with either the activity that the prisoners practise or the state of mind that corresponds to that activity, and this is an identification that I would like to retain. However, in addition to describing *eikasia* as the inability to distinguish between appearance and original, I would add that this inability results from one's ignorance regarding the existence of the originals. One in the state of *eikasia* is like the lover of sights and sounds from book 5. The lover of sights and sounds believes, for example, that there are many beautiful things, but he does not believe that there is anything prior to these, i.e. that there is a Form of Beauty. This ignorance on his part leads him to identify mistakenly the many beautiful things with Beauty

<sup>33</sup> The following scholars all advocate a view similar to this one: Adam, *Republic*, ii. 157–8; Cross and Woosley, *Republic*, 220–4; Annas, *Introduction*, 256; Fine, 'Knowledge', 102; Irwin, *Moral*, 221. Malcolm ('Cave', 68) and Wilson ('Contents', 117 n. 2) characterize this as the traditional view. Regarding the inability to distinguish between original and image, cf. G. Patzig, 'Platons Ideenlehre, kritisch betrachtet', *Antike und Abendland*, 16 (1970), 113–26 at 123. A number of alternatives have been offered. Some take *eikasia* quite literally as looking at shadows and reflections, though generally such an interpretation is offered by those who are not too concerned about preserving parallelism (e.g. Robinson, *Dialectic*, 207–8; Ferber, 'Notizen', 399–400). Malcolm ('Line' and 'Cave') wants *eikasia* to stand for false belief, *pistis* for true belief. White (*Companion*, 185–6) distinctively interprets *eikasia* as vision's two-dimensional representation of three-dimensional physical objects. Gould (*Development*, 178) takes *eikasia* to be the ability to recognize individual acts (e.g. paying one's debt to *p* at *t*) as, for example, just without comprehending the 'essential connection between acts of the same type', which is proper to *pistis*. My own view turns out to be quite close to a more politically charged version of Hamlyn's, who identifies *eikasia* as 'the state of mind of him who holds that sense-data or appearances are all that there is, who is unaware that or does not acknowledge that there are also material objects to which inter-personal standards of description and identification are applicable' ('*Eikasia*', 23). For Hamlyn the paradigmatic prisoner is not the ordinary man but rather a sophist such as Protagoras who—like the lovers of sights and sounds in book 5—thinks that appearances are all that there is. I have also found the studies by Karasmanis, 'Line', and Lizano-Ordovás, '*Eikasia*', very helpful.

itself.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, one in the state of *eikasia* believes only in the appearances and is completely unaware of the originals. For this reason he mistakes the appearances for the original. If we put this together with our previous results, the political upshot is this: the prisoners or politicians do not believe in any objective standards for justice, rather they think that justice is simply a matter of what the majority believes to be just. Hence, they compete to determine both what appears just and good to the majority now and what will appear so in the future. They are in a sense two removes away from true justice, since rather than knowing justice or forming opinions about justice, they form opinions about opinions about justice.

The defence of this suggestion must begin with a look at the word *eikasia* itself. *Eikasia* is derived from the verb *eikazein*, which has two relevant meanings: (1) ‘to represent by an image or likeness, portray’; and (2) ‘to infer from comparison, to form a conjecture’.<sup>35</sup> Both of these senses play an important role in the Cave and the Line. The former sense is invoked by the relationship between the shadows and their originals, the former being *εἰκόνες* or *εἰκασίαι*<sup>36</sup> of the latter. But the latter sense is also in play. For we should be able to say of one who is in the state or activity of *εἰκασία* that this person *εἰκάζει*, since it is surely true that one in the state of *πίστις* can be said to *πιστεύειν*, and so also for *διάνοια/διανοεῖν* and *ἐπιστημὴ/ἐπίστασθαι* (*νόησις/νοεῖν*). But in what sense can we say that the prisoners in the Cave *εἰκάζειν*? Certainly not in sense (1), since they are not *portraying* anything. It must rather be in sense (2): the prisoners are forming conjectures. However, it is hard to see how the unreflective taking over of others’ beliefs could be characterized as ‘forming conjectures’. And as we noted above, the prisoners are competing. Far from being unreflective, they are consciously using their ‘wisdom’ to form conjectures about the present and future shadows.

I contend that if one searches through the Allegory of the Cave, one will find nothing that suggests that the prisoners are doing anything unreflectively. The fact that they are willing to kill anyone who tries to remove them from their position suggests that they

<sup>34</sup> *αὐτὸ τὰ μετέχοντα ἡγούμενος*, *Rep.* 5, 476 D 1–2.

<sup>35</sup> The second meaning given by LSJ, ‘liken, compare’, plays at best a derivative role: for example, the prisoners might compare the shadows in order to form more accurate conjectures about their identity.

<sup>36</sup> For *eikasia* in this sense, cf. *Xen. Mem.* 3. 10. 1.

have given a considerable amount of thought to the matter. One wonders, then, why they are standardly taken to be engaged in the unreflective absorption of others' beliefs. The reason, as it seems to me, is this: the orthodox interpretation has a short but narrow agenda. It needs to come up with some account of *eikasia* that adequately distinguishes it from *pistis*, and whatever this account is, it must apply to the 'ordinary man'. Hence, it invents a distinction in terms of degrees of justification: *pistis* is reflective belief—belief with reasons, and *eikasia* is unreflective belief. But once we throw out the identification of the prisoners with ordinary men, we are free to look for a more suitable way to set *eikasia* apart from *pistis*.

Let us return to the account of the prisoners' activity that was given above. Politicians, sophists, and artists are engaged in an epistemic activity: they are trying to discern the desires and wishes of the multitude. That is to say, they are forming conjectures about what the multitude thinks is good, beautiful, etc. In short, they are forming opinions about opinions. This suggests a different way to distinguish *eikasia* from *pistis*—a way that is again truer to the text. In both the Line and the Cave, Plato indicates that *eikasia* and *pistis* are to be distinguished—not by their levels of justification—but by their *objects*. In each case, the mental activity itself is likened to seeing, but whereas in *pistis* one sees real living things and artefacts, in *eikasia* one sees only the reflections and shadows of these. There has been general agreement that Plato cannot seriously intend to distinguish the two activities by their objects. This is in large part due to an inability to come up with any two classes of objects such that one could be said to be an image of the other apart from the literal ones of shadows and real things that Plato himself gives. For if the prisoner is taken to represent the ordinary man, how could we say that the ordinary man has beliefs only about shadows and reflections?

But now an alternative to the literal reading of shadows and real things has presented itself. Since the mental activity involved in *eikasia* and that involved in *pistis* are both likened to seeing, we should conclude that they both involve the same mental activity. Moreover, since we have a good reason to suppose that the mental activity involved in *pistis* is believing or having an opinion, we can conclude that *eikasia* is this same activity directed at different objects. But what are the objects of each? Again, *pistis* seems to be the easier case. Let us put aside the distinction between *de re* and *de*

*dicto* beliefs and simply say that the objects of beliefs or opinions are either things (states of affairs, events) or propositions. This much, I think, is unobjectionable. The problem comes in determining what is left to be an object of *eikasia*: that is, what are the shadows and reflections of these things and propositions? I propose that we take these shadows and reflections to be the opinions formed at the level of *pistis*. This reveals a nice parallel between the Cave and Plato's account of artists in book 10. Just as a painter tries to create an image of something which is itself an image of something else, so too does the prisoner form an opinion about the multitude's opinion about something else.

It is questionable whether any interpretation can account for all the details that Plato has packed into the Allegory of the Cave, but I would like to raise a few possible objections and respond to them.

(1) First, as the orthodox interpretation underscores, the Cave is about the effects of education and its lack. Since the prisoners are in the lowest state and are said to have been in their situation 'since childhood', it seems reasonable to conclude that the prisoners represent the starting point of one's education. But this seems incompatible with the thesis that the prisoners represent politicians, sophists, and poets who compete to figure out the majority's beliefs and desires. To this I would respond that while the prisoners do represent the lowest point of *paideia*, they are not meant to stand for the starting point of every man's education. When Socrates says that the prisoners have been bound 'since childhood', he is simply restating a familiar point: in most human pursuits the most able and zealous began their training in early childhood. Hence, in the *Laws* we are told that in order to be good at an occupation it must be practised since childhood (643 B 5), and it is brought out again quite nicely in the *Theaetetus* passage discussed above, where Socrates compares philosophers to those men who 'have been hanging around law courts and such places since childhood'.<sup>37</sup>

(2) One might still press the question: why portray politicians, poets, and sophists as the lowest state of *paideia*? *Paideia* can of course have many different meanings. If by *paideia* one understands primarily intellectual pursuits, then one would expect the masses

<sup>37</sup> οἱ ἐν δικαστηρίοις καὶ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ἐκ νέων κυλινδούμενοι, *Theaet.* 172 C 8–9. Note the parallel to *Rep.* 7, 517 D 7–8, where being in the Cave is likened to being ἐν δικαστηρίοις ἢ ἄλλοθί που.

of handworkers to be representative of the lowest state of *paideia*. Indeed, Plato himself does this at times.<sup>38</sup> Often, however, Plato is happy enough to take the handicrafts themselves as forming the content of *paideia*, in which case the craftsmen would not be on the lowest rung of the ladder.<sup>39</sup> But in the *Republic* and elsewhere, Plato is not primarily concerned with either of these brands of education, but rather education in virtue. An explicit statement of this attitude is found in the *Laws*:

But let's not leave undefined what we declare *paideia* to be. For nowadays when we reproach or commend the upbringings of other individuals and say that one of us has been educated and another is uneducated, sometimes we apply the latter term to men who have been excessively educated in retail trade or shipping or some such profession. But I don't think we shall consider these to be *paideia* for the present discussion; rather it will be the *paideia* to virtue from childhood, which makes one love and desire to become a perfect citizen, one that knows how to rule and be ruled with justice. This discussion singles out this upbringing, as it seems to me, and wants to call it alone '*paideia*'. (*Laws* I, 643 D 6–644 A 2; cf. 2, 653 B 1–2)

This is precisely the kind of *paideia* that interests Plato in the *Republic* (cf. *Rep.* 6, 492 E 4). Hence, in the course of the Allegory of the Cave, Socrates can say that *paideia* is not, as some people think, mere filling empty souls up with knowledge (*Rep.* 7, 518 B 7–C 2). So the question becomes: does Plato think that politicians (sophists, artists) are in a worse position regarding *virtue* than the multitude of others? The answer, I believe, is a resounding 'yes'.

The crucial difference between the multitude on the one hand and the politicians and sophists on the other is that the former subscribe to the notion of moral objectivity. They have beliefs about certain actions being objectively right or wrong. It is, for example, pious to prosecute the wrongdoer (*Euthph.* 5 D 8–9). Moreover, these beliefs are by and large true.<sup>40</sup> That is to say, it is generally true that acting justly involves speaking the truth and paying one's debts, even though there are bound to be situations where these rules of thumb do not hold—for example, when a friend overcome by grief asks you to return his knife (*Rep.* I, 331 C). By contrast, sophists

<sup>38</sup> *Prot.* 347 C 3–D 2; *Laws* 6, 751 D 4; cf. [Plato,] *Second Epistle* 314 A 1–5 and *Ax.* 369 A 7–9. Compare this with Protagoras' remark that the most important part of *paideia* is concerned with words and understanding poetry (*Prot.* 338 E 6–339 A 3).

<sup>39</sup> e.g. *Soph.* 229 D 1–4; cf. *Laws* I, 643 E 1–2.

<sup>40</sup> To this extent I am in agreement with Malcolm ('Line' and 'Cave'), who takes *pistis* to refer to true belief.

and politicians who cater to the multitude have succumbed to subjectivist or relativist theories of morality. Like the lovers of sights and sounds, they do not believe that there is any objective reality beyond the appearances. All morality is a matter of *convention* so that rather than having opinions about what is objectively right and wrong, they have only opinions about what the multitude thinks is right and wrong. This complete denial of moral objectivity is for Plato the height of *apaideusia* in virtue.

That *paideia* implants these by and large correct opinions into the young is a thread that runs through the entire fabric of the *Republic*. One of the central concerns in the instruction and selection of guardians is that they not lose ‘the opinion [δόξα] that by law arose through *paideia*’ (429 c 7). This is why dialectic must not be taught too soon. For education provides one with ‘certain beliefs [δόγματα] about just and fine things’ (538 c 6–7), but in dialectic one is asked

‘What is the fine?’ And when he answers what he heard from the legislator, the argument refutes him; and when it refutes him many times and in many ways, it reduces him to the belief that the fine is no more fine than shameful. And the same thing happens with justice and the good and what he used to hold most in honour. (*Rep.* 7, 538 d 6–e 4; cf. 9, 574 d 5–e 2)

This reveals an often overlooked feature of Plato’s theory of *paideia*—the possibility of regress.<sup>41</sup> As Plato says in the *Laws* (1, 641 c 2–5), just as *paideia* can lead to victory, so too can victory lead to *apaideusia*, since one’s pride in victory, itself a vice, will lead to still further vices. In the *Republic*, two causes of regress are emphasized: a premature exposure to dialectic, and one’s general exposure to the multitude:

What kind of individual *paideia* could withstand it [viz. the noise of the assembly], could not be overwhelmed by this kind of praise and blame and come undone, going with the flow wherever it might go: saying that the same things are fine and shameful as they do? (*Rep.* 6, 492 c 4–8)

In the end, both causes lead to the same result—one adopts the opinions of the multitude—but with one critical difference: whereas those overwhelmed by the multitude sincerely take up their opinions as being consistent with the moral facts of the matter, sophists

<sup>41</sup> This also appears to be a feature that the orthodox account cannot adequately deal with. For why, when one has come so far as to have opinions that one has reflected on and reasoned out, would one go back to unreflective belief?

and their students endorse these same opinions in a different manner (*Rep.* 6, 493 A 6–9); they do not see them as actually describing any moral facts, since they deny that such facts exist, rather they ‘apply all of these terms [*viz.* fine, base, good, bad, just, unjust] based on the opinions of the great beast, calling the things that please it “good” and the things that upset it “bad”’ (*Rep.* 6, 493 C 1–3). They have no beliefs of their own concerning what is objectively right and wrong, and are forced to rely on those of others. And it is being morally lost in this sense that Plato calls ‘a great sign of *apaideusia*’ (*Rep.* 3, 405 B 1–2).

(3) Socrates likens the chains that fetter the prisoners to ‘leaden weights that turn the soul’s vision downward which have arisen through feasting, gluttony, and other such pleasures’ (*Rep.* 7, 519 B 1–3). Presumably, then, Plato is saying that bodily pleasures are somehow responsible for one’s being in the state of *eikasia*. Both the present and the orthodox interpretation would begin to explain this by pointing out how an appetitive part of the soul, when it grows too strong and gains too much influence over a person, prevents the reason from performing effectively. The orthodox interpretation would then go on to argue more specifically that there is a certain connection between a strong appetitive part of soul and the inability to consider one’s beliefs reflectively. The present interpretation would have to argue for a different connection, namely between the absence of moral convictions gained through *paideia* and a strong appetitive part of soul. Indeed, this is a connection that Plato himself underlines in the *Republic*. The young man who begins dialectic too early is said to lose his inherited conviction and to turn to ‘opposite ways of life that contain pleasures’ (*Rep.* 7, 538 C 6–539 A 3).<sup>42</sup>

(4) I remarked above that the orthodox account cannot explain why Plato describes the philosopher as going back down into the Cave, taking up his ‘same seat’ and not only engaging in but excelling at the same activity as the prisoners. After all, why would Plato want the philosopher to become an ordinary citizen who mindlessly takes over the opinions of the masses? This certainly makes more sense if we agree that the prisoners represent the politicians, since the philosophers go back into the Cave in order to rule.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. 9, 574 D 1–575 A 7, where part of the genesis of the tyrannical man involves the loss of the traditional opinions concerning what is fine and shameful—a loss that is due to ‘the great swarm of pleasures inside of him’ (574 D 2).

However, one could still object to the interpretation defended above that it makes no sense to say that the philosophers engage in *this* form of *eikasia* either, i.e. guessing at the multitude's present and future opinions concerning what is good and just, since this would make the philosophers no better rulers than the present rulers and the ideal city no better than any present city. The philosophers, rather, are supposed to be *kings* who run the city according to what *is* good rather than what appears good to the multitude. This is surely right, but in a way it misses the point. First, the Allegory of the Cave is at least in part being used to describe the *transition* to the ideal city.<sup>43</sup> Yes, the philosophers are ultimately kings who do not cater to the masses, but the starting point is an ordinary democratic city. The transition begins once the philosopher takes up his old seat among the city's politicians. With this, the democratic city is not automatically transformed into an aristocracy. Rather, the philosopher must now play along with politicians in order to effect this transformation, and he does so with success because the knowledge of the Form of the Good will also give him insight into its many appearances, i.e. how ordinary people tend to reason about goodness. Second, even in Kallipolis it is important for the philosophers to rule as much as possible by persuasion and not by force,<sup>44</sup> and this will require them to learn how the multitude thinks and feels about things.

The Cave represents, then, a revision of the Ship Analogy. There, philosophers were described as utterly inferior to other politicians in the matter of 'persuading and compelling' the multitude (*Rep.* 6, 488 D 3)—no doubt because no present philosophers have ever made their way to the Form of the Good. But this is precisely what they are described as being more capable of in the Cave: they share in the same 'labours and honours' (*Rep.* 7, 519 D 6) and 'use persuasion and compulsion' (*Rep.* 7, 519 E 4) to create civic harmony.<sup>45</sup>

(5) Finally, it might be objected that this interpretation cannot make good sense of Socrates' remark that the prisoners are 'like us'. There are two problems here. First, to whom does 'us' refer? On what I have been calling the orthodox interpretation, 'us' is understood to refer quite broadly to 'us ordinary men'. Moreover, as we

<sup>43</sup> See n. 18.

<sup>44</sup> See n. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Phdr.* 261 c 10–262 c 3, where Socrates argues that one who knows a subject is better able to persuade others than one who does not know it.

have seen, this ordinariness is spelt out in terms of the unreflective adoption of others' opinions. But surely this is unsatisfactory, since neither the speaker, Socrates, nor his immediate interlocutor, Glaucon, unreflectively adopts the opinions of others. A more adequate understanding of Socrates' comment can be won by taking 'us' to refer more narrowly to Socrates and his listeners<sup>46</sup> and by looking again to the parallelism that holds between the Cave and the Ship. The most vocal members in the *Republic's* cast are either philosophers or politicians and sophists,<sup>47</sup> i.e. the same class that the sailors on board the ship are meant to represent. Hence, Socrates could just as easily have said that these sailors are 'like us'. Second, in what respect are the prisoners *like* Socrates and his listeners? They are like them in the sense that they are the few who must cater in some way or other to the many—even Socrates must ultimately go before the multitude and defend himself against charges of impiety and corruption. Yet, Socrates' likeness to the prisoners need not entail that he considers himself to be playing this game. Presumably, just as philosophers in the ship stood aside from the other sailors and contemplated the stars, philosophers in the Cave could refuse to play the game. (Perhaps Socrates' own self-defence before the multitude is best understood as such a refusal.) However, this refusal is tantamount to giving up any hope of steering the city. For this reason, the philosophers will ultimately have to play the game in order to effect the transition to aristocracy, but they need not play until they have attained knowledge of the Good, which Socrates has not yet done.

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<sup>46</sup> As N. Smith also does ('How the Prisoners in Plato's Cave are "Like Us"', *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 13 (1997), 187–204 at 188), though our views on *eikasia* differ considerably.

<sup>47</sup> Socrates and Glaucon (cf. D.L. 2. 124) can surely be counted as philosophers. Thrasymachus was, of course, a sophist, and Lysias a famous orator. Adeimantus, Niceratus, and Cleitophon were all politically active in Athens. Charmantides was a long-time student of Isocrates and was counted as an extraordinary citizen (Isocr. 15. 93). Note that Cephalus, whose straightforward views on morality would put him on my interpretation at the level of *pistis*, has departed from the conversation.

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