Abstract: Many are willing to ascribe certain cosmopolitan principles of justice to Socrates. This is not surprising as the later cosmopolitans claimed a Socratic heritage. Few are willing to extend such principles to Plato. The philosophic dog as the image of the ideal political leader that we see in Republic, Book II seems to confirm this common reading. The dog, we are told, is friendly with the familiar and angry at the strange. If this were Plato’s ideal, indeed he would not be cosmopolitan. I argue, however, that on Plato’s own terms it is irrational to get angry at strangers. The image of the political leader in the form of the dog depicts the realistic leader, and this realistic image is juxtaposed to the ideal ruler, the true philosopher, someone like Socrates.

Keywords: cosmopolitan, daimonion, philosophic exile, Plato, Socrates, Republic.

The phrase kunikos kosmopolitēs, dog-like citizen of the world, brings to mind the hard-edged character, defiant of social convention and without a home: Diogenes of Sinope. Plato reportedly called the infamous cosmopolitan “a Socrates gone mad.”¹ We might take this as an expression of disapproval, which it partially is, or as high praise, for, in Plato’s mind, to be like Socrates (in respect to philosophical ability anyway) is surely worthy of admiration. With this remark, then, we are left to imagine the ways in which Diogenes and Plato’s Socrates are alike.

Many would argue that Socrates is to some extent cosmopolitan. The stoics Plutarch and Cicero even claimed that Socrates called himself “a citizen of the world.”² Whether Socrates

ever said this, the historical link from Socrates to stoicism, which inherited cosmopolitanism, is easy to trace. More to the point, Socrates’ philosophical commitment is basically cosmopolitan in its orientation. Wisdom for Socrates is a political virtue, and Socrates’ quest for it amounts to his unique form of philosophical/political activism. Socrates’ ethical/political authority was not derived from the state; it guided his relationships within the state; and ultimately it got him killed by the state.

Though the idea of a cosmopolitan Socrates is widely accepted, the role that the cosmopolitan Socrates plays in Plato’s Republic remains undeveloped or underappreciated. My view is that appreciating Socrates’ role as cosmopolitan philosopher in the Republic is requisite for grasping one of the central and most important paradoxes there. Plato’s fictional prospect of appointing someone like Socrates to rule the polis, after the polis has executed Socrates, is absurd, no doubt. This paradox is captured in the Republic by the name “philosophic exile.” The primary sense of “philosophic exile” is that philosophers who become of service to politicians are exiled from the practice of philosophy. It is the cosmopolitan character of true philosophy that accounts for its historical incompatibility with domestic politics. Far from a justification of parochial, exclusionary politics, the Republic can be read as a cosmopolitan critique of domestic politics. I will outline such a critique by looking more closely at the philosopher-ruler paradox.

Before I begin, let me state what I mean by “cosmopolitan.” I take “cosmopolitan” to describe not only the perspective that the sphere of our ethical concern ought to extend beyond the state, but also the political position that this ethical perspective ought to influence the way states organize themselves, both internally and externally.

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3 Antisthenes (not a citizen of Athens by the way) was an associate of Socrates and the teacher of the cynic, Diogenes of Sinope. And it was a cynic, Crates, who influenced Zeno, the first stoic.


6 If, in our rendering of “cosmopolitan” we stop short of the latter, political position, the term becomes too broad, basically dubbing all ethical individuals “cosmopolitan.” In fact, even as I am using it, the term denotes various divergent and sometimes incompatible views, ranging from Socrates, to Kant, to Peter Singer,
Plato’s *Republic* is an attempt at dialogue on justice against the threat of force. This is how the dialogue begins. Polemarchus, after having Socrates and Glaucon physically detained, presents them with two options: either prove stronger or stay put. Socrates wants a third option, to persuade Polemarchus and gang to let them go, but to this Polemarchus responds, “Could you really persuade…if we don’t listen?” (327c). The consideration of the (im)possibility of persuasion by (even true, just) speech against unwilling conversational partners who threaten force foreshadows the notion of philosophical exile, the paradoxical coincidence of philosophy and political power.

As Plato introduces it, the basic problem in political philosophy is how to get people to listen to Socrates on justice. At nearly the beginning of the dialogue, when Socrates says, “…it is not the work of the just man to harm either a friend or anyone else…but of his opposite, the unjust man” (335d), Thrasymachus, Plato writes, hunches up like an angry wolf and pounces on Socrates (336b). Thrasymachus’ challenge to justice, that “…the just is nothing other than the advantage of the stronger” (338c) frames the dialogue for its duration. Much later (at 499b-502a) we learn that this is one of the most difficult impediments to the realization of the ideal regime, to persuade the multitude to accept the philosopher. The reason this is difficult is that philosophers are just whereas conventional politicians are like Thrasymachus, a wild beast who only looks after his own. The work of the *Republic* is the gradual rational taming of the spirited Thrasymachus.

The notion of a philosopher-guard first appears in book two in the image of a dog (375e). The dog as image of the guard is selected because it exhibits a combination of characteristics not frequently found in human beings: great spirit and gentleness. It is friendly with the familiar. Unlike the wolf, the domesticated dog does not prey on a flock of sheep (416a). Clearly sheep here are analogous to citizens, and the distinction is between guards who look after the good of the citizens and guards who look after only their private advantage. The dog is already a tamer creature than Thrasymachus, who supposes that rulers do nothing for the benefit of the ruled (343b-), but the dog, next to the just philosopher who would harm no one, still appears wild.

and even to John Rawls (who explicitly claimed he was not cosmopolitan in *Law of Peoples*, section 16.3).
Plato’s dog is an image of an exclusionary political leader whose moral concern extends to his own citizens only. While friendly with the familiar, the dog is hostile with the strange:

When it sees someone it doesn’t know, it’s angry, although it never had any bad experience with him. And when it sees someone it knows, it greets him warmly, even if it never had a good experience with him (376a).

This leads Plato to call the dog a lover of learning, a *philomathēs*, and philosophic. We are puzzled as to why loving learning is here equated with loving that which one has learned. We are further puzzled as to how the dog could ever learn and thus love. In order to learn, indeed, one would have to “love learning,” but we think the true lover of learning is curious about the unknown. A non-prejudicial posture toward the unknown seems a precondition for getting-to-know. Insofar as the dog learns and loves, it must love learning in this sense. Yet we are told that the dog gets angry at the unknown.

We know that from a Kantian point of view, getting angry at strangers is irrational. Kant’s “Kingdom of Ends” idealizes and historicizes the demands of morality, which any rational person would have to accept. This kingdom is the idea of an historical political condition where individuals do not mistreat others in pursuit of their own ends, and, connected to this, individuals treat others as ends-in-themselves. In this kingdom, under no conditions is a political leader entitled to treat peaceable foreign persons with hostility. Kant’s view of the rational political leader concerning the treatment of strangers remedies the ailments of Plato’s paradoxical “philosophic” dog. Kant’s border dogs would be vigilant, and yet they would not make assumptions about the unknown. To do so would be irrational.

If this irrational border dog were Plato’s ideal, indeed he would not be cosmopolitan, but maintaining an affective disposition (whether of hate or love) toward the unknown must also be irrational on

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8 In the Third Definitive Article of “Perpetual Peace” Kant makes it clear that the cosmopolitan duty of a political leader not to treat foreigners with hostility should not be mistaken as a duty to entertain foreigners, and the cosmopolitan right of foreigners to expect not to be treated with hostility should not be mistaken as a right of a guest. Kant’s border guards are still watchful.
Platonic/Socratic grounds. Outside of the *Republic*, there is ample evidence for this. Socrates, in the *Apology*, characterizes himself as a stranger in court (17d), and says that his philosophic vocation requires that he seek out strangers as well as citizens (23b). Further, the philosophic vocation itself is fundamentally opposed to making assumptions about the unknown. Socrates’ remarks on death (*Apology*, 29a) are noteworthy and may be generalized: it is irrational to hate what one knows nothing about. It is equally irrational, one may add, to love what one knows nothing about. This is patently clear from what Socrates says in the *Phaedo* about misology and misanthropy (89d-90d). The mistake of misologues and misanthropes is basically the same. Misologues grow to hate ideas after their unwarranted beliefs are continually debunked. Similarly, misanthropes grow to hate people after their unwarranted trust in people is continually betrayed. Both misologues and misanthropes precisely make the mistake of the *Republic* dog. They are friendly with the familiar even without a good experience. In a dog-like way, they make claims and trust people without good reason. Such a disposition is bound to be upset and tend toward the other dog-like disposition, that of believing in nothing and hating people for no good reason. Along these lines, to say the *Republic* dog is philosophic is to make the philosopher out to be a fool or a nihilist. The true philosopher, of course, is neither. The rational way to respond to the unknown is with curiosity and scrutiny, neither with hostility nor with trust. For the dog to be truly philosophic on Platonic/Socratic grounds, it would have to love only after learning and refuse to hate in ignorance. Rational loving is based on getting-to-know, and getting-to-know is only possible on non-prejudicial terms. Now a dog that loves rationally would be the *kunikos kosmopolitēs* and an approximation of Kant’s cosmopolitan right to hospitality. The question is whether the *kunikos kosmopolitēs* of the *Apology* is Plato’s philosophic ideal in the *Republic*.

In the *Apology*, Socrates uncovers a source of discord between him and the city: “This [the *daimonion*] is what has prevented me from taking part in public affairs” (31d). With the exception of *Republic* references, Plato references are to *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (1997). Indianapolis: Hackett.
they would only turn the city over to men of philosophic nature (487a), Adeimantus interjects, pointing out that many disparage the philosopher for being vicious or useless (487d). Socrates does not deny that the philosophic nature often becomes useless and often becomes vicious. Instead he gives an explanation of how the decent ones in philosophy become useless and of how many other philosophic natures become vicious. The latter occurs when citizens recognize greatness in the philosophic nature, and they want to use it for their own affairs (494b). In this way, “…the very elements of the philosophic nature, when they get a bad rearing, are, after all, in a way the cause of its being exiled from the practice” (495a). Here we hit upon the centrally positioned notion of philosophic exile, which, so I claim, has cosmopolitan import.

The band of true philosophers has a way of becoming exceedingly small. In the first place, not many are born, as the necessary qualities are not often combined in human beings (491b). Secondly, few escape corruption. The ones that remain are the useless few (490e). It seems that Socrates and Theages are among the useless few. Both Theages and Socrates escape corruption in his own way:

And the bridle of our comrade Theages might be such as to restrain him. For in Theages’ case all the other conditions for an exile from philosophy were present, but the sickness of his body, shutting him out of politics, restrains him. My case—the demonic sign [daimonion sêmeion]—isn’t worth mentioning, for it has perhaps occurred in some one other man, or no other, before (496c).

Were it not for Theages’ frail physical condition, called his “bridle,” he surely would have fallen into corruption. On the one hand, Socrates is paying Theages a great compliment, basically saying that he has a philosophic nature. Yet on the other hand, Socrates is drawing attention to the fact that Theages’ escape was due to no credit of his own but to circumstances beyond his control. Like Theages, Socrates too has a sort of bridle which shuts him out of politics. It is Socrates’ daemonic sign that restrains him. This restraint, however, is hardly

10 It is worth noting that the philosophic nature at this point is: “…a rememberer, a good learner, magnificent, charming, and a friend and kinsman of truth, justice, courage, and moderation” (487a).

11 This explanation is given in the image of the ship at 488a.
worth mentioning as a possible way of escape, because it has happened to perhaps no others before.

It is significant that in the only two cited examples of escape from exile, the escapees, in some sense, got lucky. The fortuitous presence of sickness in Theages and the daemonic in Socrates cannot be replicated in others. This speaks to the likelihood of fulfilling an important condition for the possibility of the perfect regime. That is, it speaks to the probability of the coincidence of political power and philosophy (473d). The perfect regime requires that the philosopher have political power, yet the imperfect, actual regime regularly destroys philosophers who meddle in politics.

Though Socrates trusts and obeys the daemonic intervention, preventing him from partaking in public affairs, he also subjects it to retroactive rational scrutiny: “…I think it [the daemonic] was quite right to prevent me.” Turning to the reasons why it is right, he says, “…if I had long ago attempted to take part in politics, I should have died long ago, and benefited neither you nor myself” (Apology, 31d-e). Here again the Apology and the Republic are in agreement. Immediately following the reference to Theages’ and Socrates’ escape from an exile from philosophy, Socrates says:

Now the men who have become members of this small band have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession it is. At the same time, they have seen sufficiently the madness of the many, and that no one who minds the business of the cities does virtually anything sound, and that there is no ally with whom one could go to the aid of justice and be preserved. Rather—just like a human being who has fallen in with wild beasts and is neither willing to join them in doing injustice nor sufficient as one man to resist all the savage animals—one would perish before he has been of any use to city or friends and be of no profit to himself or others. Taking all this into calculation [logismō], he keeps quiet and minds his own business—as a man in a storm, when dust and rain are blown about by the wind, stands aside under a little wall. Seeing others filled full of lawlessness, he is content if somehow he

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12 Divine assistance is required to breed a philosopher in a base regime (Republic 492a and 493a). Not coincidentally, the name “Theages” could mean “revered by god,” and Socrates hears a voice which purports to have a daemonic source. We are told in the Apology that demons are either gods or children of the gods (27d).
himself can live his life here pure of injustice and unholy deeds, and take his leave from it graciously and cheerfully with fair hope (*Republic*, 496c-e).

Here, in the *Republic*, if Socrates were to keep bad company, against the opposition of the *daimonion*, he would have two options: either join in injustice or perish. There, in the *Apology*: “….no man will survive who genuinely opposes you or any other crowd” (31e). And if the philosopher were to die, as it is put in both dialogues, he would be of service to no one. Along these lines, as the *Republic* has it, one would choose to keep quiet and mind one’s own business. And again in the *Apology*: “A man who really fights for justice must lead a private, not a public, life if he is to survive for even a short time” (32a).

In the *Republic* and the *Apology*, it is the *daimonion* that repels Socrates from the depravity of the multitude, thereby encouraging a private existence, preserving both his life and his moral/philosophic integrity. Also common to both dialogues, calculation confirms the prudence of the daemonic opposition. A calculative member of the small band thus keeps to himself, and so in the *Republic* he is likened to a man in a storm, standing beside a wall. In the dialogues one often witnesses Socrates standing out of harm’s way, as if seeking shelter from a political storm.\(^\text{13}\) The *Apology* on the other hand is squarely positioned in the public sphere. It is here that he falls in with beasts, and, rather than perpetrate injustice, he chooses to perish graciously.

One might argue that the pre-critical authority, the *daimonion*, is not a true authority, given Socrates’ view that reason is the final arbiter. The argument would go that since the *daimonion* is a blind guide and would not await the arbitration of reason before passing judgment on strangers, it is bound to produce a man like the *Republic* dog, a person capable of loving someone untrustworthy and hating someone trustworthy. The proper response to this is that though the *daimonion* does prohibit Socrates from even associating with certain people, the judgment about them is not made in utter ignorance.\(^\text{14}\) Potentially, the daemonic does provide Socrates aid in the

\(^{13}\text{For instance, the *Republic* itself is set in the port of Piraeus, located ten kilometers out of town.}\)

\(^{14}\text{*Theaetetus* 151a tells us that the *daimonion* forbids certain associations. The same idea is in *Theages* 129e and *Alcibiades* 103a. Though the authenticity of the latter two dialogues has been contested, on this point they agree with genuine Plato.}\)
discrimination of “strangers,” but the daemonic would neither greet warmly without any good experience nor get angry without any bad experience. This is what the parochial dog does; he growls and barks at the strange without using his nose. The daimonion is like a good nose on Socrates the dog. It lets him sense good and bad qualities in the strange. In both the _Apology_ and the _Republic_, Socrates is Plato’s _kunikos kosmopolitēs_.

The idea of the philosopher that Socrates, Diogenes, and Plato all seem to share is that the true philosopher is a stranger at home and at home with the strange. The relevant notion in Plato is philosophic exile. Interestingly, Diogenes was literally in exile from Sinope. Looking at Diogenes’ exile allows us to grasp the full significance of philosophical exile. Legend has it that when someone reminded him that the people of Sinope condemned him to exile, he responded by saying that he condemned them all to Sinope. Exile, he claimed, let him become a philosopher. Diogenes’ suggestion is that philosophers, as philosophers, are in exile from the _polis_. For Plato as well, philosophic integrity requires the condemnation of the business of the city. Plato could not be more direct about this: he has Socrates say that philosophers despise the business of the city (_Republic_, 496b). The theme articulated by Socrates in the _Apology_, that the philosopher is not permitted to take part in public affairs, is continued into the heart of the _Republic_, where the philosopher is presumed useless and, at best, compelled to live aside the vulgar and base business of the city.

When the “philosophic” dog first appears as the image of the guard, he resembles the conventional politician, the philosopher in exile, the philosopher, who, having fallen in with beasts, has become himself a beast. The explanation for this is that the guardian class at this point is not yet bifurcated into auxiliaries and rulers. The attributes of the guard prior to the introduction of the so-called “philosophic” dog are sharp senses, speed, strength, courage, and spirit. Conspicuously absent from this list is justice. Yet we have learned that the philosophic nature is virtuous, that is “…a friend and kinsman of truth, justice, courage, and moderation” (487a). The dog, without justice, is wholly unfit to rule.

After the rulers become their own class at 414b, they take on the role of rational shepherds who lay down the law for the spirited

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15 Diogenes Laertius, _Lives_, 49.
dogs. Later still, the just individual appears in isomorphic relation to the just city:

And what about when a man believes he’s being done injustice? Doesn’t his spirit in this case boil and become harsh and form an alliance for battle with what sees just; and, even if it suffers in hunger, cold and everything of the sort, doesn’t it stand firm and conquer, and not cease from its noble efforts before it has succeeded, or death intervenes, or before it becomes gentle, having been called in by the speech \[\text{logou}\] within him like a dog by a herdsman? (440c-d).

In the just soul, speech makes spirit gentle. Dialogue takes the place of force. Speech demands anger’s justification and permits only indignation. The rational tames the spirited. This is not the same unfettered, pre-critical beast that gets angry without any bad experience. This mature animal knows exactly what he is mad about and why. In him, judgment does not precede proper discretion. Plato has defended Socrates’ view of justice against the menacing Thrasymachus.\(^{16}\)

This newfound ethical perspective has political ramifications. It regulates the state’s internal practices in how it treats its own citizens, and it regulates the state’s external practices in how it treats citizens of other states. An example of the former involves the inclusion of women in the band of guardians. When Socrates creates the mental picture of women exercising naked alongside the men it seems to Glaucon ridiculous (352a-b). But Socrates is quick to correct him:

...he is empty who believes anything is ridiculous other than the bad, and who tries to produce laughter looking to any sight as ridiculous other than the sight of the foolish and the bad; or, again, he who looks seriously to any standard of beauty he sets up other than the good (352d).

\(^{16}\) That Plato does this by invoking an ontology that may only be fictionally attributed to Socrates is worthy of reflection. Is Plato saying that the justification for the philosopher-ruler is in the form that the philosopher is not prepared to give?
As with the presence of anger, ridicule should not precede just cause. Unwarranted ridicule exposes empty carelessness in the ridiculer, thus rendering him the truly ridiculous.

The allegiance to justice also functions to regulate the state’s practices externally, in the way it deals with other states and their members. The example here involves the soldier’s treatment of the enemy. Enslaving the enemy, plundering corpses, and ravaging and burning houses are off limits (469b-471c). With respect to enslaving the enemy, not only is it prohibited for the ideal regime but the ideal regime should not allow other states to enslave their enemies. In terms of what today we would call *jus ad bellum*, coming to the aid of a weak and threatened party in another state may constitute just cause for war. In regard to plundering corpses, Socrates asks, “…do you suppose that the men who do this are any different from the dogs who are harsh with stones thrown at them but don’t touch the one who is throwing them?” (469d-e). The spirited dog does not realize that the stone is the instrument of the enemy rather than the enemy himself. The dog obedient to the justice of the shepherd would properly distinguish instrument from enemy. The corpse is an inanimate, harmless instrument, and so it should be left alone. In today’s terms this rule falls under the category of *jus in bello*, justice in combat. We might add that even live enemy soldiers are instruments. They are instruments of the enemy state. This means they are political, not personal, enemies, and so if they pose no threat, they should not be harmed. With respect to ravaging the countryside and burning houses, Socrates says that soldiers will not “…agree that in any city all are their enemies—men, women, and children—but that there are always a few enemies who are to blame for the differences. And, on all these grounds, they won’t be willing to ravage lands or tear down houses, since the many are friendly…” (471a-b). Again, this can be classified in terms of *jus in bello*. Plato created something like a principle of discrimination meant to regulate the spirited dog-like guards, who get angry without a bad experience.

Plato’s idea of justice is cosmopolitan on my definition. The sphere of ethical concern expands beyond the state, and this has political implications concerning the treatment of members of other states. However, one must recognize the limited application of justice. The rules of just war apply to Greek states only, that is, not to barbarians (471b). The scope of application is restricted without warrant, as if Plato were blind to the implications of his own concept.
Despite this blind-spot, Plato’s idea of justice is radical, so radical, in fact, that doubt over its actualization surfaces repeatedly in the dialogue. The only hope would seem to lie in the persuasion of the many to accept a philosopher as ruler. Yet the many are harsh, like the spirited Thrasymachus and the wild dog. As the rational taming of spirit, the *Republic* itself is a preparation for the coincidence of philosophy and political power.

Philosophers, as philosophers, receive the strange in a manner consistent with Kant’s right of hospitality. An important difference between Kant’s and Socrates’ hospitality is that Kant’s is founded upon the presumption of humanity in the stranger, whereas Socrates’ rests upon the refusal to let judgment precede proper discretion. Nowadays we are painfully aware of the fact that a discourse of humanity is frequently utilized in politics to justify courses of action that are in truth self-serving and sometimes even immoral. In this context it is important not to forget the Platonic/Socratic mandate to refuse to hate or love in ignorance.

**References:**


