A New Interpretation of the Noble Lie

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ABSTRACT

At *Republic* 414b, Socrates asks "Could we… contrive … one noble lie …?" Most plausibly, these words imply that there is one noble lie. Following these words, the Autochthony Claim asserts the Best City's citizens are equally brothers, and the Myth of Metals asserts that brother justifiably rules over brother. The article argues that the Autochthony Claim is the "one" noble lie. This conclusion derives from showing that the two assertions are not only a normative exercise about what the Best City should do but are also descriptive insofar as they describe the behaviour of worldly polities in Plato's day and ours.

Keywords: Noble Lie, Sole, Normative, Descriptive.

1. INTRODUCTION

At *Republic* 414b8-c2, Socrates asks, "Could we … contrive … 'one' noble lie to persuade above all even the rulers, if not them, then the others in the City (ἐν)?" This question entails that there is one Noble Lie. What follows are two logically independent propositions. The first, which is introduced as a Phoenician import that paints the City's denizens as earth-born, culminates in the Autochthony Claim (henceforth AC). It asserts that all of the City's inhabitants, guardian to blacksmith, must see one another equally as brothers, as if born from the same mother.[1] The second culminates in the Hierarchical Claim (henceforth HC). It asserts that brother justifiably rules over brother because their souls are admixed either with gold, or silver, or a combination of iron and bronze. AC and HC are logically independent; both can be true or both false, or one can be true and the other false. The text entails that one must be false; it does not assert that both are false. Which one is false? Socrates refers to AC and HC jointly as a "myth."[2] It does not follow from this that their logical independence is mortgaged; the Myth of Er contains many logically independent propositions without mortgaging its character as one myth (621b8).

Many commentators discuss the Noble Lie on the assumption that both parts are false. A minority either explicitly or implicitly deals with it as myth, relegating the word "lie" to a metaphorical use. Catherine Rowett privileges HC as the Noble Lie. Julia Annas implicitly privileges AC.[3]

There is a complication that doubles the problem of deciding which part is the lie. It opens a new perspective on the Noble Lie. I argue that the Noble Lie is not only a pair of prescriptions or recommendations for the City; it also describes facts of everyday life in Plato's day and in the 21st century. The Noble Lie is not only a pair of normative assertions limited to Socrates' City; the assertions are also descriptive statements that, as we will see, are about Plato's day, today, and many other times and places. Settling on an answer as to which part is the Noble Lie begins with two assertions. This perspective doubles the problem. It yields four assertions.

I argue that HC is true insofar as it is a normative assertion about the Best City, and that AC is false insofar as it is a normative assertion about the City, and its successor, the Best City, because it enjoins their citizens to believe a false normative claim. I conclude that AC, insofar as it a normative assertion about the City, is the Noble Lie. But I also contend that AC and HC are true insofar as they are descriptive assertions about normative practices of many worldly polities in Plato's day, historically, and in our day.

2. THE NOBLE LIE'S CONTEXT

Immediately preceding the Noble Lie, Socrates sets out for the first time the nomenclature for two of the City's three classes. This formally reifies the three classes.[4] Those who had formerly been called "guardians" are for the first time calved off into guardians and "auxiliaries"; this is its first of 13 uses in the *Republic* (ἐπικούρους, 414b4). This is a significant moment in the argument. It marks the point where the City's three classes become explicit and its fictive rulers' implicit existence becomes explicit through their being separated from the two other classes, one of which is named for the first time. After doing so, without explanation, Socrates immediately turns to the Noble Lie. Why does he do so? To the best of my knowledge, the scholarship has not addressed

this question.[5] Plato does not disappoint the expectation that this passage introduces the Noble Lie. With AC and HC as backdrop, the Noble Lie complements the introduction of the newly minted Auxiliaries and Rulers by focusing on their practical obligations.[6]

3. THE AUTOCHTHONY CLAIM

> Could we … contrive one noble lie to persuade … the city? … Nothing new … but a Phoenician thing, which has already happened in many places … but one that has not happened in our time … I'll try to persuade … the city, that the rearing and education we gave them were like dreams; … while, in truth, at that time they were under the earth within, being fashioned and reared and their arms and other tools being crafted. When the job had been finished, then the earth, which is their mother, sent them up. And now, as though the land they are in were a mother and nurse, they must plan for and defend it, if anyone attacks, and they must think of the other citizens as brothers and born of the earth.
>
> You had good reason, he [Glaucon] said, for being ashamed … to tell this falsehood. (414b7-e6)

In order to show AC's descriptive character, I first turn to discussing Autochthony's role in Plato's day, and, second, a reading of the passage above.

1. *Autochthony in Plato's Day*. Christopher Pelling writes, "Autochthony … mattered in the fourth and fifth century …. It was of course particularly connected with Athenians (but not confined to Athens) …."[7] This empirical claim

is present in the passage above. The reference to Phoenicia and the assertion that autochthony occurred in many places and times imply that it was a cross-cultural phenomenon (414c4-5). Pelling provides evidence for this empirical claim.[8] Vincent Rosivach surveys widespread references to autochthony in the Athenian democracy. He explains that the root meaning of autochthony, αὐτόχθων, is "indigenous" and "always having the same land." He describes how it incorporated several strands of the "earthborn" theme, the most important of which was Erechtheus.[9] Euripides' *Phoenician Women* attests to the fact that the sowing of dragons' teeth was Theban and not part of Athens' self-interpretation.[10] Once more, AC is Plato's generalization, cast in a literary form appropriate to its context, that describes the fact of autochthony in his day, which Socrates puts forward as a normative principle of the City.

2. *414b7-e6*. Socrates proposes that he will try to persuade the City's inhabitants that their rearing and education were but dreams, while in truth they were in the earth being moulded for citizenship. In describing the suppositious dream-like character of their formative experience, he uses two names for this oneiric underground. It is initially called the "earth" (γῆς, 414d7); this is the customary word to denote something independent of human existence, much like ocean or sky. When it is named a second time, another word is used that treats a part of the earth as an object of human interest. The word "land" is used (χώρας, 414e3).[11] This usage reflects the purpose of this part of the tale. The Auxiliaries must be prepared to defend this "land" as if it were a mother, and, to do so, must hold that fellow citizens are "brothers" (ἀδελφῶν, 414e5).

AC's purpose has two facets. First, it isolates a sub-class of the earthborn – the Auxiliaries, the City's Myrmidons. This is in keeping with

the implicit undertaking that the Noble Lie will further the understanding of the City's newly minted classes: Rulers and Auxiliaries. Second, it sets an affective desidertatum for well-functioning Auxiliaries. They must psychologically fuse citizenship with brotherhood. This does not imply that AC is not part of the whole City's ethos, only applying to the Auxiliaries; rather the Auxiliaries are, so to speak, the predominant element of the citizenry because of the role they play. This is made clear by Socrates' summary statement of the Noble Lie:

> When these earth-born have been armed, led by the rulers … to a military camp from which they can control anyone not law-abiding and fend off an enemy from without, like a wolf, should attack the flock. (415d4-e3)

Plato does not disappoint. AC's addition to our knowledge of Auxiliaries could not be more practical; they are the City's boots on the ground, which AC animates. Just as AC's focus is on the newly revealed Auxiliaries, I go on to show that HC discloses an important practical aspect of the equally newly revealed Rulers.[12]

I turn to Glaucon's reaction to AC. His response provides an answer as to whether AC or HC is the Noble Lie:

> You had good reason, he said, for being ashamed … to tell this falsehood. (414e6)

This asserts that a falsehood, i.e., a lie, has been uttered. In what immediately follows, Socrates does not correct Glaucon's statement, nor does he do so at any point later. This implies that we are now in possession of a Noble Lie. If there is only one Noble Lie, it follows that it is AC. This is confirmed by the truth of HC, both in its normative and descriptive aspects,

for which I make an argument in what follows. Glaucon does not offer a rationale for his assertion that a falsehood has been asserted.[13]

Plato allows for a *mélange* of motives – "mixed motives" would be inaccurate – for Glaucon's judgement. Glaucon's forthright opposition to AC finds an explanation in some facts of his day. The Theban allusion conveyed by the Cadmeian reference could have been jarring to Glaucon, if he shared in anti-Theban Athenian sentiments. This would be compounded with Socrates' picture of autochthony that ignores Ion, Erechtheus, and Athenian myth, which was part of contemporary Athenian conversation.[14] Glaucon could have been put off by this unexpected mix of allusions. The text also allows for another motive that arises out of the substance of AC. It is more theoretical in character, although not divorced from an Athenian context. The requirement of the citizens to think of themselves as literal brothers raises a theoretical issue that hits closer to home.

Glaucon is the first to raise thematically the issue of nature. In Book 1, neither Cephalus nor Polemarchus nor Thrasymachus use the word. It is at the core of his speech about justice in Book 2 (359c4-6). He presents it through the distinction between nature and convention. Nothing intervenes between this passage and the Noble Lie that signals Socrates' disagreement with this distinction. Nicole Loraux points out that the autochthony debate during Glaucon's day was alive to the distinction between nature and convention. AC collapses the distinction between nature and convention by absorbing the conventional (citizenship) into the natural (birth). Hence, Glaucon's assertion that a falsehood has occurred can be viewed as based on a confusion of the distinction between nature and convention at play in AC, which the orators had wielded in discussing autochthony.[15]

According to AC, the City's members will be brought to hold that their relationship to one another is that of brothers, as if they are in a natural relationship with one another rather than one that is conventional, e.g., marriage. This is partly conveyed through the untruth that the earth out of which they were supposedly born is their "land" in the civic sense of the word (χώρας, 414e2).[16] When introducing HC, Socrates uses the word "brothers" to sum up AC, in what is the second of its two occurrences in the context of the Noble Lie. This underlines its significance. It captures AC in a word that establishes it as the natural bond determining the character of AC (415a3).

This bond includes all citizens, rulers, auxiliaries, and farmers. This is at variance with traditional autochthony stories, which had an aristocratic bias. It is a category error to take Plato's use of the Cadmeian tale as mere appropriation of traditional material. The presence of "brothers" in a thematic non-familial sense, which raises the issue of nature, combined with the absence of an aristocratic bias, demonstrates that Plato invests the tale with a novel theoretical consideration.[17]

4. A NOTE ON ΓΕΝΝΑΙΟΝ

The *Republic* contains 13 uses of "γενναῖον," which is customarily translated as "noble." It is predicated of human beings, human behaviour, human qualities, animals, food, judges, disciplines, and forms of rule, e.g., tyranny; it is used once as a vocative. Only once is it predicated of an assertion, i.e., the Noble Lie. Socrates asserts that the lie is an iteration of a Phoenician story, evidently about Cadmus, Thebes' founder. The example of Cadmus' sowing of dragons' teeth is offered as a foundational tale of autochthony. This

storied heritage provides a pedigree for the use of "γενναῖον" in the sense of "well-born," which captures the word's etymological sense. Kateri Carmola's interpretation of the Noble Lie takes "well-born" to entail intergenerational conflict. She characterizes this as a form of injustice that reflects the "dichotomy" between "liberalism and conservativism," which "frames political reality." I argue that the salient dichotomy implied by the Noble Lie is more universal in its reach and deeper in its impact on "political reality."[18]

5. HIERARCHICAL CLAIM

AC's introduction of the Auxiliaries is relatively uncomplicated. HC's introduction is complicated, first, by the fact that the Rulers are about to undergo radical change. Would it be extreme to say that with the change from the City's non-philosopher-rulers to philosopher-rulers everything changes?[19] Second, HC tackles the issue of the transition of power and, *a fortiori*, the maintenance of power, which is true universally. It is on rulers' permanent agenda. Current scholarship blinks when it deals with HC on this issue.[20]

Socrates, as noted earlier, uses the word "brothers" to refer to the City's inhabitants. It is the textual link between the Noble Lie's two parts and introduces HC. He mentions brotherliness and immediately mortgages it to necessity. They are brothers "but"; the contrasting conjunction, "but," implies that HC is logically incompatible with AC. The incompatibility derives from the fact that HC solves a problem, inherent in political communities: how to justify the hierarchical relationship of brother ruling over brother? AC flies the flag of fraternal equality. HC asserts the necessity of inequality, the unavoidability of ruler and

ruled. This logical incompatibility puts paid to interpretations that see HC incorporating AC.[21]

> For the most part you'll produce offspring like yourselves, it sometimes happens that a silver child will be born from a gold parent, a gold child from a silver parent …. Hence the god commands the rulers first and foremost to keep over nothing so careful a watch as over the children, seeing which of these metals is mixed in their souls. And, if a child should be born with an admixture of bronze or iron, they should take no pity on it, but shall assign the proper value to its *nature* and thrust it out among the craftsmen or the farmers; and, again, if from these men one should *naturally* grow who has an admixture of gold or silver, they will honor such ones and lead them up, some to the guardian group, others to the auxiliary, believing that there is an oracle that the city will be destroyed when an iron or bronze man is its guardian. (Emphasis added, 415b1–c7)

The City will justify its political hierarchy through claiming that gold, silver, and the mix of bronze and iron embody, as it were, an independent standard that is part of each citizen's soul. The City's hierarchy reflects the rank-ordering of gold down to bronze and iron. The god's authority plays a role in two ways. First, the god warrants the hierarchy. This makes sense. The metals are dumb minerals that, in the absence of human or divine valuing, have no value. Second, the god provides instructions for preserving the hierarchy. Whereas AC is, once established, self-perpetuating, this is not true for HC; speaking for the god, Socrates enjoins the rulers to ensure that children are raised in the classes to which they truly belong. This is a two-part problem: there are those who should be demoted, and the-

re are those who should be promoted. Let's call the first problem P_o and the second P_i. Care must be exercised in examining these two tasks. They are the core of HC's connection to the Noble Lie's context, i.e., the establishment of the City's three classes. The god adds a self-enforcing sanction, which applies only to the first, P_o. If iron and bronze are part of the ruling class, the City is *ipso facto* destroyed.

P_o states that if a child is born from gold or silver parents with an admixture of bronze or iron, it shall be assigned according to its "nature" and thrust out among the craftsmen or the farmers (φύσει, 415c2). P_i states that if a child is born from iron and bronze, with an admixture of gold or silver and "naturally grows," it will be led up, some to the guardian group, others to the auxiliary group (φυῇ, 415c4). There are two differences between P_o and P_i. The latter, which describes dealing with a positively anomalous child, uses a verb in the present with a potential continuous sense. This entails a process that takes place over time. Although positive intervention is counselled, no consequences for the failure to do so successfully are mentioned. P_o is different in two ways. First, Socrates does not repeat, even allowing for variation, a comparable temporal parameter to the one that determines P_i, namely a process. An event characterizes P_o, the negatively anomalous child's birth, whereupon – no temporal parameters are implied – its "nature" is recognized by the rulers (φύσει, 415c2).[22] Gold's intervention, which deals with the negatively anomalous child described through the narration, correlates more or less with the event, i.e., the birth. Second, P_o is more important; it has graver consequences. Whereas P_i has honour, even equity, to valorize a remedy, the ongoing existence of the City is at stake when P_o is involved. For the City, for the Best City as Book 8 illustrates, the character of the rulers is of the utmost importance.

This passage is a crux for the scholarship, which reflects the paucity of textual details about P_o and P_i. The scholarship often folds the two problems into one and falls into the temptation of spelling out how this *faux* problem will be solved.[23] But Plato is consistent. Just as, following their introduction, AC shines a light on the Auxiliaries, so too does HC with respect to the Rulers. The manner in which it does has two textual solutions. I present them in the order of narration. The first turns on the pre-philosophic City.

At Book 5's start, Socrates proposes that they next rank-order four bad polities in order of degeneration from the City up to this point in the text (449a-b). However, Adeimantus interrupts Socrates. Nothing in the preceding conversation prepares first-time readers and – we must suppose – Socrates as participant in the conversation for this interruption. It reboots the discussion in a direction that leads to philosopher-rulers, and all that follows from that in Books 5 through 7. It follows that, absent Adeimantus' interruption, the argument would have unfolded the sequence of five polities in descending order without philosopher-rulers. Plato's stage directions in this transition offer the reader an independent non-philosophic City superior to its four degenerate alternatives, which can be pursued at this point in the argument.

HC asserts that "pity" must be put aside in order to meet the necessity of demoting the unworthy child (κατελεήσουσιν, 415c1). In the case of the City, whose Rulers are not philosopher-rulers, questions arise. Does it practice sexual equality and the abolition of the family? The text is silent. Given family attachments, the possibility of nepotism escalates. Even births consequent on sexual equality and the abolition of the family, because of resemblances between parents and children, may

bring about ill-results. But there is a greater problem: HC implies that the rulers distinguish the negatively anomalous child in an almost radically timely fashion, close on to the birth. This seems to rule out this City almost *ab initio*. Speculation about sexual equality, the forming of attachments, and nepotism evoke the proverbial barn doors, whose closing is in vain. So much for the first solution. I turn to the second solution, which lifts the curtain on philosopher-rulers.

I next argue that P_o requires the intervention of philosopher-rulers. This would make HC the point in the text where these, in Carmola's usage, "god-like" characters make their first appearance. As we will see, this has the virtue of being the appropriate way of introducing them.

A likely place to search for more about P_o and P_i is Book 5's marriage regulations, which consider how female and male are to be paired for the purpose of reproduction and the resulting births (459d7-461c7). The regulations, among other things, touch on incest, abortion, and infanticide – speaking of them euphemistically. Despite their relevance in this context, P_o and P_i go unmentioned. H. D. Rankin makes an interesting suggestion concerning Plato's use of euphemisms: he states that Plato aimed to moderate the discussion of these matters by the tragedians.[24] In Book 5, the universal problem raised by P_o – how ruling classes renew themselves while avoiding the risks of, e.g., nepotism – yields to the immediate Athenian issue of tempering public discourse. Demonstrating the implicit presence of philosopher-rulers in HC's critical passage shows that Plato does not sacrifice a solution to the universal issue raised by P_o to the local Athenian problem. It is necessary to begin with a well-defined view of philosopher-rulers. Francisco Gonzalez writes:

The oft-noted tension between the portrayal of the philosopher who will rule the ideal city and the portrayal of the philosopher who is constructing the ideal city in speech, i.e., Socrates, the most obvious difference between the two being that the former must possess knowledge in the strongest sense of the word (i.e., knowledge of the forms and of the good itself) whereas the latter repeatedly denies, both here and elsewhere, having such knowledge.[25]

For my purposes, I need to spell out in greater detail the consequences of "knowledge in the strongest sense." Philosopher-rulers are characterized as being at the "peak of philosophy" and as "most philosophical" (499c7, 498a2-3). Plato operationalizes these superlatives. Using Socrates as a touchstone, philosopher-rulers are essentially different when it comes to the Ideas. Whereas Socrates only has "beliefs" (opinions) about the Idea of the Good, philosopher-rulers have "knowledge" of it. In order to grasp this hyperbolic claim, it is necessary to include Socrates' assertion that this knowledge allows philosopher-rulers to infer through dialectic the other Ideas (506e2, b1, 534b3-c2, 540a8). This implies, for example, that their knowledge of justice follows from their knowledge of the Good (506a4-7). Of decisive importance is the claim that the Idea of the Good is "sovereign" and that it is the "cause," for example, of the *Kalon* (517b8-c2). This implies that, first, philosopher-rulers' knowledge by means of the Idea of the Good has no clearly defined limit and, second, their grasp of the Idea of the Good as a cause gives them a normative principle of causality that reaches into the world.

We are asked to envisage two possibilities. The first is a philosopher, Socrates, who can articulate a standard for philosophy that is inaccessible to him. The second possibility is this standard: a philosopher who grasps a normative principle from which she can deduce the cause, normative character, and the nature of diverse phenomenon such as justice or astronomical truths. In other words, she can deduce the world from a normative principle, i.e., the Idea of the Good.[26] I suggest that this is best understood as a thought experiment. Carmola asserts that there are:

> two rival interpretations of the *Republic* as a whole: as either a genuine blueprint for a just city or a rhetorical device, a game or thought experiment, with details that undercut the possibility of its realization.[27]

This disjunction does not do justice either to the *Republic* or to thought experiments. When Einstein thought about two elevators in free fall, he did not include one with automatic brakes that acted unpredictably. Thought experiments are either coherent or not; the former may lead to a better understanding of the world. Philosopher-rulers are as much of a thought experiment as is the City they rule. They rule the Best City – one of whose functions is to be a paradigm that serves as a standard for evaluating worldly cities, a function that is not compromised even if it were never to come into worldly existence (472c4-e6, especially d7).[28] It is an ideal city, governed – as a matter of necessity – by ideal rulers, i.e., philosopher-rulers.

The eugenic art portrayed in Book 8, when introduced at start of the Muses' tale, sheds light on P_o. A subtle element in its initial presentation allows for the possibility that philosopher-rulers possess a precise mathematical version, which is free of the Muses' playful presentation. This has implications for thinking

about P_o. Socrates casts turning to the Muses as a matter of choice (βούλει, 545d7, compare 336c4). The choice implies an alternative, which would at the very least have to be non-mythical. One possibility, consistent with the hyperbolic presentation of philosopher-rulers' dialectical capabilities, would be a successful, codified, and mathematically precise eugenic art. Consistency requires that both the philosopher-rulers' outsized dialectal reach and a genuine eugenic art are thought experiments. An imaginary art that successfully produces desirable eugenic outcomes would of necessity include the ability to anticipate and pass judgement with precision on outcomes. HC introduces Rulers weighing these outcomes as early as almost imaginable: a neonate or, e.g., a six-month-old, in a manner that serves the needs of P_o. Conceptually parachuting philosopher-rulers into HC's crux immediately settles matters.

This interpretation brings into focus how HC fits in with the context of the Noble Lie. Rulers and Auxiliaries are introduced analogously. Both are spotlighted in the glare of their practical concerns – one literally guards the City, while the other safeguards that it is being ruled by the best. I do not offer this interpretation as an alternative "just so" story.[29] Sometimes Plato's texts have the effect of disassembled jigsaw puzzles. My interpretation is based on the evidence of some connected pieces. It completes a meta-philosophical theme. Book 7 describes philosopher-rulers' upper bounds through their privileged relationship with the Idea of the Good. The Noble Lie gives us a preview of their lower limit in their interaction with the practical. If they are to maintain and renew themselves, a fool proof eugenic art is a *sine qua non*. I am not sanguine about this. The *Republic* suggests, according to my current understanding, that such an art stands to the animal husbandry of Plato's day

as philosopher-rulers stand to Socratic wisdom (458e3-459d7).

6. AUTOCHTHONY CLAIM: ITS CONTINUED RELEVANCE

I first review the evidence for AC as descriptive in Plato's day and then turn to make a *prima facie* case for its relative ubiquity in our day. These two synchronous horizons provide a working hypothesis for exploration of its presence as a diachronous phenomenon prevalent in history.

Pelling has collected the evidence for the prevalence of autochthony in antiquity.[30] In Plato's day, the name for a naturalized Athenian was "poeitos," a word rooted in the term used for adoptees into a family.[31] This usage connotes the absorption of legally assimilated citizens into a natural family. This joining of convention and nature is also a 21st century phenomenon.

In our day, this aspect of AC is evoked by the word naming the process of becoming the citizen of a country to which one is not native. In Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United States, to name some, this process is called, *mutatis mutandis*, "naturalization." Not every polity operates under the flag of the West's uses of "nature." For example, Japanese, without recourse to nature, has a word evocative of AC. The Japanese word for naturalization is "kika." Here the first syllable, "k," derived from a Chinese ideogram, indicates a "return," while the second "k" evokes "change." This combination suggests a goal-directed transformation from one state into another. There is a kinship between this and the root meaning of the Greek φυσις. The root of φυσις shows this; its stem φυ, which implies to "grow" or "become," is connected to the verbs of "being" and

"completion" in Latin and Sanskrit. Just as naturalization transforms a stranger into a fellow, say, Canadian, so too does a process of transformation turn a stranger into a fellow Japanese, a state characterized as complete on reaching a fixed destination, a return, analogous to the *terminus ad quem* of an emergent nature. The Russian example is also thought provoking. The word used is "aklimatizacija," which derives from the Greek "klima," meaning "region," with the sense of a specific region. Citizenship, here also, is painted in the colours of a natural phenomenon. Since modern Hebrew uses an analogue of this word, it too bears this association. The modern Hindi, "sameekaran," I am told, also raises the possibility of this connotation of nature. Consistent with this hypothesis is that there is evidence that both Hebrew and Hindi in their pre-modern versions had no word for "nature." All of this allows for the supposition that there is a latent sense of nature in citizenship as such.[32]

Once again, I believe that the foregoing provides a hypothetical basis – a heuristic in the original sense of the word – for research about the prevalence of AC as a human phenomenon. The following remarks on HC are offered in the same spirit.[33]

7. HIERARCHICAL CLAIM: ITS UBIQUITY

HC, unpacked, spells out a fundamental feature of political hierarchies. Hierarchy conveniently puts a name on the complex mechanism by which a polity structures the relationship between ruler and ruled. It settles how ruler is differentiated from ruled. It dictates the rank-ordering of positions within a political order. It sets decision procedures for placements, replacements, and demotions within this order. It

defines the scope of actionable matters. The stability of a polity, other things being equal, stands or falls on its citizens living with, and abiding by, its hierarchical order. The attachment of the polity, ruler and ruled alike, to the hierarchical order is a function of the order being invested with an appeal credible to its audience because it is based on a commonly perceived objective standard that justifies its authority. Through its descriptive function, HC provides a schema for this near-universal feature of political life.

At Book 8's beginning, Socrates names seven types of rule (544c-d), implying that what follows is neutral to the distinction between Greek and barbarian (499c-d). Four of these straightforwardly instantiate HC: the Best City, which, *ex hypothesi*, is governed by nature, Timocracy, which looks to honour, Oligarchy to wealth, and Democracy to freedom (554c). In Plato's day, Persia and Egypt followed these examples. In the case of the former, Achaemenid rule looked to the support of the god, Ahuramazda, while for the latter, Pharaoh's divinity is a dramatic example of HC at work.[34] In each case, running from the Best City to Pharaoh, the polis justifies its relationship between ruler and ruled through an appeal to an overarching, authoritative principle independent of the here and now of the lived world.

Allow me to further illustrate HC at work through the example of some stock figures from our common storehouse of rulers through the ages: Augustus, Emperor Wu of Han, Montezuma, and Louis XI of France. The rule of each explicitly or implicitly appealed to some justification independent of the polis. Charles I of England, from his putative *Eikon Basilike* to his sad end, provides evidence of the downside of the loss of this warrant of an overarching justification for ruling. Theocracies follow this vein. Ancient Athens, Sparta, and Rome provide more evidence, insofar as all three, in

varying ways, indulged in the worship of ancestors and sundry divine connections.

History and historical materialism have served an analogous purpose. Liberal democracies, with their various forms of representative governments, draw on the belief that the people shall rule, a normative principle as dominant as any in our day; the inclusion of human rights completes this picture. Nationalisms, in their many forms (some degenerate), are analogous to ancient ancestor worship. If there are exceptions to the rule of HC in its descriptive mode, they are of the sort that prove the rule rather than serve as counter-examples.[35]

8. REFLECTIONS

The Noble Lie displays the Best City doing explicitly what worldly polities do in an automatic manner.[36] The evidence implies that many, if not all, polities are bound to the schema suggested by the Noble Lie. I imagine two centrifugal tendencies in the polis – one aiming at equality derived from a shared sense of siblinghood, and another impelled by the necessity for governance – that are the matrix of a centripetal unifying tendency, with attendant tensions resulting.

The ubiquity of patriotism and associate phenomena are fallow ground for AC's traducing nature. It successfully handfasts convention and nature through asserting the communal ownership of a human being at its founding natural experience, i.e., one's birth. HC is a harder sell. Socrates acknowledges Glaucon's suggestion that HC must be time-honoured. It will take a generation or more before it is a political norm. It is notable that Socrates follows Glaucon's lead on this issue. Since Glaucon has not been introduced, at this point in the narration, to the distinction between non-philoso-

pher-rulers and philosopher-rulers, Socrates' acquiescence implicitly acknowledges that this solution is about cities not ruled by philosophers, which, logically, must include worldly cities. Socrates' use of the word, "*pheme*," to characterize this solution, which may refer either to the gods or to tradition, points to the issue at stake: how are norms established with respect to political hierarchies (φήμη, 415d6)?

To some degree, AC is a truism. Plato's contribution is not limited to the fact that he was the first to plant his flag on this truism. First, by means of AC, Plato shows that the polis turns to a paradox to justify a politically relevant commonality between its citizens, one grounded equally in nature, or some equivalent, and convention. Second, Plato yokes AC and HC into a unity. They are one "myth" (415a2). AC and HC adumbrate the same theme. The polis finds justification for its commonality and its political hierarchy, which dominates its way of life, through claims that are tacit, not revisited in the here and now of political discourse. The complex of AC and HC is a reminder that a primary experience of collective life, a common bond of deep near-brotherly fellow feeling, is in a balancing act with a contrary principle dictating that sibling rules over sibling. The myth lays out for inspection *a*, if not *the*, primal tension of political life. The Noble Lie reveals a source of tension that runs deeper than liberalism and conservatism.[37] It runs deeper not only because of its ubiquity but also because it allows one to see that justice and injustice are baked into the polis' surface.

The *Republic* displays the emergence of injustice as a consequence of the Noble Lie. Although AC is functionally dormant for the balance of the *Republic*'s argument, HC leads to a significant aspect of the *Republic* − the proposal concerning philosopher-rulers. As a

result, it also plays an important role in Book 8. It is the grounding principle of the thesis that the origin of faction, strife between the rulers, the gold of HC, leads to the degeneration of the Best City (545d1-2, 546d8-547a5, 547b2-c4). The immediacy of HC's, and thereby the Noble Lie's, connection to justice is displayed in the initial stage of the Best City's degeneration, which culminates in an act of primal injustice: the *enslavement* of the iron and bronze at the hands of the gold (547c1-4, 615b3, δουλωσάμενοι, 547c2, εἰς δουλείας ἐμβεβληκότες, 615b3).[38]

Two questions: first, is there something like a philosophical anthropology at the basis of the *Republic*'s descriptive claims? My starting point for thinking about this is the *Republic*'s two accounts of the soul (435e-441e, 588b-e). I suggest that the first account is to the second as the normative is to the descriptive, and that jointly they allow for a psychological foundation that serves the requirements of a philosophical anthropology. Second, the joining together of AC and HC raises a question, which seems peculiar to our day: why is the former a truism and the latter not?[39]

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Endnotes

1   Socrates uses three terms to name the city that arises out of the conversation in Book 2. The first is "city in speech" (369c2, 473e2). He uses "aristocracy" six times to designate it (544e7, 545c9, 547c6, 497b7, 427e7, 445d6). He uses "kallipolis" once; it is a *hapax*, not occurring elsewhere in the dialogues (527c2). "Aristocracy" and "kallipolis" are used to name it after philosopher-rulers have been introduced. Based on statistics alone as guide and rejecting "aristocracy" as misleading, I will use "Best City" for this function. Before "philosopher-rulers," instead of "city in speech," I will use "City." For the Greek of the *Republic*, I use Slings throughout.

2   The two parts are a heterogeneous unity (τό λοιπόν τοῦ μύθου, 415a2).

3   The following assert that AC and HC are jointly the Noble Lie: Andrew, 1989, 577, writes of the central

proposition of the myth; Page, 1991, 23, and foot-note 21; Brickhouse and Smith, 1983, 82. Brisson, 2005, 41, treats it as myth, as does Schofield, 2006, 223-224. Cornford, 1941, 103, translates it as a "bold flight of invention." Carter, 1953, 299, treats it as metaphorical. Rowett, 2016, 98, and footnotes 64, 83, opts for HC. For AC, see Annas, 1981, 116, and Calabi, 1998, 446.

4   The third class is instantiated, i.e., "farmers and other craftsmen" (414a6-7). Adam, 2009, 189, commenting on 412b, notes that "Rulers" are introduced.

5   Schofield, 2006, 150-153, is among the few who notes this context.

6   See Vegetti, 1998, Volume III, 151-158, for a fuller picture of "guardians."

7   Pelling, 2009, 479.

8   See Pelling, 2009, 479-483, and footnote 10, on autochthony and complexities of Athenian attitudes to autochthony. See footnote 10 for widespread use of the trope among Greeks and non-Greeks. AC is Plato's generalization, cast in a literary form ap-propriate to its context, which describes these facts; footnote 10 includes references to some 25 examples of autochthony in varied peoples found in ancient texts.

9   Rosivach, 1987, 295, 297, 301-302. See Sophocles' *Ajax* for earliest reference to an Athenian autoch-thonic origin, which "is in effect a transferred epithet," whereby "people of earthborn Erechtheus become Erechtheus' earthborn people." Euripides' *Ion* deals with another strand in Athenian self-understanding. Saxonhouse, 1986, 257, 272-273, asserts that Euripides reflects the intellectual ethos of Athenian democracy, which challenges its "self-satisfaction," and writes of Euripides' assertion of the "foolishness of autochthony." Westra, 2006, 279, asserts that Euripides does not "escape" the pull of Athenian "hegemony," which excluded foreigners and asserted "Athenian superiority." For more on the peculiarities of the Athenian situation in Plato's day, see Kapparis, 2005, 111; Meyer, 1993, 119-120.

10   Kovacs, 2002, 657-675, 931-941.

11   Chantraine, 1968, 1281.

12   Some commentators assume promoting unity is the primary goal of AC, though the word "unity" does not occur in this context. See Shorey, 2009, 195; Rowett, 2016, 83; Carmola, 2003, 52; Brisson, 2007, 55.

13   Kasimis, 2016, 340-345, 348, 349, 356, on Glaucon believing AC to be "outrageous," suggests he tasks Socrates for breaching a "taboo." But, there couldn't have been a taboo about autochthony. It was pub-licly discussed through the 5th century's last half: Davies, 1977, 120-121. A descent-group criterion for citizenship, which entailed autochthony, was contentious. Aristophanes, 1998, 1075-1076; see Kovacs, 2002, fr. 360k as well. See Thucydides, 2.36.1, where "autochthony" is equated with

"indigenous." Vegetti, 1998, Volume II, 142, footnote 142, observes the passage's "tragicomico" effect.

14   For the Theban issue, see Carmola, 2003, 54. For more on the background, see Fuks, 1971, 34-40.

15   See Loraux, 1981, 112, and footnote 6. "Nature," in this context, names those things that are not a function of human doing or decision-making and distinguishes them from the things that are. See Bywater, 1984, 1134b26; Waterfield, 1998, Book 1, 31, Book 3, 27-38; Burnet, 1965, 484e. Some complex senses of "nature" are on display in its 18 uses in the argument for sexual equality (451b-455d).

16   Hutchinson, 1985, 271ff.

17   Saxonhouse, 1986, 257, discusses the aristocratic bias in the traditional versions.

18   Carmola, 2003, 40-41. See below footnote 37. Ferrari, 2000, 107, footnote 63, sheds light on the term: "The lie is grand or noble (*gennaios*) by virtue of its civic purpose, but the Greek word can also be used colloquially, giving the meaning 'a true-blue lie,' i.e. a massive, no-doubt-about-it lie (compare the term 'grand larceny')."

19   Kasimis, 2016, 347, observes that the chief qual-ity of the City's "rulers" is the character of their "*conviction*" (δόγματος, 412e5; the word reoccurs as introduction to the philosopher-rulers' educa-tion, 503a2). This reflects the difference between the City's non-philosophic rulers and the Best City's philosopher-rulers.

20   See below footnote 23.

21   1. Page, 1991, 22, and footnote 20, uses "single," as a translation of "one" myth to blend the two parts. 2. Rowett, 2016, 98, footnotes 64 and 83, also relegates AC to an adjunct to HC. She asserts that AC "… is not a new ideology. It is the traditional use to which such autochthony myths were put … Plato['s] myth is actually about deliberately dividing … [the citizens into three] … classes." Plainly, she asserts that HC is the Noble Lie. However, none of Rowett's sources refer to brotherhood, as Plato does here and in the *Laws* (Burnet, 1967, 663e). There are no refer-ences to brothers in the autochthony stories that antedate Plato not limited to its familial sense. She fails to note the assertion that there is "one" Noble Lie, as well as Glaucon's assertion that AC is false, i.e., a lie. Rowett pays a price for dismissing AC as a rehash of traditional materials. Her answer to the title of her article is that philosopher-rulers will believe the Noble Lie because it is not false, i.e., HC is true, if only within the compass of the *Republic*. This entails that there is no Noble Lie. Did Plato portray Socrates as lying when he asserted that there is a Noble Lie?

22   I translate "φυῆ" with "naturally grows" to preserve the sense of a development uninfluenced by human intervention.

23   Page, 1991, 23, and Rowett, 2016, 89, see one problem, as does Carmola, 2003, 52, who also sees the hyperbolic element, calling the "parents …

god-like"; Schofield, 2006, 290, and footnote 11, fails to note the differences between the two issues; notwithstanding, Schofield unpacks the sense of "admixture"; Shorey, 2009, 255, indulges in a "just so" moment, asserting that the … "child will be watched"; Kasimis, 2016, 342, indulges as well: 415c is about "one's acculturative participation in a specific training and a judge's evaluation of that training's success."

24   See Rankin, 1965, 419, for the relation of HC and Book 5.

25   Gonzalez, 2014, 1; I have edited Gonzalez without distorting his meaning. Irwin and Fine provide analogous accounts of the issue. Irwin, 2011, 273, on the gap between Socrates' grasp of the Idea of the Good and that of philosopher-rulers, adds that understanding the Good entails having a coherent account of the virtues complemented by a comparable psychology. Fine, 2003, 116, argues that knowledge of the Good requires a coherent grasp of the Ideas, which separates Socrates from philosopher-rulers.

26   I leave aside a predicate that Plato assigns to the Idea of the Good, i.e., that it is beyond being (508b).

27   Carmola, 2003, 56.

28   This is re-affirmed in Book 9 (592a-b). The City is also potentially a city in the world whose worldly existence is conceptually described in one passage (540e-41a, 545c4-547c4).

29   For more on "just so" interpretations, see above footnote 23.

30   See above footnotes 7 and 8.

31   ποιητούς πολίτης. See Ross, 1962, 1275a; Deene, 2011, 161-162.

32   1. For Japanese, I profit from consultation with a colleague in Japanese Studies; 2. for etymology of φυσις, Klein, 1985, 224; 3. for "klima," Chantraine, 1968, 543; 4. for Hebrew, Fox, 1990, 120; 5. for Hindi, I depend on consultation with a colleague in South Asian Studies.

33   Chantraine, 1968, 387, offers "découvrir" as the first meaning of "heuristic," which literally means "to uncover." AC and HC uncover a fresh way of examining contemporary and historical data, and revisiting existent literature. See below footnote 35.

34   See Kuhrt, 1984, 158; Costa, 2006, 74.

35   Mosko, 1992, challenges Sahlins' case that hierarchy is a cross-cultural, diachronic phenomenon. He references Sahlins, *Islands of History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985; "Hierarchy and Humanity in Polynesia," in *Transformations of Polynesian Culture* (1985), edited by Antony Hooper and Judith Huntsman, Auckland: The Polynesian Society. Mosko fails to address the shadow of hierarchy through gift-giving.

36   A review of HC and AC and truth and falsity: in their descriptive modes, both are true insofar as each describes normative, worldly practices of many, if not all, polities. Those described by AC make claims that are false; those described by HC are dubious at best. In their normative modes, AC and HC are about the Best City, to which scholarship in the main limits itself. In this mode, AC enjoins the Best City to make a claim that is false. This makes it the Noble Lie, fingered by Glaucon at 414e7. HC is true in this mode, finding one instantiation within the text. From the introduction of philosopher-rulers to the end of Book 7, Socrates aims to distinguish philosophers from non-philosophers in order to show that philosophers are fit by "nature" to rule the City (473c11-540b7, 474b2-c3, φύσει, 474c1). Philosopher-rulers will know HC to be true as a normative principle. It is part of their self-knowledge.

37   See above footnote 18.

38   Gonda (2016).

39   The Teaching Company's author sees AC as a truism. S/he treats HC as an apology for a caste system.