

THE PULSE OF *CHRONOS*: HISTORICAL TIME, THE ETERNAL AND TIMELESSNESS IN THE PLATONIC GATHERING¹

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After a long and complex discussion in *The Republic*,² Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus come to agree that justice demands a certain differentiation of roles within society's co-existing and mutually informing groups. For, according to Socrates, "in our state one man was to do one job, the job he was naturally most suited for" and so "justice is keeping what is properly one's own and doing one's own job".³ The just polis must therefore consist of clearly defined classes, which are differentiated by reference to their members' natural occupations, whether as producers, auxiliaries or rulers of the city. Socrates is quick to point out that in the well-integrated gathering this principle of justice applies, not to individual jobs as such within any one class, but to the differentiated roles fulfilled by each of the classes:

Interference by the three classes with each other's job, and interchange of jobs between them [...] does the greatest harm to our state, and we are entirely justified in calling it the worst of evils.⁴

Although the wellbeing of the polis as a whole would not suffer decisively were a carpenter to swap jobs with a farmer, such an exchange would be disastrous if it took place across classes.

As well as participating in an indispensable system of differentiated roles within one of the productive, auxiliary or ruling classes, the members of the just polis also experience this social order as a unified whole. Unlike the immediate, unreflective unity of the first polis that Socrates and his friends discuss, a polis that characteristically lacks organization in accordance with the principle of justice, in the just polis unity is a conscious achievement.⁵ It is therefore perpetually dependent upon the ability of the city to expand and deepen its collective powers for self-integration. The gathering that fully embodies justice is thus a teleological entity for which integration is an explicit aim shared by the members of all three classes.⁶

Granted the friends of Socrates reach agreement on this account of justice, as far as the being of the polis is concerned, along with the discussants, one might have expected their conversation to have reached its proper conclusion. After all, at this point in the discussion, their complex quest for the highest knowledge culminates in the identification of the structure of the just society, a structure that in turn determines the being of justice for the individual. This, of course, was the initial aim of their epic quest. Early in their discussion the participants had considered whether the just individual lives a happier life than the unjust and they had agreed that to understand what the just individual is they should first determine the nature of the just society.⁷ Now justice has been shown to be a single principle, which is equally manifested in the city as a whole and in the member of society as a unique individual. Indeed, this dual manifestation belongs to justice itself in so far as both forms of embodiment of the principle belong to the gathering. In the light of their agreement on the principle of justice and bearing in mind their initial purpose, one might have expected the discussants to proceed to an exploration of the relationship between justice and happiness. Of course, as we know, they do go on to address other important issues, including the status of women, marriage, family and the rules of war. But, significantly, any discussion of these issues presupposes that fundamental knowledge of the principle of justice has already been achieved and so nothing more needs to be said at this level.

For Glaucon and Adeimantus this is indeed the prevailing impression, until later when the discussion turns to the question of the possibility of actually realizing the just polis, that is, of establishing Kallipolis.⁸ At this point, in response to the question of how the ideal city might become a reality, Socrates takes the opportunity, rather suddenly and with some reluctance, to introduce the idea that the philosopher has a political role to play in establishing the just polis. Having described its features, Socrates confronts the double-sided issue concerning the actuality of the ideal polis, namely “*that* it can exist and *how* it can exist”⁹, by positioning the philosopher in a unique relationship to the rest of Kallipolis’ potential citizens:

The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed [...] of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands.¹⁰

How does Socrates justify this reference to the founding/leadership role of the philosopher?¹¹ One way is to focus on potential citizens’ self-interest in recognizing philosophers’ unique potential. Jacob Howland has recently defended Socrates’ attempt to make out the claim that genuine philosophers are best suited to rule due to a peculiar combination of intellect and temperament.¹² According to Howland’s reading of Socrates’ position, as a result of their studies, philosophers are well prepared for understanding the relationship between social order and the common good and, given their love of wisdom, they would not be inclined to use public power to further their own interests. But, Howland concedes, leadership involves navigating difficult and ever-changing circumstances for which Socrates’ philosophers are not trained and so it does not follow that “philosophers *as such* possess the true art of piloting the ship of state”. Still, Howland concludes, philosophers are fast learners, so “no one would be better suited to govern than those [...] Socrates] calls philosophers”.¹³

Interestingly, in both his reading and defence of Socrates’ rationale for attributing the role of Kallipolis’ founder/ruler to the philosopher, Howland highlights the potential *usefulness* of the philosopher but the instrumental reasoning which he invokes leads to a dead end when he turns to the question of the likelihood of philosophers actually taking a leadership role in establishing and sustaining the just order. For within such terms the question of the transition, from a state of knowledge of the form of justice to one of actualizing it, is reduced to a matter of whether the philosopher is in a position either to persuade or to force the non-philosophers to concede power. The answer is, of course, that the potential citizens of Kallipolis would have no self-interested reasons for recognizing the philosopher’s political authority and the genuine philosopher would have no justifiable grounds for forcing them to accept his rule.¹⁴ Howland does note that Socrates identifies the genuine philosopher, as distinct from those who may engage in philosophical discussions, by reference to a unique capacity to discern the being of the supreme good, but he does not explore the full significance of this way of distinguishing the

THE PULSE OF CHRONOS

philosopher.¹⁵ Let us return then to examine Socrates' words.

Socrates does indeed explain that the philosopher/founder of Kallipolis must be concerned with "the highest form of knowledge, which should be peculiarly his own". To this his companions react with surprise: "The highest? But is there anything higher than justice and the other qualities we discussed?" Socrates' reply is, of course, one of the most radical in the history of philosophy: "the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of the form of the good, from which things that are just and so on derive their usefulness and value".¹⁶ For present purposes, the significant point is not so much what Socrates means by the claim that knowledge of the good is the highest possible, but that in the process of making the claim he invokes a certain distinction that ultimately makes possible the earthly realization of the class differentiated just society. The distinction in question is that between the philosopher-ruler as the friend of knowledge—for whom awareness of the good is peculiarly his own—and the non-philosophers, members of the city, acting as the friends of the philosopher.

We want to argue that the founding role of the philosopher is itself justified by appeal to the philosopher's peculiar power to exercise a kind of awareness that is more radical than knowledge of the principle of justice. If the differentiation between the philosopher and his friends is directly grounded on the good then it is not knowledge of the forms as such but the kind of awareness that makes possible the reception of this knowledge that distinguishes the philosopher. This awareness not only grounds the differentiation of roles between the philosopher and his friends, but it ultimately grounds the knowing, both of the principle of justice and its actualization, which knowing belongs peculiarly to the philosopher.

At the same time, a full appreciation of the philosopher as founder and ruler of Kallipolis calls for an understanding of how *both sides* of this differentiation between the philosopher and his friends contribute to the activation of the fundamental awareness. In order to transform the pure knowing of justice into a vision to be realized and, ultimately, into the realized vision of the earthly Kallipolis, both the descending philosopher, the philosopher who returns from dwelling in the light of the immeasurable good, and the citizens of the imperfect polis must recognize and enact this distinction from the outset. This is indeed a surprising move. Not only does Socrates propose that there is a kind of "knowing", associated with awareness of the supreme good that is in fact higher than the knowledge of the eternal form of justice, but by drawing attention to the political significance of this kind of awareness he also directly links this higher awareness to a supposedly inferior expression of the ideal of justice, namely to its copy, the form's earthly realization. Even though it is the good that grounds and sustains the form of justice in the realm of eternity, the awareness of this cosmic fact and its significance is not integral to the form of the just city itself. More specifically, according to the story Socrates advances, there is no philosopher dwelling in the eternal city of justice who functions as the ruler and the supreme gatherer of its citizens thanks to his unique relation to the perfectly dignified good. Perhaps such mediated relating to the good would not accord with the infinite worthiness of the form of justice. Perhaps, it is the perfect being of the form in its totality that infinitely, that is, immediately receives the goodness of the good without need for the mediating knowing of the philosopher. This is a question we explore elsewhere.¹⁷ Here the important point is that awareness of the good is taken to relate, not to the being of the ideal polis, but to the realization and perpetuation of the finite polis in historical time. In other words, it is taken to relate to the polis that might somehow come into existence as that which partakes in the ideal, through the philosopher's knowing, and therefore as having been generated as its copy.

Socrates' insistence that the philosopher is the proper ruler of the earthly city of justice and his way of relating awareness of the good to the possibility of the city's actualization are surprising but not the only surprises in *The Republic*. Certain other, no less radical ideas follow from such radical proposals. Once we enter the realm of finitude we are confronted with major shifts in the focus of the dialogue that at once take us deeper and deeper into the strange land of the copy and raise questions as to the conditions that make it possible and feasible. In what follows we will argue that in order to uncover and make sense of these largely unexplored shifts we must have regard to what we can call the pulsating movement of *chronos*. More specifically, we shall try to show how the flow of movement from timelessness to historical time and the eternal forms operates to

generate and order certain key moves in *The Republic* from the elaboration of the principle of justice to the conditions of its earthly realization.

Together with Glaucon and Adeimantus, we overcome our initial surprise with Socrates' insistence on the philosopher's founding role, as soon as we realize that, major though it is, the importance Socrates assigns to the philosopher's awareness of the good for the enactment of the polis of justice is only one concern. Of themselves, the philosopher's unique relation to the good and his exclusive knowledge of the form of justice are not sufficient to enable him to establish the earthly polis. In order for the knowledge of the eternal form of justice to be transformed into a realizable ideal, one also requires access to the proper place and agent of such transformation. More specifically, precisely because, for Socrates, the task here is to clarify the meaning and process of realizing Kallipolis on earth, he must identify where, how and, more importantly, *for whom*, Kallipolis becomes an issue at all, as a goal to be recognized and realized. Who are the potential bearers of this task? Where would they come from? How would they come to recognize themselves as the visionaries who appreciate the philosopher's divine nature and unique role?

On one level the answer is rather obvious if, as we suggested above, the friends of the philosopher are aware of their irreducible difference from the philosopher. Glaucon and Adeimantus reveal their awareness of this difference when discussing with Socrates the difference between those who call themselves philosophers and the philosopher proper who, along with appropriate education and maturity, "must combine in his nature good memory, readiness to learn, breadth of vision and grace, and be a friend of truth, justice, courage and self-control".¹⁸ Moreover, this discussion leads to the observation that once fully informed of the true meaning and character of the genuine philosopher, the wider public too will come to recognize this difference since all will agree that "no state can find happiness unless the artists designing it use a divine pattern", a pattern to which only the philosopher has access.¹⁹ As the agents of transformation, those capable of transforming the ideal into a realizable goal, the friends of the philosopher would therefore function as the *topos*, the proper place and, therefore, as the justice, so to speak, of the knowledge of the philosopher, which knowledge is transformed into vision only through the appropriate dwelling of its bearer in the *topos* of the appropriate friendship, namely that which is offered to him by his friends. But if this is indeed the case, then such an answer can only serve as the beginning of a response to the abovementioned questions. For it points in the direction of a path to be traversed but does not offer us the path itself. We are still left with the question of who precisely the friends of the philosopher might be. Is it even possible for them to appear and welcome him? If it were possible, what would such welcoming mean and how would it relate to the given order of their imperfect city?

We want to suggest that the agent responsible for the opening of such a place of receiving the philosopher as the ruler is none other than the collective that violently rebels against the order of ignorance. The intensity of such a rebellion is radical enough to transform the philosopher's knowledge of justice into a vision belonging to those who are committed to realizing justice precisely because and in so far as they receive the philosopher in their dual capacity as actual citizens of their imperfect city and as potential citizens of Kallipolis. As the power to relate knowledge with rebellious violence and vision, this collective act of welcoming seeks to gather and re-gather by destroying the given order of imperfection and creating the copy of the perfect polis. A fundamental presupposition for the actualization of Kallipolis then is this transformation of knowledge into vision through violence, a transformation that requires an absolute commitment at the levels of the collective and of the individual.

To summarize: the shifts identified above—from the eternal polis of justice to the justice associated with the realization of the just polis, from the philosopher-ruler to his revolutionary friends who welcome him, and from pure knowledge to knowledge as vision—are brought about, not merely because the philosopher is the best qualified for the job of ruling, the proper ruler as a matter of fact. Rather he becomes the hero of the enactment of the just city only when, like the eternal just city itself, he is *offered* a place for dwelling. In the philosopher's case the offer must come from the rebellious welcoming of what is in essence the anonymous collective of the friends of the philosopher qua citizens of the imperfect city who thus emerge as willing to receive him.

THE PULSE OF CHRONOS

What can the further investigation of the subtleties contained within this relationship reveal about the pulsating movement of *chronos* and its relationship to the eternal forms, historical time and timelessness?

We have suggested that bringing about the earthly Kallipolis, initially calls for a collective act of radical purification on the part of the friends of the philosopher. This is a kenotic act involving the members of the imperfect city, an act that would involve the participants in an ecstatic and destructive leap that has the power to take them beyond the political order of ignorance. Here is a reminder of how Socrates invokes this moment:

The first thing our artists must do [...] is to wipe the slate of human society and human habits clean. For our philosophic artists differ at once from all others in being unwilling to start work on an individual or a city, or draw out laws, until they are given, or have made themselves, a clean canvas.²⁰

In order to make themselves genuinely receptive to the philosopher's pure gift of gathering them and giving them form as gathered, the members of the rebellious collective must first transcend their ephemeral specificity as citizens of existing cities, and as bearers of specific biographies. They must move beyond the realm of the given city, the world of familiarity and predictability, in order to encounter, for the first time, the human gathering as an intensified field of finitude that is in a state of lovingly receiving the divine philosopher who brings the eternal. In this collective affair of the gathering of finite beings in historical time, their being together *touches* the limit of its finitude; it is thus liberated and becomes the strange and totally unfamiliar power of receiving eternal goodness; without any conceptual determination, the gathering is this simple erotic power.

It is as received in the above sense that the philosopher would "wipe the slate of human society and human habits clean." Notice here the metaphorical emphasis on the hand and its movement. The hand has the power to receive and give, but also to destroy. In being willing to make themselves or be made "a clean canvas", at one and the same time, the members of the imperfect city will transform themselves into destroyers of the existing forms of social and individual order, and into the potential bearers of new forms brought to them from elsewhere.

The enactment of the intense and auto-violent simplicity of the eroticism of the indeterminate gathering towards the lover of knowledge is the unleashing of a force from within the given and well-established field of ignorance, a force that is simultaneously the absolute destroyer and the only restorer of historical order. The members of the gathering are thus involved in a leap from the state of being the ignorant mass of cities that eternalize the historical, in so far as they treat the corruption of human nature as the defining feature of humanity as such, to a state of historicizing the eternal form of justice. They thus create a past of rejection and they open a future of elation. The "clean canvas" the philosopher needs is an erupting agent that disrupts and reverses the flow of historical time by transforming it into the time of the non-historical, the time of the eternal forms. Those who revolutionize their individual and collective being, by rendering visible their communal presencing as the plane of the "clean canvas" are an arrow in time that points in two directions: the past as the field of violently rejecting the imperfection of their own ignorant cities, and the future of a humanity of enlightened justice liberated from evil and self-harm. The rebellious gathering claims both these directions exclusively and unconditionally. As gathered in this plane of the "clean canvas" then, the members of the indeterminate gathering find themselves caught in their collective presence as both the ultimate dark force of destroying the idolatry of historical time and the ultimate finite power of receiving the light of the eternal, a presence in which violence separates the finite from the eternal.

It is only through this initial and revolutionary act of gathering, with its purifying and visionary dimensions, that those gathered pursue the question of justice as the principle and the practice of the gathering—we that Kallipolis is ultimately to be.²¹ The important points to emphasize here are, firstly, that the enactment of this elementally violent and visionary gathering, which expands as "a clean canvas" or plane of reception, involves zero depth, given that it is not determined by any past or future attachments whatsoever. Secondly, the participants who are gathered together are not internally distinguished from one another. They gather disruptively and ecstatically,

not as classes or in their capacity as members of their respective social groups, but *as gathered* in a radically equal and creatively indeterminate way. No matter how hard they might look around them or inside themselves, they can only sense their collective unguided body as a pure receptivity hovering over their abandoned cities. Indeed, receiving the unique one, the philosopher, by being this receiving is for the gathering participants the most intense gathering of their own erotic uniqueness. They thus form an indeterminate collective through their willingness to receive the philosopher's embrace the embrace of the one who, as we already noted, as well as bearing the knowledge of the form of justice, is distinguished as the bearer of the awareness of the supreme good. It is through this embracing that the indeterminate gathering of justice emerges and becomes present. As such its participants claim their proper place as members of the visionary collective and take up the challenge of establishing Kallipolis.

What motivates the cataclysmic violence that gives rise to the indeterminate gathering of the friends of the philosopher and to their power to embrace the question of the gathering and of their ultimate reception of the eternal form of the gathering? What enables the members of the indeterminate gathering of justice to address this primordial concern as a collective? If this elemental gathering is indeed indeterminate in the sense of the empty field of negation sketched above, then how can the question of becoming determinate be their fundamental concern? After all, their knowing seems initially to be a radical not-knowing and their being seems to have nothing to do with being just. Could not the fact of their having been posited as a "clean canvas" mean that, rather than being led to the enlightenment characterizing the receiving gathering, the members of the indeterminate gathering are thrown into a kind of destructive ignorance, which not only is more radical than that characterizing imperfect cities, but also renders them unable to identify any politically realizable ideal whatsoever?

Socrates implies that the members of the gathering are intrinsically receptive to the philosopher through whom they have access to the good given that, unlike their response to other values, "no one is satisfied to have something that only *appears* to be good".²² To this extent the friends of the philosopher are disposed to being enlightened. But we should add here that they are in a position to aim at achieving the state of knowing the form of justice and, relatedly, of knowing themselves to be the exclusive bearers of the preconditions for actualizing such visionary knowing, in so far as they encounter themselves *as the just ones* in the sense of already being in a state of primordial justice, a state that determines their proper place and role *as gathered*. This state is the justice of justice, so to speak, or the imperative of justice that precedes the justice explicitly elaborated in *The Republic* as the class-differentiated system. The imperative of justice must characterize the indeterminate gathering and hence the differentiation between the revolutionary philosopher and his revolutionary friends, who are philosophical to this extent though not philosophers. In other words, the friends of the philosopher are ready to receive the form of justice as a vision to be realized only in so far as they already find themselves in a visionary state of justice, that is, in a state of being visionary receivers of the philosopher as their accomplished gatherer and of themselves as gathered around him indeterminately or elementally. This elemental role differentiation between the philosopher and his friends is the gathering's entry point; it is the gathering's very power to gather itself. This is what accounts for the indeterminately welcoming gathering's power to be visionary.

Moreover, the welcoming in question must be understood as invoking a kind of gathering that is both radically original and originating. It is original in rendering the philosopher visible as the unique one, the only one in a position to gather in order for the gathering as such to occur out of the state of non-knowing, the nothingness of ignorance, and without appeal to anything other than the act of gathering one's friends who in turn welcome him purely as gathered. The gathering's welcoming gathers the philosopher as its own gatherer by simultaneously gathering itself as the gathering of those who welcome the philosopher. In order then to establish the just city, its potential citizens must first ecstatically emerge from the given order of their imperfect city and gather around the philosopher who they recognize as bearer of the supreme good. In doing so they thereby elevate themselves to the ones who receive the philosopher as their supreme ruler.

THE PULSE OF CHRONOS

In its receiving and as this receiving, the gathering of the potential citizens of Kallipolis is absolutely alone, consumed, so to speak, by its love for the enlightened one. This is the state of gathering before the gathering, before the enactment of the just polis as the class differentiated gathering in accordance with the ideal that *The Republic* explicitly elaborates. It therefore precedes any formed gathering as such. It is the primordial and elemental gathering saturated by the “fever” of its welcoming of the philosopher, which is at the same time a primordial self-welcoming.

So in addition to historicizing the eternal form of justice, on another level the welcoming gathering is itself an *original act of timeless welcoming*, that is, a welcoming beyond time. In welcoming the philosopher the gathering also embraces its own welcoming state as the original act of the emergence of the gathering. We have already suggested that the indeterminate gathering’s welcoming is characterized by the simple intensity that is completely innocent and free of any instrumental orientation and that this contrasts to relations within the existing cities where, being oblivious to the foundational role of the philosopher-gatherer (and, relatedly, being overwhelmed by their given order), the existing cities of ignorance have failed to acknowledge this primordial gathering as the proper *topos* of their own emerging and dwelling and as the ultimate origin of the just city. In contrast, the indeterminate gathering embraces its gathering being as a timeless welcoming given that it is this simplicity of the bond of gathering that makes possible the philosopher’s emergence in his completeness, as the welcomed gathering bearer of the good. Such welcoming is no less *timelessly originating* in so far as the project of enacting Kallipolis presupposes this welcoming as a timeless opening to and of such a project. The aim of gathering to be formed in accordance with the ideal of the gathering of justice can only be the singular, visionary and supreme aim of those who, being already gathered, are in the mode of unceasingly gathering through their recognition of the philosopher’s awareness of the timeless good. The gathered ones are thus in a position to aim to gather in so far as this aiming activity is informed by their timeless willingness to gather around the philosopher-ruler.

Let us highlight three points in connection with the original and originating character of the welcoming gathering. Firstly, being original and originating in the above sense, the welcoming gathering is a timeless opening and a timeless closing; it is at once complete fulfillment and complete *steresis*; it is arrival and destination. But if this is indeed what defines the being of Kallipolis’ potential citizens and, in so far as this being already embodies justice in the sense of the vision without yet knowing justice, then the members of the welcoming gathering are called upon, not only unconditionally but *knowingly* to participate in the ideal of justice, which the philosopher-gatherer brings to them. Being already in a state of justice, and hence being already gathered as the primordial gathering referred to above, they constitute the gathering whose members are called upon to conform to the ideal of justice and of themselves as the bearers of such ideal’s earthly realization. The indeterminate gathering is given the imperative to gather precisely because and in so far as one is already gathered and hence is itself this mission. The gathering thus encounters itself as the *topos* of activation and of receiving of the command to self-knowledge.

It follows from this that, in embracing the call to know justice, the question grounded on the fundamental differentiation of roles between the gatherer (philosopher-ruler) and the indeterminately gathered (friends of the philosopher-ruler), the primordial gathering of justice at once confronts (the question of the reception of) the command to “know thyself”. This is the command to re-gather, to create being through the act of knowing and embodying the eternal form of the gathering. This is how the spark of the possibility of self-knowledge can transform the collective body of ignorance into a fire that destroys the darkness engulfing its members by simultaneously shedding light on the horizon of the coming gathering of Kallipolis.

Secondly, if it is indeed the case that, in receiving the command to know, the members of the indeterminate gathering can collectively become agents of radical self-knowledge, given their state of ignorance they must also receive the command, so to speak, to be aware of themselves as *no more than* receivers of the command. Moreover, although they receive the command to self-knowledge through their collective being, they do so in their individual uniqueness and as this uniqueness. Consequently, they emerge and encounter themselves as

timelessly committed both to *being as gathered* in the indeterminate gathering, and thus as having left behind them their own state of ignorance in an act of violent re-birth, and to *becoming as gathered* in the Kallipolis to come. This is indeed what happens since their primordial state of justice is also their primordial state of collective awareness of individually receiving the command as the presupposition for actually receiving the appropriate knowledge of the ideal of justice. As this receiving the gathering moves from being amnesic to being anamnesic, since by gathering indeterminately it recalls, for itself, itself as the pure urge for gathering. Thus the historicizing of the eternal presupposes that the agents of transformation are also in a state of indeterminacy, which in relating to the good via the philosopher is also timeless in the sense of being beyond the time of the eternal forms.²³

This brings us to our third point. Note the role the philosopher plays in connection with the gathering's reception of the command for self-knowledge. Since it is the gathering's encounter with the philosopher that compels the former to gather ecstatically in the first place, it is *as gathered around the philosopher* that the members of the revolutionary gathering receive the command. As the one around whom they gather, the philosopher is thus the bearer both of the command to know and of the knowledge of the ideal of justice. Due to his relation to the immeasurable good the very presence of the philosopher is the activation of the command itself, a presence that also functions as the timeless opening in which the philosopher-ruler emerges as the messenger of justice.

So the members of the indeterminate gathering are timelessly commanded to know themselves as what they are through what they are, namely, as gathered exclusively as the friends of the philosopher and as thus distinguished from the philosopher. This differentiation then is fundamental in transforming the being of the members of the indeterminate gathering into a state of pure receiving of the command and this receiving in turn presupposes and posits the philosopher, not only as the bearer of the ultimate knowledge of the ideal of justice but, also as the enabling power of their pure willing to function as the "clean canvas" on which to establish Kallipolis.

We have argued thus far that the differentiation of roles between the philosopher-gatherer and his gathered friends is the most elemental expression of justice before justice. It is the most elemental because it is grounded on the philosopher as receiver of the supreme good, which is in turn the necessary precondition for receiving the command to know and the corresponding knowledge of the form of justice. Accordingly, this primordial state of receiving is a receiving without knowing. That is, a receiving of the command to know presupposes being in a state of awareness that is beyond knowing. This state of awareness beyond knowing distinguishes the philosopher as the one who gathers exclusively and without thereby becoming one with the gathering. The bearer of the supreme good is in this sense beyond the gathering at the same time as being the gathering's enabling power. The gathered ones in turn serve as the mutually enabling power of the gathering in the light of their own receiving of the philosopher but, as we have argued, as a pure welcoming this receiving presupposes, not the awareness belonging to the philosopher, but the corresponding awareness of the philosopher as the bearer of the supreme good. Without the philosopher, the immeasurable one who is beyond the gathering, the gathered are unable to enact their self-knowledge. Ultimately they fulfill their philosophical being as receivers of the command to know through what the philosopher brings, namely knowledge of the form of justice, precisely because they are nothing but enlightened *receivers* in this most radical sense of a receiving that is no less grounded on the supreme good.

From the above it follows that although it is out of the indeterminate simplicity of the gathering-we that Kallipolis will emerge if it is to do so at all, still in this movement from the indeterminate to the formed gathering the indeterminate gathering takes priority in a dual sense. It is prior in the sense that it is presupposed by the formed gathering but it is also prior in the more fundamental sense that Kallipolis perpetually springs from the indeterminate gathering given that the latter's simplicity manifests the primordial awareness of the philosopher's role as bearer of the supreme good and hence of the role of the good in establishing the just polis. In other words, since the fundamental differentiation between the philosopher and the friends of the philosopher acts as the field of awareness whose value derives from its link via the philosopher to the good, this differentiation also ultimately grounds the class differentiated form of justice as well as the ongoing

THE PULSE OF CHRONOS

commitment of Kallipolis' citizens to the embodiment of this form.

Indeed, Kallipolis' continued actuality, and not just its initial founding, must be perpetually informed by the primordial (non-knowing) awareness of the good associated with the primordial gathering of the friends of the philosopher in the *topos* that the philosopher's divine nature supplies to them. This is why the philosopher must become the ruler of the gathered city on an ongoing basis. He preserves the justness of the just polis through his relationship to the good and his knowledge of the divine form of justice. This relationship must therefore inform and be informed by the differentiation between the philosopher and all subsequent members of Kallipolis, albeit in the intensity of their radical and ecstatic being as the friends of the philosopher.

But this means that the formed gathering of justice must also perpetually fall back into its indeterminate state, given that it receives the idea of justice only in so far as it is an unceasing receiving. Accordingly, the indeterminate gathering does not just give rise to and sustain the state of determinate form but it must also pull the gathering back into itself in acknowledgement of its origin and for the purpose of renewal. Through this movement the established order is renewed and the prior, indeterminate gathering, is posited as a new beginning. Determinate form is thus created not by overcoming the indeterminate as such but by allowing it to deepen itself. Determinate form serves to intensify the indeterminate just as the indeterminate intensifies the determinate.

Moreover, because of the foundational role of their welcoming, it is Kallipolis' citizens who have the power to draw Kallipolis back, so to speak, to the primordial state of the indeterminate gathering in the requisite perpetual act of renewal. The earthly city of justice must perpetually return to its origin through the pure gathering of its citizens around the philosopher. It must perpetually move through *the primordial awareness of its citizens*—manifested in their receiving of the philosopher's embrace—from the class differentiated being of the formed gathering of justice to the primordial state of the justice of the gathering.

From the above analysis it follows that the just city's mode of being is the pulsating movement from the indeterminate to the determinate and from the determinate to the indeterminate. Kallipolis, the earthly city of justice, must be pulsating or else it is nothing at all. This is why in Plato's city of justice the philosopher must rule. Through his access to the eternal idea of justice, the philosopher preserves the order of justice and through his presence he reminds the citizens that this order is perpetually received by their indeterminate gathering. Accordingly, the philosopher is not just the bearer of the supreme good along with the knowledge of the form of justice and the preconditions for its actualization. He is also the one whose very presence reveals to the formed gathering the indeterminacy of the indeterminate thus making it possible for them to gather and re-gather indeterminately. The presence of the philosopher as the ruler of the city enables the formed gathering perpetually to return to the primordial state of indeterminacy out of which the order of justice springs through the transformation of knowledge into vision. The pulsating movement of chronos, the interplay of timelessness with historical time and the eternal, thus supplies an explanation of Socrates' insistence on the philosopher's role as ruler.

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NOTES

1. We presented an earlier version of this paper at “The Time(s) of Our Lives” Australasian Society of Continental Philosophy Conference, La Trobe University, December 2011, and would like to thank the participants for their comments and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for supporting the conference. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewer for very generous and insightful comments and suggestions for improvement of this paper.
2. Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. Desmond Lee. New York: Penguin Books, 1987.
3. Plato, *The Republic*, 433b and 433e.
4. Plato, *The Republic*, 434b–d.
5. Plato, *The Republic*, 369b–372d.
6. This suggestion is supported by Socrates’ observations that the purpose of founding the just polis concerns the unity of the community. Thus, for example, the promotion of happiness relates not to that of any particular class but to that of the community as a whole (Plato, *The Republic*, 420b) and the standard by which to determine the size of the polis is itself the unity of the polis so that is may be “allowed to grow so long as growth is compatible with unity but no further” (Plato, *The Republic*, 420b). We thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to these passages.
7. Plato, *The Republic*, 352e–354b; 368d–369b.
8. Plato, *The Republic*, 471e.
9. Plato, *The Republic*, 471e.
10. Plato, *The Republic*, 473c–e.
11. On this question see C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato’s Republic*. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006, 191–194; Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s Republic: A Study*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005.
12. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic* and the Politics of Convalescence,” *American Dialectic* 1:1 (2010), 1–17 at 9.
13. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic*”, 10–11.
14. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic*”, 11–14.
15. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic*”, 9.
16. Plato, *The Republic*, 505b.
17. *The Rebellious Gathering: Philosophy and Revolution in Plato’s Republic*, manuscript in progress. In this larger work we must also address another question that we leave open for present purposes, namely whether Plato’s argument requires that the philosopher is as a matter of fact the bearer of the supreme good and, if so, what follows from this, or whether it suffices that his fellow citizens merely recognize him as such, given that he is the instigator of the search for knowledge of the supreme good. We thank the anonymous reviewer of our paper for raising our attention to this issue.
18. Plato, *The Republic*, 487a.
19. Plato, *The Republic*, 500e.
20. Plato, *The Republic*, 501b.
21. For an elaboration of the significance of the gathering-we as a collective, see George Vassilacopoulos, “Gathering and Dispersing: The Absolute Spirit in Hegel’s Philosophy” in *The Spirit of the Age: Hegel and the Fate of Thinking*. Eds. Paul Ashton, Toulou Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos. Melbourne: repress, 2008, 292.
22. Plato, *The Republic*, 505d. We are grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to this point.
23. Here bear in mind that the good as such is beyond the eternal, for as Socrates says (Plato, *The Republic*, 509b), it is beyond the being and knowing of eternal forms.