Plato’s Kallipolis: Reasonably Free

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**Abstract**

Plato’s critics observe that he tells us little about the sphere of the *oikos* in the Kallipolis. Even whether there would be slaves is contested. Vlastos suggests that they are a fourth class doing all the unseemly work behind the scenes. Yet, even though the text mentions slaves in passing, a fourth class doesn’t fit into the psychodynamic taxonomy of the Kallipolis, which has led to the suggestion that, to be consistent, Plato’s Kallipolis *shouldn’t* have slaves. Neither of these positions is satisfactory. Rather, the economic arrangement of the Kallipolis leaves no room for a distinction between trader-producers and their putative slaves. The household disappears both as a political and an *independent* economic unit, removing the conditions under which there *could* be intra-household literal slavery or inter-household metaphoric slavery, although Plato’s aristocratic economic dirigisme means that in no way should he be thought of as an abolitionist. Rather, Plato thinks of the worker class as either slaves or slavish, but objectively freed because they are ruled by reason.

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Every man should hold the view regarding men in general, that the man who has not been a slave will never become a praiseworthy master, and that the right way to gain honor is by being a slave honorably rather than by ruling honorably—being a slave first to the laws, since this is slavery to the gods.  

Laws VI: 762e

Introduction: The Four Mentions of Slavery

To paraphrase Vlastos, distinguishing between what an author said, what an author might have meant, and what would make an author consistent are the ABC’s of exegesis. The first order of the day is to get what the author actually said right. Even at this stage, however, real problems for exegesis occur when the answer to the question, “What did he say?” is “Oddly, not very much, and what was said seems on the face of it contradictory.” Such is the case with slavery in Plato’s Republic. That leaves the burden of philosophical archeology resting on B and C. Not surprisingly, the definitive answer to the emotive question of slavery in the Kallipolis has proved elusive, inconclusive, and opposing camps have formed.

One camp, the “yes, of course, there is slavery” camp, tends to be occupied, but not exclusively, by philologists and classicists. The other, the “on balance, no, there shouldn’t be slavery” camp, tends to be occupied by those who are willing to read between the lines, even at the risk of anachronism, for the sake of philosophical systematicity. As my tone suggests, the

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1 I would like to thank my colleagues Peter Manchester and Lee Miller, as well as the anonymous reviewers, for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

2 Arguably, but only arguably, I have over-translated douleuò (and all its forms) in its literal meaning of to be a slave; be that as it may, “to be a slave” is its primary and literal meaning. Vlastos points out that the extreme metaphorical usage many scholars, including himself, impute to Plato is little evidenced elsewhere in the classical corpus, if at all. I suggest that Plato is more literally minded than we think. Gregory Vlastos, "Slavery in Plato's Thought," The Philosophical Review 50, no. 3 (1941), p.292. Reprinted in Gregory Vlastos, Platonic Studies, 2nd print, corrected ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). Since the earlier paper’s page numbers are marked in the reprint, I retain only those. By and large I have followed Bury’s translation. Plato, The Laws, trans. R. G. Bury, 2 vols., The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1926).

3 E.g., Vlastos, Morrow, and anti-Plato philosophers like Popper, or hybrids such as Ste. Croix. Let me cite references when I come to discuss the authors individually.

4 E.g., Calvert and stalwart defenders of Plato, such as Levinson, Ritter, and Wild. Let me cite references as I discuss these authors individually. But to quote Alexander Fuks, “We are not playing the—rather futile—game of <<calling names>> … Nor do we play the game of <<defending Plato>> …. Trying to understand Plato’s views
conservatives have the edge when considering the ubiquity of slavery in the ancient world, what Plato says in other places such as *The Laws*, and the fact that Plato’s definition of justice in the Kallipolis mentions them. The systematists, however, have the edge when they consider the logic of the argument in *The Republic*. The challenge therefore is to marry the benefits of both of these approaches, avoiding their faults, while admitting that there just isn’t enough textual evidence to decide the question once and for all.

I wish to argue that both positions are in one sense right and in one sense wrong. I propose a radical solution that has the advantages of both camps, namely, the advantages of a close if staid reading of the text, as well as the advantages of a reading that makes the best systematic sense of Plato. Against Vlastos, I argue that there is not room for a forth class, a class of slaves. Against Levinson, Wild, and Calvert, I argue that Plato neither is nor should be an abolitionist. Against Popper, I argue that the goal of the Kallipolis is to free its members.

Proleptically, let me say that in *The Republic*, Plato is envisaging a new social relation based neither on familial ties, nor on household interests, nor on power, but on reason that objectively frees those who Plato thinks would otherwise be suited to be slaves, regardless of whether they would actually have been classed as such in other poleis. The types of social positions available is radically transformed in the Kallipolis. Regardless of whether the traders and producers live in houses, the household is neither the fundamental political unit, nor the fundamental economic unit, so there is no place for literal slaves within households and no place for metaphorical enslavement between households. Other poleis are based on a network of competing households; the Kallipolis, in principle, is a network of singled purpose agents whose

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5 Vlastos’ landmark paper, Gregory Vlastos, "Does Slavery Exist in the *Republic*?," *Classical Philology* 63, no. 4 (1968), is generally thought to have decided the issue. I hope to alter that perception. Reprinted in Vlastos, *Platonic Studies*. Since the earlier paper’s page numbers are marked in the reprint, I retain only those.

6 Pritchard’s memorable quip with regard to the central images of *The Republic* that “none but the foolhardy claim secure convictions in their explanation” applies here too. Paul Pritchard, *Plato’s Philosophy of Mathematics*, *International Plato Studies* V. 5 (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), p.89.

7 For convenience, I am taking the economic sphere as approximately synonymous with the household sphere in the classical world as the etymology of “economics” suggests. Nothing in my argument depends on this oversimplification.
interactions and function are organized by what reason dictates is the good of the whole.\textsuperscript{8} In effect, Plato organizes the Kallipolis as one might run the best of households, were it entirely self-sufficient. The auxiliaries are the command and control mechanism by which the reason of the philosophically minded rulers \textit{in principle} permeates every social, political, and economic interaction. Plato has removed the conditions under which there \textit{could} be exploitative economic slavery. Nevertheless, Plato is no abolitionist, in fact, far from it, because he thinks that almost all people are fundamentally slaves and, in line with his aristocratic dirigisme, treats them as such. Perhaps one could say that almost everyone in the Kallipolis is a slave but there is no room for exploitation. In any case, there is not room for a fourth distinct \textit{class} behind the scenes doing the “unseemly work.”

Let me begin by briefly discussing Plato’s view on Slavery in other dialogues and in the degenerate poleis in \textit{The Republic}. That degenerate poleis have slaves is irrelevant to the question of whether there is slavery in the Kallipolis, no matter what the opposing camps seem to think—they are after all degenerate more or less real life situations, which of course have slaves. Popper is off the mark when he argues that the fact that the timocratic man is rough to slaves, whereas someone better educated only despises them [549a], means that there must be slaves in the Kallipolis, only there they will be “properly despised,” rather than roughly treated.\textsuperscript{9} Socrates, newly speaking to Adeimantus, is almost certainly taking a jab at Glaucon, although he could be proleptically referring to the homebody philosophical father figure too.\textsuperscript{10} There is no reference here to how things happen in the Kallipolis. Especially egregious in this respect are Meital and Agassi who confuse the degenerate poleis having slaves with the Kallipolis so doing, and to the extent that they distinguish between them, simply state without justification that there are “obviously” slaves in the Kallipolis.\textsuperscript{11} On the other hand, it cannot \textit{immediately} be inferred, as Wild does, that just because Plato suddenly starts talking about slavery, and more importantly

\textsuperscript{8} In effect, the single agents would almost certainly be men, the trader or producer of the household. I don’t imagine that Plato’s ‘liberation’ of female guardians extends to liberating women in the iron and bronze class. The text itself is famously unclear on the issue.


\textsuperscript{10} Joseph Gonda correctly pointed out to me that the father figure is no where described as philosophical. By philosophical here, I only mean that he is the vestige of the philosophically minded ruler in the timorous state “watering” his son’s “calculating part of the soul” with “arguments.”

enslavement, when he comes to consider the degenerate poleis, that there is no slavery in the Kallipolis. Wild does, however, accurately point out that much of the answer to the question of slavery in *The Republic* depends on what you mean by “slavery.” Nevertheless, any interpretation of *The Republic* needs to explain why it is that Plato only and obsessively discusses slavery in the context of the degenerate poleis.

Magnesia is a slightly different question because it is an ideal, although “third best” *Laws* 739e polis. Once Plato has set himself slightly more practical goals, once the “sacred line,” i.e., the owning of property *Laws* 739a, has been crossed, Plato has no doubt that there will be slaves, e.g., *Laws* 720a-e. So my claim is emphatically not that Plato was in any sense an abolitionist. As Vlastos astutely remarks, given (i) Plato’s acquiescence to barbarian enslavement by, at the very least, other Greek poleis, in *The Republic* [463b], given (ii) his enshrinement of their status in *Laws* IX, and given (iii) that Plato takes it as a fact that there are slavish types of individuals [e.g., *Republic* 395e, *Laws* IV, 720c], one is left in little doubt that Plato does not find the institution of slavery morally repugnant. Any interpretation of Plato’s position on slavery in the Kallipolis must not overstate Plato’s opposition, if any, to it. But the fact that he has a place for slaves in Magnesia is irrelevant to my thesis and argument because

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13 The pivotal point of property, the “sacred line” [Laws V:739a], marks the difference between the Kallipolis and Magnesia. This difference means that Plato does not have to talk much about the working class in the Kallipolis, whereas he does have to in *The Laws* and, for that matter, why Plato has to talk about laws in *The Laws*. As Plato makes clear [427a-b], the Kallipolis doesn’t need laws because there is a mechanism for resolving disputes even before they happen, namely, the economically disinterested guardians and the guardians themselves certainly don’t need laws. *The Republic* only aims to show why guardians should rule and how they are to be trained—and the are “laws” about their upbringing. Once those two are demonstrated, putting the true philosopher in charge is all one needs to do, that “smallest change” [473b]. The rest will work itself out. In the Kallipolis, the responsibilities set out for the trader-producers are so limited and so single-minded that there is barely scope to do anything wrong anyway. In any case, it is not necessary, in fact not possible, to teach or explain moderation to the traders and producers. Once Plato began to despair of finding humans good or wise enough to be guardians [Laws 875a-e], another implementation mechanism is required, namely, laws. Then more responsibility flows to the citizen who must follow the laws [Laws: 857c-e]. Thus in *The Laws*, Plato needs to talk about both laws and your average citizen, which he does using a medical metaphor. He distinguishes between citizens who can attain a certain amount of rationality and slaves who can’t, a distinction which is irrelevant to the trader-producers of the Kallipolis.

Plato is trying to accomplish something different in *The Republic*. The Kallipolis is a model for how we can *in principle* form a political relationship that enables freedom—and authorizes coercion.\(^{15}\) Real world constitutions are measured by how well they are able to put such ideals into practice.\(^{16}\) The freedom enabled is the freedom of rational cooperation for the benefit of the whole, as opposed to the brute authoritarianism of a timocracy and the obvious competitive factionalism of the other degenerate poleis, which I see as caused by various failures of means-ends thinking in absence of a knowledge of the Good. That freedom, which we might call the freedom of friendship, is offered to the traders and producers. “It’s better for all to be ruled by what is divine and prudent, especially when one has it as his own within himself; but, if not, set over one from outside, so that insofar as possible all will be alike and friends, piloted by the same thing” [590c-d]. It is not that the traders and producers are merely meant to provide material support for the guardians. That would trivially turn them into little better than slaves. As Aristotle notes, if traders and producers don’t have the use of the fruits of their labors “what will they gain by submitting to their government?”\(^{17}\) Organizing and moderating the trader-producers for their own benefit is the goal of the Kallipolis. *The Republic* concentrates on the production of the guardians and a justification for why they should rule, but at the end of the day the purpose of this political structure is to incorporate the trader-producer class into a unified whole. In so doing the guardians are to be “craftsmen of the city’s freedom” [395c]. But, as I shall show, the way the goals of the Kallipolis are accomplished, through peculiar property arrangements and economic dirigisme, does not allow for a distinction between trader-producers and slaves. Plato’s basic model for such an organization is a self-sufficient household. To recreate that on the larger

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\(^{15}\) Freedom is not Plato’s rhetoric, of course. Democrats had made the term their own, and Plato disparages their supposed sort of freedom. See Kurt A. Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece*, trans. Renate Franciscono (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), ch.6, for a history of the concept of freedom in ancient Greece. In ch.6, Raaflaub claims that the oligarchs ceded this use of terminology, but then oddly talks as if they had a counter-concept, namely “the fully free citizen,” i.e., the leisure class. But a better counter-concept to the democratic concept of freedom is surely to be found in Plato’s *Republic*, about which Raaflaub has curiously little to say.

\(^{16}\) As Schofield puts it, “The Laws […] announces as its own project an enquiry into the political system that so far a humanly possible approximates to it [a Kallipolis].” Malcolm Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.10-11.

\(^{17}\) *Politics* 1264a14-19. Translation following Aristotle, *Política*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885). This question implies, presumably, that the trader-producers are meant to acquiesce to be ruled, and so need to benefit from being ruled.
scale he has to get rid of competing households, while maintaining a paternalistic\textsuperscript{18} model of organization. And it is this approach that undercuts the distinction between trader-producer and slave. Here my interpretation is confirmed by how Plato thinks about the rule of reason elsewhere. In both \textit{The Laws} and \textit{The Statesman}, Plato models the rule of reason on a paternalistic household model.\textsuperscript{19} As my epigram from \textit{The Laws} has it, one is supposed to be a slave to reason. In \textit{The Statesman}, statecraft is understood by comparison with running a household and herding.\textsuperscript{20} The \textit{Statesmen} starts with the striking argument that “household management” and “statesmanship” are “convertible, since they are all identical in force” [259d].\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Charmides} too has what one could call a technocratic model.\textsuperscript{22} However, it must be noted that Plato’s position in \textit{The Statesman} and \textit{The Charmides} doesn’t solve the issue for the Kallipolis. After all, \textit{The Statesman} takes the position that it is irrelevant whether rule is of the willing or unwilling [292c-293-d] and that is hardly the position taken in the Kallipolis. \textit{The Charmides} ends up showing the shortcomings of such a model in the absence of a knowledge of the good.\textsuperscript{23}

The only other dialogue potentially relevant to my investigation is \textit{The Meno}. The view of slaves in it is markedly different to the views espoused elsewhere, but again it does not answer the question of slavery in the Kallipolis. The only use I make of it is to suggest that Plato doesn’t think of slaves as sub-human, which seems to be required of those who argue that the putative

\textsuperscript{18} I have coined this barbarism because the inclusion of female guardians means that it would be inaccurate to accuse Plato of either paternalism or patriarchy.

\textsuperscript{19} Vlastos argues that Plato thinks of not only of political relationships in terms mastery and slavery, but similarly ontological, psychological, and cosmological relationships. Vlastos thinks that such talk is merely metaphorical even in the political case of the Kallipolis. Vlastos, "Slavery in Plato’s Thought,". I, on the other hand, will argue that there is no room for a distinction between metaphorical and literal slavery in the Kallipolis.

\textsuperscript{20} George Harvey, "Politics, Slavery, and Home Economic: Defining an Expert in Plato's Statesman," \textit{Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science} 39, no. 2 (2006), demonstrates that, as the dialogue progresses, Plato increasingly highlights the differences between herding and statecraft, which primarily comes down to the use of “due measure,” or an understanding of the Good, which is also the good of the ruled. A more complicated analogy to weaving is ultimately needed. A distinction between household rule and the rule of reason is operative in \textit{The Republic} too, for it is precisely what distinguishes between goods in a household that are opposed to goods of other households and the transcendent Good of the whole that is the ultimate purpose of the Kallipolis.


\textsuperscript{22} E.g., \textit{Charm.} 171e. See below note 63.

\textsuperscript{23} See \textit{Charm.} 174c.
slaves in the Kallipolis do not need to be fitted into the psychodynamic taxonomy of *The Republic*.

Lastly, any historical conditions in ancient Greece are even less relevant than Plato’s other dialogues, unless it can be shown that, on the issue of slavery, the Kallipolis is supposed to resemble them, which I don’t think anyone has suggested—not least because it requires being completely certain that the Kallipolis has slaves, and not least because Plato gives the impression that the Kallipolis is a very different kind of polis, even an otherworldly one [e.g., 529b]. Simply put, my task in the following is to ask if within the framework of *The Republic* it is even possible to distinguish between slaves and trader-producers.

Before I enumerate the passages relevant to the question of slavery in the Kallipolis and lay down stringent criteria for any successful interpretation of Plato’s position, let me state my thesis and the route I take to show it. My thesis is that Plato thinks of the working class—whether in other poleis technically citizens or slaves—as slavish and thinks that they would, in any other polis, be enslaved either metaphorically or literally. Only the Kallipolis can ‘free’ that class—and in the Kallipolis the workers form one class. The passages I produce are often dismissed. Vlastos says that they are not meant to be taken literally.

(i) I start by arguing that there is no room for a fourth type of soul, required by a separate class of slaves—an argument already rehearsed by others—so trader-producers and putative slaves have the same psychic constitution, if you will.

(ii) Further, I also argue that due to the peculiar property structures of the Kallipolis, there is no room for a distinction between metaphoric and literal slavery within its institutions. In both cases, slavery would amount to being subject to the control of another. Both trader-producers and putative slaves are equally subject to control and the same control—the plan of the philosophically minded rulers.

(iii) I then show that the difference between trader-producers and slaves is not based on a set of tasks essentially reserved for slaves. The genesis of the febrile city demonstrates that citizens can do every task.

(iv) Nor could the function of slaves be to free up leisure time for the traders and producers. Rather the productivity of the working class in general allows the guardians to perform their function.
(v) Nor is it a question of who controls whom, the guardians being politically in charge of the traders and producers, the slaves being confined to an economic sphere controlled by the traders and producers, sequestered away from the political, for the plan of the guardians in principle controls the economic sphere for the good of the whole.

Taken together, these considerations imply that Plato means what he says. In the Kallipolis, Plato collapses any possible distinction between citizen workers and slaves, although hardly as an abolitionist. Last, I demonstrate how my reading fulfills the criterion I set down for a successful one, namely, that it is the only one to fit both the text and logic of the argument. Additionally, it is able to address the so-called presumptive argument, i.e., the argument that concludes from Plato’s silence over slavery that he leaves the institution intact.

In the course of his description of the Kallipolis, Plato mentions slaves, “douloi,” in a way pertinent to the question of whether there are slaves in the Kallipolis, four times.24

(1) His first mention is in the context of the definition of justice, namely, that people such as slaves should mind their p’s and q’s and keep to their own business.

Or is the city done the most good by the fact that—in the case of child, woman, slave, freeman, craftsman, ruler, and ruled—each one minded his own business and wasn’t a busybody [433d].25

(2) In his second mention, Plato says that rulers in other cities call their citizen wage-givers and supporters “slaves.”

And what do they call the people? Wage-givers and supporters. And what do the rulers in the other cities call the people? Slaves [463b].

(3) His third mention is in the context of the prohibition against taking Greeks as slaves in the spoils of war.

First, as to enslavement [andrapodizo], which seems just, that Greek cities enslave [andrapodizo] Greeks; or that they insofar as possible, not even allow another city to

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24 All the texts in which Plato mentions “slavery,” “enslavement,” etc., in books II-VII are given in the appendix below.

do it but make a habit to spare the Greek stock, well aware of the danger of enslavement at the hands of the barbarians? Sparing them is wholly superior. And, therefore, that they not themselves possess a Greek as a slave, and give the same advice to the other Greeks? Most certainly. At any rate in that way they would be more inclined to turn to the barbarians and keep off one another [469b-c].

(4) Plato also talks of the traders and producers as if they were slaves

And why do you suppose mechanical and manual art bring reproach? Or shall we say that this is because of anything else than when the form of the best is by nature so weak in a man that he isn’t capable of ruling the beasts in himself, but only of serving them, and is capable of learning only the things that flatter them? [590c].

The Third Mention

Let us first look at the third mention (3) of slavery in the context of the Kallipolis. Socrates is in the middle justifying the advantages of the communal arrangements of the guardians and digressing slightly to discuss how they will teach and wage the art of war when he suggests that Greeks shouldn’t enslave other Greeks defeated in battle. One might think that Plato’s clear injunction against the enslavement of other Greeks in defeat at least mitigates the scope of slavery in the Kallipolis. Here, however, Popper apparently finds definitive evidence that the Kallipolis not only allows for slavery, but is built upon it and encourages it. Popper says that Plato “goes on (in 471b-c) to encourage [the enslavement] of barbarians by Greeks, and especially by the citizens of his best city.”26 As Vlastos sardonically says, “How he [Popper] gets this out of 471BC—where enslavement is not mentioned—he does not explain.”27 Vlastos, however, does find textual evidence in these passages for slavery in the Kallipolis, although he admits correctly to its inconclusive nature. Vlastos points out that the fact that Greeks can’t take other Greeks as slaves is, according to Plato, supposed to make them fight harder against barbarians. Vlastos correctly infers that this is only a sequitur if taking slaves is a reason to fight and, if so, you must have them. Vlastos with great care and honesty points out that it is not one hundred percent clear that the “they,” who would fight better against the barbarians, includes the Kallipolis or not, although he is correct when he says that it is grammatically and contextually

possible that the Kallipolis is included. That having been said, despite the fact that Vlastos’ textual analysis is magnificent and balanced, he doesn’t take full account of logic of the surrounding argument. Plato has already told us that the Kallipolis gives away any spoils of war [422d]. It is conceivable in the context, I suppose, that the victorious Kallipolis would be forbidden only from taking gold or silver away with them but could load up with slaves. I find such a suggestion improbable, to say the least. But even if the Kallipolis does have slaves, even if they could capture slaves in war, given that in the very next lines Plato says that continual aggrandizement divides a city and is not for the Kallipolis [423b], and we know that self-sufficiency is the mark of a non-febrile city [373e and 423b], it is absolutely impossible that a Kallipolis could be engaged in war in order to enslave barbarians as a general rule. It neither needs more slaves to grow, nor does it need more slaves maintain itself, so it doesn’t need to replenish or increase its putative stock of slaves as a general rule. That is the claim that Vlastos needs to be true in order to make his argument about Plato’s line of reasoning and its implications. Thus on balance, the prohibition of enslavement of Greeks by Greeks is at best agnostic on the question of barbarian slaves in the Kallipolis. The possibility of barbarian slaves in the Kallipolis is left open.28

The First Mention

That leaves three mentions. At face value, the first mention (1), the mention of slaves in the context of the definition of justice [433d] seems to suggest that there are slaves in the Kallipolis. One must admit, considerable, not to say disingenuous ingenuity is used to get round this minor inconvenient fact, if one is in the “no” camp. Only Calvert, to my knowledge, wisely admits the full extent of the “damage” that this line does to the anti-slavery camp’s case.29 He credits Levinson with such an admission, but I find no evidence of it, save that he addresses the sentence.30 Calvert opts for merely keeping alive the idea that slavery is, nevertheless, inconsistent with the logic of the soul espoused by Plato in The Republic. Plato’s other defenders have three strategies. They either say that this list is a completely parenthetical remark, or that

28 Bernard Bosanquet, A Companion to Plato's Republic for English Readers (New York: Macmillan and co., 1895), p.84, for one ponders whether Plato might have not thought that slaves were the product of was because they are not mentioned in the ur-poleis.


30 Levinson, In Defense of Plato, p.171.
Plato wasn’t thinking about the Kallipolis, or that he had somehow forgotten he was speaking about the Kallipolis.\textsuperscript{31} Vlastos conclusively shows that the context demands that the sentence refers to members of the Kallipolis; Plato is after all defining the nature of justice in the Kallipolis,\textsuperscript{32} although that line of reasoning ultimately presents problems for Vlastos, since he is arguing that slaves are a fourth class excluded from the Kallipolis.\textsuperscript{33} Vlastos then heaps a certain amount of scorn on the third textual strategy, and not without good reason. All other things being equal, if the choice is between imputing confusion to a philosophical writer of the stature of Plato and one’s interpretation being wrong, no matter how much one would like one’s interpretation to be right, it is the interpretation that must be jettisoned. I lay down the following firm criterion that any reading of The Republic on the question of slavery needs to take this comment at face value. However, the question remains as to what its face value is, for it is undeniably parenthetical. The clause’s purpose is to give examples of different statuses and roles to exemplify the kind of minding your own business that is needed for the justice that allows a Kallipolis to come into being.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{The Second and Fourth Mentions}

The second mention (2) that says the people corresponding to those called wage-givers in the Kallipolis are thought of as slaves by their rulers in other poleis [463b], occurs, like the third, in the context of demonstrating that the social arrangements of the guardians will unify their polis—unity being the be all and end all of any political entity [462a-b]. It might be taken to suggest that just about everyone is a slave outside of the Kallipolis. Popper surely overstates his case when he says that this means for “propagandist reasons” slaves are simply called something else in the Kallipolis, but if they aren’t we need to understand in what way they are liberated in the Kallipolis.\textsuperscript{35}

The fourth mention (4) occurs outside the discussion of the Kallipolis proper at the very end of book IX. Socrates has returned to a discussion of the tripartite soul using yet another

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{31} E.g., ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Vlastos, "Does Slavery Exist in the Republic?," p.294.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} See “Slavery, Literal and Metaphoric,” below.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} See my concluding section, “Reasonably Free,” for how I interpret it.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, p.47.
\end{itemize}
famous image, this time of the lion tamer, the lion, and the many headed beast. He is discussing why some people need external control for their own good, yet holds open the possibility of friendship for all. This ideal goes some way to explain why Plato thinks that his Kallipolis is, pace Popper, liberating, or in his terms virtuous. In his discussion, he seems to suggest that just about everyone in the Kallipolis is a slave or at the very least slavish [590c-d]. It has been argued that “practitioners of mechanical and manual arts” does not refer to the trader-producers as a whole. But it surely applies at least to “some other servants [diakonoi] who, in terms of their minds wouldn’t be quite up to the level of partnership, but whose bodies are strong enough for labor,” [371e] and, presumably, many if not all of the trader-producer class. Thus at least some of the Kallipolis’ members are slavish and suited to be slaves in other poleis, yet citizens in the Kallipolis. The correct interpretation of both of these last mentions of slavery hangs on what the possible differences are between metaphoric and literal slavery both in a Kallipolis and in other poleis.

As I have already pointed out, the fact that degenerate poleis have slaves does not by itself demonstrate that there is slavery in the Kallipolis. Equally, the introduction of slavery and enslavement at that point in the text does not immediately exclude there being slaves in the Kallipolis. That having been said, something peculiar is certainly afoot. This fact, along with the three mentions of slavery gives us the framework within which we need to understand how the Kallipolis works. Any interpretation of Plato’s position on slavery in The Republic that is worth its salt needs to:

(i) address the difference between what slavery could mean in or out of the Kallipolis,

(ii) sort out the differences between literal and metaphoric uses of the word, as well as

(iii) explain the sudden profusion of the term in Plato’s discussion of the degenerate poleis.

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36 E.g., Schofield, Plato: Political Philosophy, pp.273-4.

37 In the first seven books of The Republic, “doulos” or a related word occurs fourteen times, “diakonos” [servant] four, “andrapodon” (or its verbal form) [often a war captive] thrice, and “oiketês” [domestic] twice. (I will discuss the differences between when Plato uses these terms below, see note 75.) There are more than forty mentions of these in the next two books, with an astounding twenty of those between 575b and 579a. At the very least, one can’t say that Plato didn’t have slavery and even more enslavement in mind when he was writing The Republic. He is almost obsessed with slavery and enslavement, with his description of the worst possible state imaginable, namely tyranny, being literally “the bitterest enslavement to slaves” [569c]. See the appendix for a complete list of relevant passage in Books II-VII.
These three considerations, along with the stipulation that the occurrence of “slave” in the definition of justice must be taken at face value, form the criteria for evaluating the success of any reading of Plato on the issue of slavery in the Kallipolis.

**Slavery, Literal and Metaphoric**

Since my claim is that in the Kallipolis Plato collapses the difference between slaves and trader-producers, let me first consider if there can be a psychological difference between the trader-producers and slaves. Plato, in our fourth mention (4), which I re-quote here, seems to straightforwardly say no.

And why do you suppose mechanical and manual art bring reproach? Or shall we say that this is because of anything else than when the form of the best is by nature so weak in a man that he isn’t capable of ruling the beasts in himself, but only of serving them, and is capable of learning only the things that flatter them? … In order that such a man [the mechanical and manual artist] is also ruled by something similar to what rules the best man, don’t we say that he must be the slave of that best man who has the divine rule in himself? [590c].

If traders and producers are slavish, perhaps literal slaves don’t really have comparable souls to citizens at all. But, as Vlastos has shown, ironically showing the weakness of his position, slaves do have their place in the psychodynamic taxonomy of the Kallipolis, whatever that might be since our first mention (1) of slavery [433d] tell us it is only by them knowing and staying in their place that there is justice—and justice is the parts of the soul working in harmony coordinating each soul with every other one so that the soul of the Kallipolis is in harmony. So, slaves need to be fitted into the psychodynamic taxonomy of the Kallipolis. If *per hypothese*, they have a psyche different from the traders and producers, it would mean that there would need to be a fourth part of the soul that predominates in slaves, but not in trader-producers, but there isn’t a fourth part. Alternatively, it can’t be that slaves are a fourth *class* in the Kallipolis when there are only three types of soul. As Calvert points out, Plato [435b ff. especially 441c] gives the overwhelming impression that the tripartite analysis is complete.\(^{38}\) Calvert pointedly concludes that, faced with a choice of either saying that the soul-city analogy breaks down or

saying that slaves don’t have a fourth type of psyche, the choice is fairly clear. Of course, because he still thinks slaves would differ from trader-producers in the Kallipolis, he has no way of explaining Plato’s reference to them.

Even if we suppose, despite the fact that the definition of justices tells us that they must, that slaves don’t have to be fitted into the psychodynamic taxonomy of *The Republic*, then what souls must they have? The only suggestion I can imagine is that they have to be considered sub-human. Aristotle doesn’t distinguish between male souls, female souls and the souls of slaves in *De Anima*. Yet, he does in his *Politics*. “For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority” [*Politics*, 1260a13-14]. So for him slaves are human, just deficient. But this option is not possible for Plato. He has already built his class system into the working of souls in the first place. Souls are tripartite with one part dominant. The trader-producers are those who, left to their own devices can’t run their life according to reason, that is the trait of the philosopher. Nor can they be taught to run their life according to true opinion—that is the trait of the auxiliary. So they are already similar to Aristotelian slaves. Any lower than this, slaves would have to be bestial, which would certainly preclude them from having to be included in the psychodynamic taxonomy of *The Republic*, but then they wouldn’t appear in the definition of justice and, what we can, I think, infer from the *Meno* here is that Plato does not think that the psyche of a literal slave is *that* radically different from the psyche of any other human. Just as *The Laws* doesn’t settle the issue of slavery in the Kallipolis, *The Meno* doesn’t either. But it does strongly suggest that Plato doesn’t think of slaves as bestial or no better than tools. Plato is clear that the slave-boy could have true knowledge. “But if the same questions are

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39 Ibid., 371-2.


41 Curiously enough for Aristotle it is more important for slaves to have virtue than artisans. “For the slave shares his master’s life; the artisan is less connected with him and only attains excellence in proportion as he becomes a slave.” [1260a39-41]. Translation following Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

42 Bobonich argues that precisely because Plato has a more optimistic view of the ability of *some* of the non-philosophical to be virtuous in *The Laws*, he has to shift to a more unified conception of the soul, which in turn opens up space for their to be a distinction between citizens and workers, including slaves. Christopher Bobonich, *Plato’s Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch.’s3-4. Whether this is more ‘liberal’ or not depends on one’s view of the lot of the traders and producers and the degree to which they can be virtuous in the Kallipolis. Bobonich argues they can’t, Kahn that they can. Charles H. Kahn, "From Republic to Laws," *Oxford Studies of Ancient Philosophy* 26, no. Summer (2004), p.348.
put to him on many occasions and in different ways, you can see that in the end he will have a knowledge on the subject as accurate as anybody’s.”  

Thus, in *The Meno*, slaves too have the truth waiting to be unforgotten, which suggests that they have the same sort of souls as citizens, or at the very least are not bestial. I am not claiming that the way that Plato treats slaves in *The Meno* is even compatible with the way he treats them elsewhere, for it plainly isn’t compatible with his treatment of them in *The Laws*, where it is useless for a doctor to explain anything to them [857c-e]. His use of them in *The Meno* could just be a rhetorical ploy to shame anyone who shares Meno’s fleeting inference that we should give up searching for knowledge. But I am claiming that holding that they are bestial in *The Republic* is just too incompatible.

Even if it seems that putative slaves and trader-producers have the same type of soul, one might think that the difference is that trader-producers are not treated as slaves. But Plato has just said quite the reverse. “Don’t we say that he must be the slave of that best man who has the divine rule in himself?” [590c] Here for once, the secondary literature is in agreement; all have underestimated the importance of this statement. Morrow blithely says that such metaphorical uses of *doulos* have “confused commentators.”

Levinson mentions the passage in passing and even he too dismisses it as metaphorical. Vlastos, influenced by Morrow, writes off Plato’s plain statement with the claim that

He [Plato] certainly does not mean to be taken literally. He neither means to degrade all artisans to the level of bondmen, nor to raise the social status of the slave to that of a free laborer. There is not the slightest indication, either in *The Republic* or anywhere else, that Plato means to obliterate or relax in anyway that distinction.

As evidence, Vlastos cites Morrow’s text on the *Laws*, which only shows that Plato doesn’t have universal sympathy for the predicament of slaves. If Plato is indeed collapsing the difference between the lowest citizens and slaves, it is not to liberate the slaves, but because he doesn’t think much of the *hoi polloi*. Telling us that Plato doesn’t think very highly of slaves either, hardly argues against such an “emancipation.” As to the question of textual evidence for

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whether or not Plato means what he says, there is, of course, the very passage in question (!), but let us suppose for the nonce that Vlastos is right that here; Plato is referring to traders and producers only metaphorically as slaves. According to Vlastos there are, additionally, literal slaves. So what is the difference in this scenario between a literal and a metaphoric slave? In line with the fact that the ancients didn’t think that the protection of private property was the primary function of states, slaves, according to Ste. Croix, were not defined in the ancient world in terms of being unable to own nor of being owned. Rather, what made a slave a slave is that a slave is ordered about, not to put too fine a point on it, or cannot “live as he likes” as Aristotle puts it [Politics: 1317b11-13]. In this regard, the putative literal and figurative slaves are identical. Plato famously doesn’t discuss the institution of slavery anywhere in his corpus in detail. The nearest he comes to defining the difference between slaves and citizens is in The Laws [720a-e], where slaves are differentiated from freemen by their inability to reason fully, at least in a medical context. Clearly, in this regard, the figurative and literal slaves of the Kallipolis are identical too. I, however, shall refer to Morrow’s enumeration of what he take literal slavery to be because it is the one least amenable to my argument.

(i) a slave is a possession,
(ii) subject to the will of another,
(iii) who possesses no rights of action,


49 Morrow, “Plato and Greek Slavery,” p.188. I have made the absence of property rights explicit, which is not listed by Morrow but is presumably included under rights of action. I have excluded moral and religious injunctions protecting slaves because it seems fair to presume that if there are slaves in the Kallipolis they aren’t abused.

50 “Will” is Morrow’s term. I do not care for it as it anachronistically projects a modern concept back into Greek thought and brings with it an idea of purely individual liberty, which is alien to the Greeks. Much could be said for “subject” too. In Plato’s terms, when the philosophically minded rulers use the auxiliaries to moderate the trader-producers, they are implementing a rational order using spirit for the good of the whole. The modern concept of will doesn’t feature. Part of this dynamic doesn’t involve an individual will per se at all. In the ancient world, slavery was often equated with any type of tyranny, whatever its cause, but the freedom to which it opposed is neither the childish idea of being able to do what one wants, nor based on the exercise of some purely private will. Rather, freedom is the freedom of being politically self-determined by having the self-mastery to cooperate rationally with other such agents so as to benefit the polis as a whole. Self-mastery and self-determination are the key elements to, at the very least, Plato’s notion of freedom. I think Plato would think of our concept of negative liberty as childish and find the modern obsession with the opposition between individual happiness and social duty as barmy. They aren’t opposed for him and if you think that they are you can’t be free in Plato’s sense at all. To criticize Plato from within such a framework, as say Popper does, is to presume, without argument, an understanding of liberty completely foreign to Plato. John J. Cleary, “Popper on Freedom and Equality in Plato,” Polis: The Journal of the Society for the Study of Greek Political Thought 22, no. 1 (2005), demonstrates this point in detail.
(iv) nor political rights,
(v) including, presumably, property rights.

The trouble with the first two of these characteristics of being a slave is that they are mutually incompatible in the Kallipolis. Simply put, as all in the “no” camp have pointed out, the guardians famously have no property, so they can’t be the ones who own slaves. Nor, on Vlastos’ account, would slaves be needed by the guardians. On Vlastos’ account, they would be needed by the traders and producers. But as Calvert points out and even Vlastos admits the point plainly obvious from Plato, namely, to use Vlastos’ own words, “[T]he title to absolute authority over persons is conferred by philosophic wisdom.”  

51 Surely, this rules out anyone but the philosophically minded having legitimate authority over slaves. Vlastos does not say how Plato could consistently hold that the iron and bronze class could hold slaves, leaving his account incomplete if not completely inconsistent. The “no” camp is on much stronger ground here when they try to consider systematically how slavery might work in the Kallipolis. It seems the only people who could use slaves shouldn’t, and the ones that have the right to can’t.  

52 If one drops being owned as part of the definition of slavery, then it seems, as Heitland remarks, the auxiliaries are the only literal slaves in the Kallipolis, since they both own nothing and are subject to control.  

53 Nor is the difference between literal and metaphoric slavery a question of who has property rights. Although the traders and producers can use property, they do not have property rights. That “unlimited acquisition of money” is the root of all “evils both public and private” [373e] and that it is equally important for citizens to “keep and eye out against poverty and war” [372c] surely entails that the guardians regulate economic activity including the concentration and distribution of property.  

54 If one removes both being owned and not having property rights from the definition of slavery then there is no difference between literal and metaphorical slavery. It does indeed again look as if Plato has collapsed the difference between citizen trader-producers and slaves in the Kallipolis. Both amount to being controlled.


52 I discuss below whether trader-producers could have some independent practical non-philosophic authority over their putative slaves.


Perhaps then the difference between slaves and trader-producers is in some set of tasks
set aside for slaves. To see if such a set of tasks exists we need to turn to the genesis of the
febrile city from the city of sows. Both the “no” and the “yes” camps agree that nowhere in The
Republic does Plato talk about a class of slaves, neither in the febrile city nor any other. Even
here, however, the conclusion to be drawn from this for each of the camps is the exact opposite.
This is where the difference of temperaments between the two camps is clearest. Vlastos gives us
what is accurately called by Calvert, “the presumptive argument,” namely, that if Plato were
going to radically alter this universal economic, social, and political structure, he surely would
have mentioned it, nay argued for it. The “no” camp claims that such an absence—if,
presumably, one reads between the lines—argues for the absence of slavery in the Kallipolis. I
think, to be fair, the absence of the mention of the abolition of slavery by Plato tells against the
“abolitionist” camp, but the “yes” camp draws the false conclusion from the presumptive
argument, namely, that everything must be just like it was in Athens or at least ancient Greece,
unless Plato says otherwise. Plato constructs the Kallipolis and lays down very clear lines for
how many parts are to be included and what each part should and should not be doing. It is to a
systematic analysis of Plato’s reasoning that we should go to try to understand to what extent
there is a need or place for slaves in the Kallipolis, rather than to the history books. Here, as
whenever the logic of Plato’s argument is considered, the “no” camp has the advantage.

Plato starts off with four or five men. This merry little band of men are professionals at
what they specialize in doing. The implication seems to be that there aren’t to be slave masters
organizing all the basic functions. Rather, the original inhabitants of the city of sows are to get
their own hands dirty. So too the craftsmen, the herdsman, the merchants, the seamen, the
tradesmen, and finally the day-laborers, who all belong to the same class. To claim that there
needs to be a whole class of slaves to accomplish something not accomplished by this motley
crew is not ruled out, but it is hardly suggested. More importantly, many of these tasks were
carried out by slaves in Athens. Plato includes as wage-earning laborers “other servants
(diakonoi) who, in terms of their minds, wouldn’t be quite up to the level of partnership

56 E.g., Wild, Plato’s Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law, p.50.
57 Interestingly, Benardete suggests that the fifth is the soldier. I don’t see why this should have to be so, however,
p.54.
(αξιοκοινόνετοι), but whose bodies are strong enough for labor.” Plato has such workers be only slaves or foreigners in The Laws [V: 742a]. Aristotle classifies people who are fit only for manual labor as slaves by nature (1254b20ff. and chapter 5, book 1 of his Politics generally). It seems that one of the roles for slaves in ancient Greece is performed in the city of sows and presumably in the Kallipolis by citizens. Presumably, the febrile city, close as it is to Socrates’ and Plato’s historical reality would or could have slaves, but it is not due to the addition of specific roles. The luxurious city needs more servants (διακόνοι)\textsuperscript{58} to perform increasingly diverse tasks, but as the servants mentioned before are emphatically not a separate class, then neither can more of them form a distinct class. Thus there is no textual evidence that either basic or more specialized tasks are essentially reserved for slaves.\textsuperscript{59} Levinson goes so far as to remark that slaves “would come dangerously near to being a leisure class.”\textsuperscript{60} Calvert, who also cites Levinson, stresses that the absence of a class of work for slaves undercuts the need for a class of slaves in the Kallipolis, but again leaves it possible that Plato envisaged there being slaves in the Kallipolis anyway.\textsuperscript{61} In any case, Slaves are not essentially distinguished from traders-producers on the basis of what they do. Nor, it should be added, given what Plato says about the evils of leisure [421d], are slaves supposed to free up traders and producers from work.

Who, however, is the “we” at 373c who needs more servants? The “we” could be the impersonal “one” of the city builder, but in context, it could just as well be Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus in particular or guardians in general, who of course need to be liberated from work to practice only warfare and ruling, and who, although they start out as merely another profession, do form another class. In the run up to the introduction of the guardians, talk of the “we” becomes more pronounced. Similarly, the fact that the guardians get more “leisure time” [347e] indicates that they are the class who would have slaves, since having leisure and owning slaves, historically, went hand in hand, as Plato’s contemporary readers would well have known. Thus, if anything, the historical conditions of antiquity, when read into a systematic reading of

\textsuperscript{58} For a discussion of the different terms Plato uses to refer to workers, see my note 75, below.

\textsuperscript{59} As a matter of fact, at least in Athens, slaves weren’t distinguished merely on the basis of what they did. While some jobs, such as working in the silver mines were reserved for slaves and convicts, and some positions such as owning land denied even metics, slaves held a myriad of positions including such ones as banking, and some citizens were what Plato calls wage-earners doing jobs and of a temperament that Aristotle says marks them as slaves.

\textsuperscript{60} Levinson, In Defense of Plato, p.171.

the generation of the city of sows and then the febrile city argues for the traders and producers being the nearest thing the Kallipolis has to slaves.

The psyche of slaves and trader-producers are the same. They are both equally slaves to the extent that are controlled by the plan of the philosophically minded rulers. They can’t be essentially distinguished by what they do. They don’t provide for the leisure time of the traders and producers, nor for the guardians any more than they do with the traders and producers as a whole. The only difference left is simply who controls whom. Do the guardians via the auxiliaries control the producers and traders and the producers and traders control their slaves? First, I cannot see how this wouldn’t violate the one person one job rule. Both from the description of the members of the city of sows, that is a healthy city, in which everyone does his appointed task getting his hands dirty, and which, in this regard, the Kallipolis surely emulates [369aff], and from the one man one task rule [e.g., 370b], one gets the distinct impression that traders and producers are supposed to do work themselves rather than order their slaves to do it for them. Plato seems to allow for traders and producers to swap jobs, but what he doesn’t want them ever to do is “advise” [bouleutikos] others [434a-c]. De jure, commanding others so that each part works for the benefit of the whole is the job of the guardians. Second, if the trader-producers are to have slaves not at least under the control of the guardians once removed, it would required that there is an unregulated economic sphere separate from the political. I suggest that there is not. What the trader-producers do with their time and tools is organized for the good of the whole—that is the whole point of political union in the first place. The whole point of one person one job is presumably so that the guardians don’t have to micromanage everyone all the time and they can be left to their own devices. But all interactions, such as what people do, how much people work, and what rewards they receive for it are in the service the whole. Even if Plato doesn’t discuss this function of the guardians extensively in The Republic, he does discuss such a function elsewhere, specifically in The Statesman and The Charmides. As The Charmides has it, “Nor should we allow those who were under us to do anything which they were not likely to do well.” [Charm. 171e]. In The Republic, the city of sows is the minimum

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62 See above note 20.

63 Of course, it turns out that technocratic rule is insufficient since the rulers need to know not only how to organize others to accomplish ends, but which ends are good, see Charm. 174c. Translation following Plato, "Charmides," Translated by Benjamin Jowett, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato, Including the Letters, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961). See Schofield, Plato: Political Philosophy, ch.4.
sustainable political association; the “city of utmost necessity” [369d]. If anyone works, less everyone would starve. No one can work more because if they could then it would not be the minimum political association. With the increased productive capacity of the luxurious city, there arises the question of how we distribute the chores and goods. Now, choice and the possibility of pleonexia—the real opposite to justice—arises. This is the economic overheating, the febrile nature of the luxurious city that the guardians need to control.64 They don’t do it by eliminating the benefits of increased productivity for the trader-producers. Plato’s strategy is not to return to the city of sows. That would be trying to make the trader-producers as abstemious as the guardians. Rather, because the guardians are economically disinterested, they can organize the economy of everyone else. “The desires in the common many are mastered by the desires and the prudence in the more decent few” [431c-d].65 The guardians must, at least in principle, be in charge of the economic sphere.

Even though I think it violates the one person one job rule, let us consider what someone who thinks that the Kallipolis does have slaves must say. They say that, for instance, a vintner would need slaves to harvest the grapes in September. Certainly, as a practical matter, he might need some help. But the owner of a vineyard would not be allowed to sip Retsina on the back porch during the harvest. If the benefits flowing from the productivity of his workers were to go to him and his household as opposed to the rest of the Kallipolis then he would be practicing pleonexia and that would put households in competition with one another again each trying to get the better of the others. Internal exploitation is just the obverse of external metaphoric slavery. The fact that the purpose of putative slaves, for Plato, couldn’t possibly be to free up leisure time for the trader-producers is just another way of saying that in principle the economic sphere is organized so as to perform for the good of the whole Kallipolis and if necessary be actively regulated by the auxiliaries.

64 This answers Barney’s question, “What is to prevent the appetites of such people from becoming immoderate?” In the city of sows no one has the opportunity to be immoderate. R Barney, "Platonism, Moral Nostalgia, and the "City of Pigs"." in Proceeding of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy (2001), 220. Nor is the city of sows an “arbitrary start” Schofield, Plato: Political Philosophy, p.204. It is the logically smallest social unit. It is not a historical beginning, of course, because in reality humans always posses the ability for pleonexia and choice.

65 As Schofield remarks, a) “Primitivism, in short, is not a serious option,” but b) if the luxuries are going to be purged from the city the guardians will have to “control the way society operates from within.” Schofield, Plato: Political Philosophy, pp.204-5.
The question of leisure time and the good of the whole is important for my argument. There is just not enough textual evidence in *The Republic* to produce a valid argument from undeniably true premises to decide, once and for all, the question of slavery in the Kallipolis. It can always be objected to my thesis that Plato doesn’t say that the traders and producers don’t have slaves and may not even have thought about the economic arrangements of the Kallipolis. But as there isn’t a valid argument for the counter-proposal either, in order to adjudicate between them we have to judiciously weigh them against each other. I cannot see how the claim that the traders and producers have slaves does not amount to freeing the trader-producers up for leisure time and putting them into conflict with the good of the whole and I can’t see how this difficulty for the argument for slavery in the Kallipolis doesn’t weigh decisively in my favor. It has been argued that trader-producers might be allowed a certain number of putative slaves so that they could have a limited amount of spare time, say, to attend festivals. If that is for the good of the whole then it is no different than the guardians being freed up for the art of war. Freeing up the guardians for the art of war doesn’t enslave the trader-producers, so freeing up some workers for some duty doesn’t enslave others who don’t need to be there. Only if it is for the good of the trader-producer as opposed to the whole do we have pleonexia and those freeing him up for this purpose are enslaved. What makes the guardians another class is that they are economically disinterested and virtuous and so can coordinate the Kallipolis for the good of the whole. This distinction does not obtain between trader-producers and any putative helpers. What makes the example so deceptive is that it is hard not to imagine not being required to attend festivals as being equivalent to being a slave. The question is, however, whether the logic of the set up of the Kallipolis allows for distinctions in, say, who goes to festivals to translate into a distinction between citizen and slave. It does not, first, because, as has been so oft remarked, piety does not feature in the virtues of the Kallipolis and, second, because class distinctions are based on the possibility of rational economic disinterest and that is based on distinctions in the relative power of the three parts of the soul. In Athens, democracy may have to some extent depended on slavery freeing up time for civic duties, but in the Kallipolis, any organization of tasks doesn’t free up the trader-producers into a class opposed to slaves. The workers are the organized and the guardians are the organizing principle. The philosophically minded rulers have the plan, the

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66 By an anonymous reviewer.
auxiliaries are the method of implementation, and the workers are the body into which the plan is impressed to produce a cohesive unity for the benefit of the whole.

If the putative slaves are working for the good of the whole they are no different from the trader-producers. In principle they could freely co-operate, if not they need to be forced to do so for the good of the whole and their good, just as the trader-producers must be. The guardians could conceivably force the trader-producers to force their putative helpers to work in a certain way. But who tells whom to do what is irrelevant. What it relevant is that all are equally coordinated for the good of the whole. Nor can one say that putative slaves are those who cannot understand to co-operate freely because that is in general true of the trader-producers because they too need to be moderated. The ability to learn to moderate themselves is the mark of auxiliaries. There is no room within the framework of The Republic for a systematic distinction between those putative slaves who are forced to comply and trader-producers who are voluntary slaves to the rule of the philosophically minded rulers. Perhaps one can say that by and large the workers, guided by the Myth of Metals, enjoying the benefits of a well run polis, can freely acquiesce in general to be forcibly moderated in specific situations. Again, the psychodynamic taxonomy of The Republic places trader-producers and any putative helpers in the same boat. Each economic endeavor down to the very last worker is in principle organized for the benefit of the whole Kallipolis and each benefits from being in that well run Kallipolis. In practice, of course, groups of worker have to co-ordinate and that means effectively that there will have to be some local vertical command structure. The farmer has to coordinate the harvest. But philosophically speaking there is a political relation obtaining between each person to allow for the possibility of free cooperation and the legitimacy of coercion because all are interacting for the good of the whole.

**Conclusion: Reasonably Free**

Now that we have cleared up the question of whether there is a hidden slave class in the Kallipolis, in order to fulfill the aforementioned criteria of a successful reading of The Republic on the question of slavery, we need to:

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67 As discussed, for instance, in The Laws [700a].
(i) Answer the presumptive argument, namely, that if Plato were going to abolish slavery, he would have mentioned it.

(ii) Explain the three outstanding times that slavery is mentioned in the context of the Kallipolis:

1. First, when slaves are given as an example of who should stay in their place if the Kallipolis is to be just.
2. Second, when traders and producers are expressly said to be called slaves by their rulers under other regimes [463b], and fourth, then said to be slaves [590c-d].

(iii) Explain why Plato suddenly starts talking about slavery, almost obsessively, as soon as he starts discussing the degenerate poleis but not before.

(i) The presumptive argument is easily put to rest. The reason Plato doesn’t tell us that slavery is abolished in the Kallipolis is because he isn’t an abolitionist—far from it. To put it bluntly, in a sense, he has turned just about everybody into a slave. Of course, Plato doesn’t go out of his way to point out that he thinks of many who would have otherwise been citizens as equivalent to slaves, so a different form of the presumptive argument might apply here too, namely, that if Plato wanted to collapse the difference between slaves and citizens, why didn’t he say so? To this new form of the presumptive argument, I have three things to say: a) Plato does say as much when Plato is discussing moderation. “And further one would find many diverse desires, pleasures, and pains, especially in children, women, domestics (oiketês), and in those who are called free (eleutherôn legomenôn) among the common many (phaulos)” [431b-c]. Clearly, being called free doesn’t suffice to make you different from the ones not so designated. b) Since he is trying to sell the idea of the Kallipolis, overtly insulting many of the then citizens of Athens wouldn’t be in his interests. And c) the Kallipolis is, according to Plato, the only place where such individuals are truly free, and that surely is the point.69

68 The third mention (3), concerning the enslavement of Greeks by Greeks, has been ruled out as irrelevant to our present concern. See “Third Mention” above.

69 Plato is undoubtedly a little ambivalent about the workers and producers as is shown by his reluctance to talk about their education. In Magnesia, the whole city has “all things in common,” Laws: 739b. And if the constitution of this ideal city is close to that of the Kallipolis, as Garnsey argues, then that would suggest that the Kallipolis’ trader-producer class would not be citizens of Magnesia. Peter Garnsey, Thinking About Property: From Antiquity to the Age of Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.14-5.
(ii) The first (1) mention of slavery in the context of justice [433d] is similarly easily accounted for. If people—such as slaves, women, and children, those who should be ruled, as well as those who should rule—know their place and stay in their place, justice will reign in the polis, and the workings of the Kallipolis will set all free, at least objectively, if not subjectively. To describe what justice does, Plato needs names for people before and people after the institution of justice. Before we have people like slaves, women, and children and justice subsequently organizes them so we get a Kallipolis with its three classes. Just as women form a type of person before, but not after, so can slaves.

That Plato thinks of the traders and producers as slavish should come as no surprise and that explains the fourth mention (4) of slavery [590c-d].

That leaves the second (2) mention of slavery in the Kallipolis when Plato says that traders and producers are called slaves by their rulers in other poleis [463b]. This looks forward to the degenerate poleis, and serves to underline that literal and metaphorical slavery are the inevitable result of all other political arrangements, whose politics are similarly infected by household competition and the untrammeled desire for wealth.

(iii) The reason Plato begins explicitly talking about slavery, both literal and metaphorical, as the Kallipolis degenerates is that for the first time there is room for the distinction between them and thus room for either literal or metaphorical slavery, properly speaking. The individual participants in the Kallipolis have retreated behind the walls of the household, politically and economically speaking. The position of the producers and traders has been exchanged for the position of slaves, the position of the guardians has become the position of the patriarchs. Without a way for participants to have a political relationship, only a relationship based on economics is possible, and that means brute power is all that counts. Within the household, the

70 The difference between subjective and objective freedom in the context is a point nicely made by Hegel in his lectures on Plato, see G.F.W. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995(1830)), p. II:90ff, especially p.105, G.F.W. Hegel, Vorlesungen Über Die Geschicte Der Philosophie, vol. 19, Werke [in 20 Bänden] / Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (Frankfurt am Main: Surkampf, 1996(1830)), p.105ff., particularly pp.119-120. Interpretations often miss this distinction and come down too hard on one side or other. Thus, R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, Plato's Republic; a Philosophical Commentary (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964), p.100, have the traders and producers be little better than automata; on the other hand, Paul Shorey, "The Idea of Justice in Plato's 'Republic'," The Ethical Record II, no. 4 (Jan) (1890), p.193, surely goes too far when he says that this subjective side of freedom is that "with which Plato was chiefly concerned."

71 More contentiously, I wonder whether we could say that the position of the auxiliaries, who are the feet on the ground controlling the traders and producers according to the plan of the philosophically minded rulers is exchanged for the position of the wife organizing her household according to the wishes of its patriarch.
lack of a polis-wide way to distribute chores and goods creates *household* slaves.\(^{72}\) Between households, the lack of a polis-wide way to distribute chores and goods initially creates psychic conflict in the timocrat, but soon creates figurative enslavement in the case of the oligarchy, and the democracy, and finally enslavement to slaves in the case of tyranny. In the absence of philosophic disinterested dispute arbitration, each household competes in the polis to subjugate others to its will and advantage, each household tries to enslave the other households metaphorically. Those that loose in such contests of wiles are metaphorically enslaved, they aren’t self-directed. But those who win loose too, according to Plato. That is the whole point of arguing that even a tyrant who controls everyone by force is enslaved too. So Plato is in effect arguing that freedom is impossible in any polis that does not at least approximate the Kallipolis in effect. Therefore he recommends trying to stay out of politics and staying at home to the extent that one can be self-sufficient, i.e., create a mini Kallipolis at home \[549c\]. The implication of this doctrine is that even Socrates and Plato are not truly free, except perhaps at home in the world of ideas, except perhaps to the extent that they can live as if they lived in a Kallipolis [see 592a-b]—and others, at least some, would have to co-operate in this endeavor, and except perhaps to the extent that Plato was living a life trying to set up a Kallipolis, or polis or citizens similar enough, which would be the best self-directed goal one for which one can strive in the absence of a Kallipolis. I believe that Plato doesn’t distinguish between metaphoric and literal slavery because for him what is really at issue is power verses free cooperation. Once in a system where those who are by nature “internally” slavish are unregulated, everyone is more or less “externally” enslaved because everyone is in a power relation.\(^{73}\) Constitutions, such as *The Laws*, allow for freedom to the extent that their results alleviate all the problems that property brings with it and mimic the results of the Kallipolis, but without the same

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\(^{72}\) Household slavery is almost certainly not bad, for Plato, in and of itself. The good father of the timocratic regime \[549c\] could certainly try to run his household as if it were a self-sufficient Kallipolis for the benefit of the household as a whole. The only Platonic worry would be if it allows a patriarch to be lazy. Yet again, I stress that my claim is not that Plato is an abolitionist.

\(^{73}\) Plato, unlike Aristotle, never explicitly distinguishes between conventional slavery and natural slavery, either. If we have to hazard a guess, I think that by and large he has no need for slavery by convention, not least because he thinks of so many people as slaves by nature. I think he is more worried about the slavish getting in charge rather than the reverse. War captives aren’t needed in the Kallipolis or Magnesia, since they are both designed to be self-sufficient and self-perpetuating. Plato’s clear statement that children should be promoted and demoted in the Kallipolis \[415a\] suggests he is meritocratic there. In *The Laws*, when he discusses slave’s mental faculties, e.g., 720c-e, he certainly talks of them as slaves by nature. However, that he allows for slaves to be liberated, e.g., 914a, suggests that slavery may be rather more arbitrary.
implementation. In the Kallipolis, there is neither figurative nor literal slavery, except to reason, if you like, and outside there is both.

I am sure that the textually and historically conservative philologists in the “no” camp will point out that most tradesmen and producers were citizens or at least metics in Athens, not slaves, so that a transformation of traders and producers in the Kallipolis into slaves in the timocracy, as I have it, cannot be right. And of course the historians are correct—but the Kallipolis doesn’t degenerate into a timocracy in that way. The gap between the two is so great that two invocations of the muses are required to cross it [545e and 547a], and the timocracy itself begins with the just man already in an unjust polis [549c]. Plato further signals the magnitude of the break between the Kallipolis and a timocracy by switching terminology. He uses “aristocracy” to refer to the polis better than the timocracy from the perspective of the timocracy, as if it is the never instantiated but worldly regulative ideal restraining the timocracy from an immediate descent into oligarchy [544e, 545c, and esp. 547c]. I suggest that this terminological change along with the two invocations to the muses signals that the Kallipolis is in principle not continuous with the degenerate poleis, which are, rather, failures to instantiate the Kallipolis. So my argument isn’t that every farmer becomes a slave in a timocracy, but rather, that the political position in the Kallipolis of the traders and the producers translates into the economic position of either literal slavery or metaphoric slavery in the degenerate poleis. This is the appropriate way to understand Plato’s claim, from the timocracy onwards, that “[t]he distributed land and houses [are] to be held privately, while those who were previously guarded by them as free friends and supporters, they enslaved and held as serfs (perioikoi) and domestics (oiketai); and they occupied themselves with war and with guarding against these men” [547c].

I think it is on balance untenable that there is a fourth class, a slave class, in the Kallipolis, but I think that in no way could Plato be called an abolitionist. At the end of the day, those who think there is slavery in the Kallipolis are forced to say that the appetites of the traders and the producers are moderated and coordinated for the benefit of the whole, but that those benefits are on the backs of slaves who are nevertheless similarly coordinated and moderated, have the same type of souls, do the same kind of work, but, nevertheless, for the benefit of the

74 The only two other places that he uses this terminology is (i) at 445d at the end of book iv where he is referring forward to this discussion before he gets sidetracked and has to discuss and justify some of the Kallipolis’ more unusual social arrangements, and (ii) when he is summing up the relative positions of the degenerate poleis and calculating how worse off the tyrant is at 587d.
whole, are not so benefitted. There are no passages in *The Republic* that unequivocally rule this out. But it involves positing a distinction that is not founded upon any of the resources to be found in *The Republic*, has slaves at once part of the whole and not part of the whole, and violates the one person one job rule. My reading, on the other hand, makes the best logical sense of Plato, both in terms of the psychodynamics of the Kallipolis and in terms of the progressive enslavement in the degenerate poleis. My reading is the only one to be able to read all four occurrences of “*doulos*” in the context of the Kallipolis in a straight-forward way. My reading captures the authoritarian nature of Plato’s thinking that Popper has right, on the one hand, while capturing, with Levinson and Wild, how this is supposed to be objectively liberating. My reading sees no need to resort to the dubious practice of postulating an extra-textual systematically problematic fourth class, as Vlastos wants to, but neither do I whitewash Plato into an abolitionist as Levinson and Wild do, nor suggest that he shouldn’t have had slavery in the Kallipolis, as Calvert does. Rather, Plato removes the conditions under which there can be literal or metaphorical enslavement *in and to the economic sphere*. Last, but not least, Aristotle agrees with me. While discussing *The Republic*, he twice refers to the third class of the Kallipolis in toto as slaves [*douloi*].75

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75 Once at *Politics* 1264a20 and once at 1264a35. It should be noted in passing that Plato does, in my opinion, mention those who would normally be slaves while discussing the Kallipolis. The reason that everyone has missed them is that he uses “*oiketês*” or “domestic” when he wishes to refer to them—and in the above quote at the cusp of the transition between the Kallipolis and the timocracy, it is the term that is carried over [547c]. “*Doulos*” is reserved almost exclusively for when the metaphoric or logical sense of slavery is required. So when the relationship of justice is under discussion, Plato talks about “slaves” [463b]. When he wants to pick out people who would not be good at controlling their desires, he uses “domestic” [431c]. So the vast majority of times in the context of the degenerate poleis, Plato uses “*doulos*,” except at 547c, 549e, and 578d-e, when he clearly means literal slaves, and again, calls them domestics. “*Oiketês*” is one of the alternate but standard words for a slave, a house-slave, to be precise. Interestingly, Plato prefers “*diakonos*” i.e., “servant” or “minister,” when he is setting up the city of sows and the luxurious city [see 369c, 371a, 371e, 373c], the same term he uses in *The Gorgias* [517b-c] in contradistinction to statesmen who improve the citizenry. The term in *The Republic* clearly refers to the whole working class in the city of sows and then the febrile city, but again, when he chooses to use the word, he immediately refers to the roles that would not have been performed by citizens, either because they were often performed by metics, in the case of importers, or performed by slaves in the case of the tasks left for wage labor, as well as many of the additional jobs in the luxurious city. Indeed, in *The Gorgias*, he says that such service is fitting for the “*douloprepeis … kai aneleutherous*” [the slavish and unfree] [518a]. In another context, the usage in *The Gorgias* was pointed out by James Wilberding, "Prisoners and Puppeteers in the Cave," in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Volume Xxvii, Winter 2004* (Oxford: Oxford Univ Pr, 2004), pp.124-6.
Appendix

Mentions of “Slavery,” “Enslavement,” etc., Books II-VII

So, then, when one man takes on another for one need and another for another need, and, since many things are needed, many men gather in one settlement as partners [koinônos] and helpers [boêteia] to this common settlement we give the name city [369c].

And similarly, surely, other agents [diakonos] as well who will import and export the various products [371a].

There are, I suppose, still some other servants [diakonos] who, in terms of their minds wouldn’t be quite up to the level of partnership [axiokoinônos], but whose bodies are strong enough for labor. They sell the use of their strength and, because they call their price a wage, they are, I suppose, called wage earners [371e].

And so we’ll need more servants [diakonos] too. Or doesn’t it seem that there will be a need for teachers, wet nurses, governesses, beauticians, barbers, and, further, relish-makers, and cooks? [373c]

Do you suppose anyone who believes Hades’ domain exists and is full of terror will be fearless in the face of death and choose death above defeat and slavery? [386b]

… the less should they be heard by boys and men who must be free and accustomed to fearing slavery more than death [387b].

Not must they in any event imitate slaves, women or men, who are doing slavish things [395e].

These same things—that come to be without education—that found in beasts and slaves [andrapodon]—as not at all lawful and call it something other than courage [430b].

(1) Or is the city done the most good by the fact that—in the case of child, woman, slave, freeman, craftsman, ruler, and ruled—each one minded his own business and wasn’t a busybody [433d].

… and then not minding its own business, but attempting to enslave and rule what it not appropriately ruled by its class and subverting everyone’s entire life [442a-b].

(2) And what do they call the people? Wage-givers and supporters. And what do the rulers in the other cities call the people? Slaves [463b].

I hesitate to mention the pettiest of the evils of which they would be rid … doing all sorts of things to provide for the allowances that they turn over to the women and the domestics [oiketês] to manage [465c].

(3) First, as to enslavement [andrapodizo], which seems just, that Greek cities enslave [andrapodizo] Greeks; or that they insofar as possible, not even allow another city to do it but make a habit to spare the Greek stock, well aware of the danger of enslavement at the hands of the barbarians? Sparing them is wholly superior. And, therefore, that they not themselves possess a Greek as a slave, and give the same advice to the other Greeks? Most certainly. At any rate in that way they would be more inclined to turn to the barbarians and keep off one another [469b-c].

Then they’ll correct their opponents in a kindly way, not punishing them with a view to slavery or destruction, acting as correctors, not enemies [471a].

The free man ought not to learn any study slavishly [536d].

76 Unless otherwise specified, “slavery” and similar forms translates some form of “doulos.” The numbered quotations are the four sentences I examine in detail. Translations from Bloom’s Plato, The Republic of Plato.
Two Other Relevant Passages from Books VIII & XI

They distributed land and houses to be held privately, while those who previously were guarded as free friends and supporters they then enslaved and held as serfs [perioikoi] and domestics [oikêtês] [547c].

(4) And why do you suppose mechanical and manual art bring reproach? Or shall we say that this is because of anything else than when the form of the best is by nature so weak in a man that he isn’t capable of ruling the beasts in himself, but only of serving them, and is capable of learning only the things that flatter them? … In order that such a man is also ruled by something similar to what rules the best man, don’t we say that he must be the slave of that best man who has the divine rule in himself? It’s not that we suppose the slave must be ruled to his own detriment, as Thrasymachus supposed about the ruled; but that it’s better for all to be ruled by what is divine and prudent, especially when one has it as his own within himself; but, if not, set over one from outside, so that insofar as possible all will be alike and friends, piloted by the same thing [590c-d].
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