

Republic X and Euripides' Dionysus: Freedom, Form, and Formlessness

Arlene W. Saxonhouse
Department of Political Science
University of Michigan

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At the beginning of the final Book of Plato's *Republic*, after Socrates has finished comparing the souls of the just and the unjust man, the king and the tyrant, showing that the tyrant "will be most distant from a pleasure that is true...while the king is least distant" and that "the tyrant will live most unpleasantly and the king most pleasantly" (587b),¹ and after proclaiming as a result of some questionable mathematical calculations that the philosophic or kingly soul will be 729 times happier than the tyrant, and after he has admonished Glaucon to acknowledge that "perhaps, a pattern is laid up for the man who wants to see and found a city within himself on what he sees" (592b), he suddenly returns to the place of the imitative arts in the city, a topic he had discussed in the initial founding of the city in Books 2 and 3. In doing so, Socrates ignores the profoundly radical proposals such as the community of wives and children not to mention the philosopher queens and kings from Book 5. Instead, he recalls the topic that had transformed the city he was founding in speech from the fevered city to the healthy city where appetites were controlled by the poetry recited to the young and where any individuality – and any laughter – among the inhabitants, or at least the warriors who were to protect the city from internal and external enemies, would be excised.

Once imitative poetry was exiled, Socrates explained: "a sensible man [when] he comes in his narrative to some speech or deed of a good man...will be willing to report it as though he himself were that man...but when he meets with someone unworthy of himself, he won't be willing seriously to represent himself as inferior" (386cd). The good man, if he imitates, "speaks correctly mostly in the same style and one mode"; in contrast, Socrates asks: "What is the form

¹ All translations from the *Republic* come from Allan Bloom's translation (1968).

(*eidos*) of the other? Doesn't it need the opposites, all the harmonies, all the rhythms, if it intends to be spoken in its own way, since it entails all sorts of shapes (*morphas*) of changes?" (397bc).² By Book 10 Socrates, in his effort to identify who exactly the philosopher may be, has articulated his proposition that such a thing as the form of the Good exists and he now is prepared to connect that theory with the complaints about the imitative arts expressed earlier. In Book 3 Socrates found the imitative arts problematic because they make the warrior imitate someone who may not be good, or (more peculiarly) because he becomes through imitation someone other than who he is. Anyone who "by his wisdom" is able to "be all sorts of things and imitate everything," he tells his interlocutors, would be adored in the city they are founding as "someone sacred and pleasing," but they would also send such a man to another city. Inhabitants of Callipolis must look for a "more austere and less pleasing poet" (398a). By Book 10, imitation is subject to criticism not so much for taking on multiple forms, but rather because it cannot incorporate the fullness of the form that is being imitated. The imitator cannot in its/his particularity express the multiplicity that the form of the thing captures within itself. The argument against imitative art in Book 10 changes as Socrates goes from excising multiplicity to lamenting art's failure to capture those multiple shapes.

Euripides' *Bacchae* offers a wrenching presentation of the arrival in Thebes of the god Dionysus. Written many decades before the *Republic*, Euripides presents on stage the devastating consequences following the arrival in Thebes of forces that make forms fluid and multiple, destroying the precision and certainty that forms offer to the rational mind, just those forms that Socrates champions for his city of Callipolis. In Euripides' tragedy, the god of wine who is also the god of the theater and illusion, threatens any the imposition of immutable forms

² Saxonhouse translation.

on people and things. The *Bacchae* builds on a multitude of transcended boundaries as forms dissolve and a chaotic world free from the limiting forms that set male/female/humans/gods into structured relations calls forth the tragic events that occur on stage. The *Bacchae* illustrates the freedom enjoyed/suffered when defined forms lose control; Socrates' Callipolis illustrates the constraints on freedom that the forms impose, when a soldier is a soldier and not a shoemaker, when a bed is a bed and not a chair. Both reveal the dangers that face the city when confronted with the denial of any freedom to change or with the freedom to be everything.

I do not ask that Plato's *Republic* be read as a response to Euripides' tragedy, but I want to suggest that a reading of the sections of Books 3 and 10 of the *Republic* that deal with imitation next to the *Bacchae* underscores the significance of the Socratic theory of the forms not simply as an epistemological necessity, but as a bulwark against the political and social threats in a world where forms collapse. We live in an age that is marked by contestations about forms, whether understood in terms of identity, boundaries, inclusion/exclusion, multi-culturalism and so forth. Escape from the limits that identities or boundaries impose on us expresses a freedom for which we often long, and yet we also crave the security of just those identities and boundaries that enable us to know and to interact with one another. The *Bacchae* explores the consequences of an unfettered dismissal of the forms that lie at the heart of Callipolis. The most unfree city of Callipolis imposing its forms keeps order through the insistence that each member avoid any multiplicity until, as I shall suggest at the end of this paper, we reach the beginnings of a reconsideration of imitative poetry in Book 10.

Euripides' *Bacchae*. Imitation and the Escape from Forms: The Destruction of the City

In the fourth line of the *Bacchae*, as Dionysus introduces himself and refers to his shape – his *morphê*, a word that will resound throughout the tragedy – which, he tells us, he has exchanged, going from the shape of a god to that of a mortal.³ Shortly thereafter he explains the refusal of the Thebans to acknowledge him as a god: “For this reason, I have taken on the form of a mortal (*eidōs*) and exchanged my *morphê* for the nature of a man” (53-54). From the early moments of the play, the god of the theater denies a defined form for himself and for others. Free from form, he accomplishes his goal of punishing the Thebans for their failure to acknowledge his divine birth and powers. At the end of Book 2 of the *Republic* Socrates exercises his control over the stories of gods. He proposes that of the gods it must be said: “It’s impossible...for a god to want to alter himself, but since, as it seems, each of them is as fair and as good as possible, he remains forever simply his own shape (*en tēi autou morphē*)” (381c). Dionysus rejects such an incarceration within a defined shape and boasts that he can transform himself at will. Theater allows for what Dionysus indicates his divinity enables him to do: to change shape. But, we as the audience also know that the person standing before us, speaking these words, is neither a god nor the man we see. He is an illusion, an imitation of a god who has transformed himself into a man. The theater turns what is into what is not. Nothing on the stage is what it seems, as shapes transform readily from one into another. This entire tragedy in particular is a riot of multiple shapes resisting the imposition of any form or structure.

In his prefatory remarks, Dionysus speaks of his travels from the east where Greeks and barbarians mix (18), where forms and identities do not matter. He has left this land of “mixing”

³ Vellacott’s translation using “veiling” loses the significance of language of “change” or transformation. This more than just covering up; it is a change of form for Dionysus. I use the Loeb Classical Library text for the Greek and line number references, Euripides (1979). For the most part the translations are my own, though I rely heavily on the English translation of Arthur S. Way in the Loeb edition.

for Hellas where he finds walls and boundaries marking divisions among peoples, foreign and native, old and young, male and female, god and human, human and animal. The god who has changed his form before coming to Hellas shall shatter all those boundaries – physical, social, and even natural – that stabilized the political and social life of Thebes before his arrival.

Dionysus, the master of illusion, makes clear his agenda: The Thebans have refused to acknowledge him as the son of Zeus, turning the story of his divine birth into a tawdry tale to conceal the youthful indiscretions of the maiden Semele. To affirm his divinity and to demonstrate that he is not simply a bastard, he will show that those boundaries at the heart of Thebes dissolved through the power of the god whose very existence glories in the multiple forms that people and objects can take through the art of the poet. Thus, he has through his divine power sent all the women of the city “mixed with the daughters of Cadmus” (37) out to the fields, away from their homes with their roofs and to the “roofless stones” (38). Leaving the walls, roofs, enclosures of their homes and their city, the women become part of nature, with their loose hair streaming down their backs and the untanned skin of fawns for clothing. Under the spell of Dionysus like wild animals they have abandoned the civilized world of those living within the sharply defined boundaries of the city gates that keep nature outside and women within the confines of the household.

Old Teiresias enters after the first choral ode. “Who guards the gate?” are his first words (176). Teiresias calls out first to the gatekeeper, and then to Cadmus who built the “towered gates” that fenced in his city (170-72). Though both Teiresias and Cadmus submit to Dionysus, Teiresias’ initial concern with gates suggests an ambivalence about this strange god of many forms. He seems still to care about boundaries that separate the natural world from the civilized one. When Cadmus enters, Dionysus’ power becomes apparent as the two old men transform

themselves into young men honoring the god. Cadmus admits that they are old: “Let you, an old man, lead me an old man (185-86),” but he adds that in their joy they forget their age. Dionysus, the god of theater, of illusion – and of wine –enables us to forget who are, to escape our form. The old become young. Teiresias ignores the category of age to which he has been assigned (and imprisoned) by both nature and the city. “I will try the dance,” he says (190). Forgetful of our form, we can be anything. We can be free. Worshiping Dionysus enables Teiresias and Cadmus to be what they are not. Teiresias speaks of those who resist the form-changing powers of the god and insist on clinging to their old forms: “We alone think well; the others badly” (196). By the end of the play, it is not at all clear that they “think well.”

As the two old/young men head off to the fields dressed in fawn skins, Teiresias repeats that the god makes no distinction whether one is young or old; all must, he affirms, join in the common honoring (209-10) of the god. Teiresias connects the eliding of boundaries and ignoring distinctions of youth and age with the rejection of being wise with regard to those things concerning the gods (200). Reason imposes forms, defining who is old and who is young. Reason identifies particulars out of the common mass of things; it sorts, it categorizes, it counts. Those worshipping the god who blurs all boundaries and destroys precision find there is no need for such reason, for counting, for adding and subtracting, for those mental processes, we might note, on which the technical arts depends and by which walls, for example, are constructed. Reason is divisive and exclusionary. Dionysus’ world accepts all, those from the east and those from Greece, those who are old and those who are young, those who are male and those who are female -- all, that is, except those who insist on creating barriers, who deny the freedom to escape defined identities.

Pentheus, the young king of Thebes and the voice of reason, enters to find the two old men acting like youths. He has returned to Thebes because of the reports of strange evils, namely, that the women have left their homes, “feigning” (223) Bacchic inspiration. The women have fled the walls of the household, as well as the form of womanhood, wife, virgin, mother. Pentheus’ response is to bring them back to the structured world of the city with its boundaries and secure definitions, denying them their freedom from the forms within which they had been imprisoned. He explains what he has done with the women: “However many I seized, my guards keep safe binding their hands (*desmious*⁴) in prison” (226-27). The language lets us see Pentheus’ reaction to the mutability with which Dionysus threatens Thebes. He encloses and circumscribes, trying to deny fluidity by encasing all within a structure that ensures distinctions and re-enforces hierarchy. More than the women, though, Dionysus himself is Pentheus’ quarry. Pentheus plans to confine him – or at least the stranger whose arrival in the city has provoked the chaos with which it is afflicted. Pentheus will put him behind prison walls, imagining that the response to the free flowing god is confinement.

Upon seeing Cadmus and Teiresias dressed to join the Bacchants, Pentheus marvels at this wondrous sight. These old men, as much as they may attire themselves (theater-like) as young men, are profoundly laughable. Pentheus sees below the illusions to their forms as old men. Only their gray hair, affirming what they are trying to deny with their dress and dancing steps, prevents him, Pentheus says, from imprisoning Teiresias and chaining him alongside the deluded women (259). In response Teiresias defends Dionysus and describes the benefits that come from the god of wine. Most importantly, the god offers rest from grief and “the sleep that brings oblivion from the multitude of evils from which men suffer daily” (282). As we watch his

⁴ The word for chains or anything that binds (*desmoi*) recurs consistently through the tragedy.

theater we forget who, what, where we are, transported through illusions away from the lives we live. As we drink his wine we forget who we are, the specificity of our forms. We become other than ourselves, just as the women become wild animals and the old men become young.

Pentheus, unwilling to submit to such illusions, demands stability and forswears the oblivion of our daily sorrows.

In the perversions of this play, Teiresias warns Pentheus that in his devotion to reason, he is mad and exhorts him to welcome the god, to pour his wine, to wreath his head. He and Cadmus will delight in their worship of the form-changing god so that they with their gray hairs can dance as young men. The gentle admonitions of Cadmus to listen to the good counsel of Teiresias (330) include the suggestion that even if this Dionysus is not a god, they should pretend, accept the illusion that he one is simply for the sake of the honor of the house of Cadmus. Illusions soften ills, and the soft Cadmus resists the harshness that he sees coming from an insistence on accuracy and reason. Make life easy for us, he seems to say to Pentheus. The language is not quite that of the noble lie of the *Republic*, but Cadmus sees that there can be beauty in deception (334). One ought not to search through reason for the true essence of divinity – perhaps because there is none. In such a world, one must adapt softly, changing form, or “truths,” as griefs and pleasures require. With no certain form of a god, anyone can claim to be a god-head, and if he brings happiness, Pentheus should not respond with force and reason, but accept this fluidity of form. Free from the form of “old man,” gray beards can dance.

Yet, such is Pentheus’ commitment to order and reason and form that he harshly dismisses the well-intentioned Cadmus and Teiresias. “Don’t touch me. Go dance with the Bacchants. Don’t defile me with your madness” (343-34). And in his callous response, he orders his attendants to destroy the seat from which Teiresias issues his prophecies. To match

the madness of Teiresias, they must create confusion, turning it all upside down, and as for that god whom he now calls (to the delight of psychoanalytic interpreters of this play) that “female formed stranger” (353), that one so like a woman, he is to be taken, bound in chains (*desmion*, 355), brought to Pentheus, and finally stoned to death. The feigned god, Pentheus insists, is mortal, subject to chains and death. No mutability here, or so Pentheus thinks. Teiresias’ reaction to Pentheus’ insistence on a world of ordered forms is that Pentheus may have been without his senses before, but now is completely mad (359). The boundary between madness and rationality, like all boundaries in this play, dissolve. The Chorus following this tense interchange between is filled with ambiguity as cares fade away under the wine god’s influence. Recalling Teiresias’ words, the Chorus sings of the wine bowl that surrounds men with sleep – or is it the forgetfulness of death?

Per Pentheus’ instructions, his servant returns with Dionysus in the form of the stranger in chains; the report of his capture highlights the contradictions that surround Dionysus. Though he was hunted as if he were a wild animal, he was tame. He did not flee or resist the chains. He smiled when one would have expected anger or fear. The guard adds more disturbing news: the fetters that bound the women in their prison have melted away and the women are free. The god of freedom rules over the city. All efforts at controlling the life of the city, imposing order on a formless world, are failing.

Pentheus does not recognize the stranger who stands before him as the god of illusion, and admits that this stranger’s form is not unattractive (453), perhaps using the double negative to suggest a resistance to such a conclusion. The flowing locks attract, the pale skin, the soft body cultivating Aphrodite. No wrestler, you, he says (455). Pentheus drawn in by this androgynous creature and wavering in the certainties that had marked his world before this

encounter with the god begins his interrogation: Wherefrom? Why here? When and how the intercourse with Zeus? And then Pentheus wants to know: “What form (*tin idean*)” (471) do the orgies (mysteries) he brings have? To know something, one must know its form, its *idea*, what distinguishes it from other gatherings. By knowing the form of the orgies, Pentheus calculates, he will also know how to control it. Knowing the form means to know the boundaries and limits. The form of those orgies, however, the disguised stranger says, is secret. Pentheus must enter the world of multiplicity, he must free himself of reason’s insistence on form over multiplicity, before he can observe the rites of this god of illusion. To Pentheus’ praise of the wise Hellenes who resist the mystic, frenetic dances of the Asiatics, Dionysus responds, no, the latter are far wiser. Does wisdom as Pentheus assume lie in knowing the constraints of the forms – or in the fluidity that Dionysus champions? Socrates emphatically sides with Pentheus against the god of illusion in constructing Callipolis and introducing the forms, but the reconsideration of Book 10 may open the forms up in a way that take us beyond the opposition enacted on Dionysus’ stage. Pentheus at this point, though, is not ready to engage on Dionysus’ terms of fluidity and formlessness. He resists the attraction he has felt for this womanly man and orders his servants to seize this stranger, to bind him with chains, and to imprison him in the stables in a futile attempt to deny him motion to the god and treat him as if he had a single form, not multiple ones.

The Chorus seeing Pentheus use his political authority to bind the god whom they worship fear that they too will be bound and held captive and call upon Dionysus to release them from the arrogance of this murderous man trying to imprison what cannot be imprisoned. It is at this point that the shocking earthquake occurs and the god Dionysus who, moments before had been bound and led off to the stables, reveals his unbound self. “Did he not bind your hands with a noose of chains?” asks the Chorus (614). “No,” responds the god of the theater and wine,

“he only seemed to bind me” (615), emphasizing by repetition the inefficacious chains that cannot hold him. Dionysus describes the scene: Pentheus visited where he thought the stranger was imprisoned and found only a bull straining against his chains. Dionysus sat calmly, unchained, beside the bull, and then to add to the confusion of the Pentheus, created illusions of himself elsewhere, phantasms at which the confused Pentheus struck wildly and vainly. After the Chorus hears the report of what occurred in the “prison,” Pentheus re-enters the stage to express his outrage, “Dreadful things have been experienced. The stranger has fled, he who was just compelled with chains” (642-43). And to the suddenly appearing Dionysus in the form of the stranger whom he had had bound, he asks, “How were you able to escape your chains” (648)? Calmly, Dionysus replies he had told him before that someone would release him (649).

These “dreadful things” become only more dreadful with the herdsman’s report on the women outside the city. They are like wild beasts nursing fawns and wolf-cubs at their breasts, snakes encircling them and licking their cheeks. The earth itself has defied the order of nature: simple scratching brings forth milk and a thrust from the thyrsus wine or sweet honey. The idyllic portrait of a world free of the old forms, though, is shattered when the herdsman and those accompanying him decide to capture Agave, Pentheus’ mother, and bring her back to the city. Unable to seize the women as they would wild animals, he and his fellows are attacked, and though they escape, they watch in horror as the women like animals rend cattle to pieces with their bare hands, as if they were warlike enemies (752). Under the influence of Dionysus, the women, once sheltered in their houses far from the world of war, enter the imagery of war, becoming creatures that hunt and are hunted, violating not only the male/female dichotomy, but the human/animal divide as well. In an unsettling manner the Chorus rejoices at this terrifying report, despite their dread of speaking “free words” (775) before the “tyrant.” Pentheus’ rule

denied the freedom the women worshippers of Dionysus sought, not only to speak but to break out of the restraints that his rule and his city impose on all, restraints that fight against the freedom to say all and to incorporate multiple forms – women, wild animals, hunters.

Pentheus' response to the herdsman's report is to resort to arms: to the Gate of Electra he calls to his soldiers (799) and then demands that they bring him his arms (809). What follows, though, is not the armed encounter between the wild women and armed men that Pentheus anticipates, but Dionysus' skillful and somewhat mystical transformation of Pentheus into someone who longs to observe rather than act, into a member of the audience rather than a warrior. As a passive observer, he will learn how the certainties of form dissolve under the divine power of the theater, how reason cannot succeed against illusion. Dionysus assures Pentheus: "I wish to save you by my arts" (806) and manipulates the king into one who imagines that victory over the forces that threaten will be achieved through sight rather than the force of arms. He transforms Pentheus from one who prides himself on his manly form to one who is willing to put on women's attire, hiding behind a peplos of linen, so that he can observe the orgies.

Initially Pentheus resists: "Why? Shall I turn into a woman out of a man?" (822). How he appears, not who he is, but who he becomes through the illusion of costume determines what he can see and know. And this actor deluding us into thinking he is Pentheus continues the delusion by taking on the appearance of a woman. Who is he/she? Whereas Plato's Socrates in the *Republic* has the artist aim at capturing the form of a thing only to find that he is three times removed from the form, Euripides shows the artist himself taking control of the form, and, rather than imitating what is, undermining any suggestion of the reality of the form which the artist imitates. The artist is free to create the form. He is not limited by it. He makes the audience skeptical of any form that may impose limits, teaching them to delight in illusions rather than the

true form of a thing. Just as Dionysus disguised as stranger dissolved the chains that tried to bind him in the horse stable, he dissolves any constraints on what we see by making all subject not to what is, but to what appears to be.

Pentheus is ultimately persuaded that he needs to create the illusion that he is a female in order to be safe when he observes the female revelers, and he remarks to Dionysus: “You speak well and are someone who has been wise for a long time” (824). But when Pentheus suddenly resists realizing how his transformation into a woman through illusion violates the acknowledged boundaries between male and female, the seductive Dionysus manages to draw him back: “Are you no longer eager to be an observer (*theatês*⁵) of the Bacchants?” (829). Observation is only available to Pentheus if he himself engages in the world of illusions that are Dionysus’ trademark, if he is willing to acknowledge the ambiguity and mutability of form. Should Pentheus resist the illusions Dionysus offers, he would sacrifice the opportunity to see the women in their wildness and, Dionysus warns, there would be blood in the battle against the Bacchic women (837). So Pentheus yields and puts on the vestments of a woman. Appearing as a woman, he becomes a member of the audience in Dionysus’ awful and tragic script.

The greatest illusion is Dionysus’ pretense to offer aid to Pentheus. We the silent observing audience know that the disguised stranger is not a friend. He is a god bent on vengeance, plotting the destruction of Pentheus by turning him into a theatergoer. Within two lines of Pentheus’ departure, Dionysus explains that by going to see the women’s orgies, Pentheus will pay the penalty of death (848). Dionysus says he will need to free Pentheus from reason, make him mad with a Dionysiac frenzy, or else Pentheus would not be willing to put on women’s clothes. Reason would make Pentheus resist such transgression of forms. The theater

⁵ This word also designates a member of the audience at the theater.

of Dionysus undermines reason and depends on just those transgressions. The wine he hawks fosters the willingness to live in a world of delightful illusions where men can be women and women can live wildly in the fields. Should Pentheus be thinking well (*phronôn...eu*, 851-52), Dionysus acknowledges, he would not accept the dress of a woman, but under the influence of the god of wine and the theater “standing outside of reason (853),” he will transform himself, becoming laughable as he is led through Thebes in the shape of a woman. Earlier, it had been Pentheus who found Cadmus and Teiresias laughable in their Bacchic garb as he mocked them from reason’s doorstep. Now attracted to that world of sight and changeability, he himself becomes laughable to those who will continue to rely on reason. At the end of this speech in which Dionysus exalts the obliteration of reason, he reveals that Pentheus will die at his mother’s hands so that Pentheus will know (*gnôsetai*, 859) that he, Dionysus, is the most dreadful and also the most kind to mankind (861). Again Dionysus combines opposites: he is dreadful, awesome, in his capacity to delude the human species, and yet this dreadfulness gives the human species the delusions that free them from their sufferings and make him “most kind to mankind.”

This most terrible, most kind of gods eggs Pentheus on in his longing to see things that are not for him to see. Just as he had called forth the women of Thebes from their homes, Dionysus now calls to Pentheus: “Come out,” so that you may be seen by me dressed in the outfit of a Bacchant woman. And out comes the transformed Pentheus in his peplos, in his woman’s turban with strands of hair coyly escaping that turban. Dionysus marvels at how he has taken on the shape (*morphê*, 917) of Cadmus’ daughter. And just as he appears to be other than he is – a woman instead of a man, a mother instead of a son – Pentheus’ sight, he tells Dionysus, is doubled. He sees two suns instead of one and a “doubled Thebes” (919). Dionysus appears to him as a bull with horns upon his head. Confusion reigns as he struggles to see what he saw

before when he relied on reason, which had allowed him to add one and one and get two and not to make two out of one. “Were you a wild animal before? For now you are indeed a bull,” he says to Dionysus (922). As he himself has succumbed to the world of illusion by taking on the appearance of more than one, of a woman, of a daughter, a mother, he no longer sees clearly. Dionysus explains: it is the presence of the god (i.e., himself) that enables him to see how it is necessary to see (924), i.e., in doubles and in multiple, shifting forms. Pentheus more than one himself, male and female, now sees more than one. This new vision leaves Pentheus, once the man of reason, confused, unsure of how he himself appears. “Am I like Ino or Agave?” he wonders. But Dionysus does assign Pentheus one form and says to him, “I seem to see both, looking at you” (927). Governed by the manic frenzy with which the god has imbued him, Pentheus does not resist this indeterminacy. He yields to Dionysus, submissively allowing him to rearrange his women’s garb.

A disturbing scene follows as Dionysus primps Pentheus as if attiring him for a wedding, or as a costume designer preparing him for an entrance on stage – or, more forebodingly, as a priest preparing an animal for sacrifice and death. Dionysus gloats: “I glory in your changed mind” (944). This madness, his changed mind, enables Pentheus to imagine that he could lift the mountain of Citheron and all the Bacchantes on it. Released him from reason, he does not understand limits, the boundaries of his nature as a human being. Under the Dionysus’ influence, he imagines himself to have god-like powers. At the festival of Dionysus, such feats are possible. Earthquakes can be called forth and castles can topple. Gods appear. This mind overtaken by illusion and imagination Dionysus calls “healthy” (947-48) and with his newly “healthy” mind Pentheus acknowledges that he must forswear the use of force against the women. His “unhealthy” mind had tried to control the god Dionysus with chains, but they were

no match for the god of illusion. Pentheus now drawn into Dionysus' world acts through deception, secreting himself behind the clothes of a woman, and hides in the pine forests lest he be seen by the women so that he can spy on the Bacchantes (955-56). Driven by his longing to observe the women in their wildness, Pentheus asks Dionysus to lead him forth through the middle of Thebes. Dionysus, ready with the lies and double entendres that have marked his movement and speech throughout the play, urges him on, "I as your savior" will lead you forth (965), but he adds foreshadowing the dreadful outcome of this viewing: "Another shall lead you back here" (966). This disturbing scene of deception and transformation, of madness, ends as Pentheus heads to the mountain, filled with visions of accomplishing what he deserves .

The Chorus describes in detail Agave's response to this "woman attired (980)" spy, her wondering who he may be, not recognizing him as her own son, unable to see his form beneath all the illusions. The Chorus imagines Agave condemning the mother who bore this spy, but then correcting herself: "He was not born from a woman's blood, but from some lioness – or a gorgon" (989-90). Pentheus, so effectively disguised and Agave so deluded, appears not as her own child but as the off-spring of wild animals and fantastical creatures. The Chorus calls on Justice to avenge the "godless lawless unjust one" (1014-15) and then calls on Dionysus to reveal himself in whatever form he chooses, as bull or a many-headed snake or fire-snorting lion (1017-19). We may wonder how they will know him if he has such a multitude of forms. What does it mean for him to reveal himself when he has no form to reveal? Their request highlights the challenge of knowing when there is no form to know and the tragic consequences of delusion.

The messenger answers the Chorus' first query concerning news from the forests, though, in his appealing simplicity and basic humanity, he upbraids the Chorus for finding pleasure in the

suffering of others. The story he tells is harrowing. Through his vivid narrative he enables us to see the mass of confusion brought on by Dionysus. He describes Pentheus' eagerness to observe without being observed, to be the *theatês*, the theater-goer. Pentheus complains that he does not see well enough and wants to climb a tall pine for a better view. Dionysus (still appearing as the stranger) pulls the top of the pine tree down, settles Pentheus on it before letting it rise. Then, true to this world of illusion, he disappears while a voice much like Dionysus' was heard, encouraging the Bacchantes to punish this intruder who mocked him. The women follow the god's injunction and when a series of projectiles fail to dislodge Pentheus from his seat atop the pine tree, the women tear the tree from the ground so that they can, in Agave's words, "grasp the wild animal" (1108). Worshipping the god of illusion, Agave confuses the form of her son with that of a beast. Only to the mind overwhelmed by delusions, unable to reason, has Pentheus become that beast and though Pentheus divests himself of his women's clothes so that she might recognize him and see his true form and though he cries to her, "I, mother, am your son Pentheus, whom you bore...do not kill your son" (1118-21), she in the grip of Bacchus (1118-24), is not persuaded by him. She sees only the illusion created by the god. He is an animal whom she tears to pieces with her own hands. In dreadful detail, the messenger reports the rending of Pentheus' flesh, his screams, the women's frenzy, as Pentheus' head is held high upon Agave's thyrsus.

The horror of what is reported is accentuated by the response of the Chorus: they rejoice – at the fall of Pentheus, at the bull who guided him to his fall, at the tears of Cadmus' frenzied daughters for their "glorious beautiful victory" (1161), and at the mother covered in the blood of her son. When Agave appears with Pentheus' severed head, proud of her kill at the hunt, she is under the spell of the god of illusion, not comprehending whose head she holds. It is the head of

the young lion, easy to see (1175), she says, but only to those under the power of the god of illusions, the god who transforms humans so that they cannot see the form of things and see a lion's head, not the bloodied head of one's own son. Agave glories in her imagined success, calling on all to behold the wild animal she captured. When her father arrives bearing the dismembered pieces of Pentheus' body, Agave still does not understand what she has done. Seeking praise she tells her father that her hands replaced the tools of the hunt: "Leaving behind the shuttle and loom, I have come to greater things, hunting with my hands the wild beasts" (1236-37). With these words, she hands her father the head of her son. Cadmus must now guide his daughter away from the illusions imposed by the god and toward the recognition of what she has done, to see behind the veil of deception which Dionysus wove. He says to her: "Look straight now; it is little trouble to look on it" (1279). Once she looks straight at the thing and not at the illusion, she sees in her bloodied hands the head of her son, not the wild beast the god of illusion made her see. No longer controlled by the illusion of glorious deeds and seeing the form of her son, she must now acknowledge her actions, having torn into pieces – made multiple in the most gruesome sense – what was once one. Had she seen his form behind the illusion created by the woman's dress, the great tragedy of the play would have been avoided. Again Cadmus insists on clarity of vision. "Observe it and know it more clearly" (1281). She responds: "I see the greatest anguish" (1282). Too late she learns the power of illusion, of the god who led her to the fields far from the houses with their retaining walls and sheltering roofs. Freedom allowed her to escape the confines of the forms that enclosed her, but that freedom from form and from knowing fostered the tragedy with which she must now live.

Though the final passages of the play have been lost, we hear in what remains the strange (though nothing should seem strange after what has transpired on stage) speech of Dionysus

announcing that Cadmus and his wife Harmonia shall be changed into snakes and sent forth to sack a multitude of cities before they finally find relief among the gods. Cadmus sees this as a “dreadful evil” (1352), that he in the shape of snake, having the nature of a snake (1358), will lead a “mixed barbarian army” (1356). With the laments of Agave who too is cast out of the city, we see the cruel culmination of Dionysus’ vengeance. He has punished those who did not accept him as a god born from Zeus and a mortal woman, who resisted his formlessness. He tried to bring his own formlessness into the city, mocking the certainties that provided structure for the city and its rulers. As punishment for the city’s desire for simplicity, where gods do not mate with mortal woman, where gods do not appear in multiple forms, Dionysus staged the wrenching scene described in the messenger’s speech. The city was helpless against his shattering of forms.

All – even Pentheus – found something thrilling in the freedom from prescribed forms which enabled them to live in the world of illusions. The women shed their girdles and literally let down their hair; they left the confines of their houses and wandered freely in the open fields. The old men Teiresias and Cadmus forgot their aged bones and danced. Pentheus shedding his masculine form observed the “shamefulness” of the women of the city. But as they all succumbed to the spell of the god who released them from the constraints under which they had lived, the city itself disintegrated. Its prisons collapsed, its king was torn to pieces by the women who, nursing the wild fawns and lion cubs, no longer nursed their own young. They killed them. With the dissolution of forms and/or the ability to know them, men became women, old became young, women became wild animals who stalked their prey barehanded. The vengeful god Dionysus used his extraordinary power, so vividly present on the very stage on which the events of the tragedy were enacted, to destroy the city that he saw as too fixed on its own assertion of

form, too unwilling to accept that which brings multiple forms and fluidity to the city. No wonder Socrates in the *Republic* wants no such tragedy in his city. Indeed, one can wonder whether there is even within this play a Euripidean critique of Euripides' art.

The vengeance of Dionysus was terrible, terrible to behold through the speech of the messenger and terrible to contemplate as one leaves the amphitheater. The transformation of women into beasts, of a king into a snake, evoke a deep horror, but part of the tragedy of this work is that Euripides makes it clear how close we are to such transformations, how quickly our desire for freedom may lead to the shedding of encumbering form and how close the city into which such freedom enters stands on the brink of desolation. Dionysus' divine powers bring on the earthquake that shatters the walls of the stable in which Pentheus tries to imprison him, but it is the human desire for freedom from an imposed form – whether it be Cadmus and Teiresias seeking to shed their age, Agave seeking release from roofed house, or Pentheus longing to see what is forbidden for him to see, or even the audience itself who enters this world of illusion when they celebrate the festival of the god of the theater and wine –that leads to the devastation of the city. This is the tragedy of Euripides' play. The tale of Callipolis told in the *Republic* presents a city controlled by form that exiles freedom, where sight longs not for the illusions of Dionysus' stage, but for the form itself. This is a city that creates its own tragedy while banning tragedies. Does Book 10 start to lead us beyond both tragedies?

Plato's *Republic*. Imitation and the Imposition of the Forms: The Destruction of the City

Confronted with the challenge of finding justice, Socrates founds a city – to be called Callipolis – in speech. The founding has many parts, but among the most significant (and notorious) is the education of the young warriors who must be taught to be gentle to the inhabitants of this city

and harsh to its enemies. To achieve this, Socrates says they must pay special attention to the young, for the “beginning” is the most important of every “action” (377a). At the beginning whatever is being worked is most malleable and one puts on its “stamp” (377b). The word *typos* (stamp) comes from the marking of coins. It is the stamp that defines what that piece of metal will be. In the case of the coin, it is the form put on it by art that determines its worth. Likewise with the youth. They are to be stamped in certain fashion by their education and, molded by that education, they will take on a certain and unchanging form, the form of a warrior/guardian in the city of Callipolis. With this preface the founders begin to censor the poetry that the young hear since that poetry determines what form their unseen souls will take (377c).

The founders begin with the works of the poets who “surely composed lies for human beings” (377d). These “lies” are to be blamed, especially, Socrates says, “if the lie a man tells is not a fine one (*mê kalôs pseudetai*)” (377d). And in language that will become important when we turn to Book 10, he criticizes the poets for making a bad “image”⁶ of what the gods and heroes do, “just as a painter who paints something that doesn’t resemble (look like, *eoikota*) the thing whose likeness he wishes to paint” (377e). The artist’s task is to capture the form of the thing through his art. But, in contrast to what will happen in Book 10, this discussion leaves open the unsettling issue of whether the proposed censorship leads to capturing the form or whether it remains a lie. He blames those who tell lies that are not “fine.” Socrates here and later with the noble lie seems perfectly comfortable with “fine lies.” He begins the task of censorship with the story of Uranus and Cronos and how that tale of castration and rebellion “even if [it] were true” should not be told to “thoughtless youth” (378a). Is the censorship that follows and that creates a uniform god out of the pantheon of gods the result of avoiding stories

⁶ Bloom (1968) uses “representation”, but *mimêsis* is not in the Greek. The Greek is *eikazêi*.

that may be true? Are the gods multiple? Must we conceive of them as one and uniform lest we suffer the tragedies Euripides portrays in the story of Dionysus at Thebes?

Striking about Socrates' censorship is its focus on eliminating multi-dimensionality, the sliding from one form into another that so marked the world Dionysus brought to Thebes. Socrates turns first to the gods, reconfiguring them as uniform, one out of many. After expressing the horror of telling the Cronos/Uranus story, Socrates considers more generally conflict among the gods. There is to be none in the stories told, whether true or false. Of such tales, it would be best "to keep quiet, but if there were some necessity to tell, as few as possible ought to hear them as unspeakable secrets, after making a sacrifice, not of a pig but of some great offering...so that it will come to the ears of the smallest number possible" (378). Thus, no tale of Hera being bound by her son Hephaestus or of Hephaestus thrown from Olympus when he wanted to protect Hera against Zeus's violence. No conflict means no differences, no different wants, needs, personalities. And, Socrates posits, the gods must be the cause only of what is good and not of anything that is not (379c). Out go the passages from the *Iliad* in which Zeus gives to mankind "a mixture of both" good and evil (379d,e). Nor can the gods be the cause of "strife and contention" among humans. Socrates quotes Aeschylus here, but we cannot forget the horrors of Euripides' play where the god himself taking on many forms and fostered with eerie pleasure the most vicious conflicts among humans. The poets must affirm that if the gods bring any suffering, it is for the sufferers' benefit. "As for the assertion that a god, who is good, is the cause of evil to anyone, great exertions must be made against anyone saying these things in his own city" (380b).

From the gods as the cause only of good and never of evil, of concord and never of conflict, Socrates turns to what could have been written with the *Bacchae* in mind, so strongly

does it recall events portrayed in the tragedy: “Do you suppose the god is a wizard, able treacherously to reveal himself at different times in different *ideas*, at one time actually himself changing and passing from his own form into many shapes, at another time deceiving us and making us think such things about him. Or is he simple and does he least of all things depart from his own *idea*?” (380d).⁷ Dionysus violated this prescription. He took on multiple forms, the stranger, the feminine male, the bull, the god. He was not one *idea*; he was many and the initial unwillingness of Pentheus to acknowledge that multiplicity, his reliance on a reason that said that one cannot be at the same time two, brought on his tragic downfall. Would Socrates have suffered the same fate? Socrates asks Adeimantus: “Isn’t it necessary that, if something steps out of its own *idea*, it be changed either by itself or something else?” and continues “Are things that are in the best condition least altered and moved by something else?” (380d,e) Health, strength, prudence belong to those gods, men, things (houses and clothing) that are least subject to change (381a). In the *Bacchae* change had entailed freedom.

The god of the *Bacchae* gloried in change with the disastrous results for the city. Socrates’ city will exclude it, but does his insistence on the immutable and the concomitant denial of freedom lead to its own tragedy for the city? Socrates insists that “everything that’s in fine condition, whether by nature or art or both, admits least transformation by anything else” (381b) and since the god is “in every way in the best condition,” he “would least of all have many shapes” (381b). Socrates emphasizes just this point yet again: “If he is good, he won’t transform himself since such transformation could only mean changes into what is worse” (381b). He concludes, it is impossible “for a god to want to alter himself, but since, as it seems, each of them is as fair and as good as possible, he remains forever simply in his own shape (*têi*

⁷ *Idea*, a word that will have such resonance in the discussion of the forms in Book 6, appears twice in this brief passage.

autou morphêi)” (381c). With that, Socrates purges stories of gods who take on “every sort of shape and visit cities” (381d). Though the line he cites here now comes from Homer, it too could refer to the *Bacchae* and Dionysus’ visit to Thebes. Socrates blames the mothers, who frighten children with stories of gods wandering at night looking like strangers. He could just as easily blame Euripides.

When Adeimantus answers Socrates’ question concerning whether the gods might be “deceivers and bewitchers” with a “perhaps” (381e), one can wonder whether he has seen or read the *Bacchae*. Socrates responds in astonishment that Adeimantus is not more decisive. “What? Would a god want to lie, either in speech or deed by presenting an illusion?” (382a). Adeimantus is not sure, but Socrates in his mission to prevent the gods from stepping outside of their forms (*ideas*) insists: “Don’t you know...that all gods and human beings hate the true lie?” (382a). No god would use illusions to bewitch, since “The divine are wholly free from lie” (382e). The performance of Dionysus in the *Bacchae* violates all Socrates asserts. “The god is altogether simple and true in deed and speech, and doesn’t himself change or deceive others by illusions, speeches, or the sending of signs either in waking or dreaming” (382e). At the risk of becoming repetitious, Socrates says yet again what he had said moments before, the gods “are neither wizards who transform themselves nor do they mislead us by lies in speech or deed” (383a). In the last line of the second book Adeimantus abandons his “perhaps” and concludes: “I am in complete agreement with these models...and would use them as laws” (383c).

Socrates thus establishes the model that he follows throughout the founding of Callipolis: resistance to multiplicity, to two in one and the transformation of shape or form. It is a Parmenidean model of uniformity with the absence of motion, since motion entails moving from what is to what is not, a logical impossibility. For Socrates in these books of the *Republic*,

motion becomes a moral and political impossibility since moving takes one from what is good to what is not. The gods in the tales told to the young are static. Movement, birth, is the enemy of perfection – and of Callipolis. It causes of the deterioration of the city in Book 8. Socrates expects no less for warrior/guardians than he does of his god(s). After purging his warriors of a fear of death, either their own or that of those whom they love, in Book 3 we learn with some surprise (I would think) that the prospective warriors cannot be told tales of warriors laughing: “For when a man lets himself go and laughs mightily, he also seeks a mighty change to accompany his condition” (388e). In Callipolis, where form constrains and holds the city secure in its perfection, laughter entailing change must be banished. The expulsion of laughter and the change of form that laughter entails is only a preface to the expulsion of theater – the realm of illusion whose god is the constantly changing Dionysus.

After excising from Homer any passages that may suggest warriors could have anything other than one form of goodness, Socrates continues to use the epic poet to explain to the somewhat befuddled Adeimantus (and reader) the difference between speech (content) and style. Here enters Socrates’ discussion of *mimesis*.⁸ While narrative occurs between speeches, “when he gives a speech as though he were someone else, won’t we say that he then likens his own style as much as possible to that of the man he has announced as the speaker?” And “likening himself to someone else,” either in voice or looks, “is the same as imitating the man he likens himself to” (393c). Imitation entails illusion, appearing to be other than one is, just as practiced by Dionysus in the *Bacchae*. The beginning of the *Iliad* helps Socrates illustrate the difference between narration and imitation, while Adeimantus ties the discussion to the theater. “That is the way it is with tragedies,” he says (394b). Socrates, apparently pleased with Adeimantus’ remark, notes

⁸ For the best discussion of *mimesis* see Halliwell (2002)

that one kind of poetry “proceeds wholly by imitation – as you say, tragedy and [Socrates adds] comedy” (394c).

The question then is whether tragedy and comedy have any place in the city where change of form has been banished. Adeimantus, understanding where the argument is going, senses that the conclusion is obvious and suspects that it will not, but Socrates holds back, waiting, he claims, to see where the argument will take them (394d). So, he asks whether the guardians of the city should be imitators. The answer is clear once they recall the initial founding of the city Glaucon had dismissed as a city of pigs. Socrates reminds Adeimantus “that each one should do a fine job in one activity, but not in many” (394e). Through imitation one form becomes more than one form. In language recalling the stamping of a form on the unformed metal, Socrates says: “Human nature, Adeimantus, looks to me to be minted in even smaller coins than this, so that it is unable to make a fine imitation of many things or to do the things of which the imitations are in fact only likenesses” (395b). In order to remain one and unchanging of form, the guardians must not only not laugh, they must unwilling to imitate the multiplicity of roles that the theater demands. If they are to imitate, there is only one form that they can imitate, “what’s appropriate to them from childhood: men who are courageous, moderate, holy, free, and everything of the sort.” (395c), not “slaves, women or men, who are doing slavish things” (395e).

The list of what it is forbidden to imitate is long and the references to Attic tragedy and comedy are strong. The worthy warriors who will inhabit Callipolis will be ashamed of imitating those who succumb to the lesser pleasures or are overwhelmed by diseases or are untrained. Since imitation is taking on the form of another, the good man will narrate and leave imitation aside. Adeimantus agrees: “That is just the way the model (*tupos*) of such a speaker must be”

(396e). The lesser man, unable to maintain this uniformity, will think nothing of imitating before many (397a). And the lesser the man, the more he imitates a multiplicity of sounds, the more he takes on multiple forms. Socrates avoids reference to shapes here, but concludes that there are the two forms of which he was speaking (397b) which would be acceptable in his city, one which narrates with infrequent imitation, and one when the narrator engages in imitation, but only of good men. A third form needing all modes and all rhythms is no form at all; it is the taking on a multitude of shapes of changing.

Having established the distinction between the lesser and the good man, between acceptable and unacceptable poetry, the answer to the question concerning about whom they will admit into their city is unsurprisingly, but I want to identify an inherent tension in what they say: they will admit only the unmixed imitator of the good man (397d). The imitator cannot imitate the “unmixed” without mixing who he is with whom he is imitating. Unless he can become one with that which he is imitating he remains mixed – not unmixed. The demands Socrates makes for his city cannot be met – just as the demands he ultimately makes for Callipolis in Book 5 cannot be fulfilled. Or, let’s put it this way, the one way there cannot be this contradiction is for the imitator of the good man to be the good man, i.e., for all to be good men, one man, not many and for all the citizens imitating the good man to have one form and not many. The imitator cannot be what he imitates. There is a disjunction between what is imitated and the imitator. The theory of forms will show the inadequacies of this early discussion and explain the return to the problem raised here in Book 3 later in Book 10.

Bypassing the confusion that he is creating with his commands that the unmixed be in fact mixed, Socrates nevertheless acknowledges that the “mixed man” pleases the many. We are, in fact, attracted to a multiplicity of forms, just as Pentheus is drawn to that woman-like

male and to the transgressions in the gathering of women where they are cavorting like wild animals. We are attracted to the illusions of the theater, or, we might add, to the reading of a book with multiple characters who give multiple speeches. But in the search for the just city with its one man/one job principle where perfection is simplicity and uniformity, multiplicity is rejected. In “our regime,” Socrates says there are to be no double men and no “manifold one” (397e).⁹ Thus, as already noted, “if a man who is able by wisdom to become every sort of thing and to imitate all things should come to our city, wishing to make a display of himself and his poems, we would fall before him as a man sacred, wonderful, and pleasing: but we would say that there is no such man among us in the city, nor it is lawful for such a man to be born there” (398a). Should Dionysus appear before Callipolis, the founders will show him worshipful respect and send him away. Would Dionysus have been satisfied with such treatment? Socrates, dismissing the love of the multicolored as the fancy of women and young children (557c) makes the expulsion of Dionysus look easy. Euripides does not.

With the man who “by his wisdom” is able to become every sort of thing expelled, Glaucon returns as the interlocutor marks a shift in the discussion, but when Socrates re-visits the issue of poetry in Book 10, he returns to the issues he posed at the early stages of founding Callipolis and again considers imitation and its connection with the multiplicity of form. In the discussions of the philosopher’s education, of the divided line, and of the parable of the cave, Socrates had led his interlocutors to an appreciation of – no, a longing for – the form which does not change, to the order entailed in that which is, not that which becomes. Reflecting back on the conversations about poetry, he incorrectly claims that they had acted well (595a) when they excluded whatever was imitative. In fact, as I noted above, they allowed – albeit briefly – the

⁹ All these points re-surface in the description of democracy in Book 8. See Saxonhouse (2009).

imitation of the good and moderate man. Now, he adds a preface to the forthcoming discussion of imitation: “For that the imitative, more than anything, must not be admitted back looks, in my opinion, even more manifest now that the soul’s forms have each been separated out” (595ab). Casting aside friendship for and shame before Homer, both of which he says possessed him from childhood, he insists that the truth must be honored before the man (595b). And so, he returns to imitation and though he had discussed it at length in Book 3, he now admits: “I scarcely comprehend what it wants to be” (595c). Well he might say so, given how is going to invert his understanding from Book 3. There imitation entailed multiplicity, taking on more than just one form, being many things so that a mother could not recognize a son and a god could be a stranger and a bull. This is what Dionysus had brought with devastating effect to the city of Thebes. Now, the process of imitation becomes the rejection of multiplicity; it becomes the flattening of the forms because of the inability of the imitation to capture the wholeness of what is being imitated, its many parts and its many perspectives.¹⁰

Socrates turns first not to Homer for whom he feels such “friendship,” but to the graphic artist who offers a visual image of an object two dimensionally. The problem that the artist faces now is that he cannot capture the entirety of the object he represents, let’s say, on the vase. The issue here is not that the imitator becomes more than one, taking on a multiplicity of shapes as had been the case in Book 3 when the narrator enacted the speech of others. The problem now is that the imitator cannot include in his representation the many-sided nature of what it is he is imitating. The true couch-maker, the artisan-like god, makes the form of the couch, but, Socrates explains to the rather confused Glaucon, “if he should make only two, again would come to light the form of which they in turn would both possess, and that, and not the two would be couch that

¹⁰ This section of my paper draws heavily on Saxonhouse (2009).

is” (597c). The form incorporates within itself all the multiplicity of what it is to be a couch. Rather than seeing the “form of the couch” as some sort of grand simplicity, stripping away all particularity, we should see it as encompassing the vast complexity of all couches. The couch on which I sit in my living room is a limited couch with particular qualities, of a particular color, or a particular size and softness. It does not incorporate into itself the qualities of all possible couches. The painter reduces the complexity of the couch even more since (before the development of cubism as a form of artistic expression) we see on the painted surface the couch from only one perspective, unable to appreciate the front at the same as the back of the couch. As Socrates explains to Glaucon: “Does a couch if you observe it from the side, or from the front, or from anywhere else, differ at all from itself? Or does it not differ at all but only look different...Toward which painting is directed...toward imitation of the being as it is or toward its looking as it looks?...imitation is...far from the truth...because it lays hold of a certain part of each thing and that part is itself only a phantom” (598ab). It is the partiality of the couch in my living room and then even more of the picture of that couch that offends Socrates. The warriors needed to cast off large portions of themselves to become the uniform beings who populate Callipolis. Socrates here contemns the crafts for their inability to bring in the whole aspect of the object imitated, to see the whole and not the stripped down, particularized version of man.

Curiously, Socrates re-focuses the discussion from the imitation of an object like a couch to the imitation of the artisan, the couch-maker. Visual representations of the artisan are false because the painter can only portray “a certain small part” (598b) of the couch-maker and not what it is to be a couch-maker. “The painter...will paint for us a shoemaker, a carpenter, and the other craftsmen, although he doesn’t understand the arts of any one of them...if he is a good painter...he would deceive children and foolish human beings into thinking that it is truly a

carpenter” (598bc). The painter flattens whatever artisan he is painting, unable to capture the depth of what it is to be an artisan, not knowing anything about the craft of the artisan. The critique of the painter who cannot capture the craftsmanship of the artisan in his paintings is next applied to tragedy and Homer, though Socrates only considers Homer here. These artists, though working in a different medium, can portray the artisan, the doctor, the shipbuilder, but do so superficially without capturing the multitude of information and skills entailed in the performance of his art (599c). Homer captures only appearance of the artist and cannot teach the arts practiced. He does not hold in his representation the multifaceted aspects of that art. Only by knowing the many parts of the art, could we know how to practice that art. Unable to portray the truth but only a part, Homer fails to improve others and the cities in which his followers live.

We see in this critique of imitation in Book 10 a critique of the founding of Callipolis in Books 2 and 3. There multiplicity had been rejected and the uniform exalted; in Book 10 we learn that the imitation fails because it cannot incorporate into itself the multiple sides and aspects of a thing. In Books 2 and 3 Socrates had tried to exclude Dionysus from his city; he had rejected the freedom and chaos with which Dionysus had threatened the city. The city Socrates builds, the justice he finds in Book 4, all follow from a rejection of multiplicity of forms, from a freedom to shed the stamp with which the warriors are marked at birth. The re-evaluation surfacing in Book 10 begins questioning that “stamp,” wondering whether in making one equal one, we do not lose the multidimensionality of any object. The forms are not uniform; they incorporate all sides. The city of Callipolis in its striving for a singularity of form where all the warriors equal all the other warriors, not differing in desires or pleasures only because they have none, where women lose their woman-ness to become no different than men, where in the

communism of family life there are no walls to separate and define differences, seeks to ignore its own multiplicity. In the face of the multiple, it encases all in an unmoving monad.

The discussion in Book 10 recalls for us that multiplicity is at the heart of the city. The static city that Socrates sought in opposition to all that was captured by Dionysus' arrival in Thebes, the city that denied motion and freedom through the imposition of form cannot escape the inherent multiplicity of the form of the city as the failure of the birth number suggests. The city must incorporate within itself the many, not exclude it. In Book 10 Socrates begins to explore the true source of that failure. Fearful of the chaos brought only the formless freedom of a Dionysus, he begins to revise his city by maintaining the forms, but giving them a richness denied earlier, both a front and a back, a depth that imitation on stage or in the Homeric poems or by the graphic artist lacks. He gives back to the inhabitants of the city the capacity to act, i.e., the movement that the Parmenidean model of Book 3 denied them when it banished, along with much else, form-changing laughter. The curious re-visiting of imitation and illusion at the end of the *Republic* does not only challenge Dionysus' world of complete freedom from form. The city still demands the knowledge of form (that Agave so sorely lacked) in order to know who is a son and who is not, who is human and who is not, but it also questions Callipolis' capitulation to an oppressive slavery that the uniformity the forms impose. As Aristotle said often, the city is made up of multiple parts. It cannot survive the multiplicity of Dionysus where a son is also a lion and a wall is not a wall, but neither can it survive the uniformity of Callipolis. Book 10's re-assessment of imitation begins to move us beyond both.

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