

Plato, Republic, Bk. VIII

Aristocracy → Timocracy Argument

- 1) Everything that comes into being must decay.
- 2) Not even the most well-ordered constitution will last forever; it must also dissolve over time.
- 3) Just as plants & animals have periods of fruitfulness and barrenness, so will the **kallipolis**; there will be cycles in which the young become less well-educated in liberal arts.
- 4) Thus, even rulers will be corrupted into writing the constitution in such a way that money-making and acquisition of possessions are the only things valued.
- 5) Then, land & houses will be distributed as private property, former friends will be enslaved as serfs, and war will be a continual condition; hence, guarding the slaves will be central to the state.
- 6) Thus, timocracy, understood as a degenerated form of rule (lovers of honor now love only money and possessions instead of doing a task for its own inherent excellence) emerges from aristocracy.

Timocracy → Oligarchy Argument

- 1) Once private property is established in the **polis**, honor-loving men become money-lovers.
- 2) The more they value money-making, the less they value virtue.
- 3) Then they pass a law in the oligarchic constitution that establishes a wealth qualification: those who don't possess the stated amount of property aren't qualified to rule (or, vote).
- 4) Thus, craftsmen and office-holders are determined by their wealth rather than their competencies or desires to serve the **polis**.
- 5) Also, it becomes not one city, but two -- of the very rich who rule, and the very poor who have no voice in ruling.
- 6) And, oligarchs cannot fight a war -- if they arm the Many, they'll have more to fear from them than from the enemy; and if they refuse to use the Many, then due to their love of money, they'll refuse to pay mercenaries -- so, they'd have to fight themselves, but the Few would be outnumbered.
- 7) This constitution admits the greatest of evils -- a person who sells his property & has no means for making a living has no useful role in the **polis** -- we create a class of squanderers.
- 8) This constitution then permits beggars, thieves, pickpockets, and temple-robbers.
- 9) So, oligarchy, in its reliance on a wealth requirement, creates a huge gap between rich and poor, and hence brings about many moral corruptions, with few benefits, in the **polis**.

### Oligarchy → Democracy Argument

- 1) The people in an oligarchy have insatiable greed to become as rich as possible.
- 2) So, those rule because they own much property, and thus are unwilling to institute laws to prevent the young from wasting their wealth -- through bank loans, credit debts, etc.
- 3) Thus, it's impossible for a city honoring wealth to enable its citizens to practice moderation.
- 4) Accordingly, many people become perpetually indebted, disenfranchised, hate those with property, and will use violent means to overthrow them.
- 5) The wealthy pretend not to see those disenfranchised ones -- by honoring money-making, the wealthy make the poor even poorer by charging exorbitant interest rates.
- 6) Thus, democracy comes about when the poor are victorious, killing some of their opponents & expelling others, giving the rest an equal share in ruling (according to this constitution) -- people are assigned positions of rule by lot.
- 7) Then, the whole city is full of freedom, especially freedom of speech, since everyone can do what he wants; a democracy fans an insatiable desire for the good of freedom among the citizens.
- 8) Hence, democracy is the second most degenerative form of rule, since it is predicated on the young wasting their wealth, the Many becoming more indebted, little stability in government, the wealthy preying on the poor & the Many (each person pursuing his own self-interest under the guise of freedom), demagogues pandering to the baser interests of the Many, and the **polis** accordingly being disunified and prone to constant revolutions. That is, the insatiable desire for freedom eventually destroys democracy.

### Democracy → Tyranny Argument

- 1) When a democratic **polis** gets "bad cupbearers" for its leaders, then they simply pander to the people's insatiable quest for freedom.
- 2) Then citizens who obey the rulers are regarded as willing slaves, fathers fear their sons, foreign visitors are made equal to citizens, teachers flatter their students and students despise their teachers, and the old imitate the young for fear of appearing authoritarian. And in such a society, there exists legal equality and freedom in relations between men and women.
- 3) So, taken all together, the citizens' souls have become so hyper-sensitized that they become angry if anyone even imposes on himself the least degree of slavery.
- 4) In such a **polis**, the citizens, take no notice of the laws, whether written or unwritten, so as to avoid having any master at all.
- 5) As with most other cycles in the organic world (seasons, plants, bodies, constitutions), this stress on extreme freedom leads to its opposite, extreme slavery; excessive action in one direction usually sets up an opposite reaction.
- 6) Under such conditions, there is always a class of idle, extravagant, and brave souls who establish themselves as leaders, and have the more cowardly men as followers (playing the roles of sycophant = stingless drones).
- 7) Thus, the democratic atmosphere of extreme permissiveness degenerates into tyranny, domination of the masses by some pedagogue.
- 8) Under such leadership, the tyrant finds it easy to bring someone to trial of false charges, banish some citizens, kill others, and he gets popular support by hinting to the people he will cancel their debts and redistribute land (Cleisthenes?).