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The issues that concern Jacob Howland in *Glaucon’s Fate* are these: "Is [Plato’s] *Republic* primarily a work of philosophical inquiry or ideological dogmatism? Are its political proposals serious or ironic?" "How has the *Republic* managed to inspire tyrannical hubris as well as reflective openness?" Howland argues that "a confusion of philosophical aspiration and political ideology runs throughout the *Republic*.

A philosophy professor at Tulsa University, Howland thinks Socrates failed to convince his central interlocutor in the *Republic*, Plato’s brother Glaucon, “of the superiority of the life of philosophy and justice.” Evidence for this is Howland’s surmise (following Michael Munn) that Glaucon died fighting for the notorious Thirty Tyrants who ruled Athens in 404 B.C., after Sparta defeated it. Plato’s relatives Charmides and Critias are known to have been members of the Thirty—Critias led the group, which killed 1,500 people. This connection leads Howland to make much of what he takes to be Critias’ views in three of the dialogues in which he appears (Critias, *Timaeus*, and *Charmides*).

Few who study Plato claim Socrates succeeded in turning his most politically ambitious interlocutors toward a philosophical life. This is visible with Alcibiades, whom Howland discusses, and clear enough to the reader of the *Charmides* even if one did not know that Critias led the Thirty. Speculation about whether Glaucon supported this tyranny does not add much to the already striking evidence of Socrates’ failures: Glaucon’s political ambition and shortcomings, as well as his gifts, are evident in the *Republic*. But such speculation is historically and poetically interesting: in general, Howland makes good use of the *Republic*’s literary references. He suggests that Glaucon died in the battle of Munychia—the decisive battle between the Thirty and democratic forces. This battle was fought on the road along which Socrates and Glaucon walk at the *Republic’s* beginning; they are stopped by Polemarchus’ slave near or at the place on the road on which the battle was joined. Several of the *Republic*’s characters, moreover, were killed by the Thirty. From this perspective, the *Republic* is Plato’s memorial to his brother.

The novelty of Howland’s approach is to consider Critias to be a tyrant informed by philosophy, an ideologue who is a precursor to later ideological views. The *Timaeus* begins to reveal the ideological shape and scope of Critias’ ambitions; Critias has a “top-down, technical conception of politics.” More importantly, Socrates’ most just regime in the *Republic*, Callipolis (the Beautiful City), exemplifies a Critian regime. In it, “political repression co-exists...with individual license.” “In constructing Callipolis,” Howland asserts, “Socrates disgraces philosophy as well as virtue—and he knows it, as the fears and regrets that frame the *Republic’s* central books make clear.” Callipolis is characterized by “philosophical totalitarianism”
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and “infected with immoderation and ruled by technicians supported by a rhetoric of expertise, the practical but philosophically spurious side of the formal ontology in which the city’s kings are trained.”

Others have argued that Callipolis is not intended to be a concrete political model: the Republic’s political scheme is meant to show that no actual city is an adequate home for justice, or that it outlines a version of the republic of letters, or of the education of philosophers across generations. Howland does not make these arguments. Rather, he attempts to save Socrates from his accusation of political recklessness by arguing that Socrates (or is it Plato?) means to distinguish the individual philosophical life from a political order ruled by philosophers, or intended to produce them. The dialogue’s “dramatic failures teach that philosophical salvation cannot be worked out through political institutions.” Callipolis is “a profoundly immoderate regime that is only superficially governed by the measures of philosophy.”

Howland advances this view by differentiating genuine philosophy from the technical philosophy taught and employed in Callipolis, and by arguing that Socrates and true philosophy are erotic while Critias and his thought-informed tyranny are thumotic—dominated by spiritedness. “The path of natural erotic development,” he writes, “leads to the perfection of the genuine philosopher…that of thymotic political production, to Callipolis’s pure-bred but philosophically illegitimate rulers.” “Socrates offers prophetic intimations of the Good, the unifying origin of the Whole, that allow us to glimpse the truest and deepest mysteries of philosophy. For genuinely erotic souls, the light of the Good, more brilliant than any flame, points the way toward virtue and happiness.” The Republic’s concluding myth, moreover, “supports an erotic reading of the Republic as a quest for individual salvation through philosophy.” We should therefore distinguish Socrates’ genuine presentation of philosophy from one that makes it too precise or scientific. The latter kind of ‘philosophy’ is the ground for ideological tyranny.

Howland’s Socrates nonetheless is blameworthy because he does not clearly differentiate true from scientific philosophy: Socrates instructs his companions in the fundamental dogma, so to speak, of the church of the Good. This philosophical catechism plainly indicates that the Good, in its lofty uniqueness, cannot be adequately cognized by a purely formal ontology or with scientific precision. Yet it makes no clear distinction between scientific and non-scientific forms of knowledge.... An insufficiently attentive auditor might nevertheless take Socrates to mean that intellectual vision is essentially, or in its highest instance, identical to episteme [science].... Yet, it is this very misunderstanding on which the education of the philosopher-kings is based.

To develop his position Howland takes a number of arguable steps. First, he largely ignores the Republic’s search for justice: although he praises non-metaphysical philosophy, the actual search for justice in the dialogue is given short-shrift. Indeed, he says little about justice in the soul. But if the philosopher’s soul or way of life is most just, if the soul is spirited as well as erotic, the place of spiritedness in thought must be greater than Howland suggests. He even downplays the philosopher’s use of reason in attempting to articulate matters subtly and with complexity: the work or activity of the philosopher is, in his account, somewhat unclear.

Howland’s second questionable step is to partially distort Socrates’ presentation of the philosophers’ education in Callipolis. The rul-
ers there “alone are allowed to pursue, not phi-
losophy as such, but only a part of it—a formal
and systematic metaphysics.” What is the war-
rant for this view? Socrates indeed discusses
the importance of mathematical education and
speaks of various ways in which students are
compelled—but he also discusses at length di-
alectical inquiry as the peak of their education,
and indicates that they will love learning and
that they may “see the good itself.”

This issue is connected to a third question-
able step, a certain moralism: “the goodness of
philosophical speech is dependent on the
moral orientation of those who employ it.”
But is not the philosophical life itself the ground
of philosophers’ “moral orientation”? How-
land acts as if moderation is the central vir-
tue the genuine Socrates teaches. Yet it is the
third virtue in the soul as well as in the city.
In general, Howland comes close to contrasting
a political side of Socrates that is totalitarian
or leads to totalitarianism with a prophetic,
contemplative side that is quasi-Christian.

Howland’s fourth arguable step is to
overestimate Socrates’ estimation of the true
city—the city of pigs. This city, Howland
claims, “will...respect the intrinsic measures of
human being...exemplifying the natural
criteria of what it is to be a self-sufficient hu-
man community.” “In the true city all are
perfected by nature.” There is but “one truly
relevant standard for which Socrates has
so far vouched in the Republic: the natural
measures of human being and community
that came to light in the True City.” Yet, one
wonders how excellent a city can be that has
no need for philosophy and no philosophers,
that fails to credit or educate human spirit-
edness, that apparently lacks erotic longing
and wonder, and that may engage in virtu-
ous action but lacks virtuous character and
choice? Philosophers’ “love of learning, per-
fected through intellectual inquiry produces
an erotic and self-conscious arttunement...
to the things themselves—reduuplicating,
insofar as possible, the natural, instinctive
and supremely musical soul-transformation
of the True City.” But how can philosophy
be aligned with a city in which there is no
individual choice or pride? The true city is
an image of natural justice, but it truncates
human powers; as with all cities its justice is
naturally incomplete.

Why, in Howland’s view, does
Socrates convert philosophy to
ideology? “If Socrates argues for a
regime and a curriculum that he knows to be
philosophically and politically deficient, he
does so not simply to test Glaucon’s nature,
but also in the hope of keeping him at his
side. Callipolis is in this sense an individu-
ally tailored advertisement for Socratic phi-
losophizing, designed to make Glaucon invest
more deeply in their relationship.” Moreover,
Howland argues, Socrates advances the “pro-
fessionalization” of philosophy in Callipolis
in order to exclude the “vicious [or fraudu-
 lent] philosophers” by establishing “labors of
abstract studies” that would be too rigorous
for them. In attempting to suppress counter-
feit philosophers, “Socrates clouds the erotic
purity of his soul with the unphilosophical
spiritedness of an ideologue.”

Are these explanations sufficient to account
for Howland’s claim that, by constructing
Callipolis, Socrates “disgraces philosophy”?
In any event, Glaucon’s Fate is thoughtful and
illuminating, with many telling historical and
literary references and a challenging thesis. It
explores significant questions about Plato’s
understanding of the connection between
philosophy and politics and is well worth
reading.

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osophy (Johns Hopkins University Press).
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