

The *Republic* and *Apology* as Source Texts for *Rebel Without a Cause*

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Abstract

In his 1956 article “Ajax or the Cid: An Examination of Ray’s *Rebel Without a Cause*,” Éric Rohmer wrote: “May one pardon my favourite vice of invoking the memory of ancient Greeks. I can’t help thinking, in good faith, that the parallel is not completely unintentional in the film.” In this paper we follow up Rohmer’s provocative suggestion by exploring Nicholas Ray and Irving Shulman’s use of two Greek source texts – Plato’s *Republic* and *Apology* – in the construction of *Rebel Without a Cause*. The paper’s argument rests on a comparative textual analysis of the film and the dialogues, though it also considers certain extra-textual evidence. Shulman, the film’s original screenwriter, held baccalaureate and graduate degrees in Philosophy and English from Ohio University (1933-37) and Columbia University (1937-38). He also completed five additional years of study at New York University (1938-41) and George Washington University (1941-43) before completing a PhD at UCLA (1972). We argue that Shulman’s academic and literary background, when considered in relation to the film’s content, supports the claim that the *Republic* and *Apology* were used intentionally to frame the film’s analysis of American youth rebellion. We argue further that what emerges from that analysis is a classical critique of contemporary American culture and politics.

Roger Ebert once wrote that Nicholas Ray’s “*Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) desperately wants to be about something and doesn’t know what it is.”¹ A sophomoric repetition of the film’s title may sound like clever criticism to a hurried newspaper reader, but its inadequacy as interpretation becomes apparent when we compare it to the film itself. Forty years later and with the hindsight of two generations, most critics are still no closer to understanding this odd but engaging film. The reason is simple: they see nothing in *Rebel Without a Cause* and nothing in the world around them to persuade them to take up Plato and read him seriously in relationship to the film. If they were to do so the film’s richness would be evident to them, as would the irony of its title. The clues to this relationship are ample and apparent to anyone willing to look for them. But they assume a familiarity with the Platonic dialogues that in our time seems no longer to be a reasonable expectation.¹¹

Fortunately, critics like Ebert are not all we have to go on. Éric Rohmer’s 1956 article “Ajax or the Cid: An Examination of Ray’s *Rebel Without a Cause*” presents us with a much more subtle reading of the film. Rohmer writes: “May one pardon my favourite vice of invoking the memory of ancient Greeks. I can’t help thinking, in good faith, that the parallel is not completely unintentional in the film.” Rohmer does not explain this parallel in

detail. He says only that for him the Greek nature of the film is most apparent in its tragic character, which consists in the conflict between the honour or pride of the protagonists and the force of nature that “punishes and plays pranks on whomever cannot accept it.”^{III} Though Rohmer’s insight regarding the film’s protagonists is certainly right – Jim, Judy, and Plato all aspire to a nobility not apparent in the lives of those around them – his claim that nature is what opposes that aspiration is not sufficiently differentiated. It is true that for the Greeks nature could at times respond violently to inordinate expressions of human pride. But so too could other people who were neither proud nor noble and who sought to escape tragedy’s worst consequences by diminishing their own and others’ erotic attachments. We argue that in *Rebel Without a Cause* it is not nature so much as middle class American society that cannot tolerate and so punishes the nobility of these three young people. Rohmer sees and applauds their ambition but does not develop his critical analysis of the forces arrayed against them. Nor does he explain fully the film’s “Greek” character. Nonetheless his interpretation nudges us towards the film’s most important philosophical insights and in so doing helps us to avoid the empty witticisms of contemporary film critics and the depressing if conventional narratives of youth delinquency offered by activists and social workers alike.

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This paper examines the political philosophy of *Rebel Without a Cause* through an analysis of its two principal source texts, Plato’s *Republic* and *Apology*.^{IV} While it is true that the film’s title comes from Robert Lindner’s 1944 book *Rebel Without a Cause: The Story of a Criminal Psychopath*, this text is marginal to the film’s meaning and most important insights.^V Lindner’s case study turns on the assumption that a diagnosis of psychopathology is best determined by measuring the extent of a patient’s deviation from the accepted norms of the society in which she exists. Violation of these norms along with an inability to “delay the pleasures of gratification” and a general continuation of “infantile patterns and habits into physiological adulthood” are what most distinguish the psychopath from a balanced adult.^{VI} Far from accepting Lindner’s analysis, in *Rebel Without a Cause* Ray reworks it substantially in order to free those who resist our social norms and remind us of their inadequacies from the charge of psychopathology and to reopen the question of whether post-war America’s concern with material prosperity and its easy comforts and pleasures entails a life that is, if not pathological, then deprived of certain finer ambitions and desires. *Rebel Without a Cause* asks us to examine a cast of rebellious young people, not to dismiss their spiritedness as

abnormal but to consider seriously what it might reveal about our impressive liberal democracies.

A word about the types of evidence we explore in making the argument. Most of what we claim is based on a comparative reading of the film and the *Republic* and *Apology*. However, there is also some extra-textual evidence to suggest that the film's platonic character is not accidental. That evidence has to do principally with the film's original screenwriter – Irving Shulman. According to the archives at Ohio University, Shulman held baccalaureate and graduate degrees in Philosophy and English from Ohio University (1933-37) and Columbia University (1937-38). He also completed five additional years of study at New York University (1938-41) and George Washington University (1941-43) before completing a Ph.D. at UCLA (1972). Two of Shulman's professors at Ohio University – Horace Houf and Walter Gamerstfelder – published books that examined Plato's writings and philosophy.^{vii} Also, the course descriptions at Ohio University for this period suggest that Plato was an essential part of the Philosophy Department curriculum.^{viii}

Stewart Stern, who completed the screenplay for *Rebel Without a Cause* after Shulman left the project, confirms the impression. Though he takes credit for reworking much of the screenplay, Stern acknowledges that the Planetarium and “chickie run” scenes as well as the names of the film's three protagonists (Jim, Judy, and Plato) were all retained from Shulman's original script – three of the most platonic elements of the film, as we argue below. He also discusses the “Greek” character of the Planetarium scenes in particular by referring to them as reenactments of the “Theatre of Dionysus.”^{ix} The wrong Greek referent, as we will see, but the right historical period and location. We argue that Shulman's academic background and Stern's remarks, when taken together and considered in relation to the film's content, support the claim that the *Republic* and *Apology* figure in important ways in the film's construction and its analysis of American youth rebellion.

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Ray's use of Platonic imagery in the film teaches us something about the relationship between rebellion and education. In the *Republic* Socrates' links these experiences explicitly: the movement of rebellion (*periakteon*) against the darkness of the cave is virtually equivalent to the experience of education (*paideias*).^x The famous opening sentences of book 7 set the theme: “Next ... make an image of our nature in its education and want of education, likening it to a condition of the following sort. See human beings as though they were in an

underground cave-like dwelling with its entrance, a long one, open to the light across the whole width of the cave” (*Republic* 514a). Ray understands the relationship between these two experiences similarly and depicts it concretely through the friendship between Jim and Plato. Jim and Plato are both rebels, unwilling to abide by the terms set for life within the various modern caves they encounter. Though Jim has his difficulties (he is staggeringly drunk when we first meet him), Plato is the more troubled of the two.^{XI} Nonetheless they form a friendship in which both are benefitted. Jim tutors Plato just as Socrates’ tutored his historical namesake; and Plato’s need encourages Jim to acquire the adult virtues of courage and compassion so obviously lacking in his own father. Through the process they both come to learn important lessons about the true nature of justice and love.

What emerges from their education is an image of a genuine aristocracy. Rohmer comes close capturing this image when he argues that the pride and love of these remarkable young people is what makes them noble. They suffer neither from the “resigned complacency” nor the “wilful abasement” of “modern” human beings.^{XII} The bourgeois superseded the nobles of the *ancien regime* and established the rule of a mercantile class that itself was soon differentiated into higher and lower strata, today’s plutocrats and middle class respectively, the latter of which is gradually being transmogrified into a homogenous consumer class whose members are differentiated only by the level of their buying power. At the time of the film, however, a “traditional” middle class still existed and the film’s world is guided by their tastes and desires.^{XIII} One of the most significant lacunae in *Rebel Without a Cause* in this respect is the absence of a genuinely noble or aristocratic class. The “mansion” Jim, Judy, and Plato momentarily inhabit is abandoned; and Plato’s family is entirely absent save for the arrival of generous monthly cheques. In the void left by the disappearance of the nobility, middle class mediocrity flourishes. This mediocrity encourages these young people to prefer the easier forms of accommodation made possible by money to the more beautiful but costly demands of love and justice. It is against this cultural and political backdrop that our three young aristocrats attempt to create a social world to match the pride and love they experience in themselves and in one another.

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The principal character in the story, Jim Stark (James Dean), is a troubled youth whose rebellious disposition has caused his family to move to yet another new town in the hope of escaping its consequences. But to no avail. When we first meet Jim he is in juvenile

detention, having been arrested for vagrancy. During his stay there he makes the acquaintance of Judy (Natalie Wood) and Plato (Sal Mineo), the two characters in the story who will ultimately become his friends and join him in his principled but unusual rebellion. In the early part of the film Jim's various efforts to fit in are repeatedly rebuffed by the locals. The chief barrier in this regard is Buzz (Corey Allen), the in-crowd's ringleader and Judy's main squeeze. He is a stereotypical image of 1950s American youth rebellion – violent, menacing, indifferent to authority, and incorrigible. By distinguishing between Buzz and Jim, Ray both acknowledges the reality of the stereotype and robs it of its pre-eminence as an explanation of the period's unrest. Jim's rebellion expresses the true nature of that unrest and offers a critique of Buzz's alternative that reveals the latter's complicity in the very social and political structures it claims to oppose. But more of that in a moment. The opposition between the two young men reaches its apex in the "chickie run" scene, which results in Buzz's death and simultaneously opens up the possibility of a final denouement beyond the violence and disorder of the day's events. This denouement occurs during the abandoned mansion scene, in which Jim, Judy, and Plato form a surrogate family of their own and supply the sense of order and nobility missing from their lives.

As beautiful as the moment is, it does not last. In the final sequence of the film the various forces arrayed against these three young people and the order they represent reassert themselves with a vengeance. Plato is killed; Jim and Judy are left heart-broken; the good are wounded or destroyed; and the bad and mediocre triumph. There is scarcely a glimmer of hope anywhere to be found, with the exception perhaps of Jim's father (James Backus). Ray gives us an image of what we all desire and then immediately allows it to be crushed, and we are left to wonder what it all means.

There is a roughly Platonic structure to the story that the viewer feels immediately when watching it, even though it might take some effort to explain it analytically. In a general way that structure centers on the life and doings of Jim Stark, the Socrates figure in the film. Like Socrates and Athens, Jim has an uneasy relationship with the citizens of Millertown. He is no political reformer or activist, but he is deeply troubled by the injustice, cowardice, and lack of compassion he witnesses in those around him. Despite his oversensitivity to the appellation "chicken," he never runs from difficult circumstances or hard truths. It becomes pretty clear as the film progresses that the real reason for the family's serial moves is his mother's own inability to cope. The minute it appears to her that there is

no quick and easy way to skirt or cover up Jim's involvement in Buzz's death, she announces flatly: "Well, it doesn't matter anyhow – were moving." Jim calls her on her irresponsibility and evasion immediately: "You're not tearing me loose anymore...You're not going to use me as an excuse again, Mom." This same resolve is apparent in Jim in the film's opening scene. After a brief quarrel with his parents and a tussle with the juvenile officer, the officer (Edward Platt) says to Jim: "Too bad you didn't connect. You could have gone to Juvenile Hall. That's what you want, isn't it?" Jim replies "No," to which the officer responds: "Sure it is. You want to bug us till we have to lock you up." This charming reworking of Socrates' statement to the jury in the *Apology* gets at the heart of Jim's character.^{xiv} In the *Apology* Socrates says to the jury: "Suppose that...you said to me, Socrates, on this occasion we shall disregard Anytus and acquit you, but only on one condition, that you give up spending your time on this quest and stop philosophizing. If we catch you going on in the same way, you shall be put to death" (*Apology* 29c). Socrates' reply is unequivocal: "Well, supposing, as I said, that you should offer to acquit me on these terms, I should reply, Gentlemen, I am your very grateful and devoted servant, but I owe a greater obedience to God than to you, and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone I meet" (*Apology* 29d).

Jim is not an idealist but he will not be intimidated into silent acquiescence once he has resolved that a particular stand is right and that those around him are not facing up to the matter or being honest with themselves. As in the case of the *Apology*, that resolve leads us to the heart of Jim's character and sheds light on the film's Platonic structure.

The image of the cave is central to the film's iconography and structure. It works in a number of different ways. There are two scenes in which the image is used explicitly to frame the action and illuminate its meaning. These are the Planetarium scenes, one of which occurs at the beginning of the film, the other at its conclusion. Two caves then, with markedly different natures, but together setting the parameters of the narrative. And these are not the only caves in the film. As Zdravko Planinc has argued regarding the *Republic*, the cave can be considered as any place from which it is possible to ascend to a brighter or more illuminated one.^{xv} The same is true in *Rebel Without a Cause*, and Ray's insight is a good example of the subtlety with which he interprets the *Republic*. The cave is not a single homogenous thing; nor does it denote any natural feature of the world, whether it be politics

or society, against which is set some perfect or utopian realm. Most interpretive schools accept this assumption as a fundamental principle of their reading of the dialogue, though they frequently disagree over its precise content.

Leo Strauss and his followers tend to regard the cave as politics and what lies beyond its borders as signifying the contemplative life of the gentleman or philosopher.^{xvi} Christian Platonists like to think of the realm beyond the cave as equivalent to Augustine's "City of God," and the cave itself as this world or the "City of Man."^{xvii} Ray does better than both types of scholarship by making it clear dramatically that the cave is not a place or natural feature of reality but a kind of existential or political darkness in life that is neither necessary nor insuperable. Mapping the contours of that darkness and the caves in which it is found, and exploring the various ways in which it is possible to move beyond them, is in large part the task of *Rebel Without a Cause*. Indeed the entire trajectory of the film and of Jim's odyssey could be understood as his attempt to find a way beyond the various caves he encounters in order to discover a natural and more brilliantly illuminated life. But first Jim needs to get out of jail, and he is not saying just anything to do so.

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In the film's opening scene we meet three of its principle characters – Plato, Judy, and Jim. The juvenile authorities have detained all of them for one or another offense: Plato for shooting puppies; Judy for cruising the neighbourhood late at night, suggesting sexual impropriety; and Jim for being found passed-out drunk on the street. With the exception of shooting puppies, all minor offenses and all involving a fundamental misjudgment about the perpetrator. Jim is not a vagrant, his present condition notwithstanding; and Judy is not a professional woman, despite her occasionally coquettish manner. But not in the eyes of law. Whether due to fearful moralism or concerns about deeper and more principled types of disaffection, American society of the period viewed these people as a threat. And there we have the dramatic engine of *Rebel Without a Cause*: three corrupt youths and the problem of how to turn them around. Or so we think.

The scene is straight *Apology*, though Ray makes a number of interesting changes to the story, perhaps the most important of which is the fact that in *Rebel Without a Cause* Socrates (Jim) gets off. In the *Apology* it is clear that the Athenians have grown tired of Socrates' constant questioning and moral probing (*Apology* 37cd).^{xviii} Some are adamant that he be put to death; others would prefer that he simply went away (*Apology* 37d). But both

parties want him gone. Of course the charge against him – “corrupting the minds of the young” – is empty (*Apology* 26b). All ancient commentators agree about this, not the least of them Plato and Xenophon.^{xix} Yet for just over half the jurors a perceived personal injury trumped both conscience and principle and led to Socrates’ execution (*Apology* 34bc). But what about a young Socrates? Would they have dealt as harshly with him?

The outcome of the case in *Rebel Without a Cause* is different from that of the *Apology*, but the same irony is present in both works. Jim is a youthful Socrates. He is already as erotic and courageous as his model, but his virtue is not quite fully mature. He has enough wit to stand up to the likes of the juvenile officer, the cops, and his father. But he is still too spirited at times for his own good, and he has yet to acquire some of the lesser Socratic virtues: for instance, he cannot hold his liquor (*Symposium* 220a). At any rate, despite all the hullabaloo and tough talk by the authorities, in the end all the “corrupt” youths of the town get off – even Jim, and even Plato. All it takes is a little family intervention (another theme from the *Apology*) and everyone goes home as before, absolved of the charges against them but unaided with their real troubles. Ray’s indictment of contemporary American society is palpable in the scene; and it is the same indictment that Socrates brings against Meletus and Anytus and a number of other Athenian citizens in the *Apology*: despite their moral grandstanding and the appearance of virtue that the charges against Socrates affords them, they do not and never have shown the slightest interest in either the care or corruption of the young (*Apology* 26b).

Fortunately for Plato and Judy there is real help to be found. Jim is released along with the rest of them, his “gadflyish” ways too youthful or perhaps too little understood to be considered much of a threat (*Apology* 30e). They are, of course, though not in the way the powers that be imagine them. Despite the film’s tragic conclusion (the *Apology* concludes with a death sentence, not acquittal) Jim’s release sets in motion a series of events that help to free a number of different people in a number of different ways. His efforts also call into question the practices of a democratic regime that has become “famous for its wisdom and strength” but has forgotten to pay attention to “truth and understanding and the perfection of [its] soul?” (*Apology* 29de). We might add “educational system” to the list. But there are many caves Jim must first pass through if he wants to become clear about these things.

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The first Planetarium scene is the one in which the imagery of the cave from book 7 of the *Republic* is first introduced. It is an extremely effective scene in which Ray merges Plato's account with his own to create a compelling image of the predicament of modern young people and indeed of modernity itself.

The planetarium reproduces the features of the cave in all their detail. Its inhabitants stare at a wall on which are projected images created by the play of light and shadow. Though the images are not real they create the impression of being so both by their movement and by the words that are uttered in relation to them. The background image against which the narrative occurs is the starry heavens of the night sky. The lecturer begins the story benignly with descriptions of various constellations – Orion, Cancer, and Taurus. But as the show continues he moves progressively toward more apocalyptic speculations about the end of the world and the ultimate insignificance of human life. Meanwhile the students sit transfixed by the image he creates, their deepest fears and longings played upon by its creeping nihilism.

This is the cave image of the *Republic*, in both its construction and meaning. The lecturer is Socrates' "puppet-handler," the students are the prisoners, and the planetarium is the cave (*Republic* 514a-515a). As in the Platonic account the students are enthralled and terrified by the image they see before them. Facial expressions indicate that even Buzz is troubled by its nihilism, though he is also oddly moved by it. Plato is troubled too, particularly by its chilling pronouncements about "man alone." But for him there is no hint of relish at the claim, as in Buzz's case. Plato knows from experience that there is a loneliness deeper and more terrifying than the pop-scientific version peddled by the lecturer. That is real nihilism, without seductive pyrotechnics, and he sees nothing in it to recommend it. In this regard he has already freed himself from the influence of the shadow play in some measure: he knows that the darkness he is in is darkness, and he wants to be free of it. Like the historical Plato this makes him ripe for Socrates' instruction.

According to the *Republic* the main reason that the students are enslaved is due to a "want of education" (*paideias*) (*Republic* 514a). Though "by nature" (*ei phusei*) they desire something better than the shadowy images before them, they are enslaved by them nonetheless because of their seductiveness and the mild compulsion that seductiveness entails (*Republic* 515c, 514a). These are the chains of the *Republic* that bind the prisoners' legs

and necks but leave their hands free to move, suggesting the possibility of escape. But how are they to receive this education? And what is its content?

The only character who is neither captivated nor troubled by the images before him is Jim. At the end of the performance he suggests playfully to Plato (who is hiding beneath the seats) that it is safe to come out: “It’s all over; the world ended.” And during the performance he remarks to him “Once you’ve been up there, you know you’ve been somewhere.” Where is “up there”? And how does Jim know what it is like unless he has already made the journey himself? In the film Jim’s demeanour makes it clear that the statement is a recollection, not a comment on current experience. “Up there” does not refer to the manufactured image of the planetarium but to the world that lies beyond it. Jim is able to make the claim because he has already ascended beyond the cave and its nihilistic sophistry. “Up there” is simply the world as it is given to all of us, complete with the creatures included in the planetarium show – the stars, the night sky, the various animals and beings – but without its distortion. He is free not because he is a nihilistic rebel (without a cause) who simply does not care but because he sees through the commentator’s own nihilism immediately. But what is he to do with this knowledge? And what about the others who lack it and the freedom it entails?

Toward the end of the scene Ray has Jim take up the role of Socrates explicitly by having him encourage the other students to break the spell of these shadow images and to free themselves from its influence. In good Socratic form he does so playfully. When the image of the constellation Taurus appears on the screen Jim lets out a loud comic “moo.” The sound has the opposite effect on the students from the words of the lecturer, who aims to focus their attention ever more intently on the images before them. The latter’s bad impersonation of Cancer barely distracts anyone. Not so Jim’s mooing. The moment he utters it the entire group turns from the screen in order to face him directly. Some, like Buzz’s gang, do so hostilely, while others do so merely to laugh or out of curiosity. It is a marvellous scene in which spell of the image is momentarily broken by a bit of well-timed comedy. Now what else is this disruption than a vivid image of the “turning around” of the soul from “that which is dark” to “that which is and the brightest part of that which is” which Socrates claims is the very heart of education (*Republic* 518cd)?

No sooner does the episode pass than everyone’s attention quickly returns to the show and its explosive apocalyptic finale. Everyone, including hard cases like Buzz, covers

at the sight of the earth's destruction and the lecturer's pronouncement of our final insignificance. Everyone except Jim, that is. All he displays is a mild annoyance at the bizarre light and sound that accompany the earth's annihilation. Apart from that he is not troubled in the least. Ray reinforces the image and the critique by having Jim pause on his way out of the planetarium to comment on the sophisticated gadgets used by the modern "puppet-handler" to create the spectacle: "Certainly is a lot of switches." No comment about the show's content (it has none); and no admiration for the performance. Just a simple observation that makes it absolutely clear that the whole thing is nothing but a staged technological fiction by which Jim is not seduced in the least.

Jim's efforts are lost on Buzz, at least initially. The moment the latter leaves the planetarium he mocks Jim, engages him in a little knife play, and provokes him into accepting the challenge of a "chickie run." All different ways to perpetuate the darkness of the cave they have just left behind. This too is consistent with the *Republic*. According to Socrates' image, there will always be those who choose not to leave the cave, knowing what they refuse. Glaucon himself gets only part way out, even after Socrates' many efforts. He seems to recognize that there is a reality beyond the cave, but he tends to think of it as being populated solely by geometrical types like himself. And his confusion cuts the other way too: for him all those found in the cave, like those who occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder of the Kallipolis, have no knowledge of philosophy or of the world beyond the cave's darkness.^{xx}

At any rate, Jim should resist Buzz's challenge, but he cannot quite manage it, first because he has been called a coward publically and second because he too is spirited, perhaps a little too spirited for his own good. The confrontation between the two men and the ensuing "chickie run" are Ray's remake of both the cave of "perpetual prisoners" in book 7 and the encounter between Socrates and Thrasymachus in book 1 of the *Republic*. In the cave of "perpetual prisoners" the inhabitants behave differently than do the prisoners in what Socrates describes as the "first home" (*Republic* 516c). They neither watch the show passively nor do they try to escape. Rather they compete with one another for "honors, praises, and prizes" in order to gain power over their fellow human beings (*Republic* 516c). Ray's account of the confrontation between Thrasymachus (Buzz) and Socrates (Jim) stands on its own but also illuminates the nature of this competition. Buzz's sophistic and honour-loving attempt to gain power over Jim is an image of the quarrel between Thrasymachus and

Socrates. But it also an example of the power politics of the perpetual prisoners “who fight over shadows with one another and form factions for the sake of ruling, as though it were some great good” (*Republic* 520c).

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Jim accepts Buzz’s challenge to a “chickie run” even though he knows better, and he soon comes to lament his lapse in judgement. The scene is a reworking of Socrates’ encounter with Thrasymachus in book 1 of the *Republic*. It serves to illuminate the particular darkness or nihilism represented by Buzz and his crowd: violence and sophistry.

Throughout his conversation with Socrates Thrasymachus argues sophistically that justice is “the advantage of the stronger” (*Republic* 338c). Socrates argues the opposite and defeats him, inadvertently confirming Thrasymachus’ thesis, though Socrates’ own dissatisfaction with the results makes it clear that the victory is ironic. From the outset Thrasymachus accuses Socrates of being motivated by the same love of victory or honour that motivates him, though he does so without irony. Indeed he claims that Socrates “habitual irony” is merely a mask behind which he hides that same desire (*Republic* 337a). Be that as it may. Socrates wins the argument with Thrasymachus yet laments the victory because he still does “not know what the just is” (*Republic* 354b). Why? Because sophistry does not lead to what is, even though it might be useful in getting the attention of those who think it does. By beating Thrasymachus at his own game Socrates gains his friendship and demonstrates the limitations of sophistry but loses track of justice itself.

The entire scene is subtly reworked in *Rebel Without a Cause*. When Socrates first encounters Thrasymachus he is like a “wild beast” who flings himself upon Socrates “as if to tear [him] to pieces” (*Republic* 336b). Buzz’s knife fight with Jim outside the planetarium, the violence of which leads to injuries on both parts. The chickie run continues the quarrel and provides a vivid image of the nature of sophistic debate. Like the conversation between Socrates and Thrasymachus that follows in the *Republic*, Jim and Buzz’s alternating leads in the race as they speed toward the cliff are a depiction of the nature of eristic argument – no shared upward movement but rather only contentious verbal jousting.^{xxi} The precipice is an image of the end of all such argument – not truth or goodness but victory for one party and humiliation for the other, and possible destruction for both if the desire for victory proves too great. Even the mishap that leads to Buzz’s death repeats the manner of Thrasymachus’ undoing in the *Republic*, though it does so more violently. Thrasymachus is not defeated by

an outside force but by the implications of his own argument, the contradictions of which Socrates merely teases out of him by means of his persistent questioning. When Buzz's jacket gets tangled in the door handle of his stolen car he is destroyed in the same manner. Buzz perishes not because of any action or ill will on Jim's part, but because he gets caught in his own sophistic devices and his own excessive love of victory. The scene ends with a graphic depiction of the consequences of sophistry for the lives of young people, and Jim responds to his apparent victory with the same lament as does Socrates to his defeat of Thrasymachus.

Jim began by wanting justice and friendship only to discover at the end of this absurd fight that he possesses neither. And the defeat of his rival is no consolation whatsoever. "As a result of the discussion I know nothing. So long as I do not know what the just is, I shall hardly know whether it is a virtue or not and whether the one who has it is unhappy or happy" (*Republic* 354bc). These are Socrates' words at the conclusion of his discussion with Thrasymachus. Jim is equally dissatisfied with his own "victory." As it turns out honour and justice are not equivalent. After being detained briefly by his parents Jim goes straight to the police. Why? Because like Socrates he wants justice, of course. Ultimately to no avail. The police prove no more interested in real justice than Buzz's gang or Jim's parents. As the scene ends Jim is left in the same position as was Socrates – his honour intact but the nature of justice still unknown to him.

In the *Republic* Glaucon responds to the impasse of Thrasymachus' argument in a way that only perpetuates its confusions. Rather than allow his defeat to stand Glaucon intervenes in order to "restore" Thrasymachus' argument (*Republic* 358c). In *Rebel Without a Cause* Crunch (Buzz's second in command) assumes the role of Glaucon. Buzz dies but Crunch continues his quarrel with Jim. The challenge comes over the radio as Jim and Judy are beginning to discover their shared affection at the end of a deeply troubling day: "Coming up now another request – this time by the boys down at Anna's Pizza Paradise – a new arrangement of a great oldie in rhythm and blues. Jim, this is dedicated to you – from Buzz." It is a charming scene. Buzz's argument all over again, only the new arrangement is potentially worse than the original because Crunch is more dangerous and less principled than Buzz, who despite his rough ways admits to a certain friendship for Jim. "I like you, you know?" This too is consistent with the *Republic*. After being publically defeated by Socrates, Thrasymachus experiences shame (*Republic* 350d). Soon after he grows "gentle"

and leaves off “being hard on [Socrates]” (*Republic* 354a). Socrates pays him a high complement by calling him a “daemonic man,” and later in the dialogue goes so far as to claim that he and Thrasymachus have become “friends” (*Republic* 344d, 498cd). Though Glaucon appears to be the more urbane and agreeable interlocutor, neither appellation is ever given to him.

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There are two more scenes in *Rebel Without a Cause* in which the *Republic* figures prominently as a template and source text – the scene in the abandoned house and the final confrontation at the Planetarium. We discuss them in turn.

The abandoned house scene functions on two levels. It illustrates the political and social conditions of modern democratic America through a reworking of the political limitations of Glaucon’s Kallipolis. It also provides a positive account of existential order that has been largely missing from the film thus far and that is roughly comparable to the account of the good developed by Socrates in the three icons of the “longer way” in books 6 and 7. It would take a good deal more interpretive work than is possible in this article to make the comparative analysis compellingly. What follows instead is a brief summary of the relevant features of the *Republic*, offered largely without argument. Hopefully the discussion will provide sufficient detail to make the interpretation seem plausible and to illuminate the outlines of the comparative analysis we want to make about *Rebel Without a Cause* and the *Republic*. But first the politics.

Whatever promise there might be of a serious discussion of politics in the *Republic* is forestalled by the construction of the Kallipolis and Glaucon’s inability or unwillingness to follow Socrates’ instruction about the good.^{xxii} Almost the entire history of *Republic* interpretation notwithstanding, the Kallipolis, with its authoritarian, geometrical construction, is Glaucon’s city, not Socrates’. Because of Glaucon’s limitations, the most we get in the *Republic* is an account of some of the personal or existential virtues necessary for the establishment of a good regime, tailored always of course to respond to Glaucon’s particular needs. What this means for the discussion of politics in book 8 is that the best regime – the true aristocracy – is absent from the list, despite the fact that Glaucon believes it is the Kallipolis. Moreover, the four remaining regimes – timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny – are not necessarily inferior to it. For example, it is fairly clear from the

discussion that the democratic regime that Socrates describes is far superior to anything Glaucon imagines politics to be.^{xxiii}

How do these insights figure in *Rebel Without a Cause*? As in the *Republic* there are no true aristocrats in the film. Indeed their absence is quite notable: the abandoned mansion, Plato's missing parents, the omnipresence of the middle-class – all signs of their disappearance. It can also be felt in a number of other ways, the most important of which is Jim's constant groping from some kind of meaning or nobility beyond the complacent self-satisfaction and nihilistic thuggery that surrounds him. No matter where he turns he finds nothing that answers to his own desire for love, dignity, and greatness. He is appalled by the moral weakness of his father but also by Buzz's "comic book" stupidity and the nihilistic intellectualism of the Planetarium lecturer.

All these forces conspire to create a society that is comfortable, secure, and technically proficient but utterly devoid of love or nobility. Thugs like Buzz are officially frowned upon by the regime but permitted to exist nonetheless. They provide a measure of passion and entertainment for the bored middle class. In our day such violent stupidity has become an indispensable part of modern life through Hollywood's constant production of brutal but banal television and movies. The acquisition of the technical proficiency required for this production as well as for other, less benign forms of technology is the job of the university and the modern intellectual. According to Ray, modern American society is something akin to the cold, geometrical rationality of Glaucon's Kallipolis, with a good deal of violence and promiscuity (virtual and real) thrown in to assuage the stifling emptiness of such a life.

There is no alternative politics in *Rebel Without a Cause*. But as in the *Republic* there is an expression of personal existential order. Jim, Judy, and Plato supply it in the scene in the abandoned mansion. Together they reconstitute themselves both as a family and as the true aristocrats of the story.^{xxiv} They care nothing for money (the oligarchic vice of Plato's family and perhaps of the abandoned mansion's previous occupants, too, though it does contain "books"); they teach and care for Plato (their child), affording him a much needed bit of rest; and the entire sequence of events is guided by an experience of love that is for Ray the true foundation of rebellion and provides one of the few moments of real beauty in the film.

The scene reproduces many of the features of the cave of book 7, but there is nothing cave-like about it. Even the fact that the three use candles that cast shadows does not suggest that there is anything illusory or sophistic about their dealings with one another. Nor does the fact that they spend much of their time play-acting. In the *Republic*, everything that happens in the cave is a parody of some naturally occurring reality that exists beyond its borders (*Republic* 516a-c). When Jim, Judy, and Plato mock playfully the banality and meanness of their own families' lives – cave-like existences all – their parody demonstrates that they themselves are beginning to be free of these things in some measure. There is even a dig at Glaucon's preferred manner of handling the troublesome orphaned puppies discussed near the end of book 7, a dig that also has implications for modern politics.

At the outset of the film Plato is arrested for "shooting puppies," a graphic image of the meaning of Glaucon's desire to exile all children over the age of ten from the Kallipolis, effectively making orphans of everyone who remains (*Republic* 540e-541a). Like Glaucon, Plato is frighteningly earnest about his actions, so much so that he recognizes that they will likely lead him to "the electric chair." And well they might have, had it not been for Jim's intervention. At any rate, the same theme comes up again in the abandoned house scene. But here such actions are understood for what they are. In response to Judy's remark that children are "terribly annoying" when they cry and that she does not know what to do with them, Jim replies mockingly, in the voice of W.C. Fields: "Drown them like puppies." A similar solution to Glaucon's perhaps, but precisely the one favoured by modern totalitarianism. Jim and Judy disdain this type of violence. They are sufficiently outside the cave to see it for what it is. In its place they celebrate their own sense of belonging, one suffused with the experience of love. They speak truthfully to one another, their defensive and habitual lies no longer being necessary; and their myopic and adolescent obsessions with being loved give way to richer and more expansive desires to love those around them, including children (Plato). It is a wonderful moment. Unfortunately it does not last. As in the *Republic*, once the personal reordering of the longer way has been completed, the Kallipolis reasserts itself with a vengeance. Crunch and Goon show up, along with the police (Glaucon and his guardians, perhaps?), and everything that has been accomplished begins to unravel. In the world of *Rebel Without a Cause*, as in our own, the forces of disorder never rest, and it takes only one benign slip on Jim's part for the whole thing to fall apart. A scene or two later Plato is dead and everyone is left to wonder how they shall then live.

* * *

In the final scene of the film the action moves back to the Planetarium. The scene makes use of two different episodes from the *Republic*. The first is a reworking of the conversation between Socrates and Cephalus in book 1; the second is a return to the imagery of the cave of book 7.

When we meet Cephalus he is a man nearing the end of his life. Socrates implies that he is “very old” (*Republic* 328d). Leon Craig has found evidence that Cephalus was an arms dealer, possibly selling to both sides during the Peloponnesian war.^{xxv} Given the life he has led and his current pious devotion to the gods and sacrificial rituals, Socrates is keen to examine the nature of his virtue and to discover what he has to report about this time of life (*Republic* 328e). During the conversation it becomes apparent that Cephalus is far more concerned with propitiating the gods in compensation for his unsavoury life than he is in cultivating genuine virtue. The minute the conversation becomes serious, Cephalus walks off laughing, handing the argument over to his son, Polemarchus (*Republic* 331e).

Cephalus’ lack of judgement is apparent in a number of different ways, but perhaps nowhere more so than in his claim that the possession of wealth in one’s dotage is extremely advantageous because it allows one to be just. And what is justice for Cephalus? To pay one’s debts, both to gods and to human beings (*Republic* 331ab). Socrates finds Cephalus’ account questionable. In order to test it he asks him to consider an example that will both illuminate the nature of Cephalus’ business and raise questions about the motives behind his apparent piety. “If a man takes weapons from a friend when the latter is of sound mind, and the friend demands them back when he is mad, one shouldn’t give back such things, and the man who gave them back would not be just, and moreover, one should not be willing to tell someone in this state the whole truth” (*Republic* 331c).

Cephalus puts up no resistance to Socrates’ argument. He assents to it easily and then abandons the discussion, apparently in order to avoid having to give an account of himself (*Republic* 331d). Why? Giving weapons to people who are mad with blood-lust is precisely what arms dealers do, and it is extremely doubtful that merely having the means and the “honesty” to do so makes one just. Despite his claim to love “speeches,” Cephalus has no stomach for this type of discussion (*Republic* 328c).

The exchange between Jim and Plato in the theatre of the Planetarium repeats this scene from the *Republic*. Plato has a gun, you will remember; and he is more than a little

unhinged, having just fled from the police after wounding one of Buzz's gang. He is now hiding in the Planetarium. As Jim makes his way slowly through the darkness of the theatre he asks Plato to show himself. Plato is reticent, but Jim's reassuring words finally convince him to stand up. After he does so Jim asks him to give him his gun. When Plato balks Jim insists that he wants only to look at it and promises to return it immediately. "Don't you trust me, Plato? Just give it to me for a second." Plato acquiesces reluctantly. Once Jim has the gun he removes the clip and therefore any danger that it might be used to harm someone. But when he hesitates to return it (and he does so for good reason, since there are dozens of armed officers just outside the Planetarium), Plato reproves him, echoing Cephalus' view of justice: "You promised to give it back."

Jim's response is taken almost word for word from the *Republic*: "Friends always keep their promises." Of course, they do not, nor should they, and that is the point made in both the *Republic* and *Rebel Without a Cause*. To return a weapon to a friend who has gone mad is not justice, the rules of Cephalus' trade notwithstanding. Nor is one bound in such circumstances to tell one's friend "the whole truth." Jim understands and practices both virtues in the hope of saving Plato. This is evidence of the prudence (*phronesis*) and good judgement (*sophrosyne*) he has acquired as the result of his own ascent from the cave. But something goes terribly wrong.

No sooner do Jim and Plato emerge from one cave than they find themselves in another. But which one? It is difficult to say, but it is plausible to interpret the final Planetarium scene as an image of Glaucon's Kallipolis in action. The Kallipolis is born of a unique combination of Glaucon's geometrical nature and his unwillingness or inability to grasp the erotic content of Socrates' instruction. Glaucon considers the latter to be little more than "daemonic excess" (*Republic* 509c). The former is the main current in his thinking about human relationships. In book 5 Glaucon acknowledges that relationships between men and women are "erotic necessities," yet everything that he says about them is entirely geometrical (*Republic* 458d, 459a-e). A similar confusion occurs in book 6. When Glaucon has trouble following the erotic imagery of the sun icon, Socrates accommodates him by shifting to the more geometrical image of the divided line to explain the nature of the good (*Republic* 509c-511e).^{xxvi} The final icon of the longer way – the cave – is an attempt to test what Glaucon has learned and to explain more fully the consequences of the good for human life. With this last icon Glaucon fares a bit better than he did with the previous two,

though here too there are limitations. He understands that there is a reality beyond the limits of the cave; however, his understanding of that reality is not Socrates' own. For Glaucon the good is an "idea," accessible to intellectuals like himself, and which gives them the "*technè*" or skill necessary to order the regime's political and social relations (*Republic* 428d, 517c). Socrates makes a final attempt in book 7 to free Glaucon from his confusion by giving him a lesson in plane and solid geometry (*Republic* 525d-532d).

The police in the closing scene of *Rebel Without a Cause* are the guardians of the Kallipolis. Like Glaucon they are not precisely sophists because they acknowledge a reality beyond the borders of the cave. And though they manipulate artificial lights in the manner of Socrates' puppet handlers, their aim is not to produce shadows. Indeed they turn their lights off when asked to do so by Jim. Moreover their ambition is different than that of the puppet handlers. They are not trying to keep the young people trapped in the darkness of the planetarium, but rather are encouraging them to leave it. But still something is not quite right.

The American technological regime that the police represent in the film and which is perhaps the progeny of Glaucon's Kallipolis is no home for these erotic young people. The regime is designed to suppress what is best in them. To those who share its ambitions the revolt of these young people seems unprovoked or "without cause." That incredulity is apparent in the opening scene in which Jim's father is completely nonplussed when Jim's disaffection persists even after he itemizes the various consumer goods he has so generously bestowed upon him.^{xxvii} Jim, Judy, and Plato live in a wealthy and powerful society enjoying an unprecedented economic boom after its victory in the Second World War. Glaucon's "luxurious" city, perhaps (*Republic* 372e)? If so, then the reason for Jim and Judy's disaffection is all the more clear. At the conclusion of his description of the healthy city in book 2 of the *Republic*, Socrates says that the two things its citizens will most guard against are "war and poverty" (*Republic* 372c). Glaucon, the rich boy, despises the meanness of Socrates' city, calling it a city of pigs (*Republic* 372d). To satisfy his appetites, he requires wealth and luxury. Socrates returns the insult by calling Glaucon's city "feverish" or sick, but there is much more at stake here than two friends trading insults (*Republic* 372e). Socrates asserts that for Glaucon's city to acquire the luxuries he desires, it will have to acquire more territory from which it might draw them. And in order to do that, it will have to take that territory from its neighbours, since they are unlikely to hand it over willingly. War and

violence are therefore conditions of the city's existence rather than misfortunes to be suffered.

The feverish desires thus unleashed require a powerful expeditionary force to acquire the goods to satisfy them and a military garrison at home to control them domestically. The complex state apparatus created in books 2 to 4 of the *Republic* and finally destroyed in book 5 is a direct consequence of Glaucon's rejection of Socrates' healthy city and the human order that binds it together. It is Glaucon's city into which Jim, Judy, and Plato emerge after leaving the cave of the planetarium, a city in which violent control serves as a stand in for real political order and the kinds of erotic relationships and wisdom that would have saved Plato and brought the situation to a fitting conclusion are unwelcome. Like Glaucon himself, the authorities manage to come part way – they dim the lights at Jim's request and even appear willing to dispense with violence temporarily to restore order. But they do not attend carefully enough to what Jim says and does as he leaves the planetarium. In a flash, old dispositions reassert themselves and Plato soon lies dead at their feet.

* * *

Things have changed since the making of *Rebel Without a Cause*. The American regime has accelerated its production of technical and consumer goods and by so doing has afforded us levels of wealth and power beside which those of the 1950s pale by comparison. We live longer and more comfortably than any other generation in history. And have accomplished all this while also dispensing with the rigid constraints on our freedom depicted in the film and at work in Glaucon's Kallipolis. There no longer appear to be any boundaries, natural or moral, to the satisfaction of our desires. Who could object? Our technical know-how seems even to have allowed us to overcome the historical movement from decadence to decline and destruction that has characterized all previous regimes. We pursue our pleasures and our luxuries single-mindedly yet we have not become weaker and we remain globally dominant. Historically we would have been toppled by a hungrier, more ambitious, more erotic neighbour. Modern technological regimes are efficient, powerful, and replete with almost any pleasure one could imagine pursuing. What they tend not to be is erotic. Indeed, it might be that the elimination of eros is the condition of their efficiency. There may still be virtue in such a world, but it is the virtue of victory, of winning, in which what is best or noble is being first rather than being great.

It may be the human nature has not changed and that people remain erotic beings even though they may choose to ignore this nature in preference of other things. However, that knowledge will be of little consolation should our erotic attachments and dispositions become so weak or diluted as effectively to disappear from public discussion and the practical ordering of our lives. The utopian ambitions that have guided the West for many centuries now and that turned on the subordination of virtue and nobility to the desire for salvation have begun to change their meaning. During the twentieth century, the golden age of screen technology and our most obvious modern “cave,” the images of perfection thus produced and sought after were still human images and so never quite managed to eradicate the bug of imperfection which is nobility’s twin and the context in which its longings and courage make sense. But ours in the world of the trans-human in which the aim is no longer to perfect our humanity but to overcome it entirely. Even the screen’s object of desire is slowly being eliminated – too much old world longing even in that – in favour of the technological manipulation of the organism itself toward its final, collective immortality, an immortality of which the “selfie” is perhaps the most vivid popular image. Whoever our contemporary rebels maybe, they will have first to persuade us that others really do exist and that the interruption of our comfortable narcissism is a reasonable price to pay to experience them. Perhaps then nobility’s longings and resolve might begin to make sense once again.

Notes

ⁱ <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050619/REVIEWS08/506190301>. June 19, 2005. Accessed April 2, 2011.

ⁱⁱ In the case of the film’s original screen writer – Irving Shulman – there is good evidence of such a familiarity. Shulman held a bachelor’s degree in “English, German, Philosophy, Education from Ohio University (1933-37) and his master’s at Columbia University (1937-38).” He later earned a doctorate at UCLA (1972). Shulman’s book *Children of the Dark* was the text from which the original screenplay was developed. Ohio University, Robert E. And Jean R. Mahn Center for Archives and Special Collections, Irving Shulman Collection, MSS 98

ⁱⁱⁱ Eric Rohmer, “Ajax of the Cid: An Examination of Ray’s *Rebel Without a Cause*,” trans. Constance Rowell (The Daily Californian Arts Magazine, Friday, October 12, 1973). The Article was originally published in 1956 in the *Cahiers du Cinema*.

^{iv} The type of source text analysis that is apparent in this paper relies on the work of Zdravko Planinc. He has been responsible for pioneering this style of analysis in the contemporary context. Two of his works in particular should be mentioned in this regard, *Plato through Homer: Poetry and Philosophy in the Cosmological Dialogues* and *Plato’s Political Philosophy: Prudence in the Republic and Laws*. Both works have been essential to the development of our argument.

^v Robert Lindner, *Rebel Without a Cause: The Story of a Criminal Psychopath* (New York: Grove Press, 1944).

^{vi} Robert Lindner, *Rebel Without a Cause*, 2-3.

^{vii} For example, a review of Gamerstfelder, *Fundamentals of Philosophy* includes extensive discussions of Plato. Walter Gamerstfelder & Luther Evans, *Fundamentals of Philosophy* (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1930).

^{viii} See The Ohio University Archives: http://archive.org/stream/ohiouniversitybu1933ohio/ohiouniversitybu1933ohio_djvu.txt. Accessed April 30, 2011.

^{ix} William Baer, "On Rebel Without a Cause: A Conversation with Stewart Stern," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, vol. 38, 4, fall 1999. Accessed May 20, 2011 at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=act2080.0038.414;g=mqrg;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1>.

^x Plato, *Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), 518c.

^{xi} Not a very Socratic moment, to be sure, but perfectly consistent with the behaviour of another young rebel, Alcibiades in the *Symposium*. For his part Socrates could drink as much as his companions but never seems to get drunk. This does not pose a problem for the interpretation necessarily. Jim is an aspiring Socrates.

^{xii} Eric Rohmer, "Ajax of the Cid: An Examination of Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause*."

^{xiii} Robert Reich does a good job of demonstrating the contemporary disappearance of this class in Robert Reich, *Aftershock: The Next Economy and America's Future* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

^{xiv} In the *Apology* Socrates says to the jury: "Suppose that...you said to me, Socrates, on this occasion we shall disregard Anytus and acquit you, but only on one condition, that you give up spending your time on this quest and stop philosophizing. If we catch you going on in the same way, you shall be put to death" (*Apology* 29c). Socrates' reply is unequivocal: "Well, supposing, as I said, that you should offer to acquit me on these terms, I should reply, Gentlemen, I am your very grateful and devoted servant, but I owe a greater obedience to God than to you, and so long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone I meet" (*Apology* 29d). Plato, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Hugh Tredennick eds. Edith Hamilton & Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

^{xv} See Zdravko Planinc, *Plato's Political Philosophy: Prudence in the Republic and Laws* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991), 31-50.

^{xvi} See Allan Bloom's "Interpretive Essay," which is appended to his translation of the *Republic*, 404-407.

^{xvii} See P. Travis Kroeker, *Christian Ethics and Political Economy in North America: A Critical Analysis* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1995), 126.

^{xviii} "I am not so blind that I cannot see that you, my fellow citizens, have come to the end of your patience with my discussions and conversations" (*Apology* 37cd).

^{xix} In the case of Xenophon, see his "Apology of Socrates to the Jury" in Xenophon, *The Shorter Socratic Writings*, trans. Andrew Patch, ed. Robert C. Bartlett (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

^{xx} This is apparent in Glaucon's response to Socrates' description of the cave of the perpetual prisoners. See *Republic* 516c-517b.

^{xxi} This upward movement is described in books 6 and 7 in Socrates' icons of the divided line and the cave (*Republic* 509d-511e, 514a-519a).

xxii The term Kallipolis (“beautiful city”) is introduced by Socrates at *Republic* 527c. Its construction begins with Glaucon’s rejection of Socrates’ city of necessity, in which there are limited resources but an extremely appealing social harmony (*Republic* 372a-c). Glaucon finds the dearth of relishes distasteful, and so sets about creating a “luxurious” or “feverish” city for which war is a condition of its existence (*Republic* 372de).

xxiii “Then democracy ... would be a, as it seems, a sweet regime, without rulers and many-colored, dispensing a certain equality to equals and unequals alike” (*Republic* 558c).

xxiv We mean aristocrat in the precise sense – rule of the good. Ray makes their absence felt through the decadence and neglect of Plato’s family and the abandoned house that Jim, Judy, and Plato ultimately come to inhabit. In the absence of real aristocrats, the world of *Rebel Without a Cause* is run instead by an odd combination of weak middle class businessmen, nihilistic intellectuals, and adolescent thugs.

xxv Leon Craig, *The War Lover: A Study of Plato’s Republic* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1996).

xxvi See Planinc, *Plato’s Political Philosophy: Prudence in the Republic and Laws* (Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 1991).

xxvii “Don’t I give you everything you want? A bicycle – you get a bicycle. A car –.”