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# Descending to Democracy

*Problems for the Soul in Republic 8*

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# **Why doesn't Plato like democracy?**

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# Overview



Santas' Reading



My Reading



Conclusion

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# **I. A Separable Account from Santas**

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# Santas' Method

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- Metaphysics and social philosophy are separable.
    - E.G., Function Definition (Bk. 1, 352e-353d)
  - Plato defines democracy according to private property, knowledge, and freedom.

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# Private Property and Wealth

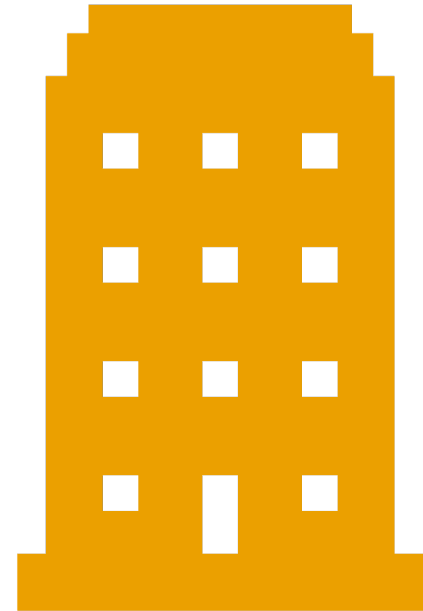
- Guardians can't...
  - own any private property that is not “wholly necessary” (Bk. 3, 412cd); or
  - touch gold and silver (416d).
- If they did...
  - they would become distracted from guarding the city and become “household managers and farmers instead of guardians” (417a).



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# Knowledge

- Knowledge of the Forms and of the Good is required in order to bring about the good for the city (Bk. 4, 428ab)
- To Socrates, knowledge is valuable in itself such that having an educated populous makes for a more just city.



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# Democratic Freedoms

- Each man must only do that thing for which is is naturally suited (Bk. 4, 433a)
- Freedom of profession would allow each man do chose his profession (implicit: Santas, 87)
- Each man could choose to do something in which he is not proficient, or less competent, comparatively (from 2)
- Therefore, freedom of profession harms the city (Bk. 2, 370d)





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## **II. Descent to Democracy**

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# Defective Constitutions in Bk. 8

- Aristocracy
- Timocracy
- Oligarchy
- Democracy
- Tyranny





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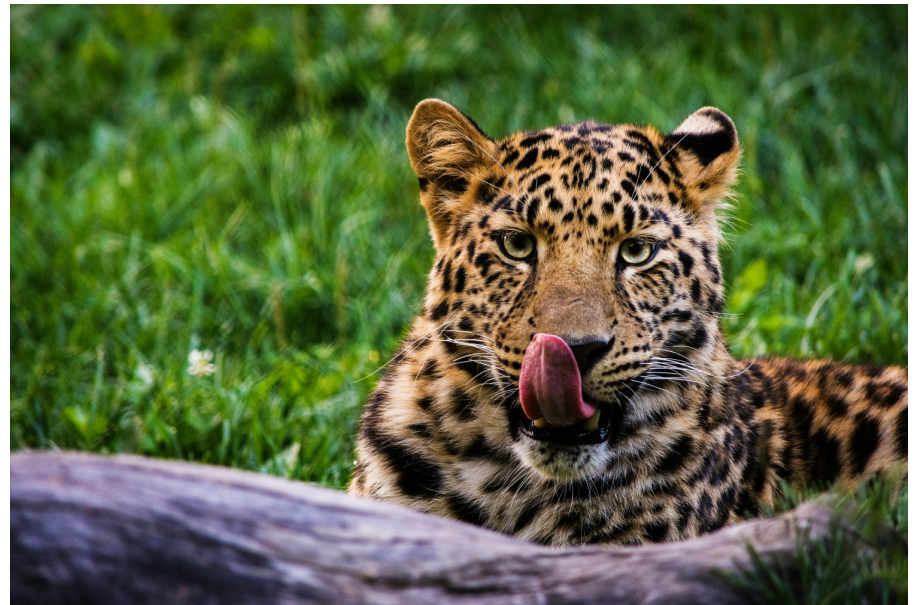
# Where does democracy come from?

- Revolt!
  - In oligarchy, the poor become intemperate (Bk. 8, 555d).
- People become fed up with centralized power and revolt to form a decentralized system of governance (556b-557a).
- Consider: France, United States of America

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# Characterizing democracy

- The oligarchic father shelters his son from “unnecessary appetites” (559c).
- The son is later overwhelmed by those appetites and becomes enthralled in pursuing them (559d).



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# Democracy is self-destructive

- The pursuit of freedom leads people to lose sense of their social roles (562bc).
- Freedom is what destroys democracy.



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## **III. Conclusion**

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## Closing Thoughts

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Plato's social philosophy is not separate from his metaphysics.

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His critique of the soul is his critique of the constitution.

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Resultingly, his most damning criticism of democracy is his criticism of freedom for the soul.

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Too much freedom is a bad thing.

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**Thank You!**



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# References

Reeve, C.D.C. 1967. *A Plato Reader: Eight Essential Dialogues*. Hackett Classics.

Santas, Gerasimos. 2007. "Plato's criticisms of democracy in the Republic." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 24(2): pp. 70-89. DOI 10.1017/S0265052507070173.