

it makes it possible to distinguish who really is a statesman and who only pretends to be it. When do the existing cities use “the written documents” (297d6) of the only correct constitution? When do their law-making assemblies chase “after the traces of the truest constitution” (301e4)? They do it when they ask which law the true statesman would enact in this situation, i.e. which order serves best the end of the state. The true knowing statesman does not exist in this world, but we can answer the question about the end of political expertise and so know the norm according to which the existing states and their laws have to be judged and formed.

PIGS IN PLATO:  
DELINEATING THE HUMAN CONDITION  
IN THE *STATESMAN*

David Ambuel

“Many of Plato’s knavish speeches sleep in the unapprehending ears of his commentators.”

Paul Shorey

“In [*The Celestial Empire of Benevolent Knowledge*’s] remote pages it is written that the animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies.”

Jorge Luis Borges

In the *Republic*, Socrates’ imagined primitive and modest community is dismissed by Glaucon as a city of pigs (II,372d). Despite Socrates’ belief that this first city, not the luxurious city that will grow and be reformed into the *Republic*’s kallipolis, is the true city, some among us might just find with Glaucon that the city whose people seek to satisfy their appetites with luxuries is truer to actual human existence. And one might find this hunch confirmed by the *Republic*’s subsequent doubts about the possible existence even of the sustainable aristocracy ruled by philosopher guardians, not to mention the primitive harmony of the Socratic susopolis,<sup>1</sup> and by Socrates’ re-

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<sup>1</sup> Piggish from Glaucon’s point of view, that is, not Socrates’.

mark that words always make a closer approach to truth than things and actions.

Regardless which societal configuration we are more likely to be able to set foot in, the short passage in *Republic II* conveys a sense of ambivalence. Which group of humans are more accurately described as living like pigs, the simple primitive city of restricted wants and resources, as Glaucon thinks, or the denizens of the feverish city wallowing in excess, as Socrates implies?

For the most part, in Plato, the beast as compared to the human represents a state of ignorance and a life governed by appetite as opposed to reason, and yet the question how we humans might best understand ourselves apart from our fellow animals is at times presented with ironic doubt. At *Laches*, 195d, the observation that knowledge comprising a virtue such as courage is not the kind of thing just any pig would know leads to the remark that, by lacking the potential for knowledge that humans possess, no animal can rightly be called courageous, not a pig and not even a lion. Still, Socrates adds the facetious qualification that perhaps lions or bears do command some deep well of wisdom, inaccessible to us humans. A similar ironic ambiguity as to just what sort of animal the human being is will frame the setting against which the Eleatic Visitor's halting attempts to define the statesman take shape.

Before turning to the manner in which this definition is pursued, and to what that might tell us, I wish briefly to visit one other thread woven into the fabric of the dialogue's background.

The *Statesman's* inquiry begins, as the *Sophist's* begins and ends, by making divisions. The *Sophist's* divisions, like the first divisions in the *Statesman*, are strict dichotomies. In the *Sophist*, negative definitions predominate: at each step, what the sophist *is*, is separated from all else that he *is not*, the latter disjunct – its relation to the other still unestablished – is then dropped, and the division proceeds. As a method, it is the intellectual offspring of a philosopher nurtured and raised on Eleatic metaphysics, his logic of definition in the *Sophist* limited to sorting *is* from *is not*, with no space for anything in between, since anything that is at all, simply is. The image, as ontologically intermediate, will be the Eleatic Visitor's biggest obstacle in the *Sophist*, and if he sees a need to rebel against Parmenides' rejection of not-being, he also does not intend to commit pat-

ricide.<sup>2</sup> It is fitting that Plato should choose to use an Eleatic voice to examine the very thing that Eleatic metaphysics excludes: the ontological intermediate as image and imitation. The intermediate remains the issue in the *Statesman*, now not primarily a metaphysical matter, but practical, not the possibility of an ontological intermediate between being and absolute not-being, but the possibility of the exercise of wisdom in human affairs, the intermediate between mere animality and divinity.

The *Sophist* offers no methodology, no criteria for properly defining by division, but only a paradigm, which in the *Sophist* as in the *Statesman* means a trivial example taken as a model from which to abstract its application to something more complex and significant. A methodology for division, including rules for dividing properly, appears elsewhere, in the *Phaedrus* and *Philebus*. These rules, distilled, might be summarized as follows:

Collection and division are reverse procedures, collection preceding or coordinated with division.<sup>3</sup>

Division must proceed according to actual kinds or forms, not haphazard parts.<sup>4</sup>

Division by forms means dividing at the natural joints.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Sophist*, 241d. It might be argued that the Visitor is introduced as *eks Eleas* (216a), as hailing from Elea, not explicitly an Eleatic philosopher cast in a Parmenidean mold, and that we can hardly assume that any native of Elea inherits one definite metaphysical system as a birthright. However, Socrates phrases the question about the sophist, statesman, and philosopher as one about what people in that place, in Elea, believed (216d). More importantly, at 241d, by requesting that he not be taken for a parricide by seeking for a way to talk about not-being, the Visitor identifies himself as the intellectual offspring of Parmenides. It is simply not plausible to suppose that Plato's choice of character for the main interlocutor of the *Sophist* and *Statesman* is random and without meaning for the interpretation of the two dialogs.

<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Phdr.* 266d.

<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Phdr.* 265e; cf. *Philb.* 16d–e.

<sup>5</sup> Plato, *Phdr.* 265e.

Division by form is axiological, a dividing in accord with proper measure and relative value.<sup>6</sup>

While the *Sophist* supplies a paradigm, but no rules for division, and the *Phaedrus* rules, but no paradigm, the *Statesman* has both. Moreover, setting aside questions about the reverse procedure of collection, which does not occur and is not discussed in either the *Sophist* or *Statesman*, each of the remaining principles is invoked in the *Statesman* by the Eleatic Visitor.<sup>7</sup> These rules are not, however, concentrated here in a single passage, as in the *Phaedrus*, but are introduced by the Visitor piecemeal, one at a time, as correctives to the divisions while they are being drawn. But the *Statesman* has more still. In addition, the Visitor advances principles for division that are incompatible with the rules he gives that are also found in the *Phaedrus*. In this simultaneous assertion and rejection of the principles, it will be seen that the Eleatic difficulties from the *Sophist*, the difficulties in construing an intermediate between what is and what is not, extend into the *Statesman*, and make for a pervasive ambivalence that is reflected in the *Statesman*'s sketch of the human condition.

### I. *Eidos*, *Meros*, and Rational Animals

The *Sophist* begins with and follows divisions of varieties of *technai* – hunters, merchants of various kinds, athletes, educators. By so doing, it introduces an assumption that contradicts what Plato elsewhere repeatedly says about the sophist, namely, the assumption that the sophist has an art, a *technê*. Now in the *Statesman*, statecraft, its status as an art undisputed in Plato, is designated both a *technê* and

<sup>6</sup> Plato, *Phdr.* 266a–b; Plato, *Philb.* 66a–b, cf. 24c.

<sup>7</sup> It is certainly conceivable that “division”, as a method, does not designate precisely the same method in different dialogues. (See M. Wedin, *Collection and Division in the Phaedrus and Statesman*, in: *Philosophical Inquiry*, 1990, pp. 1–27.) Nevertheless, the clear thematic links cannot be overlooked. The *Statesman* contains the division foreseen in the *Sophist*, likewise conducted by the Eleatic Visitor, who explicitly refers to the previous discussion and initially proceeds by divisions that follow a pattern remarkably similar to those of the *Sophist*. Unlike the *Sophist*, the *Statesman* offers corrections, criteria for proper division, which correspond to points defining proper division in the *Phaedrus*.

an *epistême*, but the initial divisions turn quickly away from groupings of anything that might be called a kind of expertise, to instead separating off the humans as the subjects of governance. The initial divisions pursue not the art, but its object. The dialogue will of course return to ask how the art itself differs from kindred arts, but for the moment attention is directed to the subject upon with the art is practiced.

Yet before this focus on defining the human subject, the very first step in the division ventures a global division of knowledge. It is a portent: all knowledge (*sumpasas epistêmas*) is divided into practical and theoretical knowledge (*tên men praktikên... tên de monon gnôstikên*, 258e).<sup>8</sup> It is a division that may appear the most natural among all that are still to come, and yet it cuts across the province of the art of politics as it will be understood later, that is, precisely as a kind of art possessing a knowledge that is brought to bear on practical affairs (*peri tas prakseis epistêmona*, 284c). It foreshadows an ambivalence that surfaces in the depiction of the human being when the art of rule is tied to the nature of the human subject, a matter that is ironically broached in the initial steps of division, leading to the Eleatic Visitor's first objection to procedure and the cosmic myth.

The first correction appears once the king's dominion has been narrowed to herds (261e). By this point, then, the humans appear to be grouped with the sheep, cows, and pigs, rather than, say, the bees or dogs, who may be left with no spot in the Eleatic Visitor's schema. The split between herds and individuals is suggestive, and yet this step in the Visitor's division does not distinguish kinds of animals, since, as the example of the horse shows (261d), a given species could find itself cared for either under the art of rearing singly or the art of rearing herds, depending on whether the ruler in question is tending one animal or many.

Here Young Socrates is rebuked for drawing what should appear to be one of the more natural divisions in this initial series, distinguishing human (*anthrôpos*) from animal (*thêrion*). The Eleatic Visitor's objection voices one of the rules also stated in the *Phaedrus*, that division must proceed according to kinds or forms, not

<sup>8</sup> All kinds of theoretical knowledge are *ψίλοι τῶν πράξεων* (258d) and result in no production of anything that did not previously exist.

just parts, *eidê*, not *merê*. The Visitor does not deny that the human being is a genuine kind; he calls humans a *genos* at 262d, and the corrected division will also lead to the isolation of the human herd. So the immediate implication is that *thêrion* does not constitute a real kind, and the Visitor's injunction forbids negative definition. But the Eleatic Visitor does more than this, for he rejects what he takes to be Young Socrates' implied criterion in making the division as he did, and by this the Visitor supplies a reason why there are not yet grounds to identify humankind as a kind: there may be other rational animals (*ei pou fronimon esti ti zoon heteron... 263d*) ones able to name things, perhaps the crane. And so, in the name of dividing by forms or kinds and not by arbitrary parts, the human being cannot be distinguished as a rational animal.<sup>9</sup>

Apart from this ironic result, the introduction of the form-part rule is curious in two other respects. The Eleatic Visitor illustrates the fault he finds in Young Socrates' suggestion by comparing it to the chauvinistic division of humans into Greeks and Barbarians. Insofar, the Visitor is rejecting negative definitions. We do not make any advance in insight by opposing a recognized kind to an unlimited otherness that it is not, and yet this very kind of diaeresis by negative definition – the type of division that prevailed in the *Sophist* – also most closely resembles, not Young Socrates' distinction between humans and wild animals, but rather a number of the Eleatic Visitor's own earlier and subsequent divisions, such as the distinction of those who practice the giving of their own orders (*autepitaktikê*, 260e) from all remaining communicators of orders, including heralds, prophets, boatswains and others, all of them members of a nameless grouping, and the division of orders given for the sake

of producing (*geneseôs tinos heneka*, 261b) from all the rest, some sort of non-producing commanding, which is left both nameless and without example. These divisions are left a part of the analysis, intact and unquestioned.

Moreover, for the moment, the Eleatic Visitor uses the form – part criterion not primarily to attack divisions that would separate a class from its logical complement, an “is” from an “is non-”, as the Barbarian illustration would lead us to believe, but rather to advance a claim about the relative sizes of the remaining divided parts: division, it is maintained, is ought to be a slice down the middle into halves, or as near to halves as possible (262b, 264e).

Presented here as allied with the requirement to divide by forms, not just parts, the rule calling for division into halves is in fact incompatible with it. Later in the *Statesman*, the halves criterion will become a quasi-repudiated rule, both withdrawn and not withdrawn in two steps. The first of the two is mainly implicit, appearing with the introduction of the *metrion*, the concept that the due measure, not relative measure, is intrinsic to all proper division (284a). This is a retraction of the halves criterion by implication, since the rule to divide smack down the middle, though not expressly pointed out as such, is evidently a type of relative and purely quantitative measuring by more and less, not a measuring against a separate standard. The second is the more explicit semi-retraction. When, after the weaving paradigm and introduction of the principle of due measure, the distinction of statecraft from kindred arts resumes, the Visitor observes that, since it is not always possible to divide by halves, one should then divide at the joints, as if dividing a sacrificial animal (*kata melê toinun autas hoion hieron diairômetha*, 287c). The Visitor is quite tentative here about this qualification, saying only that the reason will become clear as they proceed (*to d' aition, hôs oimai, proiousin ouch hêtton estai kataphanes*, 287b–c), just as he had balked at Young Socrates' request for a fuller explanation of the form – part distinction (263a). The Visitor evidently still at the later stage wishes to accord priority to clean and even dichotomies, although it has become apparent that the form – part rule conflicts with the halves rule to which it was initially so closely tied. So it is not explicitly acknowledged that division as if at natural joints, and division by forms, merge as one. Indeed, in the *Phaedrus*, division into equal halves is not among the desiderata for good dividing, while division

<sup>9</sup> Michel Fattal (*On Division in Plato's Statesman*, in: *Polis*, 12, 1993, pp. 64–76) argues for the presence in the dialogs of three distinct types of division, which he terms 1) “unregulated division” arousing “irony and joke,” 2) “division based on median dichotomies,” which is provisional and inexact, and 3) “division as exact as possible”, an ideal after which Plato strives. The three, for Fattal, are evidence of Plato's attempt to continual revise and perfect. Here, however, near the beginning of the investigations of the *Statesman*, we find irony, dichotomy, and its (ironic) repudiation juxtaposed, which suggests much rather that 1) serves to illuminate 2) as inadequate, which, therefore, is not provisional for, but contrasted to 3).

by form and division at natural joints are identified. The *Statesman's* two rules, separated by some 25 Stephaus pages, are presented as synonymous in the *Phaedrus*: division should proceed by ability to divide by form along natural joints, not by attempting to break off just any part, like a bad butcher (*to palin kat' eidê dunasthai temnein, kat' arthra, hê pephuke' kai mê epitheirein katagnunai meros mêden, kakou mageirou tropô chrômenon, Phaedrus 265e*).

Whether a process that could be called division by form could come close to dichotomy, would depend to some extent on the nature of the object of division. If it is an organic whole, the articulated body of an animal, for example, then there is most likely no halving that does not violate the principle of dividing by joints. If we are dividing instead a given set of discrete individuals, it may be a different matter. Then, dividing by half would be simply a mechanical procedure: assign each member a number, and separate even from odd. The Eleatic Visitor in fact always appeals to some other property, indicating that it is not meant to be mechanical, however odd some of his properties may be. Again, whether that yields equal halves or not would depend on the distribution of the property in the set. In a given group of people, division into male and female, or over 50 and under 50, or anything else may or may not lead to roughly equal subsets. What sort of property should count as one that determines a form or kind, is another question yet, and on that matter the Eleatic Visitor remains silent.

One might wonder, though I would not want to insist on it, whether the Eleatic Visitor himself is confused, or whether with cunning and cleverness he is testing us, as Socrates suggested at the beginning of the *Sophist*. Perhaps we need not know. The Visitor is telling Young Socrates that he must divide *kat' eidê* but will not tell him *how* to do it, and will not properly do it himself, yet that does not prevent him from leading the boy through a rugged dialectical training exercise. And just maybe, we are meant to make out shades of Parmenides himself, first telling the former Young Socrates that he should not be so quick to dismiss forms of mud and fingernails, not thereby implying that there are such forms, but rather that Socrates was too hasty in rejecting them for the wrong reasons, before going on to put Socrates through a dialectical workout.

## II. Bipedal Pigs Then and Now

The first correction to division was employed to rule out a division of humans from animals, complete with a warning not to be overly hasty and take shortcuts. (It marks the beginning of much toying with notions of length and brevity in the dialogue.) The division is seen through by following along alternate “longer” and “shorter” paths, though the two differ in length only by a single step. (Resuming at 264d from the tending of herds, *agelaiatrophia*, the two paths use five further steps and four further steps respectively.)

The longer road shows the human herd to be closest in nature to our cousins the pigs, sturdiest and most slovenly of creatures; the shorter concludes with the human as the prosaic featherless biped. The introduction of the corrective that we must divide by true forms, not haphazard parts, has issued in a first paradoxical determination of the human estate: fundamentally we are not rational animals, but rather featherless bipeds, half of our closest four-footed relatives, the pigs. In other words, the Eleatic Visitor in effect not only dismisses the contrast between humans and other animals, but assimilates humans to other animals.

Further correctives to division are forthcoming, but the initial division will still stand. It is never rejected, simply recognized as not yet complete, since it has failed to differentiate the kingly art from other arts that also tend to the well-being of the human herd. The next correction to the path of division comes not in the form of a principle, but a story. The myth does not illustrate how division to this point was incomplete – that was already stated succinctly and straightforwardly. Rather, it provides a way to conceive of the preceding division down to the bipedal pig (or featherless biped), as having pinpointed the kingly art more accurately and completely than it has seemed, namely, if it describes not today's humans, but humans of a different cosmic epoch. Ultimately, that means it will describe both: past humans, insofar as it is stated that the division pertains more to rule under Kronos than to the forms of rule existing at present; also it remains equally applicable to the present age, since the division is not replaced, but resumed and completed. In other words, it represents that complete division for the age of Kronos, and the first part of the complete division for the age of Zeus. With the myths, then, the human condition becomes two, though importantly

related: that of the archaic featherless biped and of the present day featherless biped. Whatever the biological factors that separate the two human herds, those differences ground differences that are more properly social and cultural, rather than differences in nature.

Living under Kronos is, in at least one way, an idyll: there is no want, no war, no hunger or cold, no need to farm, to work, and most notably, no need to organize politically (*politeiai te ouk êsan*, 271e). The kinship with other animals is even tighter than jokingly expressed previously through the divisions, since the humans under Kronos converse with the other animals (272b). What sort of *logoi* and whether these are the communications of pigs, cows, lions, and others endowed with speech and reason, or of humans deprived of it, is not known, and the happiness of life under Kronos, according to the Visitor, and whether it is better or worse than our present life, depends on whether they spend time with philosophy, or entirely with food and drink (272d).

One lesson drawn from the myths concludes that they have made one large and one minor error. The large error was to confuse the earthly king with the divine shepherd. The smaller, mentioned also prior to the myths, was the failure to separate the king from other contenders for the title of caretaker of the human herd. This also explains why the division can be portrayed as complete for the age of Kronos: under Kronos, there are no human caretakers at all, only governance by god, with no division of labor and no multiple arts, each its own area of expertise with its own specialists. As the Eleatic Visitor develops the argument, however, the errors prove to be connected, two facets of a single issue, rather than separate questions. We can say this, because the Visitor goes on to claim that the initial divisions, rather than describing the divine shepherd *instead of* the human ruler, can in fact be taken to describe both, and the confusion of the two stems from the incompleteness. Presumably, under Kronos, with no farming, building, weaving, warring or other familiar human activities going on, there are no arts to compete with whatever it is that rule does. For the age of Kronos, the division is complete; for the present age with its human rulers closer in nature and upbringing to their human subjects (275c), it must proceed. It is left tantalizingly ambiguous, just how different the two rulers are or are not, and how different, in the end, are the subjects. The images of the myths will contribute to a continuing ambivalence about how

to understand the art of statesmanship that we see played out in later passages.

### III. Measuring the Yarn

The so-called lesser problem, distinguishing the king's art from other arts, will in fact turn out to be the more intractable one, and it will be attacked in two ways that, while not presented as such, stand in conflict much like the form – part rule with the halves rule. As before, it is a matter of two procedural principles, one that can also be located in the *Phaedrus* and the *Philebus*, and one that cannot. These are the procedures for employing a paradigm (consequent upon an underlying principle of value-neutrality), and for measuring with reference to due measure, not only relative measure.

The paradigm of weaving will be used as the key for the Eleatic Visitor's final differentiation of the arts in order to separate the king's art. If not an explicit rule or criterion,<sup>10</sup> the Visitor's justification of the paradigm dictates that one should first examine a simple and trivial matter that is accessible to the senses, then apply it as a model for the more complex and nuanced reality that has no visual image but can be examined only by reason (285e–286a).<sup>11</sup> This model for using models implies a reversal of Platonic epistemology as found in other dialogues, notably the *Republic*; the impoverished image explains the reality. This aspect of the Visitor's procedure extends beyond one paradigm: notably, the Visitor's chosen ordering of their conversations – first *Sophist*, then *Statesman*, then, if they get around to it, *Philosopher* – reflects exactly the same reversal. If the sophist is a deceptive imitation of the statesman or of the philosopher, one might expect him to be treated last, since we must first understand what it is he imitates, before we can truly understand his nature as a mere imitation. We cave dwellers are being asked, as it were, to find reality in the shadows, without making the ascent. Of course, the Eleatic Visitor does also justify the paradigm exercises as “prac-

<sup>10</sup> It will be seen below that the paradigm in effect is the application of an explicit rule.

<sup>11</sup> Thus, the Visitor's words speak paradoxically of making the paradigm a visual image for that which has no visual image.

tice,” but the greater topic of the statesman is not independently investigated after having some practice; it is expressly modeled after the weaving analogue. The Visitor seems to have it in mind in advance: even if he treats weaving as a chance example, he also selects weaving because he thinks it somehow to deal with the same sorts of affairs as the political art (*echon tēn autēn politikē pragmateian*, 279a). Weaving will provide a rich and vivid metaphor for the final passages, and it is an important metaphor elsewhere in Plato, but the expressed conception of the function of paradigms is problematic.

Before its application to the continued search for the political art, the Visitor uses his discussion of the weaving paradigm to introduce in an offhand way remarks on the art of measurement. The claim that, for the very possibility of art, measuring cannot be only the relative measuring of greater compared with lesser, but must include measurement against the standard of due or proper measure (*metrion*), is a striking one, both for the weight that the Eleatic Visitor gives to it, and for the peculiar manner in which the art of measurement and the use of the paradigm are juxtaposed.

The introduction of the principle of due measure is signaled as a matter both essential and difficult. The very existence of any art stands and falls with the existence of due measure. Moreover, our acknowledgement of the existence of due measure must be forced (*prosanagkasteon*, 284b). The Eleatic Visitor implies that the entire argument of the whole dialogue is at stake over this, by stating that the task of establishing the principle of due measure is comparable to the previous day’s need to forcibly introduce some sense in which not-being can be said to exist, which was required in order to establish the possibility of the image and to define the sophist (284c), and moreover, the Visitor continues, to establish the principle of due measure is an even greater labor.

This exaggerated earnestness of the Visitor’s description plays up the irony of what the Visitor in fact does. The paradigm of weaving, having just been explicated through divisions of the greatest detail and greatest length – far more detail than any other piece of dividing in the dialogue – gives way to defining what is called the most important and most difficult matter of all, the art of measurement, the definition of which is taken up and completed in the shortest division of the dialogue, a single step, dividing *metrikē* into arts that

measure quantities in relation to their opposites and arts that measure in relation to a standard of what is due and fitting (284e).<sup>12</sup>

In the subsequent discussion, appeal to the weaving paradigm is explicit and extensive, while reference to the principle of due measure more subtle. The two principles underlie a tension in the description of the political art, which, in turn, relates back to a theme from the beginning, namely, our understanding of the human condition: is rationality our very essence, or are we two-legged pigs, are we rational and animal, or are we just animal? That these two principles are in a way incompatible is not so apparent as was the conflict between the form – part principle and the halves principle, and to show it, we must take up another repeating ambivalent theme in the dialogue: relative value in division by form.

As a necessary condition for the possibility of all art, *metrion*, due measure, is axiological. That weaving or statecraft or any other art must measure various species of more and less by reference to a standard of what is just right and fitting introduces criteria by which the products of the art can be evaluated as better or worse. This provides an indication why due measure is essential to all *technē*. A *technē* produces a product, the quality of which can be evaluated in accordance with the standards of the art. Furthermore, insofar as division itself is an art – in the *Phaedrus* Socrates will call it the art of dialectic (200c, 276e ff.) – it would follow that proper division could be pursued only in accordance with due measure, which would have to mean in accordance with the true *eidē*. And insofar as division by forms means showing the difference between distinct kinds that resemble in some respect, and might therefore, if we are not careful, be confused and thought to be the same, division implicitly is at the same time evaluation. Examining resemblances means observing the respects in which things compared are similar and the degree of similarity, and the respect in which they differ and the degree of difference. Precisely because resemblance is not symmetrical – two things that symmetrically resembled each other perfectly in every respect would be copies of each other, not one the resemblance of the other, as Plato likes to point out, e.g., in the *Cratylus*, but also

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that, short as it is, the division contradicts the Eleatic Visitor’s earlier remark: insofar as due measure is principle of all art (284a), there are no arts that employ only relative measurement.

in the *Statesman* – recognizing resemblance is always evaluative. That is the case with division that distinguishes relative measure from measure against a standard.

Differentiation by *eidê*, then, could not be blind to relative value. Nor is it in the *Philebus*, where it is asserted that if measure is only in terms of relative more and less, definite quantity is abolished (24c–d) and that the highest possession is due measure and fitness, *metrion* and *kairon* (66a), which make possible all knowledge, art, and true belief (66b).<sup>13</sup> We also find the subjects of division portrayed as having been analyzed and understood only when the resemblances of distinct kinds is displayed in terms of their relative value: pleasure and knowledge in the *Philebus*, left-handed and right-handed love in the *Phaedrus*, topics that, like statecraft, pertain to the exercise of wisdom in human affairs, the understanding of which requires a grasp of relative value.

Such is also the case for the chain of subjects into which the statesman falls, and our dialogue opens with Socrates making a joke about the proportionally relative values of the sophist, statesman, and philosopher (257b). It is, significantly, Old Socrates' sole contribution to the conversation.

The Eleatic Visitor, in contrast, immediately upon establishing the close kinship associating pig and person, and therefore swineherd and humanherder, re-issues an instruction from the *Sophist*, 227b: the method of division is not concerned at all whether one part is more or less noble than another and does not esteem the smaller any less than the greater. Its sole concern is to reach the highest truth (266d). In one way the Visitor's instruction is benign. It can be read as the injunction not to introduce any bias that would skew in advance the outcome of the division, as illustrated by the example of dividing Greeks from Barbarians. But it is then used to circumvent a division that will ultimately be drawn, only in a different way: human and animal, to be contrasted not in view of rationality, but rather by the number of feet. The Visitor's instruction is not merely an innocuous caution against prejudice. Thus the injunction becomes problematic, should it happen to be true that the difference that divides a kind

into similar sub-kinds lies, for example, in the inferior and deficient resemblance that one has for the other. And insofar as the principle of measure implies that differentiation in value is intrinsic to complete division by forms, the principle of value neutrality is inconsistent with the principle that is a necessary condition for all art.

The principle of the paradigm – specifically the paradigm as it is deployed by the Eleatic Visitor – conflicts with the principle of measure by reinforcing a commitment to value neutrality. This occurs, not because it is a paradigm in the sense of a model or analogy – weaving, after all, makes for a delightful metaphor – but because the notion of how to conceive and apply a paradigm, works to flatten the graded landscape of resemblances. It does this by proposing that what is prior be explicated through that which is derivative and inferior. The Eleatic Visitor, who in the *Sophist* struggles to conceptualize the image in its asymmetry as something that is real but not as real as that which it is an image of and with respect to which it is derivative, now faces analogous obstacles to locate the human being.

#### IV. Somewhere between Pigs and Gods

The conflict of antithetical principles for dividing plays out in the final depictions of the human condition and the possibilities for human political life: alternately demarcated by shades of value, or devoid of differentiation, a world of societies governed by better or worse constitutions, or a world ruled only by sophists.

The application of the weaving paradigm does little to clarify matters. Ostensibly, it addresses the lasting and remaining unresolved issue: the difficult distinction of the king from others whose arts also pertain to care of the human herd. The lengthy analysis of weaving as distinct from carding, spinning, and other kindred arts supplies the concept of the secondary cause (*sunaitia*, 281c) to distinguish arts that may serve the people, but are subservient to the authority of the king. With this, weaving has contributed only a name. In effect, nearly the same distinction was drawn, albeit poorly drawn, at 260e, when *autepitaktikê*, giving one's own orders, was separated from the nameless others, which at the time were not classified, only indicated by several examples, such as the herald and prophet, examples that now reappear alongside additional categories of subservient arts. The

<sup>13</sup> For detailed consideration of parallels to the *Philebus* cf. D. White, *Myth, Metaphysics, and Dialectic in Plato's Statesman*, Burlington 2007.

real issue, however, is not how to make clear and intelligible the difference between king and herald, or even king and general. In fact, most of the so-called contenders for the title of ruler turn out not to be contenders at all. Rather, it is the issue raised by Socrates at the start of the *Sophist*, the issue that instigated the whole conversation, namely, how to distinguish the sophist from the statesman.

The figure of the sophist is compared at once to a fierce beast like the Centaur and to a weak yet cunning one like the Satyr in passages that first introduce and then conclude the discussion of his problematic separation from the statesman (291a–303d). The figure of the sophist brackets an ambivalent discussion about the legitimacy of governments.

The ambivalence is a product of the ambivalence over values that has emerged from the conflicting principles. Twice, distinct forms of political organization are distinguished and their relative legitimacy taken up, and twice the distinctions are collapsed and rejected. This occurs against the background of qualities defining the one true king: the kingly art is a kind of knowledge (*epistēmē*, 292a); therefore rule in accordance with that knowledge is the sole criterion for defining true government (and all other factors, whether the society is wealthy or impoverished, the people willing subjects or compelled, etc. are irrelevant); therefore there can be only one form of true constitution, namely rule by the person possessing knowledge of the kingly art (293c); the true ruler would not rule by laws (294a); except as a second best and necessary alternative, like the doctor who leaves written instructions for his patients to follow in his absence (295c); the true ruler makes no errors; the true ruler only rules and does not act (305d).

These characteristics, it becomes clear, describe no existing government of humans by humans; rather, as the metaphor of the physician leaving orders and then withdrawing makes evident, the description corresponds most closely to rule under the divine shepherd in the age of Kronos. The human condition in the age of Kronos was a different one. Those humans had no need to farm, to work, to build shelter; all were tame and there was no strife or war; there was no need for sex and so no occasion for any accompanying conflicts, jealousies, families and other complications. In short, there is neither social organization, nor a need for it: the divine shepherd rules, but it is rule with no politics. To rule as a true king, the divine shepherd

need only to know, only to have *epistēmē*, not *technē* in the sense that was attributed to the political art when the principle of due measure was introduced: there it is *epistēmē peri tas prakseis*, knowledge concerning practical affairs.<sup>14</sup>

Can the Eleatic Visitor allow then for a truly human political art? The concluding passages of the Statesman give some indication of just that, beginning to add elements of shading and coloring to the sketch that outlined human form. But there are two sketches. The Visitor remains caught in an ambiguity, the ambivalence of deciding between two sets of conflicting rules for inquiry, of deciding whether the true ruler stands over and apart from the governed herd like the swineherd over his pigs or is nearer in nature and education to the society that the ruler organizes, and of deciding whether or not human affairs can be understood as something intermediate between divine activity and that sturdy and slovenly existence we imagine the pig enjoys.

This ambivalence is most apparent where the Visitor tries to separate the sophist from the true ruler. Once he introduces the sophist as a master of deception (*megiston goêta*) who is occupied with political affairs (*ta tôn poleôn pragmata*) and difficult but necessary to distinguish from the true king, the Eleatic Visitor describes the five types of constitution (291c). Yet the claim that the only correct rule is rule by *epistēmē* (292c) leads to the conclusion that there can be only one true constitution, not five (293c) and any others are neither legitimate nor real (*ou gnêsias oud' ontôs ousas*, 293e). The envisioned intermediate of a political science as a practical art, an *epistēmē peri tas*

<sup>14</sup> This ambivalence was introduced at the outset with the peculiar manner in which practical knowledge was divided from theoretical (258e). On the reading defended here, that ambiguity is neither to be resolved as an explanation of the relation of theory to practice that mirrors the relation of soul to body (see Xavier Marquez, *Theory and Practice in Plato's Statesman*, in: *Ancient Philosophy*, 27, 2007, pp. 31–53), nor is it a residual ambiguity inherent in the Platonic conception of democracy (see D. Roochnik, *Residual Ambiguity in Plato's Statesman*, in: *Plato: The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society*, 5, 2005). Rather, the ambivalence – illustrated by the dual cosmic ages of the myth – is rooted in the Eleatic Visitor's difficulties to conceive of an intermediate that resembles divine truth but is not identical to it.

*prakseis*, is replaced by reverting to a vision of pure *epistēmē* unsullied by practicalities on the model of divine rule.

And then again this conclusion (293e) that appears to reject the reality of existing political forms is immediately qualified: if not real or legitimate, they must be imitations, and the well-ordered ones (*eunomous*) imitate better, the more disordered, worse (293e). However, this qualification that has reintroduced the recognition of better and worse in human affairs is once more obliterated with the subsequent conclusion that no form of imitation can be endowed with any degree of *epistēmē* (300d–e: *Ar'oun ei men anepistēmones ontēs to toiouton drōen, mimeisthai men an epicheiroien to alēthes, mimoint' an mentoi pankakōs: ei d' entechnoi, touto ouk esti mimēma, all' auto to alēthestaton ekeino*).<sup>15</sup>

And then once more, responding to his own astonishment that there is after all some degree of stability in some existing cities (302a), the Eleatic Visitor once again lays out forms of constitution,<sup>16</sup> and ranks them better to worse (302e – 303b), then immediately flattens the gradation with the assertion that all these constitutions and any others except the true state are imitations perpetuated by the most sophisticated of sophists (*megistous tōn sophistōn sophistas*, 303c).

The Eleatic Visitor recognizes that an art of politics, as contrasted with the purely theoretical knowledge of the intelligible good, must apply that good as far as possible to practical affairs. An art of politics, one that is not simply herd management, must recognize the due measure of its art, the *kairos*, or, to borrow an apt phrase from Melissa Lane, the good in time.<sup>17</sup>

For there to exist a *kairos* or any sort of due measure requires that we be able to bring knowable principles to bear on that which can represent but never match the principle that it imitates. It requires

an image, an intermediate in time, that at all times can potentially become better or worse than it actually is.

To the extent that the Visitor is still tied to Eleatic metaphysics, for which anything that is, simply is, he remains at a loss how to accommodate the intermediate, which had presented him with a theoretical obstacle in the *Sophist* in the image, and now in the *Statesman* a practical and living obstacle in the human condition.

The ambivalence in the *Statesman's* concluding exchanges may lead some to find a message of pessimism, the message that true statesmanship is unattainable, leaving us – in the absence of some divine caretaker, who herds humans as human raise pigs – condemned to rule as and be ruled by sophists. But these strains do not conceal a rather more optimistic view of the human condition. The Visitor's astonishment that some existing governments do show some degree of stability indicates that the limits of his metaphysics fail to adequately account for experience. The fact that not all human statesmen in the age of Zeus are mere sophists shows that there is after all a distinction to be made between statesman and sophist that is not purely a theoretical definition without counterpart on earth. If the limitations of the Eleatic Visitor's metaphysics allow for no intermediate between what absolutely is and what is not at all, then there is no allowance for an *epistēmē* that is also a *technē*, for a *technē* that seeks to apply due measure, realized at times better, at times worse. The Visitor is then left with no way to conceptualize genuine rule, except as purely theoretical, a pure *epistēmē* in an age of Kronos where there is no *technē*.

The Eleatic Visitor's dilemma presents us with a choice, and just perhaps it suggests that our metaphysical choices are at the same time very practical choices, since it is also a choice about our self-understanding. The dilemma brings us back to the dialogue's first traces of our lineage among our fellow animals. If the only possible rule of humans by humans is sophistry, then, whatever other arts may exist, there would be no possibility for political art in this age of Zeus, and we might as well resign ourselves to race along through life like our suilline sisters and brothers, in the words of the *Republic*, wallowing carefree in our ignorance like a pig in the mud (*euxerōs hōsper thērion hueion en amathia molunētai*, VII,535e). Then again, if we think clearly and choose well, this, evidently, is not the only possibility. After all, to slightly adapt Socrates' citation of the

<sup>15</sup> The Visitor's inference is justified by the analogies to the ship and medicine, envisioning a democratic rule by lot, a kind of rule by sophists that destroys and banishes all art, at 298a–300a. It recalls the eventual (unsuccessful) account of images in the *Sophist* by dividing image making into *eikastikē* and *phantastikē*, images that are true and images that are false, leaving no space for conceptualizing the image as the intermediate that was intended.

<sup>16</sup> This time six instead of five, now dividing democracy into two.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. M. S. Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman*, Cambridge 2007.

proverb in the *Laches*, *politikê* is not the kind of thing just any pig would know (*Lach.* 196d: *kata tèn paroimian ara tô onti ouk an pasa hus gnoiê*).

## INDEX LOCORUM