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VIRTUE AND DEMOCRACY IN PLATO'S LATE DIALOGUES

Ph.D. Thesis

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Awarded by the State Scholarship  
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Σε Μνήμη  
Γεωργίου Α. Σαμαρά

## SUMMARY

Both Plato's theory of virtue and his attitude towards democracy -the two being correspondent- change significantly as we move from the middle to the late dialogues. The *Republic* is a substantially authoritarian work which expresses an unmitigated rejection of democracy. Its authoritarianism is deeply rooted in the fact that its ethical and political assertions are justified on a metaphysical basis. Plato suggests that virtue and metaphysical knowledge legitimize political power, but both virtue and knowledge are so defined as to be attainable only by a tiny minority. In the *Politicus* Plato reasserts the superiority of a complete virtue grounded on philosophical knowledge, but seriously questions the attainability of this ideal. In the closing part of this dialogue Plato demonstrates an interest in history and in this respect the *Politicus* anticipates the *Laws*, where political theory is not justified by metaphysics, but is informed by historical experience. More specifically, Plato attempts to reproduce on a theoretical level a legislation similar to the actual historical legislation of Solon and he underlines the need for a moderate state involving elements from different constitutions. Because Plato adopts a historical perspective in the *Laws*, his earlier authoritarianism is severely curtailed (though not completely abandoned). So, despite still holding a low opinion of democracy, Plato does use some democratic elements in his Magnesian constitution and the predominant conception of moral virtue put forward in the *Laws* is not the highly exclusive virtue of the *Republic*, but a virtue falling within the capacities of the ordinary citizen. In comparison to the state of the *Republic* the city of the *Laws* is for Plato only a "second best". Even so, however, the latter dialogue with its moderation, its rejection of absolutism and its surprisingly modern emphasis on the accountability of all officials constitutes a contribution of lasting interest to Western political thinking.

## INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is primarily concerned with Plato's theory of virtue and his position on democracy in the late dialogues and in particular in the *Politicus* and the *Laws*. Because Plato throughout his philosophical career consistently adheres to the principle that moral virtue is a prerequisite for the legitimate holding of political power, the two subjects are inextricably linked.

In comparison with the *Republic*, Plato's most heavily studied dialogue, the *Laws* is a relatively neglected work. In contrast to an almost inexhaustible literature on the *Republic*, contemporary English-speaking books specifically on the *Laws* can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and articles on the two dialogues are equally disproportionate. One reason for this neglect is probably the poor literary quality of the *Laws* which has made the work unattractive to scholars. But this cannot be the whole story, for Plato is not simply a skilful author of Greek prose; he is also a great philosopher, and it is only reasonable to expect each of his works to be judged on its philosophical merits. This brings us to the second, and more important reason for the lack of scholarly interest in the *Laws*. Scholars have often approached the work with the preconception that the "true" Platonic political doctrines are to be found in the *Republic*, and then treated the *Laws* as some sort of epilogue

to this dialogue, as a work which has little, if anything, to add to the "essential" Platonic dogmas of the middle dialogues. This attitude is exemplified even by scholars who have taken a specific interest in the *Laws*. It is partially demonstrated by Stalley, who writes that "[i]t would indeed be remarkable, if not inconceivable, that a man of, say, seventy-nine should suddenly develop new and original ideas of lasting significance";<sup>1</sup> and it is typified by Saunders' claim that "Plato could perfectly well have written the *Laws* when he wrote the *Republic* and the *Republic* when he wrote the *Laws*, for they are the opposite sides of the same coin".<sup>2</sup> This appears to remain to a great extent the predominant attitude towards the *Laws*.

In the following pages it will be argued that this type of reasoning fails to do justice to the philosophical gravity of Plato's last dialogue. Far from being a dull elaboration of themes already aired in previous dialogues, the *Laws* contains a moral and political philosophy which is both original and significant. There are substantial differences between the *Republic* and the *Laws*. In the former dialogue Plato expounds an ethico-political doctrine which is finally justified by a complex metaphysical theory. The political ideal of the work is personified in the notion of the philosopher-ruler, a perfectly virtuous state autocrat whose power remains absolute and unchallenged. In the *Laws*, on the other hand, although Plato's metaphysical theory is still there, it is silently dissociated from questions of

power. Plato turns to history for political elucidation, and the fundamental informing principle of the work becomes historical experience. The main reason for this change of attitude is Plato's realization, attested in *Politicus* 301c-d and emphatically repeated three times in the *Laws* (691c, 713c, 875b-c), that there is no such thing as an incorruptible human ruler, or at least that the possibility of the appearance of such a ruler is too remote for a whole political system to be constructed on it. Under the light of this idea, Plato recommends strict adherence to a written constitution as the best political prescription. Moreover, the virtue theory of the *Republic*, where complete virtue was the prerogative of a tiny minority, is now compromised, with Plato promoting a type of virtue less exalted, but consequently less exclusive. This change in Plato's ethical doctrine is accompanied by a shift in his epistemology. In the *Republic* Plato underlines the difference between knowledge and opinion and insists on the vast superiority of the former. But in later dialogues, without abandoning his belief that episteme is superior to doxa, Plato acknowledges the potential usefulness of the latter as far as practical matters are concerned. In the *Politicus* ἀληθῆς δόξα is exalted as a θεῖος δεσμός (309c) and in the *Laws* it is treated as an acceptable alternative to ἐπιστήμη (653a, 688b, 689a). It is obvious that this implies a change in Plato's stance on democracy. From a fundamentally deficient πολιτεία in a state of moral anarchy in the *Republic*,

democracy becomes a constitution which has some things to offer to the creation of the best practical policy. This is not to say that Plato comes anywhere near becoming a democrat. But the completely unreserved animosity to democracy which dominates the *Republic* is seriously qualified in the *Laws*.

In underlining the importance of history in the *Laws* I follow to some extent Morrow, who in his meticulous *Plato's Cretan City*<sup>3</sup> has done more than anybody else to demonstrate the extent to which Plato's practical proposals are grounded on Greek (and mainly on Athenian) historical experience. But I attempt to go beyond Morrow in two respects. First, I try to make more explicit than Morrow the political and philosophical rationale behind Plato's specific constitutional proposals and then incorporate this analysis in the framework of Plato's political theory as a whole. Second, I argue that Plato did not simply draw from historical experience in general, but he specifically tried to produce the philosophical equivalent of the Solonian Reformation of 594 B.C.

This is a point which, to my knowledge, has never been made explicitly in the relevant literature, but there is considerable textual justification for taking Plato as trying philosophically to reproduce in his imaginary colony the measures which Solon took in order to save the civic peace in Athens. Solon was credited in antiquity with creating (possibly the first) "mixed constitution"; and even

if Plato had not adopted any of his practical proposals (in fact quite the opposite is true), he would still be following the Athenian legislator in this respect, for he repeatedly exalts in the *Laws* the value of a balanced and mixed constitution. There is a problem with this line of argument, though, and this is that Solon was by the mid-fourth century B.C. already a legendary political figure, with almost all the Athenian political factions arguing for his theoretical inheritance. The question whether he intended to benefit the ὀλίγοι, the δῆμος or neither party was debated then as it is still debated. It is therefore difficult to assess what exactly Plato knew about Solon. However, some help is available on this issue, and it comes from Aristotle's *The Athenian Constitution*. This work was probably written between 328 and 325 B.C.,<sup>4</sup> that is some twenty years after Plato's death. But Aristotle must have been amassing the material for it for many years, and until Plato's death he was a member of the Academy. It is therefore highly probable, even if it cannot be proved, that his historical knowledge about Solon would not be too dissimilar to that of Plato's. Thus I think it is reasonable to compare some of Plato's major constitutional proposals in the *Laws* to Solon's measures, taking the information for the latter mainly from the *Athenian Constitution*.

One word of warning has to be issued on this point. By arguing that in the *Laws* Plato adopts a different philosophical principle from the one he utilizes in the

*Republic*, I do not want to suggest that there is a radical break between the two dialogues. In the *Laws* Plato explicitly characterizes his Magnesian city as a "second best", and occasionally confirms the superiority of the *Republic's* doctrine. Moreover, the last pages of the *Politicus* clearly show how Plato envisages the relationship between the rule of the philosopher-king and the sovereignty of law. The former remains the best political arrangement in absolute terms, but in the absence of a perfect ruler one's best bet is unqualified obedience to the law. Both the difference between the two concepts and their continuity are therefore forcefully brought out in the *Politicus*.

Because of this clear relationship between the political theses of the middle and the late dialogues, one has to take the *Republic* into account before proceeding to the *Politicus* and the *Laws*. And because the *Republic's* theory of virtue and its political authoritarianism are grounded on Socrates' moral inquiries, one has to take a further step back and look briefly at the early Socratic dialogues. It is in the early dialogues, then, that the quest for an understanding of Plato's theory of virtue and his position on democracy necessarily begins.



## CHAPTER 1: THE REPUBLIC

### I THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF SOCRATES IN THE EARLY DIALOGUES

A comprehensive exposition of Plato's theory of virtue and of his attitude towards democracy in the late dialogues inescapably involves the examination of the corresponding features of earlier dialogues. Given that Socrates' influence on Plato's thought seems to have lasted until the end of the latter's philosophical career (it can be attested, for instance, in the last Book of the *Laws*), a brief outline of Socrates' attitude towards democracy is a useful starting point for the present inquiry.

The first crucial question one comes against when addressing the early dialogues is how close the Socrates depicted in them is to the historical man. Although this is a matter which, by its very nature, precludes absolute precision, some assumptions can be made on the issue with a reasonable degree of probability.

There are certain features shared by all the early dialogues. They are concerned primarily with moral questions. Socrates uses the "elenctic" method to prove the knowledge of his interlocutors inadequate without claiming to possess positive knowledge himself. In many of the dialogues a definition of a particular virtue is sought, but

these attempts at a successful definition fail and the dialogues end in aporia. In the process of these dialogues Socrates declares two convictions of his that he is not able, strictly speaking, to prove, but which he uses as useful instruments in the discussion: the first is that virtue is one, i.e. particular virtues are parts of virtue as a whole; the second is that knowledge is a sufficient and necessary condition for virtue.

In an illuminating essay, Vlastos claims that on the basis of the information included in the Platonic corpus we can distinguish the Socrates of the early dialogues from the Socrates of the middle ones and then identifies the former with the "historical Socrates recreated by Plato in invented conversations".<sup>1</sup>

Even if Vlastos' claim that in the early dialogues we have *the* historical Socrates is too strong, there are reasons to assume that we have something fairly close to him. First, Plato came to philosophy under the influence of Socrates, starting composing his works soon after his master's death, if not earlier. Second, Plato's works were read by a number of people who knew Socrates personally; it is therefore unlikely that he would present in them, at least in the years immediately following Socrates' trial,<sup>2</sup> an unfaithful picture of him and this suggestion is not cancelled because he did so later on. Third, as Vlastos convincingly argues, both Aristotle and Xenophon offer significant evidence that the views of the Socrates of the

early dialogues are close to the views of the historical man, whereas the doctrines Socrates exposes in the middle dialogues are Plato's own.<sup>3</sup>

The attitude of the Socrates of the early dialogues towards democracy is without doubt an inimical one. Some of the most prominent passages which demonstrate this point are the following:

a) in the *Crito* 48a, Socrates tells Crito that "we must not consider at all what the many (οἱ πολλοί) will say of us, but what he who knows (ὁ ἐπαιτών) about right and wrong, the one man (ὁ εἷς), and truth herself will say. And so you introduced the discussion wrongly in the first place, when you began by saying we ought to consider the opinion of the multitude (τῆς τῶν πολλῶν δόξης) about the right and the noble and the good and their opposites".\*

b) in the *Meno* 93a-94d, Socrates suggests that the great leaders of the Athenian democracy, Themistocles, Aristeides, Pericles (and the leader of the oligarchic party, Thucydides) were unable to pass on their ἀρετή to their sons. These remarks are coupled by his insistence in the *Gorgias* that these men were no real politicians, because they did not make their fellow citizens better in terms of the virtue appropriate for citizens (515d-519d). The four men mentioned in the *Gorgias* are Pericles, Cimon, Miltiades

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\* All translations of ancient Greek texts (unless otherwise stated) are given in section B of the Bibliography.

and Themistocles, all of them leaders of the democracy<sup>4</sup> and the men who built the Athenian strength during and after the Persian Wars. Socrates accuses them of having "glutted the state with harbours and dockyards and walls and rubbish of that sort (τοιούτων φλυαριῶν-519a)" instead of caring for the moral improvement of the citizens. Furthermore, Socrates claims to be probably the only practitioner of the real political art: "[ο]ἶμαι μετ' ὀλίγων Ἀθηναίων, ἵνα μὴ εἴπω μῶνος, ἐπιχειρεῖν τῆ ὡς ἀληθῶς πολιτικῆ τέχνῃ καὶ πράττειν τὰ πολιτικὰ μῶνος τῶν ἄλλων" (521d).

c) in the same context in the *Gorgias* Socrates fiercely criticizes Pericles for making the Athenians "lazy and cowardly and garrulous and covetous by his introduction of the system of payment for services to the state" (515e). The measure criticized, the introduction of payment for participation in the Assembly and in the courts was of the utmost importance for the practical extension of democracy, because it provided a very substantial material backing to the poorer citizens so that they could participate in common affairs. How much this measure was despised by the oligarchs is plainly revealed by Callicles' response that Socrates heard such things from "pro-Spartans with cauliflower ears", the expression referring to the most extremist philo-Lacedaimonian elements in the Athenian citizen-body. Because of the immense importance of the measure attacked by Socrates here, and also its irrefutable class focus, this is one of the most uncompromising Socratic attacks against the

very essence of democratic practice.

d) in the *Laches* 184e, when invited to solve a difference between Nicias and Laches, Socrates declares that "[ἐ]πιστήμη γὰρ οἶμαι δεῖ κρίνεσθαι, ἄλλ' οὐ πλῆθει τὸ μέλλον καλῶς κριθήσεσθαι". Here Socrates once more repudiates the principle of the majority, the fundamental operating principle of democracy.

e) in the *Apology* 24d-25b, when Meletus suggests that all Athenians make the young better, except for Socrates, the latter is quick to resort to the example of a τέχνη, here horse-training. Only one ("εἷς") or very few ("πάνυ ὀλίγοι") can make horses better, and the same is true for "all animals". Therefore only very few, at best, can give the young the right education. The remark is important because, first, it clarifies the Socratic conception of τέχνη as something requiring expertise and excluding οἱ πολλοί and second because the education of the young is by itself a political procedure.

f) again in the *Apology* 31c-32a, Socrates explains how his δαιμόνιον consistently prevented him from engaging in political activities, and that this was really a very good thing ("παγκάλως"), because "the fact is that no man will save his life who nobly opposes you or any other populace (πλήθει: the word is roughly synonymous with οἱ πολλοί) and prevents many unjust things from happening in the state. A man who really fights for the right, if he is to preserve his life for even a little while, must be a private citizen,

not a public man". Here Socrates goes as far as to declare that participation in democratic politics is incompatible with τὸ δίκαιον.

One thing emerges most clearly from these passages<sup>5</sup> and this is Socrates' deep disrespect for all aspects of democracy, its theory, its practice and its leaders. In fact, this disrespect is so uncompromising that Socrates does not hesitate to make anti-democratic statements even in the *Apology*, where he is trying to win his acquittal<sup>6</sup> and where he is conscious that such a tactic might alienate the jury, a jury that Socrates himself twice identifies as democratic (21a and 32b).<sup>7</sup> Kraut finds here evidence that the *Apology* is not "a sanitized version of what Socrates said", because "Plato makes no attempt to downplay Socrates' hostility to democracy".<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this fragmentary but still substantial evidence of Socrates' hostility to democracy, the *Protagoras* demonstrates how Socrates' ethical theory, and more specifically his theory of virtue, leads in a strongly anti-democratic direction. This is especially important because the Socrates of the early dialogues does not produce a consistent political doctrine and therefore his political leanings have to be extracted from his ethical theory.

Socrates presents his theory of virtue in response to a Protagorean doctrine which provides an excellent theoretical basis for the justification of ancient democracy; this doctrine is presented in the form of a myth on the origins

of human civilization (320c-322d) and of a subsequent rational explanation (322d-328d). The political essence of the myth is revealed at its end (322d), where Protagoras has Zeus ordering Hermes to arrange for all men to acquire αἰδώς and δίκη, the two crucial qualities which make communal life possible.<sup>9</sup>

The suggestion that political virtue is a common property of all human beings is obviously an argument for democracy. Protagoras explicitly justifies the Athenian practice of all citizens being permitted to speak and vote in the Assembly, on the basis of the assumption that political virtue is shared by all and is not confined to just a few members of the community. He takes the Athenian practice to be founded on the conception that "it is incumbent on everyone to share in that sort of excellence [political virtue], or else there can be no city at all" and he explicitly justifies the Athenian practice of accepting all men ("ἄπαντος ἀνδρός") into the Assembly (323a). This does not entail that political virtue cannot be taught, as Socrates claimed (319b). On the contrary, the main objective of the whole educational system is to teach the young children the right conception of what is morally right and wrong, and at a later stage "the city itself makes them learn the laws and live according to them" (326c-d). So, the acquisition of moral and political virtue is for Protagoras a long procedure in which the whole community participates. The result of this procedure is to allow the young members of

the community to transform their innate potentiality for virtue (Zeus' universal gift of αἰδώς and δίκη) into actual πολιτικὴ ἀρετή.

One fundamental consistent of democracy that Protagoras does not refer to explicitly in the dialogue is the principle of the majority. However, given that he both attributes the political art to everybody (apart from exceptional cases which have to be eliminated from the citizen-body-322d) and accepts Athenian political practice in general, it follows naturally that he would have endorsed it, had it come into question. Since political virtue consists for him in certain qualities applicable to most human beings and not in some form of expert knowledge, the most sensible route for making a decision would obviously be to accept the opinion that wins the greatest assent.

It is on the strength of this rationale that Protagoras has been proclaimed not simply a devoted democrat,<sup>10</sup> but the man who "has produced for the first time in human history a theoretical basis for participatory democracy".<sup>11</sup> This view is absolutely right, but it has to be defended against two possible objections.

The first has been raised by Untersteiner who questions Protagoras' pro-democratic attitude on the grounds that the sophist does not uphold an unqualified egalitarianism.<sup>12</sup> It is true that Protagoras nowhere suggests that all human beings have political excellence to the same degree.<sup>13</sup> His point is rather that they all share the minimum amount of it



required for a civilized communal life to be maintained. Insofar as political virtue is teachable, there is always room for individual improvement and a competent teacher does exactly this, to help his students advance a little more. Here the sophist uses the analogy of language to support his claim (327e-328a). All Greeks are able to speak their language, but an expert on the subject can always offer some advancement in his field. This is how Protagoras justifies his profession, his claim to be a teacher of virtue: he does not take students who have no political virtue at all and implant it in them. What he does is to help his pupils, who already possess political virtue up to a certain point, to improve further in this field. But this by no means repudiates the sophist's pro-democratic stance, because Protagoras does not provide a blueprint for some form of extreme egalitarianism, but consciously defends the political practice of Athens. In the framework of this practice, every citizen could participate in politics, but the most important offices, like the one of the στρατηγός, were filled on merit. The underlying assumption was not that all men had equal political capabilities, but that they all had the minimum political virtue required for participation in common affairs; this is exactly Protagoras' position.

One instance in the dialogue could cast more significant doubt on Protagoras' democratic attitude. It occurs in 353a where the sophist asks: "[τ]ὴ δέ, ὃ Σώκρατες, δεῖ ἡμᾶς σκοπεῖσθαι τὴν τῶν πολλῶν δόξα ἀνθρώπων, οἳ ὅτι ἄν τύχῃσι

τοῦτο λεγουσιν;" . Prima facie, this statement seems incompatible with the thesis that all people are wise enough to participate in politics. But one should notice that this question of Protagoras comes in the context, set by Socrates, of the examination of the many's assertion of akrasia. In this context, the sophist finds himself discussing a highly specialized ethical issue at a level which most common people would not be able even to follow. Throughout the dialogue Protagoras is so self-conscious of his own merits (even arrogant at times), that he is ready to express serious doubts regarding the ability of common people to solve complex philosophical problems like the one in question here. However, Protagoras never based his political assumption that the many are entitled to participate in state affairs on the claim that they have expert ethical knowledge. As we saw, he made the much weaker claim that they possess the minimum of the political art which is required for this purpose. So, there is no incompatibility between his position that the many are no philosophical or moral experts and his assertion that they are wise enough to speak and vote in the Assembly. His doubts concerning the philosophical abilities of the many would undermine his political theory only if he had asked for expert knowledge in politics. Since nothing is more remote from this conception than the views expressed in the myth and its explanation,<sup>14</sup> Protagoras' pro-democratic position is not invalidated by the remark in 353a.

The ethical doctrine that Protagoras upholds is both conventional and relativistic. The sophist regards the community as the agent utterly responsible for the moral formation of its younger members. His moral theory is therefore conventional, since it relies upon the collective moral wisdom of the community and relativistic, since Protagoras does not question the moral concepts on which the education of the young is based, but accepts that every community has the right to impose its moral code on its younger generation.

Socrates rejects the Protagorean conception of morality, based on what could be described as common moral sense, in favour of a morality relying on scientific knowledge. "[W]hat should we [judge] to be the thing that saves our lives (σωτηρία ... τοῦ βίου)? The art of measurement or the power of appearances? (ἢ μετρητικὴ τέχνη ἢ ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις;)" Socrates asks rhetorically in 356d. The φαινομένου δύναμις corresponds of course to the traditional, unexamined ethical theories of the Protagorean type which draw their legitimacy from experience. Socrates wants to replace such theories with a μετρητικὴ τέχνη founded on objective, universal principles. This τέχνη can, and actually must be taught, but because of its specialized character it is no longer accessible to the many. Indeed, it is generated by the need to replace what, in the Socratic perspective, is a fundamentally deficient guide for moral judgement. But the replacement Socrates offers comes in the

form of an ethical science the obvious prerequisites of which are cultural cultivation and intense contemplation. Attributes such as these, far from being universal possessions of humanity, are more readily available to the upper strata of society, to men that have the cultural background and leisure which allows them to be devoted to the practice of the new science.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, the science in question is suitably designed for labour-free aristocrats, but not for the mass of craftsmen, manual workers and merchants who constituted the big majority of the Athenian *δημος* and were the most faithful supporters of democracy.

Socrates does not deny all usefulness to ordinary morality; he underlines its imperfect character. As Kraut puts it: "[e]vidently, Socrates has no quarrel with the Protagorean view that a valuable training in virtue begins at the earliest stages of life, and that a young adult who has received a conventional moral education is far better off than he was before".<sup>16</sup> Socrates conceives his theory rather as an advancement on the usual ethical education. This advancement, however, changes its character drastically. From an essentially simple and universal pedagogical procedure in ethics, we move to a science of human deliberation constructed appropriately for philosophers but excluding the ordinary citizen, the majority of the participants in Athenian democracy.

As far as Socrates is concerned, it is the many's custom

of deciding on moral issues by their unreliable opinions that generates the need for measurement in ethics in the first place. The possibility of οἱ πολλοί being elevated from this status of confusion to the infallible Socratic science is undercut by the fact that measurement itself is defined as an art. An obvious characteristic of an art is that it is mastered by a limited number of persons and that it presupposes exercise and effort for its acquisition. In the myth Protagoras pin-pointed political virtue as the only art that is attributable to everybody. When Hermes asked if he should distribute αἰδώς and δίκη in the same way as the other τέχνηαι Zeus replied that these should be given to all (322c). From this brief discussion of the two gods it becomes obvious that the normal notion of an art entails that there are certain (and not too many) experts in it, and that Protagoras, in claiming his conception of political art to be a common possession of mankind is fully conscious of the fact that this represents an exception to the rule that connects τέχνη with expert knowledge. Socrates, for his part, returns to the accepted pattern of taking art as something that entails expertise. Already in the *Laches* (184e-185e) he had asked for an expert in moral training. It is this emphasis on the need for expert knowledge, this insistence on an exclusive τέχνη of human deliberation, which blocks a possible acquisition of the art of measurement by the many and gives to Socrates' argument its essentially anti-democratic character.

Socrates' contempt for the many becomes plain in his argumentation from 352a onwards. We should remember that the virtue that he and Protagoras set forward to define is essentially political in character. The sophist declared that he teaches the political art (319a) and went on to clarify this art in such a way that its political significance was obvious at every stage of the myth and its explanation. In this way he set the framework of the discussion in such a manner that Socrates, despite his shift from politics to ethics, was always bound to respond to the political force of Protagoras' proposal. Socrates does that, but not in a straightforward way. By arguing that the many are unable to grasp the sovereignty of knowledge and by showing them incapable of forming in their minds the right conception of virtue, he not only reveals his contempt for the average citizen, but also effectively rejects the latter's claim to participation in common affairs. The very expression "δοκεῖ δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖς" (literally, it appears to the many-352b) purports to show exactly the inadequacy of their intellectual faculties when it comes to the crucial ethical questions on which nothing less than our εὐδαιμονία and σωτηρία τοῦ βίου depend; and the whole argument against the many's conception of akrasia serves the purpose of underlining their attachment to ever-changing opinions and to the "power of appearances" (ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις-356d). It is noticeable that even if certain individuals of low origin were able to learn the Socratic

art of measurement and consequently become virtuous in the Socratic sense, this would not at all undermine the anti-democratic thrust of Socrates' argument because the vast majority of the many would still be excluded. In fact, Socrates nowhere suggests that such a thing is impossible. But a democratic constitution does not depend on the possible elevation of poor or low-born individuals to the higher positions of the state. It depends on the participation of the mass of citizens as such. By showing, then, the intellectual and moral deficiency of the many, Socrates attacks the most fundamental principle of democracy, not any of its derivative and secondary characteristics. So, politically, there is more to Socrates' proof that the many are inconsistent with themselves in their explanation of akrasia than the simple pin-pointing of an incompatibility of two of their beliefs (hedonism and the possibility of akrasia-352a-357e). For Socrates this is not a simple logical error, but a powerful indication that the many lack the knowledge that would allow them to put their lives right from the ethical point of view.

The natural corollary of this view is that not only are the many unable to be self-governed, but that they are in need of moral guidance and, insofar as their inability to reach the right moral behaviour is innate rather than accidental (Socrates takes this point for granted by attributing intellectual inability and moral inadequacy to the many unconditionally), they stand in need of political

control as well.<sup>17</sup> In the *Protagoras*, Socrates does not give any specific indications of how this political control might be realized. But, still, the seeds of the authoritarianism that finds its way in the *Republic* are present in this dialogue in a manner that clearly anticipates the elaborate anti-democratic dogmas of the *Republic*. In the context of a debate where, from the very beginning, moral and political virtue are interwoven, the demand for expert political leadership follows naturally from the request for expertise in ethics and the animosity to democracy enclosed in this idea is only reinforced by Socrates' contempt for οἱ πολλοί.

This picture is strongly supported by some historical considerations. Socrates' pro-aristocratic inclinations have been questioned, notably by Kraut, on the grounds that Socrates "was no active opponent of democracy, nor was he a partisan of the aristocratic political faction that existed in Athens".<sup>18</sup> This claim, however, is contradicted by two historical facts. First, there is no doubt that in Socrates' time the fundamental political divide lay between a democratic and an aristocratic/oligarchic faction. To suggest that Socrates' constant criticisms of the former betray no bias of any kind favourable to the latter is completely to disregard the historical context in which Socrates' thought was shaped. Second, it is absolutely true that Socrates never willingly became involved in practical politics; but, far from being a proof of Socrates' lack of interest on the subject, this type of withdrawal appears to



conform with a pattern followed by many aristocrats, Plato included, and their political friends in the period after Pericles' death. Connor, who gives a penetrating account of the phenomenon, writes that "one result of the flamboyance of the new style [developed by Cleon and others] was animosity and annoyance among the Athenian chrestoi".<sup>19</sup> For some of them, Connor continues, "the best course seemed to be to withdraw from politics into private circles of like-minded friends, small informal gatherings".<sup>20</sup>

There is no doubt that Socrates did move in aristocratic circles<sup>21</sup> and that he enjoyed such "informal gatherings". On this point Plato and Xenophon are in essential agreement. There is also little doubt that his contempt for the many was not an incidental feature of his ethical thought, but a basic principle to which Socrates was deeply committed. Vlastos aptly points out that whereas Socrates was a revolutionary thinker in his rejection of retaliation against personal enemies, he did not extend this notion to cover social inferiors, but was utterly conformist on this score.<sup>22</sup> And if Plato's Socrates never exhorted anybody to take up a political career as a member of the aristocratic party, Xenophon's Socrates twice does exactly this in the *Memorabilia*.<sup>23</sup> Now Xenophon might lack the philosophical genius of Plato, but to suppose that he put into Socrates' mouth views that had nothing to do with the political affiliations of the actual man without anything in Socrates' overall intellectual outlook justifying this move, is to

attribute to Xenophon an exceptional degree of intellectual dishonesty. If, however, the interpretation of the political stance of the Socrates of the early dialogues hitherto proposed is accepted, it is obvious that the difference between Xenophon and Plato is not unbridgeable. It is in the degree of openness with which Socrates puts forward his aristocratic ideas that the two authors differ, not in these ideas themselves.

In conclusion, both the historical evidence available and a substantial number of Socratic remarks in the early dialogues point distinctly towards the direction of a committedly anti-democratic Socrates, and, moreover, the argument of the *Protagoras* shows how this Socratic political attitude paves the way for the *Republic's* authoritarianism. Whatever other sources Plato's totalitarianism might have had, Socrates' virtue ethics was one of them.

## II THE VIRTUES OF THE ΠΟΛΙΣ

In the following sections three theses concerning the *Republic* will be argued for. First, that Plato's moral theory, and in particular his theory of virtue, is plainly anti-democratic. The *Republic's* unqualified rejection of democracy is one aspect of the work which is often debated in the literature. However, Plato's anti-democratic attitude will here be approached from a perspective different from the one usually adopted by Plato's liberal critics.

Second, it will be underlined that the ultimate justification of Plato's Callipolis is transcendent, i.e. that the whole political construction of the *Republic* is justified by the Theory of Forms. This has important ethical and political implications.

Third, it will be claimed that in this dialogue Plato pays very little attention to history. This is not to deny that the *Republic* itself is "written in reaction against contemporary political conditions"<sup>24</sup> and therefore represents Plato's response to the historical setting of his time. It is to make the distinct claim that Plato does not use historical knowledge as a source that could contribute to the solution of the moral and political problems he confronts. This cannot be accidental: Thucydides had established, some decades earlier, the inextricable connection of history and politics, and, as it will be

argued in the third chapter, Plato did base politics on history in his last work, the *Laws*. What has therefore been described as Plato's disregard for "historical truth",<sup>25</sup> lack of concern for "historical reality, [for] "what happened in history""<sup>26</sup> is the product of a deliberate Platonic decision: the decision to justify ethical and political claims on metaphysical grounds and to do this in such a way that history remains irrelevant to the whole process (in the metaphysical scheme of the *Republic* history belongs to the world of particulars: according to Plato it therefore it has only partial existence, it comes between being and not-being. The implication of this is that no lesson of lasting value can come from history).

The challenge to which Socrates responds in the *Republic* is set in Book One by Thrasymachus who argues that the unjust individual is happier than the just. Socrates begins his endeavour to disprove this thesis by proposing justice to be sought first in the city because there it exists on a "larger" scale (368e). He suggests that the first πόλις is created because everyone is "οὐκ αὐτάρκης, ἀλλὰ πολλῶν ἐνδεής" (369b). Division of labour produces better efficiency (369e-370a) and conforms to the fact that each individual is by nature suited to do a certain job (370a-b). As more production needs arise, more people are required to do different jobs and the city grows (370dff.). Its people, in Socrates' description, have only the bare essentials for a simple life, and this invites Glaucon to complain that

Socrates is talking of a pig-city (372d). Socrates responds that the city so far described is "ὑγιής", whereas the "τροφώσα" one that Glaucon wants will be "φλεγμαίνουσα" (372e). As even more people are required to provide for the new, luxurious needs of its inhabitants, the city reaches a point where its own land is not enough to sustain its people and it ends up going to war with its neighbours (373d). At this point the necessity of an army presents itself.

There are two points which are worth making about the "ἕκον πόλιν". First, Plato realizes with remarkable acuteness that a city starts as an economic association destined to provide for the needs of its members. In order for this to happen more efficiently, Plato claims, distribution of labour has to come into effect, and this is actually a good thing not only in economic terms (giving more efficiency-369e-370a), but also in terms of human self-fulfilment (it is obviously best for every individual to do the job he or she was destined to do by nature-370a-b). This economic insight, i.e. Plato's clear understanding of the significance of the division of labour, and his conception that an individual is by nature best suited to do one job, play a crucial role in the formation of the social structure of Callipolis.

Second, as certain commentators have pointed out, it is this germinal city which is Plato's "ideal" city<sup>27</sup> and not Callipolis which is often described as such. Strictly speaking, the remark is true. The primitive community is

indeed "ideal" in that it does not include, in its initial stages, the features of Plato's contemporary societies which lead to divisions between individuals, factions and cities. But Plato understands that such a non-conflict situation bears no resemblance to the political realities of his time. In a community which is a priori peaceful, politics does not apply, because politics is primarily concerned with the restriction or elimination of conflict (both the political and the psychological definitions of σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη explicitly address the question of the elimination of conflict-see also 422e-423b and 551d. This is important because these two are the virtues which have to do with the relationships between classes and therefore they have an immediately discernible political character). So the proto-community might be "ideal", but unlike the city of the *Republic*, it is ideal on a non-political level.

The desire for luxury brings about the need for an army, and given the principle of specialization introduced earlier by Socrates, this army has to be professional. The Platonic "just city" eventually stems from the discussion of the character required for the soldiers and the education which they receive.

The city is divided into three classes: the Guardians, who come out of the soldierly class as its older and most competent members and are given the job of ruling the city; the Auxiliaries, who are the rest of the soldierly class (the term φύλαξ is introduced in 374d and is used to

designate the ex professio soldiers up to 414b where the distinction between rulers and soldiers, the latter now called ἐπίκουροι, is introduced. From then on the two terms are used in a specific technical sense); the third class is not ascribed a specific name by Plato. He refers to them by different names like δημιουργοί (421d), ἄλλοι πολῖται (the rest of the citizens, Guardians and Auxiliaries excluded-423d) or τὸ χρηματιστικόν (434c). This Platonic failure to name this class consistently is an indication of Plato's lack of interest in them,<sup>28</sup> which is further demonstrated by the fact that he devotes much attention to the education of the Auxiliaries (376d-412b) and the Guardians (502d-541b), but never spells out a word about the education of the Producers.

The city is wise, for Plato, not because of the ἐπιστήμη of its craftsmen, but because of the ἐπιστήμη which is concerned with the benefit of the city as a whole; the latter belongs to the Guardians, a "φύσει ὀλίγιστον ... γένος" (428e-429a. See also 431c-d, 491a-b and 503d). Plato applies here by implication the principle that a city has a moral quality when the class in it for which it is appropriate to have this quality has it and is in a position to exercise it. This principle becomes explicit in the discussion of bravery which follows. The city is brave not by virtue of the bravery of all its citizens, but only of those who have to perform military duty (429b), i.e. the Auxiliaries. Their bravery consists in having an unmovable

δρθῆ δόξα as to what is to be feared and what not (430a-b) and is imparted into their souls by the education that was prescribed for them in 376dff.

Σωφροσύνη, unlike the former two virtues, is not "owned" by one class, but is rather a "συμφωνία" and "ἁρμονία" (430e). This "concord" and "harmony" consists in an agreement that the best should rule over the worse (431b).

The three other virtues having been identified, Socrates suggests, the one which remains is justice (432b). Justice is declared to be "in a certain sense" (τρόπον τινά)<sup>29</sup> for each "to mind his own business"<sup>30</sup> (τό τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν-433b). It is also what "makes it possible for them [the other virtues] to come into being ... and preserves them" (433b) and what makes the city "μάλιστα ἀγαθήν" (433d). Finally, one short argument is added to show why τό τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν is a good definition of justice. The role of the courts, which in the Ideal City are to be manned by the rulers, is to give to everybody what belongs to him or her and this is just (433e-434a). The definitions of the four virtues of the city hereby summarized have to be regarded as, in a sense, provisional (a full account of wisdom can be produced only after the introduction of the philosopher and the full meaning of justice is not expounded until the end of Book Nine). They are however important because they provide the first explicit formulation of Plato's theory of virtue and, from a political point of view, because they are specifically definitions of the virtues of the πόλις.



There are a number of problems involved in this part of Plato's argument. First of all, in his conception of wisdom Plato insists that only very few will be able to achieve this virtue. This doctrine springs of course directly from Socrates' insistence on the importance of expertise in politics, which very few can achieve,<sup>31</sup> but the question is how well Plato defends this position here. His argument is that only the Guardians will care for the whole city and not merely for their own interests. But is there something in the moral argument of the *Republic* as a whole that necessitates this exclusiveness? The answer is no. Even allowing for the significant role of the Guardians' education, Plato has nowhere proved that the practical ability to protect the interests of the state as a whole must necessarily rest *only* with the Guardians. Annas, who draws attention to this fact, concludes that Plato "commits himself without argument to the anti-democratic thesis that the citizens with the wisdom that will make [the state] well-governed will be the smallest class in the city".<sup>32</sup>

A more fundamental logical problem appears in Plato's somewhat mystifying belief that virtues cannot be more or less than four. When wisdom, bravery and temperance have been defined, Socrates asserts that "what remains" is justice (432b). Cross and Woosley characterize this as a "worthless procedure",<sup>33</sup> Plato having nowhere as much as indicated why virtues should be only four. This criticism is certainly correct and pinpoints a serious gap in Plato's

argument. It has to be noted, however, that as the scholars themselves agree, this does not necessarily invalidate Plato's conclusions about the nature of justice.<sup>34</sup>

As regards Plato's judicial argument, an obvious fallacy is involved if it is taken in its stated form. The first premiss is that what the judges should do is to make sure everybody gets what is his or her own. Given that the judges aim for justice, it follows that it is just that everybody should have his or her own. So far Plato's reasoning is faultless. But Plato claims that his premisses prove not only that it is just that one should have one's own but also that one should do one's own. However, the premisses state nothing about one doing one's own and the argument cannot be accepted in this form.

Vlastos has argued that this fallacy is too gross to have gone unnoticed by Plato and that the argument is in fact elliptical.<sup>35</sup> There is an unstated premiss which is that "each shall have one's own iff each does his own".<sup>36</sup> According to Vlastos, this argument represents a Platonic attempt to connect the particular notion of justice proposed in the *Republic* (which can be called Platonic justice) with the common conception of justice (ordinary justice). Vlastos asserts that the argument includes a specific attempt to show that Platonic justice, exactly like ordinary justice, involves refraining from *πλεονεξία* (having more than one is due) and that Plato can expect a general agreement on this point. Treated this way, Vlastos suggests, the argument is

both valid and does establish the correspondence between Platonic and ordinary morality that the philosopher aims for: Plato is counting on his readers "to understand his definition to imply that in any community in which everyone lived up to the maxim "do your own" there would be no *pleonexia*".<sup>37</sup> Vlastos' point about *pleonexia* is plausible: "ὅπως ἂν ἕκαστοι μὴτ' ἔχωσι τὰλλότρια μῆτε τῶν αὐτῶν στέρωνται" (433e) to which he draws attention<sup>38</sup> does read as expressing what an ordinary Greek would understand by *πλεονεξία*.

Read as elliptical in this way, Plato's argument is actually formally correct. There is, however, one question which has to be asked: does the hidden premiss that each shall have one's own if and only if one does one's own establish a connection between Platonic and ordinary justice? In other words, would such a correspondence be immediately recognizable in any Greek society? If not, Plato cannot claim to have succeeded in connecting the *Republic's* morality to common morality, because even if there was general agreement that justice consists in refraining from *πλεονεξία*, there would be no similar agreement that to have one's own is equivalent to doing one's own.

The biconditional relation between "having" and "doing" one's own, which Vlastos asserts,<sup>39</sup> means in socio-political terms that one's property should be related to one's social status and/or one's function in the state. In Plato's city, which is rigidly stratified, this condition is indeed

satisfied. (It is satisfied not in the sense that the highest classes have more possessions, but in the sense that, as we will see in section 4, they control economic power by commanding the labour of others). But in the real world, though this principle might have applied in some strict oligarchies like Sparta, it hardly applied in societies where economic power was not concentrated in the hands of the classes traditionally regarded as the higher ones. In Athens, for example, a metic could be extremely rich, but still was excluded from participation in common affairs. But we have no evidence that the Greeks considered this asymmetry between one's property and one's socio-political status as unjust. Therefore, Plato's equivalence between having and doing one's own cannot be accepted as a point on which he could justifiably expect general agreement and this invalidates the claim that he does establish a full rapport between his own and the common conception of justice by his judicial argument. It is fair enough to say that he uses a commonly accepted notion of justice (as entailing rejection of pleonexia), but that he can achieve universal agreement for his equivocation of having one's own with doing one's own is far from clear. This fact does not entail that Vlastos' addition of a suppressed premiss in order formally to save Plato's argument is incorrect: this move remains both tenable and plausible. It does indicate, however, a serious unresolved problem in Plato's account of justice in the city.<sup>40</sup>

### III THE VIRTUES OF THE THREE CLASSES

One cardinal characteristic of Plato's theory of the virtues of the πόλις is that he refuses to attribute any specific virtue to the third class. The city derives its wisdom from the wisdom of its Guardians and its bravery from the bravery of its Auxiliaries. In this sense σοφία and ἀνδρεία are "properties" of the φύλακες and the ἐπικούροι respectively. The φύλακες are also brave, and this on a higher plane than the ἐπικούροι, since they start their careers as Auxiliaries and become Guardians by virtue of being distinguished in their soldierly duties as well as by eventually coming to possess ἐπιστήμη as opposed to the Auxiliaries' ὀρθὴ δόξα. But temperance and justice Plato defines not as properties of particular classes (in which case they would "belong" to the individuals of all the classes), but as relations between classes. In this way he can include the Producers in the political framework without necessarily allowing them any claim to virtue and consequently to political authority. The case of σωφροσύνη is particularly interesting in this context, because Plato's presentation of it involves a deep-running ambiguity. On the one hand, if temperance, whose essence is that rulers and ruled agree about who must govern, is a kind of "concord" (430e), this implies that the Producers will have at least

some degree of freedom and rationality. Of freedom because their consent would become a substantial part of the justification of the Guardians' rule, and of rationality because this is required for them to recognize the "natural" (431c, 432a) superiority of the Guardians. Plato also writes that "τὸ σωφρονεῖν ἐνεῖναι ... ἀμφοτέροισι [τοῖς ἀρχουσι καὶ τοῖς ἀρχομένοις]" (431e). Ἐνεῖναι literally means to exist *in* them; it appears then that Plato comes close here to attributing σωφροσύνη to the Producers in a way that implies they "possess" this virtue (along with the other two classes).

Nevertheless, as Irwin remarks, Plato's language here can be misleading: "[i]n a temperate state (a) the same belief about who should rule *enestin* in rulers and ruled, [431d9]; (b) this concord about who should rule is temperance, [432a7]; (c) the state's temperance, unlike its wisdom and courage is not *en merei tini* of the state, [431e10], but is spread through the whole city, 432a2. These uses of *en* might mislead us into thinking all the individuals are temperate ... But Plato says only that all the classes in the state contribute to the state's temperance, which implies nothing about the temperance of individuals".<sup>41</sup>

This interpretation is actually supported by the fact that there is a decisively darker side in Plato's psychological treatment of the Producers: "the greatest number and variety of desires and pleasures and pains is generally to be found in children and women and slaves, and

in the less respectable majority of free men (καὶ τῶν ἐλευθέρων λεγομένων ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς τε καὶ φαύλοισι-431b-c)".<sup>42</sup> The passage foreshadows the psychological model which Plato will soon be explaining, but it is particularly important even in the limited context of the political discussion of σωφροσύνη, because it underlines the difficulty of bringing the Producers to the recognition of the superiority of the Guardians. In order to achieve this, they have to overcome their deeply rooted tendency to be dominated by their desires and pleasures. This being so, the rationality which they can demonstrate by their temperance must be severely limited;<sup>43</sup> and their freedom is not the substantial freedom of checking the Guardians' power, with the latter depending on their continuous consent, but rather the nominal freedom of accepting the Guardians' authority in an acquiescent way which, as Cross and Woozley demonstrate, does not necessarily involve real freedom.<sup>44</sup> The expression "τῶν ἐλευθέρων λεγομένων" is crucial in this respect: common people are free only by name (in the framework of Plato's subsequent psychological analysis it will become clear that this is so because they are "enslaved" to their instinctive desires). They cannot therefore be invested with the virtue of temperance or with political freedom as the "optimistic" interpretation of σωφροσύνη appeared to indicate and, consequently, their freedom cannot be regarded as going beyond a passive acceptance of their betters' rule.

The essence of Plato's problem is the following: concord

between the citizens and consent about who is to rule are crucial for the harmony of his state, which he rates most highly. But all these presuppose a certain amount of rationality on the part of the producing class. Plato, however, operates philosophically with a very low opinion of this class. And he is fully aware that given the moral inferiority of the Producers, it is not very plausible to expect them to achieve even the limited amount of self-restraint which is vital for a harmonious state. On the other hand, if he adopted a different course and placed too much faith in the rationality and the moral qualities of the Producers, he would undermine his political argument. Given that rationality and virtue (the two being inextricably linked) are the attributes which legitimize political authority in the *Republic*, the greater the extent to which the Producers "possess" those attributes, the greater the potentiality of their having a claim to power. Plato's presentation of justice is a good example of this. Like temperance, justice is a relationship between classes, but not a property of all three classes. If the latter was the case, and given that justice is the central virtue which brings into being and preserves the other virtues (433b), the Producers would be put on an ethical stance high enough to enable them to make a claim to power. They would have no technical claim, since politics demands expertise and they lack wisdom, but they would have a moral claim in that they would "own" the principal virtue, justice. So, on the one



hand, Plato blocks this moral claim by refusing to call them just. But on the other, if the state is to be based on consent and not on sheer force, the Producers have to be somehow part of the justice of the state. By putting forward justice and temperance as relationships between classes Plato attempts to achieve both objectives.

The assertion that Plato does not attribute any sort of virtue to the Producers is decisively supported by two subsequent passages in the *Republic*. The first, and most crucial one, is 495b-e. Here Plato declares that when philosophy is abandoned by its true lovers, [οἷς μάλιστα προσήκει] it is taken over by "a whole crowd of squatters [who] sally out from the meaner trades", because philosophy "still retains a far higher reputation than other occupations, a reputation that these stunted natures [[οἷ] ἀτελεῖς μὲν τὰς φύσεις] covet, their minds [τὰς ψυχὰς] being as cramped and crushed [συγκεκλασμένοι τε καὶ ἀποτεθρυμμένοι] by their mechanical lives as their bodies are deformed by manual trades [διὰ τὰς βαναυσίας]".<sup>45</sup>

The philosopher states here, in absolutely unequivocal terms, that philosophy (i.e. the intellectual activity on which the full virtue of the Guardians is absolutely dependent) does not προσήκει to anybody involved in manual labour because such people have by nature a fundamental moral deficiency. But the passage does not only deny to manual workers the full virtue of the Guardians. It goes further in refusing to allow them even the partial virtue

that a superficial reading of 431a<sup>ff.</sup> might suggest. The definition of temperance in both the state (432a) and the individual (442c-d) involves a harmonious agreement between their respective three elements. It is obvious that a deformed and amputated soul cannot be expected to achieve this type of agreement. Given that the typical social property of the Producers is that they engage in manual activities, it becomes clear that the deformity of their souls precludes the possibility that they might "possess" even an individual virtue like temperance. Moreover, if one accepted that Plato attributes temperance to the Producers, one would probably have to allow for the Producers to "possess" justice as well, since this virtue is defined in terms remarkably similar to temperance and it is the second virtue which depends on the relationship between the classes. But it is absurd to suggest that a deformed soul can achieve justice, the highest virtue of the *Republic*. Consequently, 495b-e has to be accepted as actually ruling out the possibility of the Producers individually possessing either σωφροσύνη or δικαιοσύνη on the basis of their natural moral deficiency.

The second passage which fortifies the conclusion that the Producers are credited with no virtue in the *Republic* is 590c, where Socrates asks "and why do we despise manual work [[β]αναυσία καὶ χειροτεχνία] as vulgar?" and goes on to answer his own question: "isn't it because it indicates a certain weakness in our higher nature, which is unable to

control the animal part of us, and can only serve and learn how to pander it?". This passage has striking similarities with 495b-e: it connects virtue (or rather the lack of it) with manual labour and it asserts that the incompatibility of the two is by nature. The difference between them is that in 590c Plato makes an explicit reference to the λογιστικόν and to the ἐπιθυμητικόν, and therefore this passage is incorporated in his psychological scheme as a whole. The typical psychological characteristic of the Producers, Plato assumes, is that they are dominated by the lowest part of their ψυχή, that they are incapable of controlling their appetite. In the framework of a dialogue where virtue is a question of the domination of the better elements of oneself over the worse, domination by one's desires and virtue can only be mutually exclusive. It is therefore obvious that the characterization of the Producers by the domination of the ἐπιθυμητικόν in their souls irrevocably rules out any suggestion that they might have any form of virtue.

Furthermore, it is the Producers' lack of virtue which sanctifies the possible use of repressive measures against them. It is not true that Plato "never clearly decides"<sup>46</sup> on the question of whether the Producers are to be ruled by consent or coercion. His account of σωφροσύνη represents his attempt to achieve the former. Despite the incompatibility of the use of force and the ideal character of his state, however, Plato is explicit on the question of force. When he discusses the relationship between the ἐπιθυμητικόν which

corresponds exactly with the δημιουργοί, the θυμοειδές which does so with the ἐπίκουροι and the λογιστικόν which corresponds exactly with the φύλακες (this principle is established in 435b), Plato's language leaves little doubt about what means will be employed to control the desiring part of the soul: it is full of military analogies suggesting force: πολεμεῖν (440a), στασιαζόντων (440b), σύμμαχον (440b), στάσει (440e), τίθεσθαι τὰ ὄπλα (440e), συμμαχῶ (441e), καταδουλώσασθαι (442b)<sup>47</sup>, πολεμίους (442b), προπολεμῶν (442b), στασιαζῶσιν (442d). The accumulation of such an extraordinary number of military analogies in the space of less than three Stephanus pages leaves little doubt about Plato's recommendations. Provided the Producers accept their social role through their limited rationality, the use of force is unnecessary. If they do not, however (and Plato's insistence on force in the aforementioned passages demonstrates how seriously he was taking this possibility), it is unreservedly sanctioned by Plato. And any remaining doubts on the issue are dissolved by Plato himself in 590d: "wisdom and control should, if possible, come from within; failing that it must be imposed from without, in order that, being under the same guidance, we may all be friends and equals". The passage is indeed exceptional in that it refers to a friendship created by force. Occurring towards the end of Book Nine, and given that the last Book is some kind of excursus, this final acceptance of force as a legitimate means of controlling the δημιουργοί clearly demonstrates

Plato's failure ever properly to reconcile his wish for social *ὁμοιότης* and *φιλία* with his low opinion of the moral qualities of the Producers.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike the Producers who have no virtue, the Guardians possess all four virtues and therefore virtue as a whole. The virtue which typifies them is wisdom and the whole city is wise because of the wisdom of its Guardians (428d). The Guardians also possess bravery, and despite the fact that it is the Auxiliaries' bravery which makes the city brave (429bff.), the bravery of the Guardians is superior to that of the Auxiliaries because it is grounded on reason, not merely on opinion. The Guardians are temperate because they are par excellence the class in whose souls the right relationship between the three elements of the soul exists; this relationship consists in the domination of reason over the other two elements, and the Guardians have the right to rule the city exactly because this part, which is concerned with "the whole [soul]" (441e) is in command in their *ψυχαί*.

The Guardians are the class with which Plato is particularly preoccupied in the *Republic* as a whole; according to Annas "[a]s the *Republic* proceeds, Plato in fact loses interest in anyone but the Guardians, and there is some truth in the charge, often made, that he identifies the just person with the Guardian type and does not care if the other citizens in his city are not strictly speaking just".<sup>49</sup> But this fact does not appear paradoxical if Plato's overall conception of the Producers and their inability to

reach virtue is taken into account. Plato has some strong ethical reasons for being especially interested in the Guardians, in the sense that they are the only class to have full virtue. The individual virtue which is most important in terms of Plato's exposition of the overall virtue of the φύλακες is their typical ἀρετή, wisdom; and the reason for this is that their wisdom does not consist in knowledge of sensible things, but it is knowledge of Forms. From 502e onwards Plato develops the content of the Guardians' education, which culminates with διαλεκτική. Διαλεκτική is the greatest science, for it is concerned with the highest ontological entity, the Form of the Good (532a-c, 534b-c) and it aims at "περί παντός λαμβάνειν" (533b). Plato had claimed that the φύλακες should govern because they are the class which is concerned with the whole city in 428c-d and had suggested that justice is concern for the whole soul in 441e; but in the context of Book Four these statements had no immediate ontological overtones. By suggesting that the Guardians' ultimate aim is the comprehension of metaphysical reality as a whole, Plato provides a link between the aforementioned passages of the Fourth Book and the Sixth and Seventh Books which explains (and fortifies) the Guardians' right to power.

The underlying assumptions of this theory of virtue (though not its metaphysical justification) are clearly Socratic. Plato presents knowledge as the crucial quality which brings out virtue and insists that the Guardians have

all the individual virtues and ἀρετή as a whole. In this he adheres to the Socratic assumption that knowledge is necessary and sufficient for virtue (because of the moral content of the Forms, their comprehension leads by necessity to virtue. Plato of course goes beyond Socrates on this point, since the latter did not introduce Forms in his ethical argument, but Plato's metaphysical theory is designed in such a way as to support the Socratic assertion that virtue presupposes knowledge). Plato also adheres to the Socratic belief in the unity of virtue. The idea that the φύλακες have perfect virtue and the δημιουργοί no virtue at all conforms with the Socratic ethical axiom that virtue is one and that one cannot have one individual virtue without having all the others. As for the Auxiliaries, their case does oblige Plato to modify the strict form of the doctrine of the unity of the virtues, but not to repudiate it in essence.

The Auxiliaries are credited with a kind of virtue by Plato, but not with full virtue. They positively have ἀνδρεία, but only an ἀνδρεία based on doxa: "[t]his kind of ability to retain safely in all circumstances a judgement [δόξης ὀρθης] about what is to be feared, which is correct and with accord with law, is what I propose to call courage", Socrates says in 430b and in 430c he adds that this constitutes "political" virtue as well. The reason this type of virtue signifies merely a modest modification of the doctrine of the unity of the virtue and not an abandonment

of it is that the virtue of the Auxiliaries constitutes a first stage in the moral development which eventually leads the most talented of them to acquire full virtue. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Guardians start their careers as Auxiliaries and they are initially given an education which is based on *doxa* (386a ff.). This entails that the Guardians start from correct opinion and proceed to acquire knowledge. Because, however, these two epistemological states are continuous (as I shall argue in section 7), the virtue of the Auxiliaries, its immense difference from full virtue notwithstanding, is not completely different from the perfect virtue of the *φύλακες*; it is a first stage in the process which ends in the latter. There is therefore one virtue in the *Republic*, but two stages in the acquisition of it. The first stage is the political virtue of the Auxiliaries, the second stage the fully developed *ἀρετή* of the Guardians.

The fact that the virtue of the *ἐπικούροι* is an undeveloped version of its counterpart in the *ἄρχοντες* has a crucial consequence for the political argument of the *Republic*. Because the education of the former involves the ability to recognize reason (*λόγον*-402a), the Auxiliaries are in a position to comprehend the orders of the Guardians before they execute them. This is politically significant, because given the fact that the rationality of the Producers cannot be trusted and given that the *ἄρχοντες* have no other physical means at their disposal for controlling the



δημιουργοί except for the armed force of the ἐπίκουροι, this force is crucial for the ability of the Guardians to implement their political decisions. Therefore the rationality of the Auxiliaries, though substantially inferior to that of the Guardians, is necessary for the political stability of Callipolis. It is for the same reason that, in his psychological scheme, Plato presents the thymoeides as the "natural ally" of reason (441a).

One is now in a position to assess certain arguments that have been put forward to defend Plato from the charge of unhesitatingly prescribing the psychological and political suppression of the Producers. Such arguments can be roughly divided into two categories: those which use primarily psychological premisses and those which use political ones. Here we will examine some of the former, leaving the latter until Plato's conception of democracy is more fully explored.

One scholar who attempted a defense of Plato on moral and psychological grounds was Demos, who argued that the cardinal virtues can be dichotomized, one part involving virtues with regard to institutions (one could say political virtues) and one concerning the inner life of the individual (one could say private virtues).<sup>50</sup> On the basis of this distinction, Demos argued that whereas as citizens the people of Callipolis will perform one specific function, as persons they will "remain whole and self-ordering".<sup>51</sup> Wisdom is not only a prerogative of the philosopher-kings, because

in the private realm everybody is a "completely developed [person]".<sup>52</sup>

There are certain objections to this type of interpretation. For example, the suggestion that somebody might have an orderly, well-balanced personality in his or her private life but be characterized by the force of his or her irrational desires in public activities is obviously a psychological implausibility. On a more formal level, the problem with Demos' thesis is that there is no evidence for two sets of values in the *Republic*. On the contrary, as we saw, Plato upholds the essential unity of virtue.<sup>53</sup> This objection induced Skemp to modify Demos' thesis. He accepted that all classes share justice and temperance and conceded that "there is one set of ἀρεταί, but their civic effect varies as between the classes".<sup>54</sup> However, this is only a transformation of Demos' position and amounts essentially to the same thing. Skemp did not explain how one set of virtues can produce different civic effects, and without this explanation his argument is open to the same major objections as Demos'.<sup>55</sup>

A more recent attempt to show how Plato makes moral "salvation" possible for all classes was made by Kraut.<sup>56</sup> Kraut draws attention to 590c, where Plato claims that manual workers are characterized by the domination of the desiring part in their souls. This is a surprising textual choice for someone who wants to defend Plato from the charge of sanctioning the oppression of the lower class, for it

expresses most clearly his contempt for manual work and his conception of working people as fundamentally morally deficient beings. Kraut challenges this interpretation by arguing that "craftsmen can be trained to prefer the goals of reason to those of appetite",<sup>57</sup> obviously forgetting that there is not in the whole *Republic* one word about the education of the third class.<sup>58</sup> He points out that the citizens of Callipolis "are tied to each other by feelings of affection", ignoring that this affection might be imposed from without (590d which is cited by Kraut),<sup>59</sup> in which case it is a self-defeating notion. He also refers to the fact that the Producers will benefit from the rule of the philosophers and interprets this as follows: because the Producers are not "intellectually gifted" and are therefore likely to "develop appetitive values"<sup>60</sup> "it is ... better for the artisan if the ruler of an ideal state interferes with his natural moral growth and inculcates values other than the ones the artisan would adopt on his own".<sup>61</sup> Kraut finds this intervention to be beneficial for the Producers, ignoring the fact that it is imposed from without and it involves a very strong element of psychological suppression. His final argument is that since an artisan can show some intelligence in learning his craft, he is not completely devoid of reason. The philosopher-king takes advantage of this fact and installs in the artisan's soul a rule similar (though on a lower plane) to his own.<sup>62</sup> This thesis is no more tenable than the previous ones. It depends on the

obvious paradox of the Producers benefiting by giving away any claim to self-determination and is completely incompatible with what Plato says elsewhere in the *Republic*, for example with the text in 495e which we discussed earlier. On this interpretation, none of Kraut's arguments can stand independently. But the main inadequacy of his position is that he fails to realize that the need for the Producers to be morally "saved" from without would not arise in the first place, if Plato did not hold such a low opinion of them. If the Producers were not the morally and intellectually helpless beings that Plato takes them to be, there would be no need for them to be assisted, or rather controlled, in their moral development by the philosophers. From the moment such a need exists, they cannot be as rational as Kraut presents them.

Klosko has offered a milder defense of a Producers' virtue.<sup>63</sup> He made a distinction between instrumental and normative reason and argued that all men are rational because they all have the former.<sup>64</sup> Given the right education,<sup>65</sup> even those people in whose souls appetite is dominant can come under a holistic (i.e. caring for the whole soul) rule of reason and this leads to a more harmonious and happier life.<sup>66</sup>

But Klosko's interpretation is as unsuccessful as Kraut's, because a number of his premisses are demonstratively wrong. First of all, like Kraut, he ignores the fact that the Producers are not to be given any kind of

formal education. Secondly, having set up the distinction between instrumental and normative reason and having made the claim that the Producers are to some extent virtuous because they "possess" the former, Klosko disregards the essential difference between the two. Instrumental reason, like the Humean one, is concerned only with means. It is the kind of reason that can be employed by appetite in order to calculate whether it is prudent to satisfy a particular desire at a given time or not. It is the sort of reason that a robber uses in planning his next attack. In attributing this type of calculating ability to all people Plato does not credit them with a virtue. He simply acknowledges an empirical psychological fact. Platonic reason proper, the highest element of the soul, involves this type of reasoning, but is not typified by it. It is characterized by reason's self-motivation in setting its own standards. Only when controlled by the aims of normative reason is instrumental reason virtuous. Given that there is little doubt that Plato categorically denies the possibility that the Producers can ever achieve the highest type of reason, Klosko's argument does not prove that the ordinary citizens of Callipolis have even the second-rate kind of virtue that Klosko attributes to them.<sup>67</sup>

#### IV PLATO'S POLITICAL PRINCIPLES

Plato's position on democracy cannot of course be in any way dissociated from his more general political doctrine. For this reason, one has to start the examination of the *Republic's* attitude towards democracy by a characterization of the underlying political principles of the work.

In this section some fundamental political and economic principles of the *Republic* are examined. On the basis of these principles the question to which class in the actual historical world Plato's ruling class most closely corresponds is then answered. And this in turn sheds some light on the relationship between Plato's sociological and ethical doctrines.

One key passage with regard to these principles is the famous Phoenician myth of 414cff. The myth is a γειννατου ψευδος, yet Socrates introduces and narrates it with extreme seriousness. According to the myth, all the citizens are born from the earth and therefore they are all ἀδελφοί and συγγενεις (415a). Nevertheless, some of them have in their souls gold, some silver, and the rest iron and brass. The golden ones are those able to rule, the silver ones are the Auxiliaries and iron belongs to the "γεωργους και τοις ἄλλοις δημιουργοις" (415a). "Now since you are all of the same stock", Socrates continues, "children will commonly resemble their parents" (τὸ μὲν πολὺ ὁμοίους ἂν ὄμην αὐτοῖς

γενησθε-415a). Occasionally, however, a child might be born with a metal different from that of its parents. In this case, the primary duty to the god is that the rulers make sure this child is relegated or promoted to the proper class, for "there is a prophecy that the State will be ruined when it has Guardians of silver or bronze" (415c).

The political significance of the myth can hardly be overstated. It declares, in no ambiguous terms, two of the pivotal principles of the *Republic*: the natural inequality of human beings and the correlating principle that social and political status is determined basically by birth. The first of these principles is so explicit that not even Plato's modern defenders have attempted to cast doubt on it, despite its obvious incompatibility with any type of modern democratic theory. But the second has been seriously questioned. The tone was set in the nineteen twenties by A. E. Taylor who took the provision of social degradation and ascent according to natural worth to be "absolutely destructive of caste".<sup>68</sup> He is followed by Guthrie, who writes that the "moral of the metal allegory is not that it is necessary to keep the classes apart as classes based solely on birth"<sup>69</sup> and Klosko, who asserts that "class membership is based on merit, not birth;... there can be no doubt that considerations of merit are intended to outweigh considerations of birth".<sup>70</sup>

This argument is formally correct, but, if pressed too far, it can be seriously misleading. It is true that Plato's

statements, taken literally, make Callipolis a meritocratic state. But Plato clearly presumes that merit resides in a particular class (the Guardians) and he strongly believes that moral and intellectual qualities are, with very few exceptions, hereditary within each class. His meritocracy, therefore, has nothing to do with an egalitarian notion of meritocracy which would entail that equal opportunities are given to all individuals irrespective of their class background. This latter type of meritocracy clearly defies the principle that heredity should be the basic factor determining one's social status. Plato's meritocratic spirit, on the other hand, covers only exceptional cases and there are a number of features in the *Republic* which prove that Plato's society will be in practice divided along class lines mainly defined by a hereditary principle.

First of all, 415a ff. is quite clear about the fact that social mobility will be restricted to a very limited number of cases. The norm ("τὸ μὲν πολὺ") is that children will belong to the class of their parents. The exceptions to this rule are formulated with an hypothetical syntactical form (ἐὰν γέννηται ... ὄσουσιν, ἂν φύῃ ... ἀνάξουσιν-415b-c), signifying that they are to be regarded as cases that might occur, but their occurrence is by no means certain.

Second, Plato does not provide any specific provisions about how promotion and relegation are to be regulated, despite the fact that he gives considerable emphasis to sound breeding. This is a criticism as old as Aristotle,<sup>71</sup>



but the lack of an institutionalized system controlling this type of social mobility is important in that it demonstrates that Plato's provision is intended to cover exceptional cases, not to substantially modify the hereditary principle.

Third, Plato could hardly take the strong interest he does in the mating and breeding procedure, if his state was not primarily based on mental characteristics inherited within each class. Both 458dff. and 546aff. assert Plato's strong interest in the Guardians' correct mating and childbearing. But a close interest in such procedures is definitely incompatible with the suggestion of Callipolis being a meritocracy in the egalitarian sense of the term. Furthermore, it is exactly the inaccuracy of the timing of the mating procedure which leads to inferior offspring and the degeneration of the ideal city (546dff.).<sup>72</sup> This is where the assumption that the *Republic's* meritocracy might be incompatible with (or destructive of) a hereditary class system is irrevocably refuted. A state where merit is independent of class and is not transmitted by heredity cannot come to its downfall by the decline of its eugenic procedures, and this is exactly what Plato unequivocally states here. The fact that the ideal state breaks down when its hereditary principle is compromised clearly demonstrates that Plato regards this principle, and not merit independent of class, as the cornerstone of his ideal state.

Far from defeating Plato's belief in the hereditary principle, the occasional transfer of children from one

class to another is designed to reinforce its political aim. As far as relegation from the higher classes is concerned, Plato intends to use it to check the degeneration of the classes considered as higher at his time, a degeneration which he undoubtedly was in a position to observe during his lifetime. By removing unworthy individuals from the Rulers' class Plato hopes to achieve the preservation of the high moral and intellectual standard which he sets for this class. Even more ingenious is the provision for the promotion of some individuals from the Producers to the Auxiliaries and the Rulers. As noted in the last section, Plato is fully conscious of the danger of this class protesting against the rule of the Guardians, something which would destroy the much desired unity of the state. By allowing the social ascent of the most talented Producers, Plato deprives this class of the members most likely to question the unchecked authority of the Guardians and possibly lead this class into revolt. Read under this light, his provision for limited social mobility is not designed to invalidate class-distinction, but rather to foster it by perpetuating the submission of a leaderless third class. And it is a measure of Plato's ingenuity that he is able to incorporate in the same myth the conception of fundamental human inequality and the conception that all men are relatives. The philosophical objective is here the same as it was in the distribution of the virtues of the state. All men share a common origin<sup>73</sup> and this functions as an argument

for the essential unity of the state. But instead of inferring from this some sort of egalitarian doctrine, as Protagoras did, Plato uses the common origin of humans to consolidate the class distinction implied in the myth.

The state of the *Republic* is also characterized by the prohibition on private property for the Auxiliaries and the Guardians. In economic terms these two classes can be treated as one, since the fundamental economic distinction Plato draws is between the Producers, on the one hand, and the two higher classes on the other.<sup>74</sup> As was noted in the discussion of the primitive city in Book Two, Plato demonstrates a remarkable economic insight in realizing that it is the pressure of economic needs that obliges men to come together and form communities and that it is division of labour which marks the first steps towards an organized society and in this sense constitutes its basis.

Economically, Plato's *Republic* is an oligarchy. It is oligarchic not in the sense that property is a qualification for power, which is how Greeks sometimes applied the term, but in the etymological sense that economic power is exercised by the ὀλίγοι. What Plato fully realizes is that economic power is determined not by property, but by the ability to command and control the labour of others. It is exactly this power that he bestows on his ruling classes by the suggestion, introduced somewhat casually in 416e, that the Auxiliaries and Guardians are to be given μισθόν by the Producers, i.e. to be physically sustained by them. How

exceptional his insight is on this point, is proven by the fact that this is the economic principle not only of Callipolis, but of any oligarchy: the higher classes live off the labour of the rest of the community which sustains them, and, in the case of the *Republic*, allows them a labour-free existence. Although, historically, either money or agricultural products were always concentrated in the hands of the higher classes, it was not this concentration per se which guaranteed their social and political supremacy, but rather the ability to control the labour of the economically and socially inferior classes. Therefore Plato is absolutely justified, in terms of political economy, to envisage a propertyless ruling class.

In recent scholarship, Plato is very rarely, if ever, given full credit for the exceptional clarity with which he is able to distinguish property ownership and real economic power. More often he is simply misunderstood. Klosko, for example, completely failing to realize that Plato's economic planning fully consolidates his political system, suggests that "partial communism ... works to satisfy the economic longings of the lower class",<sup>75</sup> but is puzzled by the fact Plato did not extend it to the Producers. Guthrie talks about Plato's "dream of a complete divorce of political and economic power".<sup>76</sup> But this is the last thing Plato has in mind. He divorces political domination from monetary, not from economic power; and he has a very good reason to do so.

The economic structure of Callipolis offers a crucial

advantage to the higher classes. It eliminates internal divisions of interest in them, and secures the unity that Plato craves for. (Although his overall argument depends on the consent of the Producers to guarantee the unity of the state, Plato is painfully aware of the problem of the unity of the ruling class. Twice he declares that the unity of the state is a question of the unity of the Guardians-465b, 545d-e). As Winspear remarks, "[v]iewed in its historical context, there can be little mystery about the much debated Platonic communism. It represents part of the constant debate among Greek conservatives as to how their power could best be maintained".<sup>77</sup> Power of course depends very much on unity. And, as far as unity is concerned, Plato comes up here with the perfect answer, since he completely eliminates the most probable cause of conflict within the higher class, diversity of economic interest. To what extent this is a practical proposition is another question.<sup>78</sup> It hardly matters, however, since the *Republic* is supposed to be a pattern to aspire to, not a political proposal to be literally put into effect.<sup>79</sup>

Both the hereditary principle and the model of division of labour that Plato adheres to are principles strongly associated with the landed aristocracy of Athens at his time. The hereditary principle is of course crucial because no aristocracy can be maintained without it. It does not involve simply inheritance of property (in Plato's case inheritance of the right to command labour), but also

inheritance of social status. Plato does make social status dependent on moral and intellectual qualities. But given his belief that these will by and large be genetically transmitted within each class, it is not something decisively different from the inheritance of social positioning. As for the exceptions, they do violate the hereditary principle as such, but they confer the considerable advantage of reinforcing the vigour of the higher classes at the expense of the lower ones. Individuals moving across the class borders do not invalidate the social system itself. In the *Republic's* case in particular, this movement is designed to fortify class-distinction, not to defy it.

As for Plato's division of labour, it exactly corresponds with the division of labour which the rule of a landed aristocracy requires. (It needs to be made clear again that in economic terms aristocracy is a form of oligarchy, i.e. rule by the few, but not the specific form of oligarchy distributing political rights on the basis of property qualifications). This suggestion is fortified by the fact that Plato's aversion to certain other types of property, those which are not based on land and are alienable, is made plain in the *Republic*. Commercial activities are never explicitly mentioned in the framework of Callipolis, but they probably fall into the same category as βαναυσία, manual work. In 547d Plato remarks that one of the features of the ideal city that timocracy preserves is abstinence

from χειροτεχνιῶν καὶ τοῦ ἄλλου χρηματισμοῦ, the latter obviously involving commerce.

Contempt for manual work, another intrinsic part of aristocratic ideology, is a recurrent motif in the *Republic* (e.g. 397e, 434a, 443c, 495e, 522b). This subject will be examined in the next section, because it is immediately relevant to the issue of the philosopher's attitude to democracy.

To the extent that Plato has a real-life model for his ideal city, it is Sparta that performs this role.<sup>80</sup> Sparta is of course sharply distinguished from the ideal state, but it is explicitly declared the best of the existing states (545a) and it is, together with Crete, the degenerate state in which appetite has not yet come to rule. Its constitution was indeed a proper landed aristocracy and Plato praises it for the abstinence of its citizens from manual occupations (547d). Lycurgus had forbidden Spartans to get involved in money-making activities (in which Plato follows him) and its political stability was admired throughout the Greek world.

Nevertheless, one should exercise caution as regards the extent of the analogy. Plato is describing the declining Sparta of the fourth century and he does have some serious misgivings about Spartan manners. He attributes to the Lacedaimonians extreme and unbalanced preoccupation with war and greediness (547e-548a). But the deeper reason Plato could never unqualifiedly accept Sparta's model is its complete lack of artistic or intellectual achievement, the

monolithic militarism which essentially isolated it from the cultural achievements of the rest of the Greek world.<sup>81</sup>

Despite Plato's doubts concerning the ethical character of its citizens, however, his admiration for Sparta as an economic model can hardly be doubted. Aristotle notices the parallel between Plato's economic structure and the Spartan system and comments that according to Plato "the guardians are not to farm the land; and even that is a rule which the Spartans already attempt to follow".<sup>82</sup> Barker has criticized this statement by pointing out that the Guardians do not own the land as in Sparta (in other words they have the use of the products of the land, not its "legal" possession)<sup>83</sup> and that the farmers are not helots. Both points are formally correct; neither, however, diminishes the value of Aristotle's remark, if the latter is viewed from a purely economic point of view. The fact that the Guardians have only the use of the agricultural products does not affect the division of labour that Plato prescribes for his city and despite the fact that the Producers are free citizens by name, economically their position is not all that different from that of the helots. Plato's remark in 547b-c that those who in the ideal state were ἐλεύθεροι, φίλοι and τροφῆς become in timocracy περίοικοι and οἰκέται would be valid only if he had been able to establish beyond dispute that the Producers will accept their role willingly. His failure to do that, which we discussed in section 2, decisively weakens this assumption.



Both Plato's adherence to the hereditary principle as a means for enforcing class-distinction (exceptions to this rule being designed to fortify this distinction) and his endorsement of an economic model dividing labour along the Spartan lines constitute proof of Plato's own particular class preferences; and as we will now see, the division of labour he envisages in the *Republic* is inextricably interwoven with his moral argument.

One of the major features of Plato's economic system is that it secures for its higher classes freedom from manual labour, historically an essential prerogative of a landed aristocracy. On this point the interdependence between Plato's economic structure and his ethical theory is revealed. Given his own concession that manual work is morally destructive, that it deforms the soul (495e), it becomes clear that a fundamental presupposition for virtue is a leisured existence. Plato in fact declares this emphatically in 395b: "[s]o we argued originally that our Guardians must<sup>B4</sup> be freed from all forms of manual work". This passage, occurring in the context of the exposition of the Guardians' education (before their division into Guardians proper and Auxiliaries), clearly demonstrates that virtue, far from being the universally attainable property that a meritocratic reading of the *Republic* implies, is essentially grounded on social conditions, i.e. freedom from the need to work. This interdependence of social condition and moral status has to be taken into account if a full

understanding of Plato's ethico-political theory is to be achieved. Bernard Williams, for example, working purely from premisses of moral psychology, is baffled by the following puzzle: "logistic supremacy and fitness to be a guardian are of course for Plato necessarily connected. But how about epithymetic motivation and fitness to be a *δημιουργός*? Not even Plato at his loftiest can have believed that what actually qualified somebody to be a cobbler was the strength of his *ἐπιθυμία*."<sup>85</sup> But this might look less improbable once one realizes that for Plato manual work is an occupation which deforms the soul and makes virtue unattainable, or, to put it the other way, virtue requires abstinence from "vulgar" activities. In this sense, moral weakness and manual work, *βαναυσία*, go together; the former, manifested psychologically by the force of one's desires, does "qualify", or rather does restrict one to be a demiourgos.

Platonic justice, the requirement that everyone does the job he or she is best fitted to do by nature, is justified by Plato on the grounds that one's moral qualities should decide one's social position. But this is not a one way road. Given that someone already involved in manual occupations has a deformed and cramped soul, Plato's moral argument excludes, from the very beginning, the large majority of citizens from any claim to virtue, and, consequently, to any form of political power. In this way, Plato's sociology supplements his ethical theory in blocking any active political role for the democratic masses.

## V THE *REPUBLIC* ON DEMOCRACY

As a political work, the *Republic* represents a sustained and devastating onslaught on all aspects of democracy as Plato knew it. He relentlessly attacks the fundamental theoretical principles of this type of constitution, its practices and the moral and intellectual qualities of the social groups which supported the Athenian democracy and politically benefited from it.

The Platonic repudiation of democracy is by no means restricted to his formal discussion of democracy as a degenerate constitution in Book Eight. It is a recurrent motif in the work, and, in a certain sense, the whole argument of the *Republic* is an attempt to prove the inefficiency and disregard for nature to which democratic theory and practice give expression.

With the possible exception of Protagoras,<sup>86</sup> the Greeks did not develop a consistent and systematic democratic theory. According to Finley it was the "philosophers [who] attacked democracy; the committed democrats responded by ignoring them, by going about the business of government and politics in a democratic way, without writing treatises on the subject".<sup>87</sup>

But although there was not a systematic democratic theory, there definitely were certain notions which were

absolutely crucial in the development of what can be described as democratic ideology. The two most crucial ones<sup>88</sup> were *ἰσονομία*<sup>89</sup> (initially equality before the law but later also "equality through the law")<sup>90</sup> and *ἰσηγορία* (the prerogative of a citizen to speak before the Assembly) and a word used sometimes as synonym for democracy.<sup>91</sup>

The common denominator of the two notions is that they imply political equality between citizens in a way that excludes discrimination on the basis of wealth or birth. They both underpin the principle of the majority which can only operate on the theoretical basis that the opinion of one citizen is as good as that of any other. And they functioned in democratic practice as guarantees for the prerogative of any citizen, irrespective of class, to participate in the Assembly, the ultimate decision-making authority of the state.

Plato uses *ἰσονομία* twice in his discussion of democracy: in 561e, in the framework of the description of the psychological character of the democratic man he talks of "[τὸν] βίου ἰσονομικοῦ τινος ἀνδρός". Here the word is clearly a synonym for "δημοκρατικοῦ". In 563b Plato talks about the "*ἰσονομία καὶ ἐλευθερία*" that prevail in the relationship between men and women in democracy. The statement does not make sense historically, given the exclusion of women from social and political life. What it does declare is that isonomy is a cause of democratic licentiousness, which for Plato is one of the most prominent

defects of democracy. Here the close connection between isonomy and democracy is again easily discernible, with Plato treating isonomy not as a theoretical notion in itself, but only as a typical feature of democracy.

The fact that Plato does not discuss ἰσονομία (or ἰσηγορία which is nowhere mentioned in the work) as a theoretical notion in the *Republic* is symptomatic of his refusal to take on a specific democratic argument.<sup>92</sup> What he does is first to refute both by his overall argument, by employing the maxim of the fundamental inequality of human beings, and second to repudiate the principle of democratic equality by substituting for it the notion of a geometric or proportional equality. As far as the first strategy is concerned, the Phoenician myth of 415a-c is immediately relevant. What Plato in essence does is to declare human inequality as an axiomatic proposition; having done that, he has no need to argue explicitly against a specific democratic doctrine. As for democratic ideology, the fundamental principles of Plato and his democratic opponents are so far apart that there is hardly any common ground for discussion. Which argument one sides with becomes simply a question of where one stands on the subject of equality among citizens. Plato consolidates his anti-egalitarian doctrine by the ethical and political arguments of Book Four, the anti-democratic character of which was discussed in section 2. Plato's second response to universal<sup>93</sup> democratic equality is admittedly sketchy, but still clearly

discernible. In 558c he complains of democracy that it is "ὁμοίως ἴσοις τε καὶ ἀνίσοις διανεμούσα". What Plato employs here is the notion of geometrical equality, an undoubtedly aristocratic concept of Pythagorean origin.<sup>94</sup> According to Dodds "it may well be the Pythagorean answer to the democratic slogan of "equality".<sup>95</sup>

"[Ἡ] ἰσότης ἡ γεωμετρικὴ" is introduced in the Platonic corpus in *Gorgias* 508a, without being explained or supported by argument. In that context it is intended to refute Callicles' defense of pleonexia, "without thereby conceding Callicles' assumption that if justice is ἰσότης, it would justify equality between the masses and their betters ... Thus "geometrical" would be used to break the democratic stranglehold on ἰσότης".<sup>96</sup> Vlastos, who offers the above penetrating comment, is baffled by the fact that "Plato is so uncommunicative about it" and supposes that "Plato has not yet detached this doctrine from the metaphysical framework ... in which he received it".<sup>97</sup> Vlastos then assumes that "(a) [Plato is] unsure of the extent of his agreement with it and/or (b) such a discussion is thematically precluded by the exclusively moral interests of the *Gorgias*".<sup>98</sup> What is difficult to grasp about (a) is how Plato could use geometrical equality in such a brilliant way as to refute both Callicles and the democrats in one masterly move (Vlastos' first argument clearly brings out the anti-democratic tendencies of the *Gorgias*) without being "sure" of its political implications. I believe Vlastos'

second explanation makes more sense, and can equally be applied to the *Republic*, where again geometrical equality is left undeveloped. In the political scheme of the latter work Plato does apply geometrical equality in the sense that everyone receives from the state what is appropriate for his social position. From this point of view geometrical equality exists at the very core of the *Republic*. Why Plato does not make more of it on a formal level remains an open question. Thematic considerations could be part of the explanation. Another reason, though this can only be a speculation, is that his disciples in the Academy, where Pythagoreanism was studied in depth, might have been familiar with the concept and therefore not much exposition would be necessary. Aristotle explicitly endorses proportionate equality<sup>99</sup> and if we accept that the *Laws* was directed to a wider audience, this explains the fact that Plato discusses this type of equality at greater length in that work (756e-758a). Finally, none of the characters of the *Republic* expounds a democratic argument, which would have given Socrates the opportunity to elaborate on proportionate equality.

Another aspect of democratic theory which definitely came under Plato's notice was the democrats' claim that their constitution aimed at the greatest ἐλευθερία possible.<sup>100</sup> Ἐλευθερία was for the Greeks primarily a question of birth (one had to be born to free parents to be oneself free) and on the level of the city, the term designated a self-ruling

community. But in democratic theory the notion took overtones of what we might call self-expression or the right of every citizen to live the way he chose.<sup>101</sup> No ancient author takes the democrats' claim on virtue more seriously than Plato,<sup>102</sup> who responds to it in two ways. The first is to present the democratic notion of freedom as the equivalent of unlimited and morally destructive licentiousness. Plato does not dispute the democrats' assertion that their constitution aims at freedom. His first remark on democracy is that its citizens become "πρωτον μὲν δὴ ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ ἐλευθερίας ἡ πόλις μεστή καὶ παρρησίας<sup>103</sup> γίγνεται" (557b). But he attempts to defame this concept of freedom by equating it with anarchy: everybody in democracy can choose their own constitution (557d). Nobody is obliged to obey any authority, and even if the law precludes somebody from becoming ruler or judge, one can do it if it comes one's way (557e-558a). Convicted criminals go around unpunished (558a). The high principles of Callipolis are met with καταφρόνησις (558b). As regards the politicians' moral status, nothing counts "provided they profess themselves the people's friends". "Δημοκρατία", Plato concludes, is "ἡδεῖα πολιτεία καὶ ἄναρχος καὶ ποικίλη" (558c).

Plato uses the notion of freedom which was associated with democracy in a derogatory sense in a number of other passages. In 561d it is one of the names which the democratic man uses to describe his morally anarchic life. In 562c ff. the desire for freedom entails disobedience to



the rulers and opens the way to tyranny. Similarly, in 564a, in the beginning of his description of the constitutional transition from democracy to tyranny, freedom is described as leading to its extreme opposite, "εἰς ἄγαν δουλείαν". In 572e it is the name used as a euphemism for "complete licence", παρανομία. But Plato's deepest objection to democratic freedom comes in 563b: "[τ]ὸ ... ἔσχατον ... τῆς ἐλευθερίας τοῦ πλήθους" comes when "οἱ ἐωνημένοι καὶ αἱ ἐωνημένοι μηδὲν ἤττον ἐλεύθεροι ὥσι τῶν πριαμένων". What is absolutely unacceptable for Plato is that ἐλευθερία is, in his opinion, destructive of all social hierarchy. It not only defies the social stratification within the citizen-body, but it even goes as far as blurring the most fundamental of social distinctions, that of freemen and slaves. It is the de facto association of freedom and equality that Plato objects to, going to absurd lengths in suggesting that even domestic animals enjoy unprecedented freedom in democracy (562e, 563b-c).

In attacking freedom, however, Plato paints a completely inaccurate historical portrait of Athenian society. It is impossible to see how such an amorphous state as the one he depicts could come close to ruling the whole Greek world and be the major power in the Eastern Mediterranean for almost a century. The issue of Plato's gross distortions of historical facts will be more fully examined in section 8.

Plato distinguishes this type of freedom from what we might call Platonically "true" freedom. Because he never

discusses the notion specifically, his conception of it has to be extracted from the way he uses the term in contexts where it is not associated with democracy. So in 576a it is stressed that the tyrant can "never taste true friendship of freedom". In 577c the city governed by the tyrant is not "ἐλευθεραν" but "μάλιστα δούλην". In 577d-e the best elements in the tyrant's soul are "enslaved (δουλεύειν) and completely controlled by a minority of the lowest and most lunatic impulses". For this reason "ὁ τῷ ὄντι τυραννος τῷ ὄντι δοῦλος [ἐστὶ]" (579d). For Plato, then, "true" freedom consists in the best elements in both soul and city having control over the worse. This notion of freedom is further developed in 589c-590d. Here Plato emphasizes that ἀνελευθερία is the result of the subordination of the θυμοειδές to the ἐπιθυμητικόν (590b); and in 590d he declares that epithymetic people should be subjected ("δοῦλον ... δεῖν εἶναι") "to the same rule with those who are governed by their rational part", and that this is not "ἐπὶ βλάβῃ τῆ τοῦ δούλου". The profound authoritarianism of this assumption has already been discussed. It is indeed remarkable that Plato, in responding to the democrats' claim on ἐλευθερία, creates a notion of freedom which explicitly denies self-determination to the Producers.

Plato's attack on democratic practices is another recurrent theme of the *Republic*. One cardinal feature of democratic practice was popular participation in juries which were considered as representative of "the demos itself

in action".<sup>104</sup> According to Aristotle, one of the Solonian measures which gave rise to democracy was the right of *ἔφεσις* which was conceded to the *πληθος*, because "*κύριος γὰρ ὢν ὁ δῆμος τῆς ψήφου κύριος γίγνεται τῆς πολιτείας*".<sup>105</sup> Based on his assumption that justice consists in everyone doing his own, Plato emphasizes that the farmer should never be a judge (397e); and in a hardly concealed assault on popular juries, he insists that there is no greater shame for somebody than to take refuge in the justice of others instead of relying on his or her own justice (405a-b). The passage concludes with an outspoken reference to "a jury dozing on the bench" (405c).

Plato's most venomous attack on democratic practice is contained not in Book Eight, where democracy is analyzed in terms of psychology rather than of political practice, but in the parable of the ship (488a-f.). The parable is intended to explain how real cities do not employ philosophers, which, according to Plato's argument, would be the only way for them to acquire a good government. What is notable about this parable is, first, that it contains the only use of the Craft Analogy after Book One, and second, the particular violence of Plato's onslaught on democratic practice. The philosopher describes how in one ship (Athens)<sup>106</sup> or in many (Greek democratic cities in general), the owner (the *demos*)-Plato writes "*ναύκληρος*"; he purposefully avoids *κυβερνήτης* which implies expertise-is besieged by the sailors (demagogues) who try to persuade him

to let them have the helm. None of them has ever studied navigation and they uphold it cannot be taught. Moreover, they are ready to put to death whoever says it is teachable-the reference is clearly to Socrates' trial. They fight each other virtually to death over control of the ship. They lay out the owner by drugs or drink or in any way they can. Eventually one group of them wins, after which they embark on an orgy on board, proclaiming whoever helps them a great navigator at the same time that the ship travels virtually on its own. Little wonder, then, that the real philosopher will not enjoy great respect in such a situation (488e-489a).

There are a few points about the ship parable which are important. First, Plato's choice of language. The demos is "larger and stronger than any of the crew, but a bit deaf and short-sighted, and similarly limited in seamanship" (488a-b). The sailors are "στασιάζοντας πρὸς ἀλλήλους" (488b) and lethal violence is the name of the game. The flattering politicians use every means available to them to get the approval of the ναύκληρος and the whole situation results in a ship practically uncontrolled, whereas the real philosophers stay unused or are even put to death. There is hardly a political vice absent from democracy.

The parable is a caricature of the Athenian way of going about politics, and, given the stunning political success of Athens within the Greek world, it is completely unjustifiable historically. It also seems to make use of the

Socratic Craft Analogy, though Plato has now metaphysical reasons to abandon it (the expertise of the craftsman belongs to the world of particulars). But there is no inconsistency in Plato's thought on this point, for two reasons. First, despite its extraordinary clarity, the simile of the ship is only a metaphor designed primarily to expose the inadequacies of democratic government, not an argument to be taken literally. Second, Plato has already exposed his metaphysical and epistemological doctrines and has made clear that the art of ruling presupposes not the empirical knowledge of the artisan, but the "scientific" knowledge of the philosopher who knows the difference between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα and is able to shape his life according to the pattern of the Forms. Consequently, there can be no confusion between his own political ideal and the simpler Socratic one which was void of such ontological overtones.

In the framework of the same argument, explaining why real philosophers are left unused in contemporary societies, Plato describes how the true philosophical natures are corrupted by the sophists and, even more strongly, by οἱ πολλοί. Every democratic crowd has this destructive effect for Plato, but most notably ἐκκλησίαι, δικαστήρια (the twin pillars of the sovereignty of the demos) θέατρα (another intrinsic part of democratic culture) and στρατόπεδα (492b). No sound education can protect a talented young man from the corrosive influence of such crowds and he inevitably becomes

"one of them" (492c). As for those who resist the influence of the mob, they are severely punished with "disfranchisement, fines or death" (492d), another reference to Socrates' fate.

This passage connects Plato's conception of the constitutional apparatus of democracy with his opinion of the masses. It brings us therefore straight to the third element of Plato's rejection of democracy, his contempt for the social categories which provided the mainstream support of democracy in Athens. To a very considerable extent these were merchants, sailors, artisans and wage-earners. Such social categories could differ widely in terms of wealth and social outlook, but were alike in having no pretensions to noble birth and being the beneficiaries of the meta-Cleisthenian democracy which permitted them collectively an unprecedented degree of political power. There are a number of passages in the *Republic* which express Plato's resentment against these groups. We have already discussed two of them, 495b-e and 590c. In both the passages Plato explicitly associates manual labour with moral deficiency. The same principle is emphatically upheld in 371e, where Plato labels wage-earners, probably the lowest group of citizens both economically and socially, men "who have no great powers to contribute [to society]".<sup>107</sup> In 495eff., Plato narrates the story of "some bald-headed tinker who's just got out of prison and come into money, and who has a bath and dresses himself up in a new suit, like a

bridegroom, and sets off to marry his boss's daughter because her family's fallen on hard times" (495e). "What sort of children are they likely to produce?" Socrates then asks. "A mean and misbegotten lot [νόθα καὶ φαύλα], I think" (496a).

This passage is interesting in a number of respects: it declares Plato's endorsement of the existing social hierarchy (the philosopher explicitly laments the fact that the tinker marries into a social class higher than his own); it gives clear expression to Plato's contempt for banausics, and especially those who use their money to attempt the amelioration of their social position; and it forcefully reinstates Plato's conviction that moral qualities are hereditary: although Plato is speaking metaphorically in this story, his conviction that the children of a φαύλος will be φαύλα themselves is revealing.

Plato's contempt for manual workers as a social category is extended to their political role in democratic Athens. His treatment of ὁ δῆμος is crucial in this respect. The word had principally two meanings. Formally it meant the whole citizen body, which in democracy was sovereign through its decisions in the Assembly. But it was also used to designate the common people, the low-born, the poor. It is in this sense that opponents of democracy, including Plato, usually used the word.<sup>108</sup> Plato assimilates the demos to a short-sighted, almost deaf and ignorant ναύκληρος in the ship simile, but, by Platonic standards, this is an almost

sympathetic description. For in 493a-c the demos is assimilated to a big, moody, untamed beast, switching from irrational anger to unjustifiable calm. Although Plato's venom in both places is primarily directed to the democratic politicians, his opinion of the many as such could hardly be lower. In 496c he talks about τῶν πολλῶν τὴν μανίαν and likens the participants in a democratic assembly to wild beasts ("θηρία").

If one accepts that Plato is philosophizing not in a historical vacuum but in response to the social and economic conditions of his era, then the importance of the aforementioned passages emerges clearly. As already stated in the previous two sections, Plato believed that manual work disqualifies someone from any claim to virtue, wisdom or political authority. Seen in terms of his contemporary society, this means that the vast majority of citizens, and the committed democrats in particular, are to be excluded from social or political recognition. Whether one needs to work for one's living becomes the decisive factor for one's socio-political status *before* considerations of ethical or intellectual ability come into play at all. (Φύσις is invoked in both 495d and 590c). It is absolutely true that the *Republic* is not a plutocracy, since Plato places no value on wealth. As the tinker's story demonstrates, money, especially when it is produced by βαναυσίαι, ought to be irrelevant to social status. But the dialogue is not neutral with regard to the social groups which existed in the



philosopher's own time. Having dispensed with wealth, Plato argues in essence that only a specific training and abstinence from manual occupations are the social presuppositions for inclusion in the higher classes. But, given the historical context of the *Republic*, these qualifications can only be found in one class, the landed aristocracy of which Plato himself was a member.<sup>109</sup>

Despite Plato's rejection of every aspect of democracy as he knew it, modern commentators have often attempted to acquit him on this score. Even those liberals who recognize the extreme anti-democratic character of the *Republic* have, more often than not, been led astray by reading into ancient democracy those concepts and institutions which define modern liberal democracy. In this respect, both camps have produced serious misreadings of Plato's philosophy. To this issue we turn next.

## VI THE DEBATE OVER PLATO'S TOTALITARIANISM

The paradigmatic example of a wholesale attack on Plato's political principles from a liberal point of view is the first volume of Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*. This book initiated an extended discussion of Plato's political philosophy as a whole and of its relevance to twentieth century forms of government which Popper regarded as totalitarian.

Popper accuses Plato of adopting a strict class-distinction and of identifying the fate of the state with the fate of the ruling class.<sup>110</sup> He charges Plato with presenting justice as "a property of the whole state, based upon a relationship between its classes"<sup>111</sup> while never discussing it as isonomy,<sup>112</sup> and temperance as meaning that one is satisfied with one's place in society whatever this might be.<sup>113</sup> He asserts that Plato bestows unchecked and uncontrolled power on his rulers<sup>114</sup> and that he unashamedly uses censorship and deception to consolidate his sociopolitical system.<sup>115</sup> Popper's polemic culminates with the conclusion that Plato was an arch-enemy of the "open society", a society which guarantees individual rights and free expression, and favoured a closed tribal society.

Although Popper's notion of the "open society" is problematic, as we will soon see, the rest of the political charges cited above are essentially correct. On Plato's

identification of the fate of the state with its ruling class, on his use of *δικαιοσύνη* and *σωφροσύνη*, the two political virtues par excellence, and on his attribution of absolute power to a tiny minority we commented in previous sections. As for his adoption of censorship, it is so explicit and widespread<sup>116</sup> that it cannot be seriously questioned.

Popper's central assertion, i.e. that Plato eliminates in the *Republic* individual liberty as we conceive it in the name of the state, is undoubtedly true. The moral education of the Guardians in Books Two and Three purports to install in them the "right" beliefs, not in any way to develop their critical capacities,<sup>117</sup> as proven by Plato's unhesitating use of lies in the process (382d, 389b-c). Plato goes as far as to suggest that all members of society should have "common feelings of pleasure and pain" (462b), from a psychological point of view an obvious absurdity since it presupposes the assumption that emotions can be so ordered that a whole city would have the same emotional response to the same events. In 500d the philosopher is given the prerogative of "*ἡθῆ* ... *τιθεῖναι*", a function that goes beyond mere legislation to the extent that *ἡθῆ* entails not simply some sort of behaviour but a way of life as a whole. These passages leave no doubt that uniformity of opinion and life-style are essential characteristics of Callipolis.

Nor is Plato prone to attribute any value to human life irrespective of the social function of the individual. In a

passage of notorious anti-humanitarianism he suggests that anybody who is prevented by chronic illness from performing his social function should be left to die (406d-407e).

Some commentators, although basically agreeing with Popper that individual liberty is sacrificed to the state in the *Republic*,<sup>118</sup> attempt to qualify this by suggesting that the Producers are given a fair deal. Klosko writes that there is no "terroristic police control"<sup>119</sup> and that "[t]he Guardians do not use their political power to monopolize life's goods ... Though the lowest class is excluded from politics, it controls all the state's property".<sup>120</sup> In similar vein Annas remarks that "[t]he Guardians are no exploiters; the Producers have a right to those benefits from the common working of society which are needed for them to function best in making their contribution to the common good".<sup>121</sup> Vlastos argues that Plato's treatment of all classes is impartial: his rule is "that each has a right to those, and only those, socially distributable benefits which will maximize his [social] contribution".<sup>122</sup> He also asserts that although "Plato's aristocracy" will have the military force to overexploit the Producers, Plato legislates in the opposite direction: the rulers will have less "wealth, sex, and leisure"<sup>123</sup> than the Producers.

To the extent that any of these arguments purport to qualify Plato's rejection of individual liberty by suggesting the Producers are compensated for it, they are all equally unsuccessful. As we saw in section 4, Plato's

economic system is unfair to the Producers in the fundamental sense that it obliges them to sustain a leisured<sup>124</sup> class which in turn controls them politically and, if need be, physically: Plato obviously does not rule out force as a means for constraining the Producers, and as for "police control", 414b plainly states that one of the military functions of the φύλακες will be to make sure that "friends at home shall not wish ... to harm the state" and 415d-e declares that the φύλακες should camp on a spot enabling them "to control any internal disaffection" (τοὺς τε ἔνδον μάλιστα ἄν κατέχοιεν). Because Plato's system is so fundamentally unfair to the Producers in both economic and political terms, no amount of impartiality or self-restraint on the part of the rulers can sufficiently compensate them; and, as Vlastos himself agrees, Plato does not recognize human dignity as a value inherent in "man's humanity".<sup>125</sup> He makes it dependent on social productivity and the result is that human beings become fundamentally unequal in this respect.<sup>126</sup>

Popper's attack on Plato's political proposals is therefore neither unjustified nor misplaced. It is in other areas that Popper's argument is questionable.

Popper asserts two fundamental principles, which in his opinion are violated by Plato: that ethical doctrine cannot be based on factual statements<sup>127</sup> and that "piecemeal [social] engineering" is always preferable to "Utopian engineering",<sup>128</sup> i.e. to revolutionary change. With regard to the first of

these principles, Versenyi has persuasively argued that the fact-value distinction is not valid because notions like "[e]nd in itself", "good in itself", "absolute norm" are empty concepts, for the only meaning these words have is a referential meaning".<sup>129</sup> Good, Versenyi rightly contends, can only be good for someone or something. Thus when it comes to moral or political issues, it is pointless to speak of the good absolutely. In these fields, what is good is good for human beings, and therefore a theory of human nature is necessary to underpin any political theory. "Nothing but an "is"", Versenyi concludes, "can justify an "ought"". <sup>130</sup>

As far as the preferability of piecemeal social engineering to social revolution is concerned, Popper's argument is again unconvincing. Popper explicitly claims that piecemeal social engineering is rational, while revolutionary change is irrational.<sup>131</sup> His argument for this is that because "[a]t present, the sociological knowledge necessary for large-scale engineering is simply non-existent",<sup>132</sup> wholesale social experimentation has to be avoided in favour of piecemeal changes. But this conclusion depends on a number of questionable premisses. First of all, it assumes that sociology has the apparatus to provide objective "scientific" knowledge similar to the one produced by disciplines like, say, physics. But because sociology inevitably involves questions about the nature of man and society, on which no common agreement can be reached in the way that the principles of physics are universally accepted,

social experimentation can never be ideology-free as Popper assumes. Furthermore, there is a danger here of making the social scientists wholly responsible for decisions which properly belong to politicians (paradoxically, Popper comes close here to conceding Plato's point that politics is an art to be conducted by experts). Finally, and most significantly, both piecemeal and wholesale social engineering are means to particular ends and therefore their rationality ultimately depends on the rationality of these ends. For this reason, there is nothing that makes small-scale social change *a priori* more rational than large-scale one.

Another problematic issue is Popper's use of the terms "open" and "closed" society.<sup>133</sup> In an illuminating critique of Popper, Stalley makes two crucial remarks. First, Popper's distinction between open and closed societies is too inflexible: Popper talks as if we have a straight choice between the two, whereas "there is in fact no such thing as a completely open or completely closed society".<sup>134</sup> Second, it is not immediately clear that an open society is to be preferred: "there are other values which a reasonable man might seek and these may conflict with the demands of openness; for example if we set a high value on order we may prefer the less open but more orderly of two societies".<sup>135</sup> Popper is wide open to both objections, for he fails to acknowledge that there is a grey area between open and closed societies and his assumption that an open society is

always better is nowhere specifically argued for, but constitutes one of his unstated liberal principles which has to be taken on faith.

But Popper's most serious drawback is the way he understands, or rather misunderstands, the nature of ancient democracy. Popper takes ancient democracy as a constitution primarily characterized by the protection and promotion of individual rights, like freedom of speech and thought. These were indeed characteristics of ancient democracy to a certain extent and it is for this reason that some of the major accusations that Popper launches against Plato are justified. But they were secondary and in a certain sense incidental attributes of the Greek democracies. The notions of human and political rights, with which Popper is so concerned, were not familiar to the Greeks, who had neither a word nor an intellectual concept corresponding to "rights". Because of their dependence on slavery<sup>136</sup> they never developed anything even remotely close to universally attributable human rights; and the closest they came to a concept of political rights was negatively, through the notion of ἀτιμία, the deprivation of a citizen's political prerogatives.<sup>137</sup> The Greeks understood democracy primarily in socio-economic terms, as a constitution which gave political expression to the aspirations of the poorer classes, the ἄποροι or πένητες. For Plato himself democracy comes into being when the poor defeat the rich: "[δ]ημοκρατία δὴ οἷμαι γίνεσθαι ὅταν οἱ πένητες νικήσαντες τοὺς μὲν ἀποκτείνωσι τῶν



ἑτέρων, τοὺς δὲ ἐκβάλλουσι"-*Republic* 557a). Aristotle writes that "democracy might be defined as the constitution under which *the poor* (οἱ ἄποροι), being also many in number, are in control"<sup>138</sup> and this definition is repeated like a leitmotiv throughout his *Politics*.<sup>139</sup>

What these passages make crystal clear is that democracy, as conceived by the Greeks themselves, had little to do with rights, and everything to do with the participation of the poorer citizens in the affairs of the polis. Operating with liberal notions which apply to modern representative democracies, Popper completely misses this point (Popper has hardly anything to say on social issues, and he even agrees that Plato does not sanction the "exploitation" of the Producers).<sup>140</sup>

This anachronistic conceptualization of ancient democracy, in which Popper is followed by a number of commentators,<sup>141</sup> inevitably leads to some serious flaws in Popper's overall argument. One of the problems it creates is that it judges Greek political theory in terms of a distinction between the individual and the state, whereas for the Greeks this is an absurd distinction. This point is excellently formulated by Sinclair: "[t]he antithesis of rulers and ruled, οἱ ἄρχοντες and οἱ ἀρχόμενοι, and of the Few and the Many meet us constantly, not our familiar antithesis of State and Individual. This would have been tantamount to opposing the πόλις and the πολίτης, which would be slightly absurd, as if one were to make an

antithesis of the hen and the egg".<sup>142</sup> One particular case where Popper's misunderstanding of ancient democracy leads him to completely unacceptable results is in his assessment of the political implications of Socrates' philosophy.

Despite Socrates' continuous and relentless animosity towards democracy, its leaders, its practices and its basic principle of deciding according to the opinion of the majority, Popper unequivocally depicts him as a plain democrat. Popper holds that Socrates "felt compelled, by his conscience as well as by his religious beliefs, to question all authority"<sup>143</sup>. He tries to construct a pro-egalitarian Socrates by arguing that in the *Meno* he teaches geometry to a slave-boy "in an attempt to prove that any uneducated slave has the capacity to grasp even abstract matters".<sup>144</sup> But, as Kraut remarks, "nothing of moral significance is proved by... [this] fact".<sup>145</sup> Clearly, any suggestion that Socrates holds a universally attributable notion of intellectual or moral virtue is outweighed by the way he defines virtue in the *Protagoras* and by the other passages where he refers to the limited abilities of οἱ πολλοί. It is the authority of the many, granted and eventually promoted to a significant degree by the democratic constitution of Athens, not all authority in general that he is putting into question. In the *Apology* 28e, he says that it would be terrible ("δεινόν") for him to disobey his military commanders ("οἱ ἄρχοντες"); and he adds that "τό δέ ἀδικεῖν καὶ ἀπειθεῖν τῷ βελτίονι, καὶ θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώπῳ, ὅτι κακόν καὶ

αἰσχρὸν ἔστιν οἶδα"-29b). These passages show that Socrates is far from questioning all authority, either in moral (βελτίονι is here probably meant in a moral sense) or in non-moral issues, like military obedience.

Popper also rejects the view that Socrates was calling for expertise in politics, talking about "Socrates' demand that a responsible politician should be a lover of truth and of wisdom rather than an expert, and that he was wise only if he knew his own limitations"<sup>146</sup>. Were this true, there would indeed be a lack of continuity between Socratic and Platonic political thought. But this position is certainly untenable in the face of the interpretation of the *Protagoras* suggested in section one and of what Socrates says in texts like the *Apology* 24d-25b (moral education is like horse-training: only "εἷς" or "πάνυ ὀλίγοι"-25b- can master it) and the *Laches* 184e (proper decisions are "made on the basis of knowledge and not numbers").

This examination of Popper's depiction of Socrates is not exhaustive, but it suffices, I hope, to show how Popper's misreading of ancient democracy can lead to the wrong conclusions. There is nothing democratic in Socrates' craving for expertise in politics (and the formulation of a notion of ἀρετή in terms of it). Popper takes Socrates' individualism as a reflection of some sort of liberalism,<sup>147</sup> and then, thinking of democracy in modern terms, equates his liberal Socrates with a pro-democratic figure. But this reasoning is clearly at odds with the way Plato presents

Socrates' views in the early dialogues if these views are seen in their historical context.

In conclusion, Popper is right in his claim that the *Republic* is a totalitarian work. Viewed in terms of the distinction between individual and state, there is no doubt that Plato sacrifices the interests of the former to those of the latter. But this distinction was one that the Greeks themselves would hardly have recognized and, if it is the main or the only angle from which one judges ancient political theory, there is the serious danger of being led astray, as Popper's complete misunderstanding of Socrates demonstrates. It is not only or even mainly in its failure to recognize individual rights as against the state that the *Republic* is authoritarian. It is totalitarian on a much deeper level, because it absolutely ~~rejects~~ the aspirations of the lower citizen classes and because it produces a complex moral and metaphysical argument which sanctifies the perpetual social and political subordination of a large producing class to a tiny minority. It is in this respect that Plato's argument becomes intelligible in terms of its own historical context and touches upon the realities of Greek political struggle. It is here that Plato takes sides in the ongoing political struggle of the Greek cities and it is here that the full scale of the *Republic's* authoritarianism reveals itself.

Popper's onslaught on Plato triggered a wave of protest by a considerable number of scholars who attempted to defend

Plato,<sup>148</sup> ironically confirming the attitude that Popper characterized as the "idealizing [of] Plato".<sup>149</sup> One example is Versenyi, who conceded Plato's "authoritarianism",<sup>150</sup> but proceeded to claim that Plato's theory of the state, "supports rather than undermines the establishment of democratic constitutions".<sup>151</sup> The *Republic*, Versenyi argued, is not designed as a realizable project. It involves a circular process in that philosophical wisdom is necessary for the recognition of the philosopher-king, and if this wisdom is lacking initially, there is no way Callipolis can be set up.<sup>152</sup> "[H]ow are we to select the philosopher to select the philosopher to rule?"; if the latter "has not already been found, [he] can never be found".<sup>153</sup>

Given this "logical impossibility",<sup>154</sup> and because Plato adheres to the principle that power should be proportionate to knowledge, the absence of the ideal ruler means that the *Republic* is, in Versenyi's opinion, a work which repudiates despotism in practice. Without the philosopher-king no one is entitled to absolute power and "[t]herefore the democratic state, while not the best possible in theory, is still the best possible in practice".<sup>155</sup>

Versenyi suggests that democracy involves equality before the law, which entails equal opportunities, not equal value attributed to each individual. This is why democracy's officials are elected and its educational system is selective.<sup>156</sup> Democracy proper is a meritocracy, Versenyi claims, and Plato's *Republic* is a meritocratic and therefore

a pro-democratic work.

Versenyi is not unjustified in claiming that the *Republic* is not intended to be literally realized. But he goes beyond what the text allows in claiming that it is not a blueprint for absolute rule at all. The text in 592b clearly shows<sup>157</sup> that the *Republic's* value is as a pattern to be approximated as far as possible. Plato does envisage a process according to which the philosophers-to-be are selected and educated, but he does not make clear how the initial selection is to be materialized (Guthrie rightly remarks that "Plato seems confused about this").<sup>158</sup> This is a gap in Plato's exegetical procedure, but no more than that. By no means does it cancel out the fact that philosophical rule is the cornerstone of the *Republic's* political philosophy (Versenyi himself concedes this when he writes that "[i]n the ideal state everything depends on the rule of the philosopher king").<sup>159</sup> It is particularly interesting that Plato does consider the question of what ought to happen in the absence of the philosopher-king, but only in his later political philosophy, when he proposes strict adherence to law as the means for covering this eventuality (*Politicus* 301d-eff.). But in the *Republic* Plato does not show any interest whatever in what might be a prudent course in the absence of the ideal ruler; from the moment this ruler is removed from the political equation we move straight to the fundamentally defective historical πολιτεία of Books Eight and Nine. Therefore, even if the realization of the concept of the

philosopher-king is doubtful, its paradigmatic value is without question the pillar of Plato's political doctrine in the *Republic*; and given that the authoritarianism of the work is deeply embedded in this concept, the dialogue's totalitarianism is not refuted by Versenyi's argument.

As for the subsequent claim that Plato's proposals are meritocratic and therefore compatible with modern democratic practice, the *Republic's* meritocracy is firmly anti-egalitarian, as I argued in section 4, and therefore Versenyi's transformation of the *Republic* to a democratic work is untenable on this score as well. In fact, one of the major defects of Versenyi's thesis is that not only does he not dispute Plato's belief in natural inequality, on which the *Republic's* authoritarianism depends, but he seems to endorse it. For instance he accepts that freedom should be given on the strength of knowledge,<sup>160</sup> ignoring the fact that a conditional freedom can never be the universal freedom demanded by democracy. He further claims that Plato's theory is not incompatible with representative democracy, because both recognize the factual inequality of human beings. But representative democracy does not rest so much on the assumption that the best should rule as on the assumption that all should be able to participate in voting. Plato definitely knew the democratic argument that although some citizens might be fittest to rule, all have the capacity to participate in common affairs. It is the political essence of the myth he himself put in the mouth of Protagoras. Plato

disagrees not with the assumption of both Protagorean and modern representative democracy that some are better equipped than others when it comes to power, but with the democratic principle that everybody ought to be able to participate in politics. He bluntly repudiates this principle by excluding the Producers from any form of such a participation and by presenting Athens, who put this principle into practice, as a state where moral anarchy reigns. The inescapable conclusion is that his political theory is plainly anti-democratic, no matter whether one refers to ancient or to modern democracy.

Reeve argues that Plato is innocent of all the charges attributed to him, even those which other defenders of Plato do not touch as too obviously embarrassing.<sup>161</sup> He claims that the *Republic* is not "a totalitarian hymn to the benefits of repression and unfreedom, but ... an attempt to design a polis whose members enjoy as much real happiness, and as much real or critical freedom, as possible".<sup>162</sup>

It might be true that the *Republic* is not a hymn to totalitarianism, but only in the very limited sense that Plato consistently attempts to conceal the repressive features of the work and present his anti-democratic theses as the result of a rationality based on nature. But what Reeve argues in effect is that the work is not totalitarian at all. This is of course a totally different proposition.

Reeve thinks the Producers can, given the restrictions of their cognitive ability, be maximally happy in Callipolis,



because nothing prevents them from achieving their aim, which is money-making. Although he agrees that they definitely do not receive the primary education of the Guardians,<sup>163</sup> he claims that they are educated in their craft, and this "causes [them] to abandon the pleasures of food, drink, and sex for the more pleasant pleasure of making money".<sup>164</sup> Because the higher classes do not compete with them for the money the Producers most highly rate, their money-loving desires are not externally frustrated.

Reeve also claims that the Producers lack deliberative freedom, namely the freedom to satisfy maximally the desires they themselves regard as most important. For this reason, they might be better off sacrificing these desires for others which are "sanctioned by the critical theory of rationality".<sup>165</sup> Reeve calls this latter kind of freedom critical freedom.

With regard to Reeve's first argument, two questions are relevant: first, whether the separation of the lowest appetites from money-making is valid and second, whether the economic interests of the Producers are really compatible with those of the other two classes.

As regards the first question, Plato makes it abundantly clear in 580e-581a that the baser desires and money-making are members of the same class of psychological attributes; talking of the ἐπιθυμητικόν, he writes: "[w]e accordingly called it after its most salient characteristics, "desire", because of the violence of the desires for food and drink

and sex and the like, or (καί) "acquisitiveness" (φιλοχρηματου), because wealth is the means of satisfying desires of this kind". The conjunction καί is here crucial: it proves that the more instinctive desires and the wish for money are, psychologically, on a par: the only difference is that money secures satisfaction of such desires. Reeve therefore is not justified in suggesting that one's desire for money is more sublime than the rest of one's ἐπιθυμίαι, and that education in a craft makes a producer somehow more virtuous by orientating him or her towards money-making. Moreover, apprenticeship in a craft is not something of moral value in itself. Plato refers to it only incidentally in the framework of discussing the Auxiliaries' education (456d), and then only to contrast it to the superior education of the Guardians. If he thought there was anything intrinsically valuable in it, he would definitely have to pay some attention to the issue. His refusal to do so clearly renders Reeve's interpretation untenable.

As for the fact that Guardians and Producers do not compete for money, the economic analysis of the *Republic* attempted in section 4 shows that this is a secondary feature of Callipolis' economy. Given the fact that the Producers bear the weight of sustaining the other two classes, their economic condition is one of dependence, and no amount of fine talk about their willingness to provide for the higher classes can conceal this fact. Thus Reeve is wrong to assert that the Producers will be happy because the

Guardians will not deprive them of their valued possession of money. In the economic structure of the *Republic* the value of money as such is minimal. And one could clearly envisage a situation where the Producers would be better off keeping the surplus of their production instead of giving it to the Auxiliaries and Guardians. In an economy like Athens they would be able to sell it and make a profit. Therefore there is a sense in which they compete with the higher classes even if one restricts the issue to the question of money.

One major objection can also be raised to Reeve's thesis that the Producers can achieve "real freedom" if they abandon deliberative freedom in favour of "critical" freedom. As the scholar himself admits, the latter kind of freedom involves abandonment of the Producers' own values. Thus there is a deep, and I believe insoluble paradox in a notion of freedom which demands that the agent surrender his own conception of freedom, whatever this might be, for an abstract notion of freedom defined by someone else. Given that the Producers, due to the restrictions of their cognitive capacities, are a priori excluded from defining the rationality on which the critical theory of freedom depends and given the omnipotency of the philosopher-kings, there can be little doubt that it is the latter who will define what is rational and what is not. What we end up with, then, is a morally and intellectually impoverished third class, completely lacking self-determination and

having its "freedom" tailored for it. But any theory of freedom, critical or otherwise, which completely ignores the agents' wishes and which depends on their moral heteronomy, cannot lead to the "real" freedom Reeve claims. Consequently, there is no justification for attributing such "real" freedom to the Producers in the framework of Callipolis.

One final but important remark on the subject. There is a distinct tendency among those who defend Plato against the charge of authoritarianism, either on political or on psychological grounds, to leave unquestioned some of the fundamental principles which underlie Plato's political argument. In particular, they seem happy to accept Plato's belief in the natural inequality of human beings, and to argue that, given the low cognitive capacities of the Producers, Plato is justified in depriving them of any political prerogatives, or, moreover, that he could not consistently follow any other course. But this line of argumentation can prove only that Plato is consistent within his own premisses. It does not absolve Plato from the charge of authoritarianism, because within its own set of propositions authoritarianism can be as consistent as any other political system without becoming either desirable or morally justified. This, I believe, is one of the major reasons that the arguments in defence of Plato have been ultimately unsuccessful.<sup>166</sup>

## VII EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

The epistemological doctrine of the *Republic* and the corresponding metaphysical doctrine, Plato's famous theory of the Forms, are introduced at the end of Book Five. The theory is of great philosophical importance in its own right, but in this section we will concentrate on those aspects of it which provide the ultimate justification for the ethical and political theses which Plato propounds in the first half of the *Republic*.

In 473d Socrates declares that "there will be no end to the troubles of states, or ... of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands". He then proceeds to define the real φιλόσοφοι. As the word signifies, a philosopher is someone who loves wisdom, and not merely a part of it but wisdom as a whole (474c).

Socrates adds that the philosopher is the one who "can reach beauty itself and see it as it is in itself" (476c). For this reason "we can rightly call his state of mind one of knowledge; and of the other man, who holds opinions only, opinion" (477d). It is in this section that Forms are introduced in the *Republic*, with the word εἶδων in 476a. We learn that each is "in itself single", but they seem to be a

multiplicity because they "appear everywhere in combination with actions and material bodies and with each other" (476a); that a particular is a resemblance of the Form, the latter being the reality of which the particular is a resemblance (476c); and that particulars participate ("μετέχοντα") in the Forms (476d).

But this argument presupposes the existence of Forms and is unlikely to be accepted by the φιλοθεάμονες who deny this existence. For this reason Socrates proceeds to give a second one, based on premisses that the disbelievers are likely to accept. He suggests that ἐπιστήμη and δόξα are different δυνάμεις (477b) and therefore they must have different objects (477d). The object of ἐπιστήμη is "what is", τὸ ὄν (478a). "[W]hat is not" (τὸ μὴ ὄν-478c) is the object of ἄγνοια. The object of δόξα comes between being and not being, "between what fully is and what absolutely is not" (478d). Knowledge is infallible, while opinion is fallible (477e). Now, whereas the φιλόσοφος is concerned with the eternal and unchangeable Forms, the φιλοθεάμων denies that beauty is only one, justice one and so on. But there is neither a beautiful thing nor a just act that could not also appear the opposite (479a). Similarly, something which is double can appear half when compared with a different thing, and the same holds for other epithets like large or light. Because of this relativism, the multiplicity of sensible things belong to an "intermediate realm" between being and not being, and are apprehended by the intermediate

δύναμις, δόξα (478d).

The two arguments from 474b to the end of Book Five are among the most crucial in the *Republic*. Their scope is extremely wide. They purport to justify the main political assumption of the work, that philosophers ought to rule. They also introduce Plato's epistemological and ontological doctrines, and they do that in such a way that the exact correspondence of the two is immediately discernible, since Plato distinguishes two realms of reality on the basis of the different cognitive capacities of which they are the objects.

Plato virtually repeats the same point in 529b-c where he states that the sensible world cannot be known because there can be no ἐπιστήμη of the αἰσθητά. Ἐπιστήμη is therefore from the outset placed on a position vastly superior to δόξα. This is emphasized by the fact that the former is infallible while the latter is unreliable, a suggestion made by Glaucon and accepted without argumentation (477e). Variations on this theme, the deeply unsatisfactory results one gets when one relies on δόξα,<sup>167</sup> run through the *Republic*: so, for example, in 367b-d Plato states one of his favourite political positions, that the doxa of the many about what is just and unjust is completely unreliable; in 412a-413a he writes that we abandon our false opinions voluntarily but our true opinions involuntarily (the underlying assumption here is that doxa is changeable and therefore rests on precarious grounds); in 444a Plato explains that there is a

doxa which is connected with ignorance and disaster; in 466b he talks about an "ἀνόητος τε καὶ μειρακιώδης δόξα" and in 560c he talks about "ψευδεις" and "ἄλαζόνες δόξαι".

In 476dff. Plato appears to draw a rigid distinction between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα. He writes that the two are different δυνάμεις in the sense sight and hearing are different (477c) and that the cognitive condition of the φιλόδοξος compares to that of the φιλόσοφος as that of a human being who is dreaming to one who is awake (476c). He then uses this distinction to establish two separate ontological realms: one is the realm of the sensible world, which comes between being and not being: its position is "μεταξὺ ... τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντως καὶ τοῦ αὐτῆς μηδαμῆ ὄντως" (477a); everything that belongs to it is "ἅμα ὄν τε καὶ μὴ ὄν" and lies "μεταξὺ ... τοῦ εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος τε καὶ τοῦ πάντως μὴ ὄντος" (478d); it participates "τοῦ εἶναι τε καὶ μὴ εἶναι" (478e); it is positioned between "[τῆς] οὐσίας τε καὶ τοῦ μὴ εἶναι" (479c) and between "τοῦ τε μὴ ὄντος καὶ τοῦ ὄντος εἰλικρινῶς" (479d).

In contradistinction to the intermediate ontological status of the objects of doxa, the objects of episteme, i.e. Forms, are fully real: Plato uses here expressions like "ὄν παντελῶς" (477a) and "εἰλικρινῶς ὄντος" (477a, 478d, 479d). Both adverbs function here as superlatives intended to designate the fact that the ontological status of Forms is hugely superior to that of sensibles. Moreover, παντελῶς (which means fully or perfectly) implies that particulars



have only imperfect (to use a Greek term, ἀτελής) existence.

What Plato appears to be asserting, then, is that the objects of doxa, particulars, belong to a lower degree of reality than the objects of episteme, Forms, which are fully real. The traditional interpretation of this, and the one held by a substantial majority of scholars,<sup>168</sup> is that when Plato speaks of the lesser reality of the sensible things, he means that they exist to a lesser degree than Forms. This is the "grades" or "degrees of reality" thesis.

This thesis is strongly supported by another passage in the *Republic*. At the beginning of Book Ten Plato declares that the Form of a bed is "ὁ ἔστι κλίνη" (597a and 597c) and he talks of it as "κλίνης ... ὄντως οὐσης" (597d), in sharp contrast to the bed created by a human craftsman who "οὐκ ἄν τὸ ὄν ποιοι, ἀλλὰ τι τοιοῦτον οἶον τὸ ὄν, ὄν δέ οὔ" (597a). It is untrue that the artisan's bed is "τελέως ... ὄν", obviously because perfect being belongs only to the Form of the bed.

Some interpreters, however, find this position too scandalous to have been held by a philosopher of Plato's magnitude. Vlastos argued against it,<sup>169</sup> and Annas follows him in her reading of 476dff. Annas argues that εἶναι and its derivatives in this section must be taken as predicative, not existential: "'is" should be read elliptically, as "is F" where "F" is some predicate".<sup>170</sup> In other words, when Plato says that something can be large and not large he does not claim that this thing exists to a lesser degree than the

relevant Form. He only claims that someone cannot know this thing to be unqualifiedly large, because at a different time, or in comparison to different things it might appear not large. Only the Form of largeness can be known to be, and therefore is, perfectly large.<sup>171</sup>

Vlastos adds to this another argument. He cites a number of expressions where Plato uses "real" or "really" in a way which is not open to an existential reading (e.g. "the really good and noble man"-*Republic* 396b, "a really divine place"-*Phaedrus* 238c).<sup>172</sup> On the strength of these expressions he suggests that Plato distinguished, although he never made explicit the distinction,<sup>173</sup> two meanings of "is", one declaring existence, the other genuineness.<sup>174</sup> The first does not admit degrees, the second does. Vlastos argues then that when Plato talks of degrees of reality, he means degrees of authenticity, not degrees of existence. He also cites in support of this claim *Politicus* 293e, where Plato contrasts the ideal constitution with the others which "are not genuine, nor really real".

The "predicative" reading of 476dff. is both plausible and in tune with the way modern philosophy rejects the concept of a gradual ontology. The fact remains, however, that the predicative use of εἶναι and its derivatives does not exclude the existential one, and therefore does not prove by itself that Plato did not believe in degrees of existence. To the importance of einai for Plato's metaphysical theory we will return shortly.

As for Vlastos' other arguments, none of them is conclusive. As Vlastos himself admits, expressions like "the really good and noble man" and "a really divine place" occur in contexts where they are untechnical, unphilosophical expressions<sup>175</sup> and therefore it is somewhat far-fetched to use them for deciding fundamental problems concerning Plato's overall metaphysical theory. Moreover, the best synonym for really is in both cases "truly", i.e. the primary meaning of really is here veridical. Vlastos writes that "[t]hat "really good and noble man" Plato is talking about would be really good and noble even if he did not exist",<sup>176</sup> but how can one be a good man without existing in some sense? The veridical meaning presupposes the existential and Vlastos cannot claim to have established Plato's awareness of the difference between predication and existence by this argument. *Politicus* 293e, as Guthrie remarks, simply begs the question:<sup>177</sup> historical cities surely exist for the majority of people, but whether they are fully existent from the point of view of the Ideal Ruler is unclear. It is also difficult to believe that Plato, having sorted out these two meanings of being (being genuine and being existent), never put the solution to this problem in writing. In the *Republic* much depends on it, as demonstrated precisely by the controversy Vlastos addresses, and in the *Sophist* Plato did much analytical work in distinguishing the identification use of *ἔστι* from its other uses (251cff.) without giving, as Vlastos himself admits, the slightest hint he was aware of a

distinction between its predicative and existential uses.<sup>178</sup> Finally, the predicative reading of 476dff., is less plausible, though still possible, for 597a-d where Plato does not use his epistemology to support his ontological claims. But it is not applicable to a later passage, *Timaeus* 27d-28a where Plato refers to the objects of episteme and doxa as "what always is and never becomes" and "what becomes but never is" respectively.<sup>179</sup>

Whether one accepts that Plato sharply separates only the two cognitive conditions, ἐπιστήμη and δόξα, or also the realms of their respective objects, has an immediate bearing on the question of the Platonic separation of particulars and universals. If Vlastos' position is accepted, then Plato separated these two only in terms of knowability, not in terms of existence. This is still a form of separation, but clearly much weaker from what most commentators see as Plato's separation of νοητὰ and αἰσθητὰ in existential as well as epistemological terms. In fact, it is questionable whether in Vlastos' version we should be talking about separation at all, since the term has come to designate the two-world view Vlastos rejects. It is true that Plato does not explicitly mention separation in the *Republic*. Nevertheless he does so in the later *Parmenides* ("χωρὶς μὲν εἶδη αὐτὰ ἄττα, χωρὶς δὲ τὰ τούτων αὐ μετέχοντα"-130b), just when he is about to spell out some devastating criticisms of his earlier metaphysics. And this is the way Aristotle understood Plato's ontology as testified by a well known

passage of his *Metaphysics* (1078b30-33). In addition to this historical evidence, there are a number of reasons for accepting the stronger form of separation.

Indisputably, the key to the whole issue lies with εἶναι and its derivatives: if these are used existentially by Plato in 476dff., there can be no doubt he meant to separate Forms and particulars in terms of existence. Kahn provides strong evidence that the existential and the predicative meaning of "being" were not sorted out by either Plato or Aristotle. The logical distinction between the two, Kahn argues, was firmly established only after John Stuart Mill and there is no evidence of it in "the classical authors, who pass blithely back and forth between uses which we might identify as existential or copulative".<sup>180</sup> As far as Plato is concerned, Vlastos himself admits, as we have seen, that Plato never made explicit the distinction; and Aristotle did not identify a special existential use when he discussed the basic senses of einai and esti in *Metaphysics* 1017a8ff., a text pointed out by Kahn.<sup>181</sup> Kahn asserts that the "range of meaning of einai in Greek is likely to be wider and richer than that of the corresponding verb in any other language-and certainly richer than the verb "to be" in most modern languages. For this very reason, the traditional dichotomy between the existential and the predicative use of the verb would have to be rejected for Greek as a hopeless oversimplification".<sup>182</sup> Kahn attests that the primary meaning of einai is veridical, i.e. that it is used to state what is

the case.<sup>183</sup> But he somewhat overplays the distinction between veridical and existential use. In the statement "the book is on the table", "is" is used to denote something which is true (provided that the book is actually on the table and that one holds, like Plato, a correspondence theory of truth), but the existential use is logically prior to the veridical one. One has to assert that the book exists before making any true statements about it. Therefore one could argue that if the primary use of *einai* in Greek is veridical, there is an existential use which underlies it.

If this is the case, one can see how the common Greek linguistic use of *einai* and its derivatives would lead Plato in the direction of separating Forms and sensibles in existential terms. To suppose that Plato could not have held a position because we find it untenable today can be decisively misleading. As we will soon proceed to see, the degrees of reality doctrine is supported by one particular aspect of Plato's theory of the Forms, and, moreover, it contributes to the solution of some fundamental ethical and political problems which Plato confronted throughout his philosophical career.

In addition to the linguistic evidence, the argument in 476dff. itself decisively promotes a two-worlds view. In this passage it is not the case that the cognitive subject, possessing two cognitive powers (i.e. *ἐπιστήμη* and *δόξα*) then decides which to apply to a particular object. *Ἐπιστήμη* and *δόξα* are radically different exactly because

their objects are radically different, and these objects exist independently of the cognitive powers one might apply to them, as indicated by the use of τεταγμένῃν and ἀπεργαζομένην (477d) and proved by the fact that it is the Form of the Good which makes the Forms intelligible and gives to the soul the capacity to comprehend them (508e).<sup>184</sup>

One of the functions Forms perform in Plato's system is that they operate as παραδείγματα, patterns to which the particulars strive to assimilate themselves. Particulars, on the other hand, "participate" in Forms. (*Republic* 472b-c, 476d, 484c-d). What characterizes the φιλοθεάμων who is dreaming is "the confusion between a resemblance and the reality which it resembles" (476c). Viewed from this perspective, it becomes quite clear in what way the sensible particulars belong to a different grade of reality than their prototypes, the Forms: they are real to the extent they share some property with a Form and unreal because they can never reach, by definition, the absolute perfection and reality of this Form. As Allen puts it: "[particulars] are real in that they *are* resemblances, not real in that they are *resemblances*. The copy theory of participation and the theory of degrees of reality are not two theories, but one".<sup>185</sup>

Moreover, separation effectively provides the absolute ethical standard which proved so elusive for the Socrates of the early dialogues. It is commonplace to suggest that Plato was preoccupied in his earlier career with the ethical

relativism of the sophists and how it could be refuted.<sup>186</sup> In the *Protagoras*, Socrates insists on a μετρητικὴ τέχνη (356d) which will liberate the moral agent from the multiplicity of the φαιδόμενα, but this τέχνη remains a formal concept since Socrates lacks a metaphysical theory which would permit him to give it content. In the *Meno*, Plato introduces the concept of recollection to account for the superiority of knowledge to opinion (81b) in the search for the definition of virtue, but his Socrates is still unable to provide this definition (100b). Even when, in *Republic* Four, the Platonic Socrates takes the further step of giving definitions of the individual virtues, these definitions taken in themselves remain without metaphysical support as yet and therefore they cannot be regarded as final and indisputable. As it becomes clear after the theory of the Forms is fully developed, no definition of justice is thoroughly reliable without knowledge of the Form of justice, and the same holds for the other virtues. Therefore, it is only after Plato postulates the existence of eternal, unchangeable Forms (479a, 484b-c, 485b) that he is in a position to prove the truth of the previous definitions and to provide the absolute ethical standard against which the virtue of actions and individuals can be measured. It is here that the Socratic inquiry is finally satisfied and ethical relativism irreversibly refuted. The theory of the Forms, then, provides both the basis upon which the previous ethical arguments stand and the final philosophical justification



for them. But it is obvious that such a justification will have full force only if Forms are separated from their imperfect exemplifications not simply in terms of knowability, but also in terms of existence. For the Form of justice to become the absolute standard by which any just act and individual is to be judged, this Form has to be beyond the multiplicity of the particulars and therefore it must be transcendent. Thus Plato needs the transcendence of the Forms if he is to resolve the problem of moral relativism effectively.

He also <sup>needs</sup> this transcendence to support the absolute and unchallengeable rule of the Guardians. In order for this extraordinarily strong claim to be legitimized, it is necessary that the rulers possess qualities which the rest of the citizens lack. Now, if through their infallible knowledge the Guardians have access to an ontological reality higher than anything the other citizens can come close to, their authoritarian rule becomes not simply justifiable, but, as far as Plato is concerned, the only way a political community can organize itself rationally. Thus the degrees of reality theory permits Plato both to present the absolute authority of his ruling class as dictated by the structure of reality itself and to deny the rationality of any other political constitution (i.e. of all actual historical constitutions). Callipolis becomes the absolute political standard in the same way the Forms of the individual virtues become the absolute standard in ethics.

In conclusion, there is overwhelming evidence that Plato upholds a "degrees of reality" (in the sense of existence) theory in the *Republic*. This theory provides the best way to understand the argument at 476dff. and squares very well with some of the central doctrines of the dialogue.

So far it has been argued that Plato adopts a two-world view in his metaphysics in the *Republic* and that this helps him to make some strong ethical and political claims. But does he succeed in establishing the two separate grades of being?

Plato attempts to justify his hierarchical ontology by suggesting that no predicate can ever be absolutely attributed to a subject in the sensible world. He uses in this connection two types of predicates. The first (479a) consists of aesthetic and moral predicates: beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, holy and unholy. The second consists of adjectives like double and half, heavy and light, large and small (479b). As Cross and Woosley remark, the predicates of the second group are clearly relational.<sup>187</sup> But Plato does not draw any distinction between the two groups and appears to take the predicates of the first group as relational in some way too. In what sense this might be possible, they illustrate by a passage in the First Book of the *Republic*, where Socrates says that an action might be just under some circumstances and unjust under others (331c). Therefore a just act cannot be judged absolutely, but has to be determined in relation with something else.<sup>188</sup>

On this basis they argue that Plato's attempt to establish two distinct grades of reality fails because a relation exists between two or more terms and therefore when one says "x is double" one needs another term to specify in relation to what it is double. "To predicate a relation of a single term, to say simply "x is double" [is] to misunderstand the logic of relational expressions".<sup>189</sup> Plato finds the sensible world semi-real because he believes that when we say of a particular thing that "it is double", this is sometimes true and sometimes not. From this he infers that the subject of the predication sometimes exists (as double) and other times it does not and therefore it is self-contradictory and comes between existence and non-existence. But this argument depends on a logical error and Cross and Woosley's assertion that with it "nothing has been established about the self-contradictory nature of sense experience"<sup>190</sup> is justified.

But this is not the only problem with the closing pages of Book Five. By drawing too rigid a distinction between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα and between Forms and particulars Plato seems to contradict what he himself says in other parts of the *Republic*.

Despite the fact that δόξα and ἐπιστήμη are described as distinct δυνάμεις in Book Five, a number of other passages in the *Republic* suggest that the gap between the two might not be impossible to bridge. So in 429cff. the courage of the Auxiliaries is described as ὀρθή δόξα about what is to

be feared and what not and this class is credited with political virtue (430c); the latter, although vastly inferior to the full virtue of the Rulers, is still a kind of virtue based on opinion. What is even more important is that the Auxiliaries, the class which is expected to form its judgements relying on *doxa*, are given an education whose final purpose is to allow them to accept and recognize reason (402a). Reason is of course the prerogative of the philosophers-kings. Nevertheless, the fact that the Auxiliaries' education is designed with an eye to rationality suggests that there is indeed a continuity between correct opinion and rational knowledge rather than an unbridgeable gap between them. Furthermore, the Rulers are selected from the Auxiliaries on the basis of their ability to retain, in the face of adverse force or persuasion, "the conviction (*δοξάν*) that they must always do what is best for the community" (412e). Therefore, they are not only likely to proceed to knowledge from opinion, as the passage in 402a suggests, but, moreover, the resoluteness with which they stick to correct opinions becomes a central prerequisite for their eventual ascent to knowledge.

This assumption is further fortified when we take into account the image of the line in Book Six (509dff.). Plato here suggests that there are four distinct epistemological statuses referring to different objects: *νόησις* or *ἐπιστήμη* is correlated with Forms; *διάνοια* has as its objects mathematical or geometrical entities; *πίστις* is correlated

with visible things and εἰκασία with the images of those things. Δόξα is the cognitive condition that is referred to in the latter two cases: at best it is belief about sensible things, at worst it is sheer imagination. Its objects are δοξαστά, whereas the objects of knowledge and of dianoia are γνωστά (510a). By emphasizing the difference between the former which are usually untrue and the latter which are always true (510a), Plato demonstrates the supremacy of knowledge over opinion. Nevertheless, the line is continuous. Moreover, and this is of particular importance with regard to the relation between the line metaphor and the argument at the end of Book Five, in the former Plato's interest is concentrated on the four states of mind and not on their objects. As Lee writes "[h]e is careful *not* to work out correspondences between the different modes of perception and their "objects"". <sup>191</sup> Although there is, then, a substantial difference between knowledge and opinion, the possibility that δόξα could be used as a first, preparatory stage on the route for the acquisition of ἐπιστήμη remains open. This conclusion is further supported by a crucial passage in 518d: education, Socrates asserts, is not "concerned to implant (ἐμποιῆσαι) sight, but to ensure that someone who had it already was not either turned in the wrong direction or looking the wrong way". It is exactly this possibility that Plato utilizes when he asserts that the Rulers will start their career as Auxiliaries and therefore will, most probably, proceed to knowledge from

opinion. So there are two aspects in the relationship between doxa and episteme in the *Republic*. On the one hand, as already noted, Plato insists on the overwhelming superiority of the latter; but, on the other, he does not completely deny the possible usefulness of opinion. It is because of this fact that he is actually able to use opinion as the starting point of the Rulers' education.

The contradiction between 476dff. and the aforementioned features of the *Republic* has been noted by commentators. So Guthrie suggests that "[Plato's] talk here of different faculties is misleading, but soon dropped. The analogy of sight and hearing is faulty, but he himself corrects it to the true one when, later on (484c), he compares the states of mind of the *philodoxos* and *philosophos* with those of the blind and keen-sighted".<sup>192</sup> Furthermore, Gosling has argued in detail that in the whole argument from 477d onwards *δύναμις* should not be rendered as "faculty", but rather as "'ability", "capacity" or "power"'.<sup>193</sup> Two of Gosling's remarks are of great significance in the context of the present discussion: first that "[a very] wide application is given to *δύναμις*" and second "that sight and hearing are simply mentioned as examples and then drop out of the discussion altogether. We get no elaboration".<sup>194</sup>

Guthrie and Gosling are right to point out that the analogy with sight and hearing is not central to the argument at the end of Book Five and therefore Plato's epistemological distinction may not be as inflexible as a

first reading of the argument might suggest. The fact that ἐπιστήμη and δόξα are distinct capacities does not entail, though it might suggest, that the two are completely unconnected. There are two things which are important to keep in mind with regard to this matter. First, the argument in Book Five establishes two distinct ontological realms, but the two are not completely unconnected: particulars participate in Forms (again participation is the one aspect of the theory of the Forms which appears to be particularly relevant to Plato's epistemology). Second, the substantial superiority of knowledge to opinion is not compromised in the education of the Guardians and the line. Although in both cases one proceeds from the latter to the former, the difference between the two stages when taken in themselves remains immense. Therefore Guthrie is justified when he suggests that "although in different dialogues Plato emphasizes one or other feature of his theory of knowledge and being [i.e. either their distinctness or the fact they are connected], no real contradiction is involved".<sup>195</sup>

This double-sidedness is in fact not confined to the *Republic* but runs through Plato's corpus as a whole. In the *Meno*, Plato asserts that although ἀληθής δόξα is inferior to ἐπιστήμη in that it cannot provide the "αἰτίας λογισμῶ" (98a), it can be equally successful as far as practical tasks are concerned: "ἀληθής δόξα ἡγουμένη τὸ ἔργον ἐκάστης τῆς πράξεως οὐδέν χειρόν ἀπεργάζεται ἢ ἐπιστήμη" (98b). In the *Theaetetus* he examines the possibility that knowledge

could be the "μετὰ λόγου ἀληθῆ δόξαν" (201d). It is in the *Timaeus* that Plato seems to present his most uncompromising account of difference between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα. In 27d-28a, in a passage strongly reminiscent of *Republic* 476dff., he declares that "what always is and never becomes" is conceived by "νοήσει μετὰ λόγου", whereas "what becomes but never is" by "δόξη μετ' αἰσθήσεως ἀλόγου". And in 51d he asserts that "νοῦς καὶ δόξα ἀληθῆς ἔσονται δύο γένη". It is this consistent flexibility in his epistemological doctrine that allows Plato to put the emphasis sometimes on the practical usefulness of δόξα and at other times on the vast superiority of ἐπιστήμη without formally contradicting himself. And it is exactly this flexibility of his epistemological doctrine that he exploits in later dialogues (the *Politicus* and the *Laws*), where he returns to the *Meno's* suggestion that ἀληθῆς δόξα can be just as successful as knowledge as far as practical results are concerned. (See chapter 2, section 4 and chapter 3, section 6). This interpretation squares well not only with the continuous line, but also with the famous cave simile (514aff.). Plato there compares sight, which enables one to see the sun, with the noesis which comprehends the Form of the Good (508d-e), and distinguishes four frames of mind. One is the frame of mind of those who stay with their heads still inside the cave (which corresponds to the visible world) and see only the shadows different objects cast inside the cave (515c). A second is the frame of mind of those who see the objects



which cast the shadows (515c-d). A third is the frame of mind of those who see the images of things in the world outside the cave (in the intelligible world) and eventually those things themselves (516a) and a fourth of those who reach the point where they can see the heavenly bodies and finally the sun itself (516a-b). In 517a-b Plato himself declares that the cave metaphor "must be connected throughout with what preceded it", i.e. the sun and the line similes. In view of this recommendation, it appears that the bound prisoners have εἰκασία; the released prisoners inside the cave πίστις; the persons who look at reflections outside the cave are characterized by διάνοια and those who can look at the heavenly bodies and the sun itself ἐπιστήμη. But even without taking the proposed correlation into account, Plato's intention is clear. He presents the four epistemological stages as parts of a process. Their objects are distinct and the difference between the stages is clearly marked, but still the process of their comprehension is a *single* process. The cave is perhaps the one point in the dialogue where Plato makes the immense difference between episteme and doxa so clear (there could hardly be a greater difference of human cognitive condition than the one between the two extremes in the cave parable) without having to separate them in water-tight compartments.

One last remark on the subject. It has been objected to Plato that by giving too theoretical an account of the philosopher's knowledge in the similes of the sun, the line

and the cave he does not explain how this knowledge might be applied to practice. Annas writes that "Plato seems to have drifted away from what the argument needs, the philosopher as practically wise, the good person who is the norm for moral judgements because judging rationally and from understanding. We now find the philosopher raptly contemplating Forms and only Forms, dismissing the world of experience as being on the level of a shadow or a dream".<sup>196</sup> But it is Plato's epistemology which acquits him of this charge. If the intellectual process which leads to the grasping of the Forms has opinion as its starting point, and since every stage in the philosopher's ascent is a positive development on the previous one, Plato does not have a problem on this score. The philosopher's knowledge is immediately relevant to practical matters and the philosopher can resolve such matters infallibly because he or she has started from the intellectual capacity which is concerned with sensible things. This is why the philosophers provide infallible government when they return to the cave. Their knowledge has different objects from the ones of the visible world, but it includes these objects. Ἐπιστήμη is not a negation of δόξα but an improvement on it.

There are two distinct ways in which Plato's metaphysics support his ethical and political assertions. The first becomes obvious when his argumentation about the natural fitness of the Guardian class to rule is traced. Plato argues that there is one cognitive capacity which is, if not

distinct, at least hugely superior to any other, namely episteme. This capacity is to be found only in the Guardians. It consists in a full grasp of the ultimate ontological reality, the realm of the Forms and especially of the Form of the Good. This means that their claim to power is based on the order of reality itself. They are the only ones who can comprehend this ultimate reality and transfer this comprehension into practice. Moreover, because in the *Republic* Plato is thinking of Forms primarily as moral Forms, and because he adheres to the Socratic belief that knowledge is sufficient for virtue, he attributes to this class perfect virtue along with perfect knowledge (he nowhere specifically argues for this connection, but it is one of the governing principles of the *Republic*). It is here, more than anywhere else, that the *Republic's* totalitarianism becomes plain. To challenge the power of the Guardians becomes equivalent to going against the ultimate ethical, metaphysical and even cosmological reality (the Form of the Good has certain cosmological connotations in that the other Forms derive their reality from it (508e); this is pursued further in the *Timaeus*, a work closely connected with the *Republic*).<sup>197</sup> Consequently, there is no Platonic premiss which would provide justification even for the slightest dissent on the part of the Producers or even the Auxiliaries. The necessity for this type of rule becomes equivalent to a natural law. To defy it is to go against both morality and nature itself.

The second argument logically follows the completion of the first and depends on the paradigmatic function of Forms. When established, the ideal city is a "pattern" to be approximated as far as possible, (though it may never be fully realized: practice is more remote from truth than theory-473a). This is effectively the note on which the *Republic* closes (592b), given that Book Ten confronts a different (though closely related) set of problems. Plato establishes on this basis a radical distinction between his own city and any other, more specifically between his own city and any actual one. The former belongs, by definition, to the eternal and unchangeable world of the Forms and therefore is ontologically on a different plane from any historical city. This means that the final justification of Callipolis is metaphysical. Its paradigmatic ethical and political value comes from the theory of the Forms. In this sense, Plato's final answer to the ethical and political problems he confronts is metaphysical, and so is the final justification of the ethico-political theory of Books Two to Four. We are now in a position to discern that both the basis and the ultimate justification of Callipolis are transcendent.

## VIII HISTORY IN THE *REPUBLIC*

The fact that the final conclusions of the *Republic* are justified on a transcendent basis entails that history is ruled out from the outset as a source of useful political insights. Furthermore, in the structure of the *Republic's* ontology, history belongs to the world of particulars and therefore Plato can ignore the possibility that it might be a useful guide for political action without the need for specific argumentation. But Plato is not content simply to relegate historical experience to a state of unimportance. His disregard for it extends to the point that he almost consistently ignores it even in the one area where one could expect him to turn to it, namely in his discussion of actual historical states in Books Eight and Nine.

Plato's neglect of history has been defended on the grounds that because Callipolis, which is placed at the beginning of the sequence of the degeneration of the constitutions does not actually exist in the historical world, this whole sequence must not be taken literally: its purpose is to provide a typology of actual states as they stand in relation to the ideal one, not to give a historical account of them. Both Guthrie and Barker criticize Aristotle for treating the constitutional transitions as if they were historical in the *Politics* 1316a1ff.<sup>198</sup> Their argument provides an accurate account of Plato's intentions in this

section and clearly brings out Plato's disregard for history, since it underlines the fact that Plato comes to judge existing states not by the use of historical categories, but by measuring them against his transcendent ideal (this is a direct consequence of the paradigmatic function of the Forms). But it is unfair to Aristotle, in the sense that the latter is completely justified in asking for historical accuracy from the moment that Plato passes from the ideal to the actual. One of the pivotal aims of Plato's metaphysics is to explain how the phenomena of the sensible world relate to the Forms. But if too distorted an account is given of these phenomena-and as we shall see Plato's description of the existing constitutions does include some gross historical inaccuracies-the whole theoretical scheme comes into question, because in that case the theory of the Forms does not explain the sensible world but is rather imposed upon it. In this sense Plato cannot afford to present a typology of constitutions which is widely at odds with historical reality. Moreover, Plato himself twice connects explicitly his timocracy with actual states: in 544c it is called "ἡ Κρητικὴ τε καὶ Λακωνικὴ" and in 545a it is referred to as "τῆν Λακωνικὴν". It is also difficult to accept that Plato would not draw from the experience of his native city in his depiction of democracy, and an indication of this is given by the Athenian Glaucon's remark in 563d that "I've often suffered from it [the disobedience of domestic animals] on my way out of town". In

conclusion, Aristotle is justified in criticizing Plato on a historical basis.

But this is not the only major problem with Plato's philosophical procedure in Books Eight and Nine. Plato here utilizes what can be called a "psychological" principle, based on the assumption that the constitution of a state reflects the psychological characteristics of its citizens. Plato's focus on psychology rather than history in his discussion of the actual states clearly shows his lack of interest in history, a lack which becomes even more evident in the light of the fact that, as we will now proceed to see, the psychological principle ultimately fails to produce a coherent account of the "degenerate" states.

This principle is stated emphatically at the beginning of the discussion of the corrupt constitutions, when Socrates declares that "there must be as many types of individual as of society" and that "societies aren't made of sticks and stones, but of men whose individual characters, by turning the scales one way or another, determine the direction of the whole" (544d-e). This statement should not be taken as implying that the state reflects the character of all its citizens: Plato recognizes divergent elements in each city (e.g. 547d, 551d). It is rather what Williams calls the "predominant section"<sup>199</sup> of a polis which determines its constitutional type.

Plato is prepared to go into graphic detail to illustrate this principle. He presents the transition from one

constitution to the next as taking place in one generation: the democratic man is the son of the oligarchic man who in turn is the son of the timocratic man and so on. The psychology of each of them is mainly determined by the influences exercised on him inside his family. So, for example, the timocratic man comes to be dominated by the middle part of his soul, the θυμοειδές, because he is pulled into different directions by his rational father<sup>200</sup> on the one hand and his mother, servants and friends on the other (549c-550c). The suggestion that a constitution can be described by the short story of one family probably appears odd to the modern reader, but this is not an argument against Plato. The latter obviously wants to explain the existing constitutions of his time in terms of his psychology. He attributes a thymoeidic character to the timocrat, an epithymetic character dominated by the "better" (βελτίους-554e) desires to the oligarch, a similar character but ruled by "unnecessary" (των μὴ ἀναγκαίων-559d) desires to the democrat and finally an epithymetic character which has no inhibitions and "no shame" (ἀπηλλαγμένον αἰσχύνης-571c) to the tyrant.

The problem with the psychological principle is that it depends on an equivocation οὐκ the character of the predominant section of the citizens and that of the constitution. But this equivocation breaks down in the cases of democracy and tyranny. In the case of democracy, this constitution is made of people of "πᾶσι ἠθεσι" (557c).



There is no unity of any kind, obedience to the government's decisions is voluntary (557e-558a) and no common good is acknowledged (558b). This sociological picture of democracy makes it difficult to see how there could ever be a typical democratic character (and of course such a character is required for Plato to claim that democracy takes its character from its citizens). But Plato ignores this fact and paints the portrait of the typical democratic citizen a few pages later. Plato's picture of the democratic man is that of someone with no steady character and no sense of direction; he is the man who makes no distinction between necessary and unnecessary pleasures (561a), who indulges in lustful activities on one day and in ascetic ones on the very next, who engages in hard training on one occasion and is indolent on another, who might even lightly take up philosophy or politics (561c-d). In 561e Plato argues that "[t]he versatility of the individual, and the attractiveness of his combination of a wide range of characteristics, match the variety of the democratic society. It's a life which many men and women would envy, it contains patterns of so many constitutions and ways of life". But if the democratic polis consists of citizens with all sorts of ἡθη, then Plato is not justified in talking of a democratic type at all, let alone in depicting him in such detail in 561c-d. If, on the other hand, the majority of the people in democracy fall under this description, then Plato is not justified in taking democracy as including all sorts of citizens. Here

Plato's sociology is inconsistent with his psychological typology: the way the former is set up makes the latter untenable. Or, as Williams puts it, "Plato seems disposed to confound two very different things: a state in which there are various characters among the people, and a state in which most of the people have a various character, that is to say, a very shifting and unsteady character".<sup>201</sup>

One could perhaps argue that this logical error is not due to Plato's adoption of the psychological principle itself, but rather to the fact that his insistence on the very different temperaments of the people who live in a democracy is unfortunate. If Plato dropped his assumption that in democracy we get all kinds of characters, he could still present a coherent account of how a predominant type of person, the unsteady individual of 561a ff., determines the character of the constitution. One problem with this argument is that there is little doubt that Plato's conviction that a democracy is made up of "παντοδαποὶ" individuals (557c) is not a circumstantial remark, but an integral part of Plato's overall disposition towards democracy. Plato elaborates considerably on this point (557b-558c) which thus cannot be summarily dismissed from his argument. But even if the psychological principle is defensible in the case of democracy, it is completely irreconcilable with the rest of Plato's assertions in the case of tyranny.

The reason why the correlation of a predominant

psychological type and the corresponding constitution is untenable in the case of tyranny is very simple: it cannot be claimed that a city has a tyrannical regime because the majority of its citizens have tyrannical dispositions. Plato makes a weak attempt to suggest something along these lines in 575c, where he suggests that a number of individuals with tyrannical inclinations are instrumental in the ascent of the tyrant to power. Even in this case, though, they are not a majority: the majority is the *δημος* which helps the tyrant unwillingly with its folly ("*μετὰ δήμου ἀνοΐας*"-575c). And the emphasis is decisively on the fact that the tyrant oppresses the citizens and is disliked by them. In 567a-b he is "*μᾶλλον ἀπεχθάνεσθαι τοῖς πολίταις*". In 568a "*οἱ δ' ἐπιεικεῖς μισοῦσι τε καὶ φεύγουσι [αὐτόν]*". In 569b the tyrant uses violence against the citizens protesting against his rule. There is no doubt, then, that tyranny cannot be explained by the suggestion that a predominant section of the citizen-body has tyrannical dispositions and Plato's psychological principle collapses in this case altogether.

The fact that Plato prefers to apply to actual states an ultimately dysfunctional psychological principle rather than to argue from historical experience demonstrates an almost total disregard for historical knowledge. But this statement has to be qualified in one way. Plato does contribute occasional historical insights to the discussion of the actual states. They are, however, only incidental and they never get fully incorporated into his main argument.

Moreover, any suggestion that these insights might indicate a serious Platonic interest in history is refuted by the fact that some of the views that Plato puts forward in this section strongly contradict historical truth.

The most clearly discernible historical insights that Plato includes in his discussion of existing states occur in the framework of his presentation of the transition from oligarchy to democracy and of the process by which the tyrant comes to power. In the former case Plato remarks that because in oligarchy wealth is the most appreciated good, the oligarchs try by all means to increase their fortunes at the expense of other citizens (555b-556c). This inflates the number of "πένητας" (555d) in the state and increases the social tension between rich and poor, until one of the factions asks for the assistance of an external power (the rich ask help from an oligarchy, the poor from a democracy-556e). Democracy comes about when the poor achieve victory in this conflict, either by force or because the rich abandon the city out of fear (557a). These last two propositions look as if they come directly from Thucydides' *History* where friction between democrats and oligarchs, with both sides often inviting the help of external powers, is a recurrent theme.<sup>202</sup> What is particular in Plato's case, however, is that these remarks remain on the periphery of his main argument. Right after Plato has made these observations he asks "[τ]ίνα δὴ οὖν ... οὗτοι τρόπον οἰκοῦσι; καὶ ποία τις ἢ τοιαύτη αὐτοῦ πολιτεία; δηλοῦν γὰρ ὅτι ὁ

τοιοῦτος ἀνὴρ δημοκρατικός τις ἀναφανήσεται" (557a-b). This passage shows that for Plato the true nature of democracy can be revealed only by an inquiry made in terms of moral psychology and that the aforementioned historical remarks serve as little more than an introduction to this inquiry.

Plato also gives a plausible historical account of the way a tyrant might come to dominate a city. The tyrant starts as a προστάτης (565d) of the δῆμος who feel threatened by the oligarchs (565aff.) and wins the goodwill of the people by promising "ἄποκοπὰς καὶ γῆς ἀναδασμόν" (566a); and he is transformed from a prostates to a tyrannos when he asks-and is given-a personal bodyguard (566b) which he then uses for promoting his individual interests. Even if this picture is not correct in every detail, at least it reflects the historical fact that in most cases tyrants arose by promising to protect the interests of the δῆμος against the landed aristocracy. But again Plato does not make much of this historical fact. In 566d he starts scrutinizing the actions of the tyrant and the character they reveal, and the whole discussion is concluded in 576b where the tyrant is denounced as "the worst type of man" (τοῦ καχιστοῦ). Once more, therefore, in terms of the overall argument, moral psychology overshadows history.

The extent to which Plato's psychological principle-and his disdain for democracy-lead him to historically improbable claims is plainly illustrated by his description

of democracy. As already noted, there are biographical reasons which suggest that the democracy Plato portrays in Book Eight is the Athenian democracy as he knew it. This assumption cannot be proven by the text, but at least a dramatic indication is given that it might be so (Glaucon's statement in 563d). If this is the case, Plato's depiction of the Athenian democracy is almost as remote from historical truth as it could be. It is simply impossible to see how a state where laws were disobeyed at will, where anybody held office independent of merit and where court decisions were not executed (557e-558b) could remain the predominant power in the Eastern Mediterranean for the best part of a century; and even if its prowess was diminished after the Peloponnesian War, Athens ceased to be a first rate power only after Plato's death. A state as anarchic as Plato's democracy would hardly have been able to keep its independence in the competitive Greek inter-city relationships, let alone reach the exceptional degree of dominance Athens achieved. Insofar as Plato has Athens in mind in Book Eight, then, his idealist preconceptions completely blind him to the historical facts.

Similarly, it is very difficult to see how Plato's tyrant could be a successful political leader, as many of the Greek tyrants were. The bottom line of Plato's presentation of the tyrant is that when he has relatively consolidated his power, he satisfies every possible desire he might have, without any inhibition of any kind. In the final stages of

his career he loses every sense of reason, he becomes what we today might call a sociopath. He is the individual who is called upon to "[control] others though he cannot control himself" (579c). But how such a person could ever remain in power in the highly competitive arena of Greek politics is a mystery, and Annas is absolutely right to claim that "Plato's tyrant would not last a week".<sup>203</sup>

One could probably add other ways in which Plato's theory violates historical experience. Aristotle, for example, remarks that constitutions tend to change to their opposites and that other transitions from the ones Plato describes are possible (*Politics* 1316a18-26); and, appropriately, he proceeds to give historical examples of different types of changes (1316a23ff.). Plato's defenders might reply here that Plato's concern is to produce a pattern which will explain constitutional transition, not to account for every such change that has actually happened. Even so, however, Plato's complete lack of concern about historical truth cannot be seriously disputed.

The Platonic attitude towards history in the *Republic* is particularly relevant to the development of Plato's political theory. In later dialogues (in the closing pages of the *Politicus* and mainly in the *Laws*), Plato moves towards more moderate political positions. As we shall now proceed to see, the historical experience which was completely discarded in the *Republic* becomes the methodological vehicle of this shift.

## CHAPTER 2: THE POLITICUS

### I THE MYTH

In the development of Plato's political theory the *Politicus* occupies a central position. It is the dialogue where the ideal of the perfect statesman of the *Republic* is restated in full force, but its achievability is seriously questioned; for the first time Plato examines the possibility, or indeed the probability, that ideal rulers might not appear in contemporary society and recommends strict adherence to the law as the best solution in this eventuality. It is by advocating the rule of law as a legitimate constitutional alternative to philosophical rule that the *Politicus* anticipates the *Laws*; and it is by explaining that this rule is to be prescribed only in the absence of a philosopher-king that it elucidates the relationship between the political positions of the *Laws* and the *Republic*.

The main character of the dialogue is the Eleatic Stranger, the man who in the *Sophist* utilized the method of division to discredit any claim the sophists might make for possessing genuine knowledge. In the *Politicus* he uses the same method to define the πολιτικός. Politics is an ἐπιστήμη, an art that presupposes knowledge (258b). On the basis of successive divisions which follow, the statesman is



finally defined as the possessor of an art which nurtures beings that are tame, live on land, have no horns, do not interbreed with other species, have two legs and no wings (264bff.). But there are a number of other artisans such as traders, farmers, gymnasts or doctors, who could claim the title of the "feeders of mankind" (267e). The Stranger proposes then to tell a story which will demonstrate the difference between the statesman and these inferior arts.

Plato has already made, during the process of division so far, a number of important political statements. The Socratic thesis that politics is an ἐπιστήμη, an art that relies on knowledge, is posited from the outset (258b) and is accepted without contest. This position effectively shapes the political philosophy of the dialogue; it serves indeed as the prime principle of the work. The doctrine that one can be a real statesman even without holding power (259e) is perfectly compatible with the Socratic argument from the arts, because somebody is an expert in an art when he has the knowledge necessary for the exercise of it, and this knowledge exists even if, for some reason, an individual abstains from practicing his art. Plato here explicitly defends a practice widespread in the Academy, many members of which served as advisors to actual rulers, with Plato himself attempting to play this role in Syracuse. But despite the fact that Plato makes important political statements before the narration of the myth, the role of the latter in the framing of the discussion which follows can

hardly be overrated. The myth sets the framework within which political science is to be examined for the rest of the dialogue. It is also intended to provide a number of political conclusions to which, from its very nature as a logical method, division is unable to lead.

The myth draws a clearcut distinction between two specific states of affairs. According to it the Universe is sometimes assisted in its rotation by the god "who framed it in the beginning" (269d), while at other times it is left to its own initiative and rotates by itself because it is living ("ζῶον ὄν"-269d). The cosmological assertions put forward here present an obvious resemblance to the Platonic positions in the *Timaeus*. In the *Timaeus* there appears a god-creator ("δημιουργός"-41a) who made the world, but, because the latter participates in matter, is not in absolute control of it. Matter is always up to a certain extent recalcitrant, and so god, even though absolutely good in himself, is not able to create an absolutely good world (29d-30a). The same point is made in the *Politicus* where it is stated that the Universe "has received many blessed gifts from Him who brought it into being, but it has also been made to partake in bodily form" (269d-e). When the universe is under immediate divine control we are in the "age of Cronus". In this age "all mortal beings ... began to grow backwards, as it were, towards youth and ever greater immaturity" (270d). Everything works in time not as we know, but in exactly the opposite way. Even the dead resurrect

(271b). Under Cronus' supreme government, lesser gods and daimons were appointed as "shepherds" to every species. "Each of them was all in all to his flock- providing for the needs of all his charges. So it befell that savagery was nowhere to be found nor preying of creature on creature, nor did war rage nor any strife whatsoever" (271d-e). Living in such perfect conditions, free from labour,<sup>1</sup> men in the Cronian age are vastly happier than the human beings of Plato's time provided they engage in philosophical enquiry (272c). But even if they do not do so, they still lead a life without conflict.

The bright colours used by Plato to depict the "age of Cronus" become dark colours when we come to the "age of Zeus". When the time came for Cronus' era to end ("πάντων τούτων χρόνος ἐτελεώθη"-272d), God "let go the handle of its rudder and returned to his conning-place" (272e). The lesser gods followed him and the universe, after great upheaval and destruction assumed control of itself. The universe, which as we saw is ensouled, tried to remember and follow the instructions of its Creator, but "as time went on its recollection grew dim" (273b). This was due to partaking in matter (again a clear point of reference to the *Timaeus*).

The withdrawal of God's immediate care had devastating effects for the human race. Men were ravaged by savage beasts and did not know how to produce their food. In order to meet their needs they were assisted by the gods: Prometheus gave them fire, Hephaestus and Athena

craftsmanship and other gods the technical knowledge required for agriculture (274c-d). Plato finally closes the myth by stating once more its central idea: human beings sometimes live in the perfect conditions of the divine-guided universe, sometimes in the reverse situation we find ourselves in.

There are a number of mythological threads that Plato interweaves, with impressive literary ability, into his myth.<sup>2</sup> The most important in terms of the internal structure of the myth is the "age of Cronus" fable.<sup>3</sup> This was a common tale in the fourth century B.C. and it was loaded with political connotations. According to Vidal-Naquet, in this period "[t]he age of Cronos, "life in the time of Cronos" as it is called, is a slogan for philosophical and religious sects that are not satisfied, or are no longer satisfied, with the existing civil order".<sup>4</sup> There is little doubt that such dissatisfaction lies deep in the roots of Plato's political philosophy. In giving his own version of the myth, therefore, Plato enters a contemporary debate. The philosopher conceives the Cronian age as being separated by an unbridgeable gulf from his own era. Other authors of the fourth century, however, take a different stand on this point: "Dicaearchus and Theophrastus [both subsequent to Plato but probably reflecting views current in the philosopher's lifetime] see humanity's advance since the time of the oak and the acorn which, for Dicaearchus too is the time of Cronos, as a continual, historical evolution

towards the age of cities and empires, the empires of Athens and Alexander".<sup>5</sup> Plato's rejection of this supposed historical continuity (essentially the same kind of continuity that Protagoras defends in the dialogue bearing his name) obviously has a philosophical significance and has to be taken into account in the political analysis of the myth.

The first aim that the myth serves in the *Politicus* is a formal one. It demonstrates that there was a mistake in the process of diairesis towards the definition of the statesman: the latter's art consists in being concerned for herds, not in nurturing them. But, as Skemp remarks "[t]his is manifestly not the real reason. So small a correction could have been made in a line or two of argument".<sup>6</sup> Plato's myth is indeed intended as a political statement in its own right. One of its main functions is to repudiate a conception of the ruler which attempted to justify personal as opposed to constitutional authority on the basis of what Skemp calls "the innate or natural superiority of the ruler",<sup>7</sup> the conception that a ruler is superior to his subjects in the same way that God is superior to man or a shepherd to his flock. The idea that the good ruler is like a shepherd to his subjects was as old as Homer<sup>8</sup> and a renewed version of it was propounded at the turn of the fifth and fourth century B.C. by Xenophon and probably even Isocrates.<sup>9</sup> What Plato finds most objectionable in this particular conception of leadership is that the rule of one

person is sanctified not by knowledge but by some sort of divine charisma. Plato categorically disagrees with this; for him, in the absence of really divine rulers, like the daimons in the myth, the only faculty which can fully legitimize political power is philosophical wisdom. This wisdom is indeed divine (e.g. 303b) because it involves knowledge of a transcendent reality (it will be argued below that Forms are present in the *Politicus*). But it is divine only in the sense that humans achieve the level of knowledge which allows them to become Ideal Rulers. Even as such, they are still like their subjects in being human. Therefore for a ruler to claim that he is the shepherd of his people<sup>10</sup> or to be eulogized as descending from the Gods (as in the case of Cyrus' characterization by Croesus in Xenophon's *Cyropaideia*),<sup>11</sup> is to violate the principle that in the present era rulers and ruled belong to the same species. Plato could hardly be more explicit on this issue. In 275b-c the Stranger himself analyzes the moral of the myth as follows: "[i]t appears to me now, Socrates, that the Divine Shepherd is so exalted a figure that no king can be said to attain to his eminence. Those who rule these states of ours in this present era are like their subjects, far closer to them in training and in nurture than ever shepherd could be to his flock".<sup>12</sup>

We can therefore identify three independent and yet interconnected political assumptions as following from the myth: first, divine guidance is immensely superior to human

(even if scientific) government. Second, all rulers in our present era are like their subjects, they belong to the same species. The only divine property a ruler can have is knowledge, and even this does not bring him anywhere near the Divine Shepherd or the daimons of the myth who were really divine and could provide for all the needs of their subjects. Third, conflict in the forms of both πόλεμος and στάσις is an integral part of the cosmos we inhabit in the present era, as can be inferred from 271d-e.

Another probable implication of the myth is that Plato demonstrates in it a tendency to go beyond the polis, the typical Greek political unit of his time, towards a state of affairs which is irrelevant to the specific political framework of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. It has to be noted that whereas men like Protagoras and Dicaearchus saw civilization as something continuous, gradually developing from an initial stage of primitiveness, for Plato there is a radical break between the "Cronian age" and the civilization of his time. This point is proved by the fact that in the former "πολιτῆται τε οὐκ ἦσαν οὐδέ κτήσεις γυναικῶν καὶ παίδων" (271e-272a).<sup>13</sup> Here we see the economic (goods) and social (family) κοινοκτημοσύνη of the *Republic* radicalized: economic common possession is secured by the fact that men live off the earth without labour, and common possession of women and children is secured by the absence of sexual reproduction. From this point of view the "age of Cronus" provides a mythological blueprint for the cardinal

arrangements of the *Republic*. Callipolis is an attempt to reproduce in the "age of Zeus" the ideal social arrangements of the "age of Cronus". But because it is deeply rooted in the historical world of conflict, the city of the *Republic* can never fully realize the conditions of the Cronian age: it remains a model in heaven (592b), a *παράδειγμα* to look up to.

In the myth Plato contrasts a literally perfect state of affairs with contemporary human existence, an intrinsic and inseparable part of which is conflict, and indicates that although the βασιλικὸς ἀνὴρ might provide the best government possible, this will still fall short of a divine guidance provided by beings superior to humans. Conflict is part of man's present political existence, Plato assumes, and as such it might be checked by a perfect Ruler, but it cannot be eliminated. Political theory has to take into account the "human condition" in the "age of Zeus". The myth provides the first signs of Plato's increased realism in the *Politicus*.



## II THE IDEAL RULER

As already noted, one of the principles informing the political theory of the *Politicus* is the presence in it of the ἐπιστήμων ruler of the *Republic*, whose political judgement is formed on the basis of absolute knowledge. A number of features of the *Politicus* certify that the Ideal Ruler of the dialogue is hardly distinguishable from the philosopher-kings of the *Republic*.<sup>14</sup>

The first thing we learn in the *Politicus* about the πολιτικός is that he is τῶν ἐπιστημόνων (258b; the point is repeated in 292b). It is true that Plato does not make explicit in the dialogue that the ἐπιστήμη of the πολιτικός is knowledge of Forms and that, as Gill remarks, it is knowledge of individual cases rather than of moral Forms which provides the Scientific Ruler with justification of his rule.<sup>15</sup> Given, however, that Forms exist in the *Politicus* (as I argue in section 3), and that, from the *Phaedo* onwards, episteme is for Plato knowledge of Forms, there is no reason to doubt that the knowledge of the πολιτικός is knowledge of Forms; this fact places him in the same position as his counterparts in the *Republic*. As regards the fact that it is the Ruler's insight on individual cases which particularly characterizes his political function, Gill himself realizes that there is no necessary contradiction between the *Republic's* position and that of

the *Politicus*.<sup>16</sup> Plato describes the knowledge of the Rulers of the former dialogue in terms of moral Forms, but he also states that this knowledge can be applied to particular instances (520c). From this point of view it becomes obvious that the insight covering particular cases is part of the knowledge of Forms in general. What we have therefore in the *Politicus* is a shift of emphasis from the universal to the particulars. But knowledge of the particular does not preclude knowledge of the general; it is rather, as in the *Republic*, a continuation of it.

The epistemology of the *Republic*, is, however, qualified in the *Politicus* in one significant way. This has been demonstrated by Miller, who argues that in the *Politicus* human speeches and actions (the material that any ruler has to deal with) are purposeful in the sense of striving to "realize or instantiate forms"<sup>17</sup> and are evaluated on the basis "of how fully such approximation is accomplished".<sup>18</sup> In other words, an action or a speech is good or bad depending on the extent to which it approximates its relevant Form. But because Forms as such are not sensitive "to the existential limitations of context",<sup>19</sup> a number of intermediary categories are posed by Plato as objects of knowledge. Immediately below the Forms we have τὸ μέτρον, essential measure which is concerned with size "in relation to the fixed norm to which they [in the particular context the speeches] must approximate if they are to exist at all (τὸ ... κατὰ τὴν τῆς γενέσεως ἀναγκαίαν οὐσίαν-283d)". This

is opposed to relative measure, i.e. the measure which compares the relative sizes of objects in the world of particulars. Essential measure is then exemplified in "τὸ πρέπον καὶ τὸν καιρὸν καὶ τὸ δέον" (284e). These three terms signify norms according to which an action can be judged, and all three, although informed by essential measure which in its turn is informed by Forms, are close to experience and therefore to the world of particulars. According to Miller "[a]ll of these notions refer implicitly to concrete historical context as orienting and delimiting".<sup>20</sup> Together with essential measure, then, they bridge the gap between Forms and particulars. It is important to realize that this move does not invalidate the metaphysics of the *Republic*. Forms remain ontologically prior, and their knowledge remains the sine qua non for the Scientific Ruler. But the relationship between universals and particulars which was straightforward in the *Republic* (Gill remarks correctly that in 520c the thesis that a man who has knowledge of the Form of justice will recognize what is just in each individual case is asserted but not proved<sup>21</sup> and this indicates that Plato did not see a problem with this point), becomes complex in the *Politicus*. Plato here comes up with an epistemological model more subtle than the one of the *Republic*, and the reason for this is of critical importance for the understanding of the *Politicus* as a whole: it is his attempt to accommodate the "concrete historical context" of a human action which obliges him to increase the flexibility

of the ontological scheme of the *Republic*. We will have more to say on the importance of history in the *Politicus* in section 4.

The heart of the matter remains, however, that the Scientific Ruler has absolute knowledge of the same kind and calibre as the knowledge of the philosopher-kings. It is on the grounds of this knowledge that Plato states one of the most daring positions of his whole philosophical career: that the Scientific Ruler should be above the law. How much this runs counter to the most sacred political beliefs of the ordinary Greek is well demonstrated by the fact that this is the only case in which Young Socrates, the otherwise docile interlocutor of the Eleatic Stranger, utters an objection in the whole dialogue (293e). Plato's argument for the superiority of the ἐπιστήμη of the μετὰ φρονήσεως βασιλικός in relation to law is that whereas the former can produce the best judgement on each individual case, the latter, by its very nature, "cannot prescribe with perfect accuracy what is good and right for each member of the community at any one time. The differences of human personality, the variety of men's activities and the inevitable unsettlement attending all human experience make it impossible for any art whatsoever to issue unqualified rules holding good on all questions at all times" (294b). It is important that in this context Plato emphasizes the wisdom ("φρόνησις"-294a) of the Scientific Ruler. What places him above the law is the fact that he possesses the

kind of knowledge which permits him to issue the best decision on any individual case. In the *Republic*, wisdom, the only virtue to be found only in philosopher-rulers is exactly the virtue that guarantees correct political decision-making. Law is disregarded as a triviality unworthy of the attention of ἀνδρες καλοὶ καὶ ἀγαθοὶ (425d-e) and although Plato never makes this point quite explicit, it is obvious that the rationale behind it is that living wisdom will always be superior to any inflexible written code.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, then, the Ideal Ruler of the *Politicus* is exactly like the ἀρχοντες of the *Republic*. Moreover, given that law, as we will see below, is now valued higher by Plato, as the imitation ("μιμήματα"-300c) of scientific rule, it becomes obvious that the knowledge informing the Ideal Ruler's decisions can only be of the highest possible rank and this, again, puts this ruler on a par with the knowledgeable φύλακες of the *Republic*.

Finally, another factor which identifies the two is that the Scientific Ruler, exactly like his counterparts of the *Republic*, puts the interests of his subjects beyond his personal interest. As the extreme opposite of the tyrant who is led only by "his passion and his ignorance" (301c), the Scientific ruler is able "to rule with moral and intellectual insight and to render every man his due with strictest fairness" (301d). This is not the picture of absolute power that common men have: "[t]hey feel sure that a man with such absolute power will be bound to employ it to

the hurt and injury of his personal enemies and to put them out of the way" (301d). This passage illustrates what is a cardinal property of the βασιλικός ἄνθρωπος: that he uses his power not to his own advantage but to that of his subjects. In a similar vein in 296bff. Plato explains that even when the βασιλικός coerces or injures his subjects he is justified in doing so insofar as this is in their ultimate interest, and culminates by declaring that whether a ruler benefits his subjects or not is "the only genuine test of good government" (296e).

The conception of a Ruler whose political prerogative is grounded on infallible knowledge carries of course with it the authoritarian overtones it had in the *Republic*. Moreover, the authoritarianism of the work is reinforced by the fact that the dialogue's political outlook is decisively shaped by the old Socratic argument from the arts. (Plato uses here the notion of ἐπιστήμη and this notion has a specific technical sense. In the *Republic*, Plato does not utilize the craft-analogy after Book One, because, in its simple Socratic form the latter implied empirical knowledge, whereas the knowledge of the philosopher-kings was transcendent. In the *Politicus*, where the main function of the argument from the arts is to underline the extreme rarity of the Ideal Rulers, the use of ἐπιστήμη indicates that Plato wants to retain the exclusiveness produced by the craft-analogy, but drop its reference to an empirical type of knowledge). Plato introduces this argument, i.e. that

politics is a highly specified ἐπιστήμη and political power should be bestowed only on the practitioners of this ἐπιστήμη, from the very beginning of the philosophical discussion in the dialogue (258b) and uses it extensively in the shaping of the subsequent analysis. Campbell rightly calls this argument "the postulate on which the whole dialogue proceeds".<sup>23</sup> The strong anti-democratic implications of this argument were evident already in the *Protagoras*, where Socrates used it to define moral and political virtue as a highly exclusive quality, attainable only by a small minority at best. This aspect of the argument receives considerable emphasis in the *Politicus*: at 292e Plato insists that no πλῆθος could ever attain the political art; at 293a he suggests that this art can "be found in the possession of one or two, or, at most, of a select few"; and in 300e he stresses that "τὸ τῶν πλουσίων πλῆθος καὶ ὁ σύμπας δῆμος οὐκ ἂν ποτε λάβοι τὴν πολιτικὴν ταύτην ἐπιστήμην".

So far we have explored those specific characteristics of the *Politicus* which bring it into line with the authoritarian trends of the Socratic dialogues and of the *Republic*. But it has to be underlined that whereas the Scientific Ruler and the philosopher-kings are identical in terms of the knowledge they possess, they operate in different political circumstances. Unlike the latter who apply their rule in the politically sterilized environment of the *Republic*, where orthodox upbringing from a very tender

age is designed to forestall any possible opposition, the Ruler of the *Politicus* has to exercise his art on ordinary men. He is therefore conditioned by the sociohistorical framework he has to work within in a way the *Republic's* ruling class is not. This factor, combined with the equivocality of Plato's attitude towards the political abilities of ordinary human beings, accounts for certain ambiguities which exist in the dialogue. The ambiguities concern primarily the clarity of the distinction between the Scientific Ruler and his potential counterparts: the god of the myth, the tyrant, and the law-abiding but unphilosophical king. In each of these three cases there is at least some doubt as to whether Plato has clearly drawn the line separating the ἐπιστήμων πολιτικός from the other types of rulers.

The problem regarding the demarcation between the god of the myth and the Scientific Ruler stems from a passage in 303b where Plato declares that the constitution based on the will of the ἐπιστήμων "must always be exalted, like a god among mortals, above all other constitutions". Does this phrase indicate that the Ideal Ruler has properties analogous to the god of the myth, that he is beyond his subjects in being divine? The answer to this question has to be negative for two reasons: first, Plato is here speaking metaphorically as the use of οἶον clearly demonstrates; second, it is true that perfect Rulers, by having knowledge of the transcendent Forms, do have a divine property; but



they do so only to the extent to which this property is attainable by human beings; there are no gods or daimons undertaking the government of humans in the "age of Zeus" and neither in the *Republic* nor in the *Politicus* does Plato claim that the perfect Rulers belong to a different species from their subjects.

If Plato's arguments regarding the relationship of the *πολιτικός* and the god involve no contradiction, the same cannot be said of his attempts to distinguish the Ideal Ruler from the tyrant. The problem is instantiated by two of Plato's statements in the dialogue which flatly contradict each other. The first is 276e where he declares that "[t]endence of human herds by violent control is the tyrant's art; tendence freely accepted by herds of free bipeds we call statesmanship". The second is 292c: "the real criterion in judging constitutions must not be whether ... rule is by violence or consent".

Attempts to explain away the contradiction of these two statements have not been successful. Guthrie, for example, has tried to resolve the issue by stressing that "the essential difference between him [the Scientific Ruler] and the tyrant is one of motive"<sup>24</sup> (i.e. the former promotes the welfare of his citizens, the latter his personal interests). Guthrie remarks that although people have learned to associate arbitrary and capricious rule with the tyrant, they would still be able to recognize the Ideal Ruler and submit to his authority (he probably refers to 301d). For

that reason, he claims, "[t]he question of force or consent would not arise".<sup>25</sup>

Miller's conception of Plato's two contradictory statements is that they can be explained in terms of context. According to his interpretation the distinction between ruling over willing or unwilling subjects in 276e is part of Plato's argument repudiating the claims of the old despot who appeared as "shepherd of the people". In the course of this argument, Miller suggests, Plato invokes common opinion in order to undercut the "despot's pretension to statesmanship".<sup>26</sup> Having achieved that, and coming to examine the art of statesmanship itself, Plato abandons this distinction and claims that rule by force or by consent is actually irrelevant to the essence of the πολιτική ἐπιστήμη as such. In brief, the first statement is supported by common opinion, and Plato accepts it in a given context because it serves his immediate purposes. But it is the second statement in 292c that represents the thesis suggested by philosophical knowledge, and this should be accepted as Plato's final position on the issue.

The reason neither of these explanations can be accepted as finally resolving the issue is that, as I shall argue, the problem is deeply rooted in Plato's attitude towards ordinary people<sup>27</sup> and neither Miller nor Guthrie take this factor seriously into account. If the distinction between rule by violence and rule by consent is finally dropped by Plato, as Miller claims, what will happen if the tyrant

poses as the Ideal Statesman and attempts to usurp the power that can be exercised justly only by the latter? Interestingly, Plato asks this question in 300a, and his reply is that this would be a major "καχόν". What Plato does not ask however, is who is going to recognize the Scientific Ruler and differentiate him from the tyrant. Presumably carried too far by the implications of the argument from the arts, Plato treats political authority in 300a as something to be imposed from above (the rulers) rather than to be accepted from below (the citizens). This attitude, though, creates one principal problem. Given the extreme rarity of philosophical knowledge which Plato repeatedly acknowledges in the *Politicus* (e.g. 292e, 293a, 300e, 301d-e), it is of course questionable whether there would be enough philosophers around to tell the difference between the disinterested Statesman and the capricious tyrant. How then can the people choose between them? Plato's response to this problem is optimistic. In 301d he writes that "if the ideal ruler we have described were to appear on earth he would be acclaimed, and he would spend his days guiding in strictest justice and perfect felicity that one and only true Commonwealth worthy of the name". For the citizens to be in a position to identify the true Statesman in this manner, however, it is presupposed that they will have at least a minimal ability to form correct judgements. But if they have this ability which allows them to identify the true ἐπιστήμων πολιτικός and to set him apart from the τύραννος,

they will also have, according to all probability, sufficient rationality to accept his decisions and willfully execute them. The question becomes, then, why there should be any need to coerce such citizens at all. If, on the other hand, one accepts a low estimate of the rational faculties of ordinary citizens, the need for coercion can be justified. But the issue then is how these citizens, who are incapable of grasping the rightness of the Ruler's decisions, will be able to recognize him the way Plato expects them to do. So, either common people have the ability to recognize the Scientific Ruler but coercing them is unnecessary, or they do not have this ability, in which case one cannot expect them to acclaim the Ruler in the manner described in 301d. Plato cannot have it both ways.

It is this contradiction which lies at the heart of the more apparent one concerning whether rule by consent can be adopted as a criterion of distinguishing the Scientific Ruler from the tyrant or not. And both are generated by Plato's ambiguous stance as regards the common human being's rational faculties. Significantly, in the closing part of the dialogue where a society composed of ordinary citizens is described, Plato is ambiguous about the means that the Scientific Ruler will employ to make sure the citizens act justly. In 304c-d he explains that the Scientific Ruler will employ rhetoric to persuade the general mass of people "διὰ μυθολογίας, ἀλλὰ μὴ διὰ διδασχης". The distinction is important because μυθολογία targets the emotions of an

individual rather than his or her rational capacities. By preferring it to διδασχῆ, which entails a certain involvement of the rational abilities of the listener, Plato indicates that he estimates the rational powers of the ordinary person as inadequate even for the limited exercise of apprehending orders before executing them. This picture, however, is at odds with 309c, where Plato states that the Ruler will implant into the souls of his subjects ἀληθῆς δόξα; ἀληθῆς δόξα involves at least some rationality: it is μετὰ βεβαιώσεως, an expression which suggests at least some limited rationality (see *Republic* 461e, *Theaetetus* 169e),<sup>28</sup> and it brings about φρόνησις, i.e. rational wisdom, in the souls of the σώφρονες citizens.<sup>29</sup> Finally, it has to be noted that in the *Laws*, a work multidimensionally connected with the *Politicus*, ὀρθή or ἀληθῆς δόξα is systematically treated as an acceptable alternative to knowledge and the distinction between them is on occasion almost entirely blurred.<sup>30</sup>

There is then a discrepancy, to put it mildly, between the use of mythologia in 304c-d and the implications of the notion of ἀληθῆς δόξα in 309c. Plato finally appears, however, to opt for the optimistic estimate of common people's abilities: in 308e-309a he declares that those unable to acquire true opinion will be exiled, executed or enslaved to the community. In this case coercion is completely abandoned: Plato does not attempt to coerce the citizens who are unable to rise to the level of political

consciousness necessary for life in a perfectly governed community; he simply excludes them from it. As for the rest of the citizens, through their true opinion, they will be able to fulfill the political role prescribed for them by the Scientific Ruler by means of their rationality. It is significant that true opinion is introduced only a couple of pages before the end of the dialogue and that after its introduction Plato does not suggest anything which could be interpreted as promoting coercion. On the contrary, when he proposes intermarriage between the *ἄνδρες* and the *σώφρονες*, he insists that this will come about voluntarily through their common opinion ("μίαν ἔχειν ἀμφοτέρω τὰ γένη δοξάν"-310e), even though he is aware of the natural tendency of members of both *γένη* to marry somebody akin to them in character (310d-e). From these facts it follows that Plato's final position on the matter is that the common people's rational abilities, despite falling short of full knowledge, have to be estimated as significant. This entails that from the two alternatives (citizens recognizing the Scientific Ruler but in no need of coercion or citizens in need of coercion but unable to pinpoint the Ruler) the former is preferable. This explains how the citizens will be able to acclaim the Ruler in 301d; but at the same time the use of coercion remains ultimately unjustified. The final conclusion has to be, then, that as regards the whole issue involving the distinction between the Scientific Ruler and the tyrant by means of the use of coercion and the

underlying problem of whether the rational abilities of non-philosophers should be regarded as important or not, the *Politicus* cannot be considered to present a coherent picture.

The third contestant who might be confused with the Ideal Statesman is the legitimate king who governs according to laws but does not possess ἐπιστήμη. The problem is initiated by the fact that Plato uses the term βασιλεύς for both, but, provided the text is followed closely, one is always in a position to tell in which contexts βασιλεύς designates the Scientific Ruler and in which the non-philosophic monarch. The difference between them is that the latter's rule constitutes the best polity in the absence of scientific wisdom, but the non-scientific monarch can lay no claim to the absolute rule of the philosopher. Plato admits that he uses the same name for both ("βασιλέα καλούμεν, οὐ διορίζοντες ὀνόματι τὸν μετ' ἐπιστήμης ἢ δόξης κατὰ νόμους μοναρχοῦντα"-301a-b). But the distinction between scientific government and all forms of human rule based on opinion is forcefully made in 303b ("πασῶν γὰρ ἐκείνην γε [the constitution where the ἐπιστήμων rules] ἐκκριτέον, οἷον θεοῦ ἐξ' ἀνθρώπων, ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων πολιτειῶν [the ones based on opinion]"). Because of the exceptional clarity of this distinction there is no contradiction, apparent<sup>31</sup> or real, involved in this issue.

### III FORMS IN THE *POLITICUS*

As argued in the previous sections, the fundamental political principle of the *Politicus* is that knowledge legitimizes political power, and in this respect the *Politicus* falls into line with the *Republic*. But is this knowledge knowledge of Forms? Although we get no elaboration of this theory, there are some passages in the *Politicus* which strongly suggest Plato's continuous belief in Forms.

The first such passage is 278c-d, taken by Campbell, Skemp, Moravcsik and Rosen<sup>32</sup> to imply Forms. It comes in the context of a clarification of the use of παράδειγμα and follows a description by Plato of how young children first learn particular letters and simple syllables and then move to more complicated elements. It reads "[w]ould we be surprised, then, to find our own mind (ψυχή) reacting in the same way to the letters with which the Universe is spelled out? Truth sometimes guides the mind to a comprehension of every member of some groups of things and yet the same mind a moment later is hopelessly adrift in its attempt to cope with the members that make up another group. Somehow or other it makes a right judgement of a particular combination of elements but when it sees the same elements transferred to the long and very difficult syllables of everyday existence, it fails to recognize again the very elements it discerned a moment before". The first assumption this



admittedly difficult passage underlines is that there are fundamental abilities which are common to more than one art (the wider context of the passage is the analogy between politics and weaving). The real statesman has therefore to look beyond the trivial features of different arts in order to grasp their common element. The question is whether this common element is a Form or not. Moravcsik remarks that "the analogy between letters-and-syllables and the combination of Forms is fairly standard in the later dialogues and it is clear that for Plato a syllable is no mere sum of parts".<sup>33</sup> The fact that a syllable is more than the mere sum total of parts mechanically added does indeed indicate that Plato here makes something more than a simple logical point and one can sympathize with Skemp's assumption that in this text "the use of the terms "letters" and "syllable" ... is at once logical and metaphysical or ontological".<sup>34</sup> But Skemp provides no compelling arguments for this assertion and the ontological reading, although plausible, is not made obligatory by the text itself.<sup>35</sup>

A clearer allusion to Forms appears to be made in 285d-286b, where, right after stressing that the aim of the discussion is to solidify the dialectical excellence of the interlocutors rather than to define the statesman, Plato writes: "[l]ikenesses which the senses can grasp (*αἰσθηταὶ τινες ὁμοιωτέρες*) are available in nature (*πεφύχασιν*) to those real existents which are themselves easy to understand, so that when one asks for an account of these

existents one has no trouble at all—one can simply indicate the sensible likeness and dispense with any account in words. But to the highest and most important class of existents (τοῖς δ' αὖ μεγίστοις οὐσι καὶ τιμιωτάτοις) there are no corresponding visible resemblances, no work of nature clear for all to look upon. In these cases nothing visible can be pointed out to satisfy the enquiring mind: the instructor cannot cause the enquirer to perceive something with one or other of his senses and so make him really satisfied that he understands the thing under discussion. Therefore we must train ourselves to give and to understand a *rational* account (λόγον ... δοῦναι καὶ δεῖξασθαι) of every existing thing. For the existents which have no visible embodiment (τὰ γὰρ ἄσώματα), the existents which are of the highest value and chief importance ([τὰ] κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα), are demonstrable only by reason (λόγῳ μόνου) and are not to be apprehended by any other means. All our present discussions have the aim of training us to apprehend this highest class of existents".

This looks like a straightforward and almost unmissable reference to the paradigm-Forms of the middle dialogues. First of all the text appears to state, in hardly ambiguous terms, the imitation theory of the middle dialogues, i.e. that the participants in a Form have a likeness (ὁμοιότητα) to this Form or, moreover, that they are its images or copies (εἰδῶλα).<sup>36</sup> In addition to this, there are four distinct statements in the passage that correspond to

cardinal features of the theory of the Forms of the middle dialogues. First, there is a distinction between αἰσθητὰ and νοητὰ (the latter are implied) and later between visible and non-visible things. Second, the resemblances perceived by the senses are by nature (πεφύκασιν): this indicates that we are here concerned with resemblances between things which exist φύσει, not with resemblances between things created by humans. Third, the aim of dialectical training is to enable us to give and receive a rational account of both sensible and supersensible reality. This appears to be a powerful reference to Forms, because exactly this ability is the trademark of the philosopher-kings of the *Republic* (531d-e, 534b-c) and the knowledge of the philosopher-kings is indisputably knowledge of Forms. Moreover, just a few lines above this remark the Stranger identified dialectical excellence as the primary aim of of the *Politicus*. Fourth, there are certain ὄντα which are to be conceived only by reason and these are κάλλιστα and μέγιστα. This use of grandiose language is clearly associated with Forms in the middle dialogues (see *Republic* 504d-e, 508e) and it is difficult to justify it here unless accepting it refers to Forms. There is one element in the text which might tell against the presence of Forms in it: Plato says that there is no satisfactory sensible likeness of the highest beings. But this can be explained by the precedent of the *Phaedrus* 250aff. where Plato suggests that certain Forms, like temperance and justice, have no immediately corresponding

sensible things, but accepts that even these Forms can be recognized through the sensible world, though with extreme difficulty.

Owen has challenged what appears to be a clear allusion to Forms in 285d-286b, arguing that the passage has to be taken as part of the Stranger's defence of the length of his speech on weaving.<sup>37</sup> He goes as far back as 277aff. and points out that in 277c Plato emphasizes the superiority of explaining something by words to depicting it when the pupil can follow the words. Owen argues that essentially the same point is made in 285dff. Weaving can be depicted and understood immediately by the senses, statesmanship belongs to a different category and can only be accounted for by words. Still, both belong to the sensible world and the passage carries no ontological overtones of any kind: "[r]ead in context the passage says nothing of the paradigm-metaphysics. It makes a sound philosophical point in plain terms".<sup>38</sup>

Owen starts the defence of his position by capitalizing on the Stranger's dictum that the higher Forms have no sensible resemblances. The *Phaedrus* cannot explain this anomaly, he assumes, because in 250aff. Socrates is speaking poetically rather than philosophically; he engages in a *παιδιᾶ* and therefore his points must not be taken at face value.<sup>39</sup> However, Guthrie has argued against this dismissal, saying that the term *παιδιᾶ* is also applied to the whole dialogue (278b) and eventually to every written work (276d

and 277e) and, moreover, that Socrates himself defends the philosophical importance of the myth in 265b-d.<sup>40</sup> Given the fact that there is nothing unusual in Plato making a philosophical point by means of a myth, the *Phaedrus* can be accepted as reinforcing the ontological reading of 285dff.

In the final analysis, Owen's thesis depends on the explanation of the four recognizable features of the theory of the Forms which can be isolated in this passage. The distinction of αἰσθητὰ and νοητὰ could be accounted for in Owen's scheme: if Plato's aim is to explicate a specific difference between the human activities of weaving and statesmanship, i.e. that the former is sensible while the latter is not, a metaphysical reading of this distinction is not compulsory (although still the use of αἰσθητὰ and the implication of νοητὰ is strongly reminiscent of the relationship between participants and Forms in the paradigm-metaphysics of Plato's middle period). With regard to πεφύκασιν, Owen accepts that if we take the "perceptible likenesses" ... and the "image clearly made for men" as "applicable generally to the contents of the physical world and not just ... to such human artefacts as pictures and models",<sup>41</sup> in other words if πεφύκασιν designates not simply human creations but also things which exist in nature, then 285dff. is most likely to be read in terms of the paradigm-metaphysics of the middle dialogues. Owen realizes that if Plato is here talking about natural things, then we almost certainly have Forms in 285d-e; what else could

natural things be likenesses of? If Plato is referring exclusively to human artefacts, on the other hand, then Forms need not be implied in this passage because one human artefact can be made in the likeness of another. Owen claims that πεφυκασιν can be used to designate human artefacts and that this is the case with 285d-e. He criticizes Skemp for presupposing the existence of Forms in this passage and translating πεφυκασιν as "are available in nature".<sup>42</sup> The primary meaning of πεφυκασιν, however, is that something exists by nature and this recommends Skemp's reading of the text more than Owen's. The latter has merely demonstrated that πεφυκασιν need not be referring to natural things. He has not proved that it definitely does not refer to such things and therefore his argument does not preclude the possibility that Forms are implied in 285d-e; it only provides, at best, an alternative possibility.

We come now to the crucial phrase "we must train ourselves to give and to understand a rational account of every existent thing". Owen interprets this as stating that "the most important things cannot be taught ... from pictures and models, [i.e.] ... they are not "depictable"". <sup>43</sup> But, in the middle dialogues, to give and receive a rational account of every existent thing is the typical characteristic of the philosopher-ruler. In 531e the sign of the dialecticians is that they are "δυνατοὶ ... δοῦναι καὶ ἀποδέξασθαι λόγον" and very similar language is used in 534b-c. Contrary to Owen's claims, then, there is linguistic

evidence connecting the passage of the *Politicus* under discussion with central features of the epistemology and the ontology of the middle dialogues.

Finally, with regard to Plato's talk of *κάλλιστα* and *μέγιστα*, Owen remarks that exactly these words (though in reverse order) are used in the *Republic* to characterize purely human activities like wars and generalships and government and the education of men.<sup>44</sup> The remark is correct, but it has to be weighed against the use by Plato of similar expressions to designate the Form of the Good. In *Republic* 508e this Form is "[*κάλλιον*] γνώσεως τε καὶ ἀληθείας" and in 504d-505a the [yet unnamed] Form of the Good is three times referred to as the "*μέγιστον μάθημα*". Again, Owen's assertion might suggest an alternative reading of the passage we are concerned with, but it by no means precludes an allusion to Forms.

To conclude: a strong linguistic case can be construed against Owen's interpretation of 285d-286b. It is important that Owen does not suggest that some sort of change might have occurred in Plato's metaphysical doctrine. He plainly denies that the passage has ontological connotations of any kind. But 285dff. does provide a number of clues to the existence of Forms in the *Politicus*. An interpretation of this passage as implying the existence of paradigmatic Forms is, if not compelling, at least highly plausible. The recurrence of a number of terms strongly associated with Forms in other dialogues in the space of a few lines is a

factor that cannot be ignored. And the immediate context, the emphasis on dialectics which is placed prior to politics (278d), further fortifies this reading.

There are two more places in the *Politicus* where Forms are probably present.<sup>45</sup> The first is 269d-e, where Plato writes that "to be the same, steadfast and abiding, is the prerogative of the divinest of things only (τοῖς πάντων θειοτάτοις προσήκει). The nature of the bodily does not entitle it to this rank (σώματος δὲ φύσις οὐ ταύτης τῆς τάξεως). Now the heaven or the Universe as we have chosen to call it has received many blessed gifts from Him who brought it into being, but it has also been made to partake of bodily form. Hence it is impossible that it should abide for ever free from change, and yet, as far as may be, its movement is uniform, invariable and in one place". Unchangeability and divinity are two cardinal attributes of the Forms ( *Republic* 478b, 479a, 479e, 484b-c, *Symposium* 211b) and of the soul which contemplates them (*Phaedo* 80b, 95c, 106d). They distinguish the Forms from the flux of the material world and this contradistinction is clearly marked out in 269d-e. Furthermore, it is difficult to see what the τὰ πάντων θειοτάτα might be if they are not Forms. Again we have in this case a text where the presence of Forms is not explicitly stated, but which is difficult to interpret without accepting them.

The second passage probably acknowledging Forms is 297c: the best constitution is "ὄρθη"; the others are only its



"μιμήματα" (imitations) and their goodness depends directly on the extent to which they imitate this perfect constitution. This passage provides probably the strongest evidence for Forms in the *Politicus*: not only is there a clear reference to an unchangeable constitution, but also the argument explicitly works in terms of paradigm-metaphysics, since the value of each other constitution depends on the degree to which it imitates the ὀρθή one.

In support of these textual references one can add a historical and a political argument for the existence of Forms in the *Politicus*. The historical argument is that, according to a substantial majority of scholars,<sup>46</sup> Forms exist in the *Sophist*, of which the *Politicus* is the explicit continuation (258a). If Forms are present in the *Sophist*, immediately preceding the *Politicus*, and (as it will be argued in the next chapter) in the subsequent *Laws*, Plato's last work, their abandonment in the *Politicus* would entail that Plato temporarily rejected this doctrine only to return to it. Though this possibility cannot be dismissed on logical grounds, it is clear that it is extremely unlikely.

Finally, there is a strong political reason to accept the existence of Forms in the *Politicus*. In 293c the Stranger argues that the Ideal Ruler should not be bound by law. If Forms do not exist in the dialogue, and this Ruler has no knowledge of them, this position becomes objectionable. Even if Plato accepted an alternative to Forms as the object of ἐπιστήμη (say, the knowledge of logical genera) this would

clearly be knowledge of beings ontologically inferior to the divine Forms of the middle dialogues and Plato's extreme confidence in the political abilities of a leader possessing this type of knowledge would not be equally justified. Because knowledge distinguishes the βασιλικὸς ἀνὴρ from the τυραννός and τυραννία is by far the worst constitution (302e), it is important that the distinction between the two is made as clear as possible (a task in which, as argued in section 2, Plato does not entirely succeed). From this point of view, the political rationale of the dialogue is more solid if one accepts transcendent Forms as the highest object of knowledge in the *Politicus* than if one takes less exalted entities to perform this role. It is obvious that the higher the quality of the objects of knowledge the higher the quality of the knowledge itself will be and therefore the higher the quality of government and the more justified Plato's confidence in placing his Scientific Ruler above the law.

Given the strong textual indications of the presence of Forms in the *Politicus*, some of which come fairly close to full proof, and given that this presence is supported by the position of the dialogue between the *Sophist* and the *Laws* and invited by the political argument of the work, the case for the existence of Forms in the *Politicus*, has, I believe, to be considered philosophically sounder than the case against.

IV TOWARDS THE *LAWS*: LAW, VIRTUE AND HISTORICAL  
PERSPECTIVE IN THE *POLITICUS*

No single text in the Platonic corpus has the crucial significance of the last part of the *Politicus* (293a-fin) in terms of the development of Plato's political theory. It is in this text that Plato brings together, and clarifies the relationship between, the philosophical principles which shape his two major political dialogues: the scientific rule grounded on absolute knowledge of the *Republic* and the respect for law of the *Laws*. Because both principles are vindicated in their respective realms, the *Politicus* can be said to "stand midway"<sup>47</sup> between the other two dialogues.

Although the relevant discussion begins at 293a, Plato's position on the value of law cannot be fully appreciated without reference to the subsequent observation, made in 301d, that the Scientific Ruler hitherto described in the *Politicus* "[ν]οῦ δὲ γε ... οὐκ ἔστι γιγνόμενος ... ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι". This statement, in effect a bold Platonic admission that the ideal of fully scientific rule might not after all be realizable, at least in the present political circumstances, puts into perspective the whole argumentation from 293a onwards. Plato's main argument for the superiority of philosophical insight to written legislation is, as noted in section 2, that the former is able to cover all particular instances, whereas the latter is inflexible and

can only prescribe general directives. But the sensible world is never in "ἡσυχίαν" (294b) and therefore law, being general and indiscriminating, is insufficient for infallible government. Plato illustrates this point by the example of a doctor who has to go on a lengthy trip and leaves certain instructions for his patients. If on his return he finds the situation altered, he will adjust his treatment to the new situation, acting on the basis of his knowledge of medicine, and he will not be in any way bound by his previous written orders (295b-d). The analogy is successful because it demonstrates both tenets of Plato's argument. Ἐπιστήμη is substantially superior to νόμος, because of its power fully to cover any eventuality. (The notions of the πρέπον, the δέον and especially of καιρός are implicitly present in this line of reasoning). Written instructions can be justified, however, as the sensible course in the absence of philosophical intelligence.

Although scientific rule and law are clearly distinguished by Plato, the exposition of their respective merits is by no means linear. So despite having acknowledged the usefulness of law in 297d-e, Plato proceeds in 298bff. on a thinly covered venomous attack on Athenian democracy. The basic premiss of the attack is again taken from the argument from the arts. The Eleatic Stranger invites Young Socrates to imagine a situation where an ἐκκλησία consisting of "ἢ σύμπαντα τὸν δῆμον ἢ τοὺς πλουσίους μόνον" (298c) decided that the arts should be performed according to its own

written instructions rather than according to the recommendations of the ἐπιστήμονες. Now if anyone appears, Plato says in a clear allusion to Socrates' trial, who inquires into the nature of these arts, he will be rebuked, tried and convicted to "suffer the utmost penalties" (299c). This kind of dominance of common opinion and of law (because the decisions of the Athenian Assembly had the force of law) over epistemic insight is unacceptable, the Stranger concludes in 299d-e; and Young Socrates adds, in a literal allusion to the trial of his elder namesake, that life in such a city would be "ἀβίωτος".<sup>48</sup>

Despite this attack (which, it has to be noted, is an attack on law contesting the predominance of science and not on law as such), Plato is prepared to attribute significant value to written rules and customs, provided the superiority of ἐπιστήμη is not questioned by them. So, in 297d-e adherence to law is described as "κάλλιστ' ἔχον ὡς δεύτερον", with government by knowledge of course πρῶτον. The point is practically repeated in 300b-c where the use of "νόμους" and "συγγράματα" is a "δεύτερος πλοῦς" (300c). Plato states that laws are the result of much experience ("πείρας πολλῆς") and have been put forward by "some advocate" who was able to "[persuade] the public assembly to enact them" (300b). (It is noticeable that persuasion is here promoted as the right way to initiate a law). Furthermore, the laws, their deficiency in comparison to knowledge notwithstanding, are not void of any metaphysical

justification: they are "μιμήματα ... της ἀληθείας" (300c) and they are produced under the influence of the ἐπιστήμονες. The point is repeated in 300e-301a where Plato again uses imitation terminology ("μιμήσασθαι"-301a) and spells out his conclusion on the subject: the non-epistemic constitutions must adhere with the strictest rigidity to their written laws and ancestral customs. By stating the view that the law participates, even as a copy, in the divine wisdom of the "εἰδότες" (300c), Plato ascribes to it an undeniably positive value. The relevance of this positive value becomes clear as soon as we take into account the absence of a Scientific king which Plato acknowledges in 301d. In the light of this absence, regard for law becomes automatically the best attainable policy. This increased Platonic appreciation for law represents a major shift from the dismissive attitude towards it exemplified in the *Republic* (e.g. 425d-e). And its final vindication comes from the fact that, the ideal polity of the Scientific king excluded (by the fact of his epistemological superiority but also by the fact of his non-appearance), law becomes the criterion according to which the imperfect human constitutions are to be evaluated. This evaluation commences at 302b: constitutional monarchy is considered the best of the knowledge-lacking constitutions, on the grounds that it is in closest proximity to the ideal one. Aristocracy (law-abiding rule by the few) is second and democracy third. Of the polities disrespecting the law democracy is the best

because of its little "potency for good or ill" which makes it the easier to live under. Oligarchy (lawless rule by the few) comes next and tyranny is, as in the *Republic*, the worst constitution.

From the point of view of democracy's position in this ranking, one remarks an improvement in comparison with the *Republic*, where democracy rated higher only than tyranny. There it appeared as an inherently lawless regime, an almost anarchic state of affairs under which "every individual is free to do as he likes" (557b). In the *Politicus* Plato does not judge democracy from a moral point of view. He only suggests that because of the wide distribution of power in it, its potency for good or bad is limited. Looked at from this angle, democracy's elevated ranking does not appear terribly important. To use Wood's and Wood's formulation "[i]t involves nothing more than the admission that of evil constitutions, democracy is easiest to bear, that it is weaker rather than better".<sup>49</sup> Even so, though, democracy's relatively insubstantial improvement in the *Politicus'* constitutional mapping is an indication of a change of attitude on Plato's part.

The emphasis on the usefulness of law as a criterion for correct government is one major way in which the *Politicus* anticipates the *Laws*; in the latter dialogue Plato explicitly repudiates the possibility of a Scientific Ruler ever appearing (691c, 713c, 875b-c) and proceeds to a meticulous description of a political system whose

cornerstone is unequivocal respect for law.

The second way in which the *Politicus* anticipates the *Laws* is by the undertaking of a historical perspective by Plato. Historical considerations were markedly absent from the *Republic*. Although the result of some empirical observation finds its way into Plato's description of the degenerate constitutions, the principle which shapes their political outlook is psychological, based on the assumption that the constitution of a state reflects its citizens' characters. As we noticed in the interpretation of the *Politicus*' myth, Plato's tendency in the *Republic* is to reproduce, to the extent to which it is possible, the conditions of the "age of Cronus", by denying property and family to the Auxiliaries and the Guardians. This move towards not simply pre-history but towards a state of affairs which is plainly irrelevant to history, denudes the latter of any significance whatever in the framework of Callipolis. Historical experience, on the other hand, is, as we shall see, the main principle informing the political arrangements of the *Laws*. And it is again one of the factors which come into play in the *Politicus*, in particular in the closing section of the dialogue.

The turning point is, once more, Plato's admission that the Ideal king  $\nu\upsilon\upsilon\ \omicron\upsilon\chi\ \acute{\epsilon}\sigma\tau\iota\ \gamma\iota\gamma\nu\omicron\mu\epsilon\nu\omicron\varsigma$ . First of all, this admission itself is, as Gill asserts, "one of the lessons of history".<sup>50</sup> Moreover, it is immediately followed by an explicitly historical remark: despite all the disasters to



which cities are led by the absence of philosophical wisdom, Plato states that "some of them have not come to ruin but still stand firm" (302a). The remark is significant not only for its historical origin, but also because Plato here explicitly compromises the principle of the *Republic* that successful government absolutely depends on transcendent knowledge: even though all non-epistemic cities have to suffer, some of them are still in a position to achieve a hardly insignificant aim: they remain relatively stable ("οὐκ ἀνατρέπονται"). In the light of historical experience, then, Plato is prepared to modify his conviction that ἐπιστήμη is the only saviour of a city and to accept that a state's survival does not absolutely depend on it.

Another crucial manifestation of Plato's new interest in history is the emphasis on the value of law itself. Although his main stress lies on the quality of the law as a copy of scientific wisdom, Plato does not ignore its historical background: in 300b he explains that laws are introduced by somebody who is able to persuade the people to adopt them. This is a reference to an event in time, a historical event. In the same phrase he states that laws are the result of "much experience". The last observation proves beyond doubt the connection of law with history. As Klosko remarks, Plato "deals with laws ... insofar as they embody an expression of social desires and aspirations".<sup>51</sup> One could add that he also explicitly treats them as historical phenomena.

The historical dimension of the *Politicus* is most

forcefully exemplified in Plato's description of the society on which the Ideal Ruler is to employ his art. The philosopher introduces this society with a "startling statement" (*θαυμαστόν τινα λόγον*-306b): courage and moderation are "in a certain sense enemies from of old, ranged in opposition to each other in many realms of life" (306b). The assertion that two important parts of virtue ("*μόρια ἀρετῆς οὐ σμιχρὰ*"-308b)<sup>52</sup> are strongly opposed to each other runs of course counter to the Socratic doctrine of the unity of virtue. We will come soon to the consequences of 306b for Plato's theory of virtue in the *Politicus*. But first it has to be emphasized that what informs the new Platonic position is history. The contradistinction of the two virtues is a fact of political life and is attested by history: the picture of two opposing parties, one promoting conflict and the other asking for pacification is a recurring theme in Thucydides.<sup>53</sup> It is startling not historically, but because it invites reappraisal of the old Socratic thesis of the unity of virtue. And it can only be fully understood by reference to a specific historical context: as Lane remarks, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. "such opposing [one aggressive and one quietist] foreign policies and a predicted disastrous outcome are a recurrent theme in ... Athenian political argument. For Thucydides, the Peloponnesian War was essentially a conflict between the aggressive imperialist policy of Athens and the quietist moderation of Sparta".<sup>54</sup>

Plato, living in Athens, could hardly avoid having some first hand experience of debates fought along these lines. This is politically important not simply because it demonstrates his attention to history, but because it also provides an indication that the society of the last section of the *Politicus*, the society on which the Scientific Ruler is to apply his "βασιλικὴν συμπλοκὴν" (306a), is based on an actual historical model: his contemporary democratic Athens.

Two suggestions made by commentators indicate how Plato's preoccupation with history might penetrate into his metaphysics. The first is Lane's assumption that in the *Politicus* the static political framework of, say, the *Republic* is transformed into a dynamic one.<sup>55</sup> Because courage and moderation cannot temporally coinstantiate (they have to be expressed one after the other), "their unity is irreducibly temporal and so dynamic: it can only be achieved over time, not in static composition".<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the role of the Scientific Ruler is not to resolve their conflict by constantly promoting either (Plato explicitly treats them as equivalent),<sup>57</sup> but rather by keeping a balance in time between them. Lane finds the justification for the conception of a dynamic framework in the *Politicus* in the use of *καιρός* in 305d: "[t]he kingly art controls them [the other arts] according to its power to perceive the right occasions (*ἐγκαιρίας τε περὶ καὶ ἀκαιρίας*) for undertaking and setting in motion the great enterprises of state". Lane concludes from this that "[k]nowledge of the *kairos* is what

gives the statesman his right and writ to rule".<sup>58</sup> Both these claims are correct. The concept of a dynamic framework gives a good account of the *Politicus*' political scheme and, one can add, it has to be explained by Plato's decision to examine the impact of the Scientific Ruler on an actual historical society and his denial that this Ruler is a god. Conflict is inherent in such a society, and the Ruler being only human has to manage rather than eradicate it. As for the fact that knowledge of the *καίρος* gives to the Ruler his prerogative, the historical connotations of *καίρος* (meaning the exactly appropriate time for an action) can hardly be questioned. Continuing to resort to historical lessons, Plato remarks that the excesses of either the *σωφρονες* or the *ἀνδρες* can destroy the state; the terms used to designate these excesses are "*ἄκαιρότερον*" and "*σφοδρότερον τοῦ δέοντος*" (307e and 308a respectively). This supports Lane's claim that knowledge of the *καίρος* gives to the *ἐπιστήμων* the right to rule, because it is his role to protect the state from such disastrous excess. It should be noted, however, that this fact does not invalidate the significance of Forms in the *Politicus*, because *καίρος* depends ontologically on essential measure and this in turn depends on the Forms. This qualification notwithstanding, the fact that Plato puts forward *καίρος* as the immediate object of the Ruler's knowledge is a further demonstration of the role history comes to play in the work.

An even more ambitious attempt to show how the opposition

of the two types might affect Plato's metaphysics is made by Skemp, who writes: "[i]t is significant that a metaphysical ground is found for the restatement [of Plato's theory of virtue]: the mutual incompatibility of the Form of Courage and the Form of Moderation (307c). This is like the mutual incompatibility of Rest and Motion in the *Sophistes* (254d sqq.)".<sup>59</sup> The precedent of the *Sophist* definitely strengthens Skemp's case as far as mutual incompatibility between Forms is concerned. The passage that Skemp refers to does not suffice by itself to prove that Forms exist in the *Politicus*. Given that in all probability they do, however, as argued in the previous section, Skemp's interpretation makes sense. Skemp presumably finds "οἷον πολεμίαν διαλαχούσας [τὴν σώφρονα φύσιν καὶ τὴν ἀνδρείαν] στάσιν ἰδέας" (307c) to declare the incompatible nature of the two Forms and "οὐτ' ἀλλήλαις μειγνυμένας ἐφευρίσχομεν ἐν ταῖς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράξεσιν" (307c) to state the exemplification of this incompatibility in the sensible world. The vocabulary of the text obviously supports his reading, in particular the use of ἰδέας and πράξεσιν. If this inconclusive, but by no means implausible, reading of the text is endorsed, we have here the strongest evidence of how important history is in the *Politicus*, in the form of a change from Plato's middle-dialogues metaphysics designed to accommodate what is in essence a historical observation.<sup>60</sup>

We come now to the complex question of the *Politicus*'

theory of virtue. Plato's statement in 306b that ἀνδρεία and σωφροσύνη "εἰ μάλιστα πρὸς ἀλλήλας ἐχθρὰ καὶ στάσιν ἐναντίαν ἔχοντε ἐν πολλοῖς τῶν ὄντων" generates the problem of whether we have in this dialogue an abandonment of the Socratic thesis of the unity of virtue or not. In the *Republic* there was one virtue proper, which included all individual virtues, and one class, the Guardians, who possessed it. The Producers had no claim to virtue at all and the Auxiliaries had only a second-rate, inadequate political virtue. Therefore the *Republic* did essentially uphold the doctrine of the unity of virtue. Is this doctrine abandoned in the *Politicus*?

The question has divided commentators. Skemp has produced arguably the best defence of the thesis that there is a real break between the *Politicus* and earlier Platonic accounts of virtue,<sup>61</sup> while others have tried to reconcile 306b and Plato's subsequent comments with the picture of the *Republic*.<sup>62</sup> Skemp holds that the statement in question represents "a denial of an important tenet of the Academy itself at an earlier time".<sup>63</sup> More importantly, it constitutes a "frontal assault" on the *Republic's* standpoint and "though it leads to a new "synthesis" in the sense of the interweaving of the opposing characters, the new statement must necessarily destroy the *Republic's* psychological scheme."<sup>64</sup> Skemp concludes with the argument about the incompatibility of the Forms Courage and Moderation we discussed above. But no matter whether one

accepts this argument or not, his position remains strong: the statement about the incompatibility of the two virtues is not presented as merely an opinion of the many. The Stranger supports it in his own person. The λόγος is θαυμαστός not because common sense would refute it, but because it is not what young Academicians, represented in the dialogue by the younger Socrates, would expect to hear.

The scholars attempting to bridge the gap between 306b and the *Republic's* position have pointed mainly towards the reconciliation of the two virtues by the actions of the βασιλικός. So Klosko writes that "[t]he function of the Statesman in the *Statesman* does not seem far removed from that of the philosopher-kings in the *Republic* insofar as it pertains to educating the lower classes in the state".<sup>65</sup> This is correct, but it does not invalidate the fact that in the *Politicus* we have two specific virtues which are opposed to each other in a substantial way. Even if the two can be finally reconciled, the single fact that they are presented by Plato as being mutually exclusive at one stage of the moral development of the individual makes the universal application of the reciprocity of the virtues required by the Socratic position impossible to uphold. Guthrie has pointed out that *Republic* 375c ("ἐναντία γὰρ που θυμοειδὲς πράξει φύσις")<sup>66</sup> is similar to *Politicus* 306b, but the former phrase is a common sense statement not followed through in any way or playing any part in the shaping of the moral psychology of the *Republic*. He has also argued that Plato

uses "simplified language"<sup>67</sup> in the *Politicus*, but this is obviously too weak a suggestion to explain away a point made in quite unequivocal terms by Plato.

In 306b we undoubtedly have a serious compromise of the old Socratic position. Plato does not merely claim that to have one virtue does not entail having all the others. He makes the much stronger claim that, as far as ordinary people are concerned, there are two virtues which, by their very nature, cannot possibly be coinstantiated in the same individual. This "incompatibility thesis" is definitely at odds with the earlier Platonic faith in the reciprocity of the virtues and, as we noted, historical experience as a force at work in the closing part of the *Politicus* accounts for this major change. Because at a certain stage of the citizens' moral development we have two virtues inherently inimical to each other, Skemp's conclusion is formally correct. The *Politicus* as a whole cannot be regarded as upholding the Socratic unity of the virtues.

Nevertheless, Skemp's suggestion that this is a "frontal assault" on the *Republic's* theory of virtue might be an overstatement. Although the unity of virtue is compromised by the Stranger's dictum in 306b, it does not cease to exist on a higher level. Despite the fact that Plato nowhere argues specifically for this point, there are two reasons for accepting that the Scientific Ruler possesses such a perfect virtue: first, as already argued, this Ruler personifies the same ideal as the philosopher-kings of the



*Republic*; second, it is obvious that the Scientific Ruler needs to possess a full unified virtue if he is to succeed in the major task of reconciling the conflicting virtues of ordinary citizens. This indicates that Plato has abandoned the strict form of the Socratic belief that it is absolutely impossible for one to have one virtue without having all the others, but not the conviction that on the highest level of moral development there is one full virtue which includes all individual virtues.

It also appears that the state as a whole becomes fully virtuous through the intervention of the Scientific Ruler. One of the major functions of the Ruler is to make sure that the long-term policy of the state does not become either excessively aggressive or excessively pacifist, in other words that neither the ἀνδραγατοι nor the σώφρονες become predominant in the polis (the Ruler's knowledge of both the "essential measure" and the kairos is obviously critical in this respect). This carefully worked out balance, achieved as we saw over time, ensures that the unity of virtue exists (dynamically rather than statically) in the state. The polis can be said to possess a unified virtue not in the sense that all its citizens possess such a virtue, but in the sense that the Ruler reconciles the opposing tendencies of the two factions in the long run.

The reason why the unity of virtue in the state has to come into effect over time rather than immediately is that the Ruler, being human, cannot completely eliminate the

natural inclination of the citizens towards either ἀνδρεία or σωφροσύνη. There are two features of the *Politicus* which demonstrate that the Ruler's intervention checks the possible excesses of both the ἀνδρειοὶ and the σωφρονεῖς, but does not install a fully harmonized virtue in their souls. The first is the fact that the Ruler uses them differently in his συμπλοκή: those who tend towards ἀνδρεία are the warp of society, those who tend towards σωφροσύνη are the weft of it. It is obvious that this differentiation would not be valid if the citizens had achieved a full harmonization of their respective trends of character. Therefore although the education they receive from the Ruler does induce them to avoid taking an extremist stand and does transform their natural inclinations from being politically dangerous to being politically useful, it does not completely eliminate these inclinations. Some of the citizens remain predominantly brave ("ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνδρείαν μάλλον συντεινούσας [τὰς φύσεις]"-309b) and some predominantly temperate ("ἐπὶ τὸ κόσμιον"-309b).

The second feature of the dialogue which suggests that the citizens do not achieve full virtue is that the Ruler insists on intermarriage between the two parties, on the rationale that this will genetically balance their excessive tendencies. Again it is clear that the full harmonization of ἀνδρεία and σωφροσύνη cannot be achieved immediately or even within the same generation; it is rather a task to be aimed at over time.

But the fact that the common citizens do not achieve a fully unified virtue does not deprive the educational intervention of the Ruler of its moral significance. The very essence of this intervention is that it leads to a higher synthesis of the two opposing trends of character, to a harmonization between them. This harmonization, as we saw, is not perfect: even after having been educated, some of the citizens remain predominantly ἀνδρεῖοι and some predominantly σώφρονες. However, the moral level to which they are elevated is substantially superior to the level on which they were before. In 308e-309a, Plato explicitly excludes from the community those individuals who are unable to participate in the σύμμεξις (309b) of the πολιτικός. But those individuals possess exactly the crude, one-dimensional virtue that the Ruler helps the majority of the citizens to overcome. It becomes clear, therefore, that there is a vast difference between the two moral statuses: the crude virtue which characterizes common people before the appearance of the Scientific Ruler is unacceptable both politically and morally and those individuals who cannot raise themselves beyond it are excluded from the community. The rest are accepted, and this indicates that, despite being imperfect, their new, partially harmonized virtue, is rated by Plato as significant. The virtue they attain with the help of the Ruler constitutes not simply a development on the crude excessive virtues of 306b, but a positive supersession of them.

One can therefore identify three distinct conceptions of virtue operating in the *Politicus*. The first is the Ideal Ruler's virtue, perfect virtue grounded on perfect knowledge. At its opposite extreme stand the mutually exclusive courage and moderation. These parts of virtue taken singly are completely inadequate and either of them left unchecked can lead to disastrous political results. Mediated though through the Ideal Ruler's pedagogical programme these virtues can come to a partially harmonious coexistence informed by ἀληθῆς δόξα. The latter is clearly deficient in comparison to full knowledge and it cannot substitute for the absence of the latter. Still, however, it is a "divine bond" (309c) and, as we saw in section 2, it involves a certain degree of rationality. It therefore blocks the tendency of crude courage and moderation to lead to excess and it appears to put the average citizen of the *Politicus*, at least potentially, on a higher plane than the Producers of the *Republic* in terms of virtue.

From this point of view ἀληθῆς δόξα is the crucial notion on which Plato's concessions to the many are based in the *Politicus*. The strong authoritarian tendencies of the *Republic* are also present in the *Politicus* and retain considerable power. The Ideal Ruler with his absolute and unchallengeable authority and the Socratic argument from the arts with its consequence of a highly exclusive, almost unattainable virtue, form the core of the political structure of the *Politicus*. The analogy between weaving and

politics which Plato uses extensively in the work also has an unpleasant corollary which has escaped the attention of commentators. Having denied the idea that men can be, at least in the present cosmological era, "flocks" of an alleged super-human leader, Plato then depicts them as inanimate matter, wool to be woven by the Ideal Ruler. Perhaps no other metaphor in the history of political thought has expressed so vividly the expectation of the complete submission of the subjects to their ruler. There is no doubt that the dominant ideological commitment of the *Politicus* is to an aristocratic absolutism similar to that of the *Republic*.

In this dialogue, however, largely because of Plato's newly found interest in history, there is another side to the story. So the particular function of ἀληθῆς δόξα not only results in a slight improvement in democracy's position in the constitutional mapping of 302bff.,<sup>68</sup> but also signifies a more sympathetic Platonic attitude towards ordinary people and their abilities. The philosopher's stance as regards democracy is inextricably linked with his evaluation of the intellectual and moral status of common people. For this reason, any elevation of the latter is bound to reflect on democracy. And the fact that Plato is prepared to attribute a "divine" faculty, involving some degree of rational reasoning, to ordinary people, is an undoubted improvement in comparison to their positioning in his earlier political constructions.

It is also important that the society Plato describes in the last pages of the *Politicus* corresponds, quite probably, to the Athenian democracy of his time. This can be inferred from the fact that, as we saw, the opposition between an aggressive and a quietist policy was part of contemporary Athenian political debate. Another democratic characteristic of this society is that, with the exception of the Scientific king, there is no stratification. Plato does not suggest that either the brave or the moderate might be superior to their opponents in terms of their moral character. Both are equally dangerous when excessive and equally useful when tamed through ἀληθῆς δόξα. As Bobonich puts it "[t]he differences of character do not establish a hierarchy of virtue".<sup>69</sup> This entails that the society in question has an egalitarian element completely missing from the *Republic*.

It is also noteworthy that Plato expects at least one individual to possess both courage and moderation (311a). This is interesting because it provides the possibility of a leader who, without possessing the Ruler's ἐπιστήμη, might nevertheless be able to understand the point of view of both opposing factions and provide some mediation. In 302a Plato remarked, with some astonishment, that some cities, despite being guided by merely human devices, manage to survive and "stand firm". Does this mean that there are cases where non-scientific human wisdom, despite its deficiency in the face of ἐπιστήμη, might still be able to save a city?

Moreover, is ἀληθῆς δόξα absolutely dependent for its appearance on the Scientific Ruler, ("ἐμποιεῖν"-309d) or is there a human faculty, independent of the Ruler which constitutes the prerequisite for its acquisition? (In which case those eliminated, exiled or enslaved-308b-309a are the ones lacking this fundamental faculty). Given the rational character of ἀληθῆς δόξα, this faculty would be something like an inclination for rational thinking, and even though like ἀληθῆς δόξα it would be vastly inferior to ἐπιστήμη, it might still provide a useful guide for political action. There is not sufficient textual evidence in the *Politicus* to allow us to answer these questions. But the fact is that Plato's reasoning is not a priori dismissive of common people's abilities; the dialogue itself provides certain premisses out of which a purely human but still well-governed city might be produced. One could say that the questions asked above are answered, in a broad sense, in the *Laws*. Having definitely abandoned hope that the Ideal king will appear, in the *Laws* Plato attributes paramount political importance to law. Doxa is elevated to a position where it constitutes an acceptable alternative to knowledge itself. And the citizens' rationality is exalted in that in all political issues they have a voice through the organs of the state.

The roots of all these developments can be found in the *Politicus*. But perhaps the most significant single link between the two dialogues is Plato's emphasis on history. In

the *Politicus* Plato uses history as a legitimate means to reach political conclusions, but restricts its range: history is confined largely to the periphery of the argument with the Socratic idealistic conceptions of knowledge and virtue operating in the centre. But even this limited utilization of history is important. It provides some of the conclusions which the argument from the arts could not lead to (like the value of *νόμος* as second best) and it paves the way for the *Laws* where historical experience becomes the guiding principle of Plato's political philosophy.



## CHAPTER 3: THE LAWS

### I THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Although the ideological stance of the *Laws* can be described as aristocratic,<sup>1</sup> there are in this dialogue a number of elements that show a considerable modification of Plato's attitude towards democracy in comparison with previous works and especially the *Republic*. There are definitely degrees to the extent that one can be anti-democratic. From this point of view the *Republic* is Plato's extreme statement against democracy, whereas in the *Laws* his position is much more reserved. Not only is democracy not rejected out of hand, but certain features of it find their way into the administrative scheme that the philosopher envisages in his last work. Given that the economic structure of the last Platonic polis is undoubtedly a decisive factor for its political outlook, it would be useful to start our examination of it from this point.

The aristocratic character of the *Republic* is certified, from the economic point of view, by the fact that there is in this dialogue a specific citizen class that produces the necessary commodities for the maintenance of the two higher classes which are not themselves involved in any economically productive activity. The economic pattern of the *Laws*, however, is identifiably different. Here we have

five thousand and forty plots of land (737e), each allotted to the head of a citizen family.<sup>2</sup> The citizens are divided into four classes according to their movable property (744c). The crucial difference from the *Republic* is that none of these classes is sustained on the labour of the others. Therefore, from the very first moment, the economic relations between the citizen classes of Plato's "second best" state are set on a more egalitarian and consequently a less anti-democratic basis than in the *Republic*. Less anti-democratic, nevertheless, does not mean democratic: land-owning, on which the society of Magnesia is based, has been, historically, the cornerstone of aristocratic rule; and by insisting on an unalterable number of plots Plato is denying economic and social mobility, distinctive characteristics of democracy. The case seems rather to be that there is, in economic terms, a kind of balance between the two; aristocratic elements may in fact be stronger, since, as we shall see later, the higher classes have certain political advantages and their members are not obliged to work, whereas those belonging to the lower classes may be obliged to do so.

Even so, there is a shift from the straightforwardly aristocratic economic model of the *Republic*, where one citizen class had to produce for all the rest. One attempt to deny this shift has been made by Wood and Wood, who deny any change of mind on Plato's part between the *Republic* and the *Laws*. This is how they see the division of labour

operating in the latter dialogue: "the *Laws* represents a detailed programme for the establishment of a polis firmly grounded in the aristocratic division between non-labouring landowners and non-landowning labourers".<sup>3</sup> They add that in the *Laws* "society is without qualification divided between landowning citizenry and everyone else -slave, labourer, artisan or metic-merchant- whose primary purpose is to serve the landowning citizenry".<sup>4</sup> But there are some substantial objections which can be raised to this interpretation.

It is far from certain that Plato expects all his citizens to be labour-free. The one passage that seems to support Wood and Wood's interpretation occurs in 806d-e, where Plato asserts that the Magnesians are to get the artefacts they need from others (he probably means metics and foreigners) and that work in the fields will be left to slaves: "γεωργίαι δε ἐκδεδομέναι δούλοις" (806d). Now, if this passage is taken literally, it definitely backs Wood and Wood's assumption that the four classes "are not classes at all" in the economic sense.<sup>5</sup> However, it could well be nothing more than a general guideline, a commonplace: it most clearly corresponds to a practice widespread in the Greek world, and therefore it could be not a specific Platonic recommendation for the execution of agricultural work, but simply an empirical remark. This would explain why there are a number of points in the *Laws* that plainly contradict it:

First, Plato nowhere states that all citizens will be

labour-free; and it is very unlikely, if he really intended to associate citizenship with leisure, that he would simply by accident omit to refer to such a central feature of the social and economic structure of his society, especially given that there is so much emphasis placed on this point as regards the two higher classes in the *Republic*.

Second, although all plots are supposed to be equal, the citizens differ in the extent of their movable property, and therefore in the number of slaves they own. So, we can suppose either that the lower classes have just about enough slaves to cultivate their land and the higher classes more slaves than they actually need, or that the more prosperous citizens will own enough slaves, but the members of the lower classes will not, in which case they will have to make good this deficiency by working on their land themselves. The first alternative is at variance with Plato's deep sense of the "due proportion"<sup>6</sup> and would practically mean the existence in Magnesia of slaves that cannot be fully used in productive activities. So, the second one appears to be the most plausible.

Third, the agricultural laws of 842bff. are to be "ἐλευθέροις ἀνθρώποις μάλλον πρέποντες" (842d-ἐλευθέροις here refers to citizens alone),<sup>7</sup> and this formulation strongly indicates that there will be citizens working their land themselves. This indication becomes almost a certainty when, a few lines below in 842d the philosopher refers to the citizens as "γεωργοῖς δὲ καὶ νομεῦσι καὶ μελιττουργοῖς",

words that are far more likely to apply to the actual farmer, shepherd and bee-keeper than to a landlord who simply oversees his estate.

Finally, the clearest confirmation of the fact that there is a differentiation between the classes in the economic sphere (and most probably in labouring status) as well as in the political one comes at 756b-e: in the election of the *Bουλή* the participation of the two higher classes is compulsory; the third one has to vote only for the *βουλευτὰς* of the three higher classes; and the fourth for those of the two higher classes. But this would count only as negligence of civic duty if there was not a serious reason for the abstinence of the lower classes from one or two days of voting, and it is difficult to see what else this reason could be except that they are obliged to work.<sup>8</sup> It seems therefore that not only does Plato allow his citizens to engage in physical labour themselves, but he actually expects them to do so. Moreover, the differentiation of the four classes in the voting procedure indicates that they are not simply a decorative element in the *Laws* and thus it makes the "no classes at all" position difficult to uphold.

But it is not only the fact that certain categories of citizens are to engage in physical labour that makes the interpretation of the economic structure of the *Laws* as unqualifiedly aristocratic untenable.<sup>9</sup> It is also that this interpretation takes the exploitation of slave labour to be something that allows a distinction between democracy and

oligarchy. However, to the extent that the whole Greek world, irrespective of constitution, depended on slave labour, it is evidently wrong to assume this. Furthermore, it seems that it was democracies that developed the institution of slavery furthest in Classical Greece.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore wrong to assert, as Wood and Wood do, that in expecting slave labour to support his citizen community Plato reveals his commitment to a reactionary aristocratic position.

The existence in the *Laws* of citizen classes that are not aristocratic in the sense of being supported by the surplus of the production of the rest of the community, but that engage themselves in physical labour and still have a participatory role in the government of the city is not simply a slight deviation from a vital principle of the *Republic*. It opens the way for a Platonic constitution that draws partly on democratic practices and therefore entails a certain degree of acceptance of these practices. In order for this position to be sustained, however, one has to accept that, at least in Plato's case, it is the relations -social, economic and political-between citizens that determine the political character of a constitution rather than the relations between the citizen-body and the rest of the population, i.e. metics and slaves. From a modern point of view, of course, this is simply unacceptable. One cannot ignore the exploitation of large numbers of people, the metics and especially the slaves, when assessing questions

concerning Classical Greece. But within a society where the institution of slavery had almost the acceptance of a natural law,<sup>11</sup> it is inevitable that political issues are to be defined within the framework of the πόλις and the πόλις was by and large identified with its πολῖται.<sup>12</sup>

The automatic exclusion of metics and slaves from participation in the common affairs of the polis is plainly attested by historians of such different backgrounds as Finley and De Ste Croix. The first underlines the fact that civil strife, στάσις, the strongest Greek word referring to political contests "was by definition restricted to the citizen-body".<sup>13</sup> The second states bluntly that "[o]f course it was only adult male citizens of a polis who could indulge effectively in class struggle on the political plane".<sup>14</sup>

It is important to realize that for the Greeks of the Classical era the exclusion of metics and slaves from the political process was an unquestionable reality. The decisive political choice was one between oligarchy and democracy<sup>15</sup> and Greek political theory was primarily concerned with the antithesis of these two constitutional types. It is therefore reasonable, I think, to look into the relationship between the four citizen classes of Magnesia in order to define the political outlook of the *Laws*.

Nevertheless, one further distinction has to be drawn at this point. In his *Politics* Aristotle suggests that "καὶ γὰρ ὁ πολίτης ἀμφισβητεῖται πολλάκις· οὐ γὰρ τὸν αὐτοῦ ὁμολογοῦσι πάντες εἶναι πολίτην· ἔστι γὰρ τις ὃς ἐν

δημοκρατία πολίτης ὡν ἐν ὀλιγαρχίᾳ πολλάκις οὐκ ἔστι πολίτης" (1275a2-5). In this model, democracy and oligarchy are distinguished on the basis of how widely they confer the political prerogatives of citizenship. Aristotle is right in principle in making this suggestion as well as defining the citizen as the individual who is permitted to participate in the judicial and executive branches of government ("[π]ολίτης δ' ἅπλως οὐδενί τῶν ἄλλων ὀρίζεται μάλλον ἢ τῷ μετέχειν κρίσεως καὶ ἀρχῆς"-1275a22-23). But this does not entail (and Aristotle nowhere claims) that this is the end of the matter. First of all Aristotle himself admits that his definition applies to democracies, but not necessarily to other constitutions (1275b5-7). Secondly, Aristotle recognizes that specifying the status of the βαναυσοί can be a difficult problem. Although he formulates the question clearly ("[i]f, on the other hand, mechanics [τοὺς βαναύσους] should not be called citizens, in what class are they to be placed? They are not resident aliens [μέτοικος], neither are they foreigners [ξένος]"-*Politics* 1277b35-39), he has to go to great lengths to reach an answer, which is finally a historical one: he correctly remarks that different constitutions take a different stance on the issue: some (the democracies) give political rights to the banausics, others (the oligarchies) do not (1278a16-24). Aristotle approves of the latter: "ἡ δὲ βελτίστη πόλις οὐ ποιήσει βαναύσον πολίτην" (1278a8). However, a straightforward answer to Aristotle's own question would



presuppose the definition of the status of the βαναυσοί in terms of the social categories known in the ancient world. But this he is unable to provide; if they are neither citizens, as in his βελτίστη πόλις, nor metics or slaves, in which distinct social stratum can they be classified? In general terms, these three strata were the basic ones recognized in Classical Greece. The fact that Aristotle employs a historical/constitutional account to answer his own question asked in sociological terms originates in the fact that the social typology of his time did not treat the banausics as distinct from one of the three main groups. His final conclusion is that manual workers are treated as citizens in democracies and as metics in oligarchies. In this respect, they do not constitute a group whose position in society can be decided without reference to particular kinds of constitutions, and, furthermore, it seems that constitutions themselves can be defined by the status that they confer on the βαναυσοί. But the single fact that Aristotle recognizes the considerable difficulty involved in this issue shows that the question of on what groups citizenship should be bestowed was at his time a significant problem.

Despite the fact that it does not answer fully all the relevant questions,<sup>16</sup> Aristotle's definition does give an excellent account of what citizenship represented for the Greeks in practice. The philosopher is right to claim that the width of the social groups included in the citizen-body

is characteristic of a constitution. But this by no means entails that as soon as the citizen-body is defined, political problems cease to exist, or that the only political problem in the Greek world is where one draws the (irrefutably important) line that separates the citizens from the rest of the population. Very often the drawing of this line becomes the object of what for the Greeks is the most common political antithesis, the one between democracy and oligarchy; and this is a process in which the whole community of free and autochthonous residents of a city participates, whereas metics and slaves are unquestionably excluded. That the victorious party might deprive its opponents of their citizenship, is possible. But still, the crucial factor in this process is whether one is allowed to take part in the political struggle or not. This is the story that Thucydides fleshes out in his *History*. Democratic and oligarchic factions collide over power. The members of these parties might or might not be formally recognized as citizens, but, in any case, they are the ones who have the prerogative to take part in the political debate.

There is therefore a political problem which goes beyond the simple question who is to count as a "formal" citizen. In approaching questions concerning Greek political theory, one has to recognize that there is one particular section of the population-roughly, the free, autochthonous, male members of the community-which has the prerogative to participate in the political struggle. Whether all or only

some of these members of the community are recognized as "formal" citizens depends on a number of factors, mainly on the type of the constitution. But it is the relationship between the different social groups of such free and autochthonous male residents of a polis which primarily defines its political character.

These assertions do not contradict the Aristotelian model of citizenship, except if one takes it in the rather extreme form where it would suggest that only "formal" citizens are engaged in political disputes. But there is nothing in the *Politics* suggesting that Aristotle himself ever held this doctrine. As for Plato, the *Republic's* class structure makes it crystal clear that he allowed for quite significant differences of social and political status within the citizen-body itself.<sup>17</sup> So in the *Republic* we have "banausics" included in the citizen-body in a quite emphatic way and we are obliged to consider the relationship between citizen classes, not between citizens and non-citizens, in order to provide a political analysis of the work. As I have already argued, the latter can be no proper criterion because democrats and aristocrats alike used to take for granted the exclusion of non-citizens from the political process. The same applies to the *Laws*. It is the relationship among the four citizen classes which constitutes the political essence of the work; and since this relationship is much more complex than the straightforward aristocratic domination of the *Republic*, it is necessary to examine it in detail.

## II THE POLITICAL QUESTION

The administrative system of the *Laws* is characterized by the coexistence of democratic and aristocratic elements. Given the ideological orientation of Plato's political theory as it appears in the *Republic* and in the greater part of the *Politicus* (up to 300a), the simple presence of democratic aspects in the government structure of Magnesia demonstrates a shift in Plato's attitude towards democracy. But as a closer examination of this structure reveals, those democratic aspects are strongly counterbalanced by anti-democratic ones. It is this tentative balance between democratic and aristocratic elements that shapes the political character of the *Laws* more than anything else.<sup>18</sup>

As already suggested, in the *Republic* Plato's attitude towards democracy is one of uncompromising rejection, and, for most of its length, the *Politicus* seems to reinforce the principles established in the *Republic*. The Ideal Ruler of the *Politicus* (despite being himself only human (275b-c) and despite having to work with ordinary human beings, a recalcitrant material not always easy to handle) has "expert knowledge" and this brings him close to the philosopher-kings of the *Republic*. The authoritarianism of the *Politicus* is indeed grounded on the conception of a Ruler who possesses absolute metaphysical knowledge and whose authority cannot be challenged as a consequence.

But the *Politicus*, unlike the *Republic*, is not unqualifiedly authoritarian. Plato's emphasis on the political importance of law in the absence of philosophical knowledge, his insistence on the practical usefulness of ἀληθῆς δόξα, his approval of a society which (with the exception of the Ruler) is not stratified in terms of virtue and his increased interest in history are crucial features of the closing pages of the *Politicus* which decisively pave the way for the *Laws*. As regards Plato's position on democracy, it is clear that both the elevated role of doxa (which means that common people can have a stronger claim to political power) and the existence of a society whose citizens are not differentiated in moral terms indicate an increased Platonic acceptance of democracy. This development is related to the elevated status of history in Plato's later political thought, as it will become more obvious as we examine the distribution of power in the *Laws*.

This distribution falls into two parts. On the one hand there is the "formal" administrative system, elaborated in great detail from Book Four onwards, and, as it will be argued, largely shaped by historical experience. On the other hand there is the appearance, in the last pages of the dialogue, of a peculiar Platonic institution, the Nocturnal Council. With the emergence of this Council, metaphysical considerations that had for the most part of the work been subdued become predominant. The evaluation of the role of both the "formal" administration of Magnesia and of the

Nocturnal Council is critical for any interpretation of the *Laws*, and it is not an overstatement to suggest that their relationship by and large determines the whole outlook of the dialogue.

Our examination will start with the "formal" administrative system.

As we have seen, the first element that indicates Plato's deviation in the *Laws* from an orthodox aristocracy is the fact, proved by the passage in 842b-d and the other passages discussed in section one, that at least a substantial number of citizens will be working their own land, being therefore farmers rather than leisured aristocrats. This is not however in itself necessarily a democratic position. As Saunders has argued farming is not included in the banausic occupations that the aristocracy of the time used to look upon with contempt.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the trade mark of the Greek aristocracy in the Classical era is leisure and/or military training. By expecting a substantial number of his citizens to participate in agricultural production Plato evidently departs from the standard model of the aristocrat of his time. And this, given that the political prerogatives of the working citizens are not insignificant or non-existent as in the *Republic*, is already a concession to democracy.

This remark, however, can only have relative value. Plato's conciliatory attitude to democracy can only be proved or disproved by the distribution of power he

prescribes for Magnesia, i.e. by the nature of its administrative system.<sup>20</sup> In fact, there are elements of this system that demonstrate some relatively pro-democratic and even to an extent egalitarian inclinations.

The first of these elements is the role attributed to the Assembly. The latter is constituted by all who bear or have borne arms (753b), that is, practically, by all adult male citizens (764a).<sup>21</sup> The constitutional role of the Assembly is nowhere elaborated in any detail.<sup>22</sup> Its main prerogative is to elect the officials of the state (753bff.). Apart from that it has jurisdiction over crimes against the state (767e-768a) (a "function of considerable importance" according to Morrow)<sup>23</sup> and it must approve any change in the laws (772c). It can also extend the time that a metic can stay in the country (a rather insignificant function-850b).

Most commentators seem to agree that the authority of the Assembly in Plato's state is substantially restricted in comparison with that of Assemblies in the Greek world at that time. Stalley writes that "the new state's most striking departure from the practice of fourth-century Athens will be in the power bestowed on the magistrates ... In the Athens of Plato's day, ultimate authority rested with the Assembly and the large popular juries".<sup>24</sup> Morrow talks about the "limitations that Plato places upon the traditional functions of the assembly and council".<sup>25</sup> Klosko is the most explicit in this respect. After enumerating the functions of the Assembly referred to above he adds: "[i]t

is likely that the Assembly is also meant to have additional powers, especially in the field of foreign policy. Plato neglects to assign responsibility for such matters as war and peace and alliances. But since these were prerogatives of the Athenian Assembly, it is reasonable to assume that they were intended for the Assembly in Magnesia. Even with these functions added, however, the Magnesians Assembly is but a shadow of its Athenian counterpart".<sup>26</sup>

These views are no doubt justifiable to a large extent. It is beyond question that Plato strips the Assembly of vital tasks it performed in contemporary democracies. This analysis, however, fails to do justice to the fact that Plato's concession to democracy in accepting an Assembly in Magnesia is far from trivial. It is vital to realize that had he accepted a constitutional role for his Assembly similar to that of Athens, in Klosko's own words "an extreme democracy",<sup>27</sup> Plato would have no real choice but to create a predominantly democratic state. Neither is the constitutional power of the Magnesians ἐκκλησία negligible. In a surprisingly modern way Plato creates a constitution where the people (of course non-citizens excluded) have the major prerogative of electing their officials. This of course comes closer in spirit to modern representative democracy than to Greek democracy. More specifically, there are two features of Greek democracy that are absent from Magnesia. One is the use of the lot for major assignments (we will examine the issue of the lot shortly); the other is



the fact that in Greek democracies the Assembly was unquestionably the ultimate authority of the state. From the basic functions that guaranteed this constitutional supremacy, Plato retains two pivotal ones: the appointment of the magistrates<sup>28</sup> and the military officers of the state and the ultimate responsibility for foreign policy (Klosko is probably correct on this issue). On the other hand, Plato does not accept that magistrates should be accountable to the Assembly. Instead he creates a special body of examiners. These must be "divine" men because the survival of the city depends on them (945c-d). But despite the fact that they will be elected by the whole citizen-body (945eff.), the examiners do undertake a function that, had it been given to the Assembly, would have made the latter practically the sovereign institution in the state.<sup>29</sup>

Even though the Magnesian ἐκκλησία does not have the extensive authority of its democratic counterpart, it cannot be considered a mere shadow of the latter. No matter how many matters are placed in the hands of magistrates, the Assembly still retains some principal functions. One could say that power originates from it, in the sense that it chooses the magistrates. And the fact that Plato ascribes to it the authority to try crimes against the state and effectively to block changes in the laws is of no minor importance. Its sovereignty is restricted not so much by the matters placed in the hands of the magistrates but by the fact that these magistrates are not accountable to it.<sup>30</sup> If

they were, the Assembly would have been able both to give power and check its use. Even as the matter stands, however, the part of the Assembly in the *Laws* is more than simply decorative. Looked at against the background of previous dialogues, it does represent a movement in a democratic direction.

This democratic tendency is, however, partially undermined by the procedure defining attendance in the Assembly. Plato makes attendance compulsory for the two higher classes, which are otherwise threatened with a fine, but voluntary for the third and fourth classes which are not obliged to participate unless they are instructed to do so "ἔκ τινος ἀνάγκης" (764a-b). The measure is designed to control the extent of popular participation in the Assembly and as such it is straightforwardly oligarchic.<sup>31</sup> Morrow is not convincing when he attempts to play down the political character of the measure: "Plato's intentions may be oligarchical, ... but another motive that is certainly present in his thought ... is that attendance at the assembly would be more of a burden for the poorer citizens than for the richer ones".<sup>32</sup> To suggest that poor citizens might find it difficult to participate regularly in the Assembly is clearly in accordance with the division of labour that Plato prescribes for Magnesia. But this is not so much a "motive" for deliberately diminishing the participation of lower classes in politics as it is an excuse for it. Democracies had handled this problem by

offering daily subsidy for attendance at the Assembly and Plato was definitely aware of the fact.<sup>33</sup> Thus, although the economic structure of Magnesia may make Plato's suggestion seem reasonable, in no way does it cancel out its political nature.

It is more this limitation on participation in the Assembly than its restricted authority (which, as we have seen, is not so restricted after all) that undercuts the democratic tendencies existing in this section of Plato's administrative system. The philosopher counterbalances the influence of the ἐκκλησία, basically a democratic element in the constitution, not by attributing to it a shadowy role, but by effectively allowing it to be dominated by the higher classes. In a fashion typical of the *Laws*, however, the democratic aspect of the Assembly is in the end not completely obliterated. In the exercise of two of its most pivotal prerogatives, the election of the thirty-seven νομοφύλακες and the approval of any change in the laws, Plato wants the participation of all citizens (753b and 772d respectively).<sup>34</sup>

The full δῆμος takes part also in the election of the candidates of the members of the two higher classes that are to sit on the Council. However, the fourth class is excused from participating in the election of the members of the third and fourth classes and the third class from the election of the candidates of the fourth class. By adopting this scheme of participation Plato both gives increased

political influence to the higher classes and indicates that the election of the candidates of these classes is more important than the one of the candidates of the lower classes. So, in two respects this can be described as an oligarchic measure.<sup>35</sup>

Of oligarchic colour too is the fact that the Council, despite being modelled on the actual Athenian βουλή,<sup>36</sup> keeps only a part of the functions performed by its Athenian counterpart: it controls the everyday business of the state, it receives foreign representatives, it summons the Assembly (758a-d) and it probably prepares its agenda;<sup>37</sup> but it is stripped of a number of important assignments that belonged to it in Athens and that are attributed to other officials in Magnesia.<sup>38</sup> So, for instance, the general supervision of public buildings goes to the ἀστυνόμοι (763c-d), the politically crucial function of examining outgoing officials to the εὐθυνοί (945b-c) and though the Athenian Council enjoyed judicial power Plato does not ascribe to its Magnesian counterpart any similar role.

But the oligarchic tendencies running through Plato's creation of his Council do not prevail uncontested. In one important respect (maybe the most important) the Council appears to be constructed on a conception that lies midway between oligarchy and democracy: it is to consist of ninety members from each class, therefore establishing a kind of balance between rich and poor; Plato here deviates from normal Athenian practice,<sup>39</sup> but for a particular political

reason: he wants to prevent the kind of civil unrest that originates in the opposition of the rich and the poor. In this respect he departs from his insistence on a strictly stratified society; and the oligarchic standards applied in the election of the Council are counterbalanced by its defined class-composition designed to conciliate the two factions whose opposition is the most likely cause of civil unrest. True, the βουλή, like the ἐκκλησία, is not of very great significance in the administrative system of Magnesia. Yet, both of them have their relative value;<sup>40</sup> and it is quite obvious that cooperation between them could allow them (and the lower classes which have political expression mainly through them) a good degree of participation in the decisions of the community.

Plato's conscious attempt to nullify a potentially fatal threat to the internal stability of his community by bringing together the rich and the poor is closely linked with his deliberate policy to prevent extreme wealth or poverty by legislative measures (744e-745a). The philosopher shows a keen historical insight in recognizing the strife between rich and poor as the main source of potential political unrest in a city. To a considerable extent, the political history of Greece in the fifth and the first half of the fourth century B.C. consists of conflicts between rich oligarchs and low class democrats and of cities controlled by politically inimical factions. Furthermore, this was exactly the problem that was confronted by Solon,

the Athenian legislator of the early sixth century, and as we will soon see, Plato in the *Laws* is in many ways indebted to the ancient νομοθέτης.

We encounter a very similar interplay between different political principles when we come to the administration of justice. Plato—despite his statement in 766d that "οὔτε πολλούς ὄντας ῥάδιον εἶ δικάζειν οὔτε ὀλίγους φάυλους"—retains the democratic popular courts that were predominant in Athens but he severely curtails their range of authority. The first level on which any dispute might be settled is one where the opposing parties choose some of their neighbours as "διαιτηταί" (956b-c). On a second level any party that is not satisfied by the ruling might apply to a popular court (956c).<sup>41</sup> In case of another appeal the case is presented to the court of select judges (956c-d), a court consisting of one member of each officialdom lasting more than a year; this member will be chosen by his fellow-officials (767c). As far as crimes against the state are concerned, Plato follows the principle that these are crimes against each citizen separately and gives authority to the Assembly to try these cases (767e-768a). The interrogation ("βάσανον"—768a) is, however, entrusted to three senior officials.<sup>42</sup>

In the formal juridical system of the *Laws* then, we find again a conscious Platonic attempt to bind together democratic and oligarchic practices. Oligarchic tendencies are promoted further by the fact that magistrates are

entitled to try offenses that belong to the area of their responsibility. In Plato's words, "[e]very official ... sometimes has to set up as a judge as well" (767a). Another aristocratic aspect of the juridical system is that some particular crimes against the state will be tried not by the Assembly but by the nomophylakes and the select judges together.<sup>43</sup> Morrow also includes in the oligarchic features of Plato's construction the fact that voting is to be open, but his reasoning for this view is somewhat precarious. He writes that "in any society the aristocrats worthy of the name are likely to be surer of the grounds for their opinions and more fearless in expressing them than the common man".<sup>44</sup> But this is not a proposition that really covers any society. Few orators in Thucydides seem to have the supreme self-confidence of a democratic leader like Pericles (2.35-2.46) or even Alcibiades (6.16-6.18). Moreover, open voting is closely connected with Plato's principle that any officials, including judges, should be accountable for their decisions; this is stated in the most positive terms in 761e: "δικαστῆν δὲ καὶ ἄρχοντα ἀνυπεύθυνον οὐδένα δικάζειν καὶ ἄρχειν δεῖ" (see also 846b and 946e). This exceptionally modern provision, clearly designed to protect any citizen from miscarriages of justice, has a particularly democratic aura and it is another indication of the tentative political balance which Plato seeks to achieve in the administrative system of Magnesia.

In conclusion, Klosko's statement that "[i]n his

treatment of Magnesian courts ... Plato creates democratic institutions but limits their power"<sup>45</sup> is a correct assertion as far as it goes. Going into further detail in the juridical system we find the same interaction of opposing political principles that we noticed in other areas. But the final decision has to be that oligarchic schemes ultimately get the better of democratic intentions. The most crucial feature of the whole construction seems to be that, in comparison to a democratic state, Magnesian legislation gives more judicial power to the magistrates than it leaves with the *δημος*.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, this is not an unqualified aristocracy. One has only to remember how much the accountability of all officials is at odds with the spirit of the *Republic*.

The issue that perhaps typifies better than any other Plato's stance with regard to democracy in the *Laws* is the use of the lot. The lot is used in the appointment of many of the officers of the state. But it is never (except for the appointment of priests-759b)<sup>47</sup> used alone. There is always a procedure of election that brings the number of the candidates to a certain low point; and the lot is only used in the last stage where a number of candidates (presumably of equal competence) have been shortlisted through a process of election. So for example in the selection of the Council the lot is employed to reduce the number from one hundred and eighty to ninety for each property class (756e); but in such a procedure it is obvious that it is the first stage,



the election, that is important, since at this stage the large majority of citizens is eliminated. Because Plato uses the lot in such a way its political significance is next to zero.<sup>48</sup> (In the case of the powerful nomophylakes and the military officials it is not used at all-753bff.).

From the point of view of political utilitarianism, i.e. measuring the result of the use of the lot on the politics of Magnesia, it appears that here Plato makes little more than an empty gesture towards democracy. The question that then arises is why he uses the κληρος at all. Plato gives an exceptionally clear answer to this question: in 756e-758a he contrasts arithmetical equality (giving equal shares to unequals) with geometrical or proportionate equality (giving to everybody his due). Plato confirms the superiority of the latter kind of equality which "Διός γάρ δὴ κρίσις ἐστὶ" (757b) and asserts that this is the kind of equality that should be employed in politics (757c). So far we are on ground familiar from the *Republic*, where democracy is viciously attacked for putting into practice arithmetical equality (557a, 561a-e and especially 558c). Unlike the *Republic*, however, Plato is ready in the *Laws* to accept that, because of the possible discontent of the many ("δυσκολίας τῶν πολλῶν ἕνεκα"-757e) and in order to avoid στάσεις, arithmetical equality must also be taken into account. Plato makes it abundantly clear that this is only a half-hearted concession to the many: "... though force of circumstances compels us to employ both sorts of equality,

we should employ the second [the arithmetical one], which demands good luck to prove successful, as little as possible" (757e-758a).

These passages provide the key to Plato's use of the lot in the *Laws*. It is not that the lot is indispensable for good government: it is rather a burden for it. So it has to be used as little as possible, just to the point where it will keep the masses happy. This attitude evidently explains the practical insignificance of the κληρος in the dialogue. In terms of the development of Plato's political thought, however, the passages referred to above signify a real change of course in comparison with the *Republic*. Plato is now ready to recognize, with increased political realism, that the people by and large have a potential claim to a certain degree of power and that concessions have to be made to the δῆμος to guarantee political stability. So the use of the lot marks not so much a simple political measure as the recognition by Plato of the principle of the possible (even if limited) political usefulness of arithmetical equality, an intrinsic part of democratic ideology.<sup>49</sup> From the point of view of Plato's position on democracy it is the principle that is far more important than its political implementation.<sup>50</sup>

On the other hand, the extensive use of election in Magnesia can be interpreted as a step in a democratic direction, at least in comparison with the *Republic*. Most commentators on the *Laws*, following Aristotle,<sup>51</sup> emphasize

that election was in Greece an essentially oligarchic procedure while the use of the lot was democratic.<sup>52</sup> Although this is generally correct, there are two points that can be made on the issue. First, even extreme democracies like Athens did not depend on the lot for some of the most influential offices of the state that were filled by election, notably those of the Generals; Pericles, for example, who led Athens for almost half a century and who in Thucydides' famous phrase transformed the Athenian constitution to "λόγῳ μὲν δημοκρατία, ἔργῳ δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ πρώτου ἀνδρὸς ἀρχή" (2.65), exercised his authority by being repeatedly elected General as opposed to being chosen by lot. Therefore the Aristotelian assertion is not an absolute rule. Second, by giving the citizen-body as a whole the prerogative to elect its magistrates, Plato does give them a certain degree of political participation; and this is totally at odds with the political position of the producing class of the *Republic*. From this point of view, and given that election is not exclusively an oligarchic procedure in the context of Greek politics, Plato does move in a relatively democratic direction in the *Laws*.

Finally, one especially important characteristic of Plato's administrative system is that election to the really important offices (those of the nomophylakes, the examiners, the official responsible for education and the select judges)<sup>53</sup> is open to all classes. Plato nowhere suggests that property qualifications will affect in any way the election

of these officials, whereas secondary posts like the ἀστυνόμοι and the ἀγορανόμοι (763d-e) or the temple-treasurers (759e) are to be filled by the higher classes. This is an evidently democratic feature of Plato's administrative system, since, at least in terms of eligibility for election to high office, all citizens have the same opportunities.

To conclude: throughout the constitutional system of Magnesia Plato mixes democratic and oligarchic devices. In most cases, the final composition of the deliberative organs of the state is such that oligarchic principles check the democratic tendencies that find their way into the system. Despite this fact, however, democratic practices do play a part in the Magnesian administrative structure. So, there is an Assembly in Magnesia, but, unlike a democratic Assembly it has limited authority and it is not expected that officials are to be accountable to it. Also, by making attendancy to it compulsory for the higher classes and voluntary for the lower ones Plato allows a predominance of aristocratic elements in it. Similarly, the higher classes play a larger role in the election of the Council. The most important judicial decisions are placed in the hands of select judges; and election, to a certain extent though not absolutely an aristocratic procedure, is employed as the dominant mode of appointing officials. Finally, in comparison with a democratic state, Magnesia has far too many decisions resting with magistrates rather than with the

Assembly.

All these features severely limit the democratic dispositions of the *Laws*, but they do not eliminate them. The administrative system of Magnesia still includes some democratic elements: the Assembly, despite its restricted role, is still the organ of the state from which power originates, since it elects the magistrates; the Council is to consist of equal numbers from each class, Plato's intention being to conciliate the four classes; popular courts are retained though they are not entrusted with capital charges; the lot is used in what is actually more of a symbolic gesture towards the poorer classes than a politically vital decision; a procedure is established by means of which every citizen can individually call into question an official's use of power; finally, and most significantly, the major officialdoms are open to all classes. These aspects of the political structure of the *Laws* cannot be ignored. Taken cumulatively, they prove that Plato goes some way in the dialogue towards a moderately favourable assessment of the political characteristics of democracy.

### III THE SOLONIAN MODEL

The question which follows from this political analysis of Magnesia's administration is what factor accounts for Plato's shift in his disposition towards democracy. Of course his tendency to be practical in his political proposals is evident in the late works, notably in the closing section of the *Politicus*. But this is only a very general way to describe the subject. In the *Laws* Plato is not simply practical. He increasingly allows history to come into play in the shaping of his political philosophy and, moreover, the political system of the *Laws* is based on a plainly historical model: the legislation of Solon.<sup>54</sup>

Unlike Plato who contemplated politics in a theoretical way, Solon was presented with practical and concrete socio-political problems. Having won fame as a military figure in Athens' war with Megara and being a recognized poet at a time when poets had significant authority over moral and political issues, he was asked to arbitrate between the landowning aristocracy and the peasants, the two factions being on the verge of civil war. By following a middle course, Solon rescued the civic peace. He abolished old debts and forbade enslavement for debt, therefore removing an unbearable burden from the poor (the famous *σεισάχθεια*). On the other hand he did not go as far as redistributing all Athenian land and the old aristocracy was

allowed to retain much of its power. He also established an administrative system the similarities of which to Plato's Magnesia are, as we shall see, indeed striking.

Given the context of Solon's reformation and his own status of an εὐπατριδης of rather moderate means<sup>55</sup> the question arises whether Solon by his legislation effectively favoured one of the conflicting parties. Was he an aristocrat trying to save his own class from the consequences of a popular rising? A democrat giving rights to the masses and initiating the process that eventually ended up in the full democracy of the fifth century? Or was he a disinterested arbitrator trying to preserve a fragile civil peace? The question was fiercely debated in Plato's time, with the moderate oligarchs and the democrats both claiming Solon to be a man holding their own convictions.<sup>56</sup> In his *Constitution of Athens* Aristotle describes Solon as the first leader of the democratic party (28.2), but in a number of other places he emphasizes that he held middle ground between the opposing factions.<sup>57</sup>

Plato's opinion on this issue is difficult to define with certainty, because there is no explicit statement in the *Laws* of how he saw Solon's political position. The fact that Aristotle takes him to be essentially a moderate might serve as an indication, since Aristotle was in the Academy at the time of the composition of the *Laws*.<sup>58</sup> Most probably, Plato did not conceive of Solon as a democrat. Wherever the name of the legislator appears in the Platonic corpus Solon is

praised either as a wise man, as a poet, or as a good legislator.<sup>59</sup> Given the way Plato's Socrates abuses democratic leaders in *Gorgias* 515cff., and Plato's overall stance on democracy, it is very unlikely that the philosopher would praise Solon had he conceived him as a democrat. On the other hand, the political structure of the *Laws* which is directly related to Solon's measures can by no means be defined as an extreme oligarchy. The most plausible hypothesis, then, is that Plato saw Solon as an arbitrator and a moderate conservative and this brings his understanding of him close to that of Aristotle.

The most obvious case where Plato follows in the footsteps of Solon is in the employment of the four *τιμήματα*.<sup>60</sup> Whether Solon invented this categorization or he found it already existing is unclear.<sup>61</sup> It does not really matter very much for our argument here, however, because even if there were four classes before Solon he definitely changed their constitutional role and it is exactly in this respect that Plato adopts his system. The four classes are in both cases defined in terms of wealth. The fact that in Solon's case wealth is measured on the basis of annual income but in Plato's case on the basis of movable property owned is not a real difference, because in an agrarian society like Athens in the sixth century the income of an individual is bound to reflect his (land) property and therefore in both cases property comes to be the decisive criterion. The important point is that both Solon and Plato



use the distinction between the four classes for political purposes. As we have seen, Plato makes the participation of the two higher classes in the Assembly compulsory and gives them a larger share of the vote for the Council; he also considers that the election of the members of the Council representing the higher classes is more important and requires the participation of all citizens. Finally, he leaves certain offices (though minor ones) to be filled exclusively by the members of those classes. Solon, on the other hand, made officials eligible from the three higher classes and he left intact the role of the Areopagus and the magistrates, thereby allowing the wealthy a predominant role in common affairs.<sup>62</sup> There is of course a difference in that Solon restricted eligibility to office to the three higher *τιμήματα*, whereas Plato left it open to all. This, however, can be explained; as Ehrenberg has demonstrated, the original distinction out of which classes arose was their ability to provide their arms.<sup>63</sup> The fourth class in Solon's constitution, the *θητες*, were not able to do that and this was the reason for their exclusion from civil service and, correspondingly, eligibility for office. On the contrary, in Plato's state all classes are able to provide arms. This is one cardinal reason, along with the need for civic peace, why Plato forbids anybody to fall below a certain limit of poverty (744c). From this point of view, Plato departs from Solon in form but not in content. In both cases the rule that applies is that he who is able to do military service

should be entitled to hold office. Or, to put it another way, there are no *θητες* in Magnesia.

Plato's modelling of the administrative system of Magnesia on Solonian precepts becomes evident as we examine the roles of certain deliberative organs of the state. One of the major innovations of Solon, and one that opened the way to democracy is that he allowed all citizens to participate in the Assembly and Plato follows him closely in that.<sup>64</sup> He also literally copies Solon in giving to the *ἐκκλησία* the prerogative of electing the officials of the state,<sup>65</sup> which means that the Magnesian Assembly performs a constitutional role very similar, if not identical, with its counterpart in Solonian Athens. Furthermore, Plato adopts the procedure that Solon utilized for the election of the officials. This method, known as *κλήρωσις ἐκ προκρίτων*, consists in voting until a small number of candidates is elected and then employing the lot to choose among those; as we saw, with the important exceptions of the election of the *nomophylakes* and the examiners, Plato uses this method extensively.

The Platonic Council is also part of a Solonian inheritance. Solon invented this Council ("*ἐποίησε*" in Aristotle's words)<sup>66</sup> and he probably intended it to check the power of the older aristocratic Council of the Areopagus.<sup>67</sup> We know very little about the constitutional function of the Solonian Council and therefore a detailed comparison of it with the Platonic one is practically impossible.

Nevertheless, there are two aspects of their relationship that have to be emphasized: first, in adopting the Council Plato does not simply adhere to Athenian tradition, but effectively accepts a state organ that initiated <sup>was</sup> by Solon; second, the number of the members of the Council that the philosopher prescribes (three hundred and sixty) is closer to the Solonian Council (four hundred) than to the later Cleisthenian one (five hundred). Plato probably tried roughly to square his number with the days of the year.

A difference between Plato's Βουλή and its Athenian counterpart is that the former is elected on a class basis as opposed to a tribal one. This, however, is in accordance with Plato's general neglect of the tribes in his constitution, and it is this neglect which explains Plato's departure from his model in this respect.

Plato's juridical system is of a particularly Solonian colour as well. Solon was the first to establish popular courts (Aristotle says that this was one of his most democratic measures and that it made the people dominant in the city,<sup>68</sup> but this could hardly be Solon's own intention and Aristotle is probably judging the measure from its historical development after Solon). It is of great significance that Plato retains these popular courts in Magnesia despite the fact that he acknowledges that the many are unable to pass correct judgement (766d), in a sense paying political tribute to their originator. Furthermore, it seems likely that the Solonian system of the

administration of justice was very close to the one created by Plato, though lack of information about the former does not allow the drawing of indisputable conclusions. In the *Laws* the first level on which disputes are settled is by a neighbour-arbitrator (956c), a procedure definitely existing in Athens at Plato's time. Whether it can be traced as far back as Solon is unclear though it seems likely.<sup>69</sup> What is certain is that there is a clearcut analogy between Solon and Plato in the way the rest of the judicial apparatus functions. So in both cases popular courts are entrusted with minor offences, whereas capital crimes go to a higher court, in Solon's case the Areopagus, in Plato's the select judges (956c-d). It is obvious that both attribute to their respective higher judicial authorities a similar range of cases, like homicide and conspiracy against the constitution.<sup>70</sup> In more than one way, then, Plato's system is informed by the Solonian one.

One of the most democratic measures of the ancient legislator<sup>71</sup> that Plato follows is the provision that every citizen can bring to a court a case where another citizen has been damaged in any way. This was no doubt intended to promote the legal cover that the poorer citizens enjoyed and to prevent discrimination in judicial matters. Plato retains this institution (928b, 932d) and also creates a provision that any citizen can accuse a judge for a wrong decision and bring his case to court. Because every magistrate in Magnesia operates also as a judge under certain

circumstances (767e), this practically means that common citizens are given a powerful device of controlling excesses in the conduct of their officials. Even Plato's proposal that no magistrate should be irresponsible (761e) is strongly Solonian in spirit.

Where Plato fails to adhere to Solon's model is in the accountability of the magistrates. Solon made the latter directly accountable to the people<sup>72</sup> and this was a democratic move the significance of which can hardly be overestimated: the *δημος* had now the authority both to appoint magistrates and to control their holding of office. We have already noted how much the absence of public accountability restricts the democratic outlook of Plato's state, especially as it was out of measures like this that the Athenian democracy developed.

This difference, however, despite its significance, does not cancel out the fact that Plato's political construction is largely modelled on the Solonian one. Not only are there the many unquestionable similarities between the two indicated above, which cover almost the whole of the administrative function of the state; there is also the fact that Plato employs a political principle which is essentially (though not uniquely) Solonian: the principle of the "mixed constitution".

From the very nature of his political assignment Solon would have failed if he did not keep the balance between the aristocrats and the people. The former would not have

allowed their power to evaporate without dynamic protest, the latter would hardly have borne their suppression much longer. The greatness of Solon consisted largely in that not only did he realize the exact situation, but he consciously chose to adopt policies that would give something to each faction: he thoughtfully took a middle course.<sup>73</sup> In his *Politics* Aristotle says that the Athenian legislator is praised by some people for breaking up the "λίαν ἄκρατον" oligarchy and for masterfully mixing ("μειξάντα") the constitution (1273b37-39). Aristotle also defends Solon from the charge that he brought about the extreme democracy of later times: this was the work of other men and of circumstances (1274a2ff.). The essence of Aristotle's remarks is that Solon created a "mixed constitution", mixing oligarchic and democratic elements, a view definitely supported by Solon's poems themselves. Aristotle himself seems to be approving of the views of those "people" who took Solon's constitution to be a "mixed" one, and, as Morrow suggests, Aristotle probably means here by "people" Plato and his entourage in the Academy: "the suggestion is made at least plausible by the fact that in the *Laws* Plato points out the danger of having unmixed offices, and insists throughout on the necessity of a moderate -or "mixed"-constitution".<sup>74</sup> This not only squares with Plato's admiration for Solon throughout the corpus of his dialogues, but establishes a relationship between the legislations of the two-one imaginative, one real-which goes deeper than the

resemblances between their administrative systems. In fact, this view would be tenable even if Aristotle did not refer to Plato in this passage. There is little doubt that Solon did endeavour to create a legislation that balanced oligarchic and democratic elements, and which therefore unquestionably fell under the description of a "mixed" constitution. In this sense Plato follows him not only in the particulars of his legislation, but also in its basic principle.

The theory of a "mixed constitution" did not begin with Solon. Despite his fame and consequent influence Solon was not a political theorist in any consistent way. It appears that the idea of a "μεικτή πολιτεία" must have been a current, though largely undefined political ideal in the fifth century, if not earlier, applied to politics by men like Theramenes. Somewhat anachronistically men like Solon and Lycurgus were given credit for being the first to employ it, in Solon's case justifiably so.

In insisting on the need for a mixed πολιτεία, then, Plato again follows in the footsteps of Solon. But he significantly widens the range of this conception.<sup>75</sup> In a long historical narrative Plato describes how Argos, Messene and Sparta created a Peloponnesian confederacy. The first two, however, soon declined because their kings violated the laws they had sworn to obey. Only Sparta retained its political prowess due to the successful combination of three separate authorities, the two kings, the gerousia and the

ephors (691d-692b). The secret of its success was that the combination of different authorities secured τὸ μέτρον, the due measure (691d) in political power. Sparta had a moderate constitution with no authority left unchecked.

Sparta's example serves as an introduction to Plato's assertion, stated in 693d, that there are two mother-constitutions, monarchy and democracy, the former typified by Persia and the latter by Athens. "It is absolutely vital for a political system to combine them" Plato says "if it is to enjoy freedom and friendship allied with good judgement". Plato goes on to narrate how Persia declined from a moderate monarchy to a despotic one (694a) and how Athens similarly was transformed from a city where people lived "in willing subjection to the laws" (698c) to one where unreigned freedom prevailed. The rationale of the myth is that both Persia and Athens did well under moderate political systems, but they both decayed when they moved to extremes (701e).<sup>76</sup>

In a clear demonstration of his interest in history in the *Laws*, Plato produces the theory of the mixed constitution, to a large extent the informing principle of his political system, from a historical narrative. This principle, stated explicitly in 756e in the form that a constitution must always be in the middle between a monarchy and a democracy, shapes his political construction along with the specific historical patterns he adopts, the latter coming mainly from Solon. The constant interplay of



democratic and oligarchic devices in the political structure of Magnesia can be seen, in the light of this doctrine, as a deliberate Platonic attempt to keep the constitution balanced. From the same principle also originates Plato's continuous preoccupation with providing means of checking the authority of each magistrate, since any abuse of power will essentially violate the mixed constitution that he is at such pains to establish. Aristotle has often been criticized for his remarks in *Politics* 1265b26-28 and 1266a5ff. that the constitution of the *Laws* combines oligarchy and democracy rather than monarchy and democracy.<sup>77</sup> Most commentators on the *Laws* agree that Plato means with "monarchical" not a literal king present in the state, but the implementation of a principle that will counterbalance democracy and the freedom that was historically associated with it. So Von Fritz finds the monarchical principle to be embodied by the Nocturnal Council,<sup>78</sup> Morrow by the nomophylakes, the examiners and the select judges together,<sup>79</sup> Stalley thinks it means respect for the law in general<sup>80</sup> and Klosko takes it to be applied in the combination of the democratic principle of freedom from arbitrary authority with powerful magistrates and of the lot with election.<sup>81</sup> Now the problem with Von Fritz's interpretation is that the Nocturnal Council, although in a sense the most powerful institution in the state, does not participate straightforwardly in the administration of Magnesia; therefore it is not the most obvious embodiment of the

monarchical principle which is clearly connected by Plato with the administrative system (the remark in 756e occurs in the context of the election of the Council). From this point of view Morrow's suggestion is more plausible. Stalley's proposal is too general. Why should respect for law occur only in monarchies? Finally Klosko's position makes sense, like Morrow's one, but, since Plato himself does not give enough clues as to what exactly he implies by monarchy in this context, any suggestion has to be speculative. Overall, Klosko might be closer to Plato's intentions, since his hypothesis is based on a scheme (protection from arbitrary power-strong government) which is confirmed by the political structure of the *Laws*.

One can find both ethical and metaphysical analogies to the Theory of the Mixed Constitution. Persian despotism and Athenian freedom are ethical qualities that need to be mediated because otherwise they can be destructive, as the passage in 701e suggests. Morrow points out the Pythagorean influence on Plato in relationship with the theory of the Mixed Constitution<sup>82</sup> and the latter is probably connected with the art of essential measurement which is vital for the political art in the *Politicus* 273bff. In the *Laws* Plato strives to achieve in politics the "due measure" emphasized in the *Politicus*.

But this theory is, in the *Laws*, primarily political and practical. It is instantiated by history and supported by historical examples. In a sense the whole of Book Three,

filled with historical material, serves to introduce this doctrine that is later carefully instilled in the political structure of Magnesia. By originating in history and then being used as a central principle in a practical political proposal, the theory of the "Mixed Constitution" becomes the vehicle of Plato's partial change of disposition towards democracy. The abandonment of the absolute metaphysics of the *Republic* as a justification for political proposals in favour of a principle that emphasizes moderation explains this shift. But it is the increased Platonic interest in history that makes the shift possible in the first place.

The theory of the "Mixed Constitution" does not operate only in the *Laws*. It also operates on the *Laws*. It makes this dialogue a middle ground between the realism of history and the idealism of the Forms, a middle ground between the proto-democracy of Solon and the aristocracy of the *Republic*. In this specific sense the *Laws* is Plato's most complex political dialogue.

#### IV FORMS IN THE LAWS

Is the theory of Forms still upheld by Plato in the *Laws*? The question is obviously critical for the estimation of the political scheme of the *Laws* and of the exact meaning that Plato attributes to πολιτική ἀρετή in the dialogue. As will be argued in the following pages, the theory of Forms does exist in the *Laws*, but because Plato no longer believes in the possibility of the appearance of an incorruptible human ruler, his metaphysical doctrine comes to play a different role in this work in comparison with the middle dialogues. In the *Laws* Plato creates a political body oriented towards "higher" studies, but refuses to allow it dictatorial powers. Unwavering respect for law becomes the central political principle of the work instead.

It has to be stated from the outset that the theory of Forms is nowhere elaborated at any length in the dialogue. But if one were to try to construct an argument against the existence of Forms in the *Laws*, one would have to tackle two important problems: first, the fact that Plato, although giving very few clear signs of his adherence to the theory of Forms in the *Laws*, does not give any indication that he has abandoned it either<sup>83</sup> and puts forward no alternative metaphysical doctrine;<sup>84</sup> second, the fact that there is at least one passage which would be extremely difficult to make sense of, unless one assumes the presence of Forms in the

dialogue.<sup>85</sup>

However, because of the scarcity and obscurity of references to the Forms in the *Laws*, the specifics of the theory, in other words the exact ontological status of the Forms in the *Laws*, cannot be decided. There is not nearly enough textual evidence for any attempt to define the precise character of Plato's beliefs about the Forms at the time of the composition of the dialogue and Saunders is undoubtedly right when he claims that "it is impossible to know whether the full hierarchy of Forms elaborated in the *Republic*, culminating in the "Form of the Good", is implied [in the *Laws*]".<sup>86</sup>

As already argued, historical experience provides the informing principle of the *Laws*' political system and Plato's opportunities for expressing his metaphysical beliefs are consequently limited. It is not so much the subject-matter of the dialogue, politics, that prevents a metaphysical discussion from evolving, as the historical approach that Plato adopts and consistently follows in it. His insistence on institutions modelled on their real-life Greek counterparts, and consequently measured, to a certain extent, not by a metaphysical principle but by their historical success, appears to restrain any straightforward metaphysical expositions in the *Laws*. Furthermore, the Athenian Stranger's [i.e. Plato's] interlocutors in the dialogue are in this spirit chosen not for their philosophical expertise but rather for their lack of it:

they represent a typical Spartan and a typical Cretan, and although Plato portrays them as respectable old men with common sense and some political experience, he emphasizes again and again their philosophical inadequacy.<sup>87</sup> This attitude is most clearly illustrated at 892dff., when he is about to argue for the most crucial position of his theology of the Tenth Book, namely that the soul was the first thing to come into existence ("ψυχή δ' ἐν πρώτοις γεγεννημένη"-892c) and therefore is prior to the natural world. At this point Plato completely drops his interlocutors and introduces an imaginary young man to whom the argument is addressed. The reason for this is that Cleinias and Megillos are "ἄηθεις ὄντας ἀποκρίσεων" (893a), i.e. they do not possess dialectical skill either in the common Greek or in the Platonic sense of dialectic. They are not, then, the right company for fully fleshed metaphysical inquiries and even when Plato comes to such matters, in the second half of the last Book, he is reluctant to go too far in their exposition. The *Laws* is a work undoubtedly designed for the unphilosophical public, personified in the dialogue itself by Cleinias and Megillos. It is therefore an unlikely dialogue for metaphysical disquisitions.

It is for this reason that the suggestion that simply because the *Laws* is Plato's lengthiest dialogue the philosopher would have had a chance of referring to his ontological doctrine is unconvincing. The only place in the *Laws* where this can really happen is in the last pages of

the work, from 951d onwards, where Plato discusses the Nocturnal Council, a state organ devoted to higher studies. It is indeed exactly in this part that we have the clearest reference to the Forms (in 965b-d).

It is also vital to notice that the political ideal of the *Republic* is not renounced in the *Laws*; on the contrary, it is restated in full force: in 739b-e Plato explains that in a perfect city women, children and possessions should be common to all. But such a city could only be inhabited by gods or children of gods. The alternative of the *Laws* is merely a "second best" state, created by men and for men (see also 732e).<sup>88</sup> Such a "human" city cannot be perfect, a point stated forcefully in 713e: "where the ruler of the state is not a god but a mortal, people have no respite from toil and misfortune".<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, in 804b Plato asserts that the human race hardly participates in truth: "σμικρά δὲ ἀληθείας ἄττα μετέχοντες". If then the human race has such a distant relationship with truth, it is hardly surprising if, in the construction of a human (as opposed to a divine) state we find little or no mention of metaphysical principles. Plato no doubt feels that the city of the *Laws* is hardly good enough for philosophers, let alone gods: in 753a the Athenian Stranger politely but firmly refuses to be a member of Magnesia. All the passages mentioned above strongly indicate that the viewpoint from which the enterprise of the *Laws* is undertaken has to do with human, unphilosophical intelligence. From this point of view it

becomes clear not only why the architectonic conception of the *Laws* justifies the absence of references to Forms, but also why this absence in no way entails that this theory is abandoned.

There seems to be a large majority of scholars who accept that the theory of Forms still exists in the *Laws*.<sup>90</sup> But their opinions can only be measured against the textual evidence they provide for this claim. We have already suggested that there are sufficient philosophical reasons which explain why the scarcity of references to the theory of Forms in the *Laws* does not mean it has been abandoned. We will now proceed to an examination of certain passages which support this assertion.

Some of the features of the *Laws* which Brochard uses to prove the existence of Forms in it are admittedly weak. For example, he takes the distinction between empirical medicine and medicine that proceeds scientifically and the "necessity for the legislator to justify rationally the laws he creates and to [use] persuasion"<sup>91</sup> (he probably refers to 719eff.) to imply Forms. But although there is a clearcut division between the knowledge of the free doctor and his slave assistant who only empirically follows his orders, it does not follow that this knowledge has to do with Forms. In fact nowhere in the Platonic corpus do we hear of a Form of medicine, and doctors in Greece did not necessarily enjoy a higher status than the τεχνιται. Brochard also suggests that the preambles to the laws indicate Plato's commitment to a



science which goes beyond experience,<sup>92</sup> but this is doubtful. As Morrow remarks, in writing the preambles Plato "draws from his long experience in life"<sup>93</sup> and this means that the preambles can be based on common, unphilosophical intelligence. Moreover, Plato emphasizes that they are intended as introductions to the actual laws (723a). Since not even the language here includes anything reminiscent of the theory of Forms, there is no compelling reason to accept that these passages imply them in any way.

A better case for the existence of Forms in the *Laws* can be made out of the argument at 859dff. Here Plato argues explicitly against public opinion (859c-d) and says he will try to talk "περί δικαιοσύνης ὅλως" (about justice in general). A few lines on (859e) he argues, in a passage worthy of citing in full, that "[π]οίημα μὲν, ὅπερ ἂν ἦ δίκαιον, σχεδὸν ὅσονπερ ἂν τοῦ δικαίου κοινῶνῃ, κατὰ τοσοῦτον καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ μετέχον ἔστι. -Τί μήν; -Οὐκοῦν καὶ πάθος ὅπερ ἂν δικαίου κοινῶνῃ, κατὰ τοσοῦτον γίγνεσθαι καλοῦ ὁμολογούμενον". It is noticeable that we have here not only the beautiful and justice, which both have corresponding Forms according to the *Symposium* and the *Republic*, but also that the participation theory is indicated (μετέχον, κοινῶνῃ). There is therefore a good linguistic case for accepting Forms in this part of the text. The problem is, however, that this passage is a somewhat isolated case, occurring in the context of a discussion of moral responsibility and there is not, strictly speaking, an

undeniable reference to Forms.<sup>94</sup>

It is only in the Twelfth Book, at the end of the dialogue, that Plato gives us the best clues for the presence of Forms in it. As already noted, this is the appropriate place for him to do so. It is here that the higher education of a part of the citizen body is discussed. It is here that the aim of political science, virtue, is explicitly and forcefully declared (963a). And it is here that the metaphysics and the theology of the *Laws* are bound together.

The Nocturnal Council is the institution that is entrusted with the task of providing the higher intelligence (962b) needed for the preservation of the laws (960b). It is composed of men who have distinguished themselves in serving the public interest and are renowned for their virtue (961a). These men have to understand how the four virtues are one. And although dialectic is not formally included in their studies, it is difficult to imagine what other Platonic name one should give to this exercise.

The two vital passages which probably offer the solution to the riddle of Forms in the *Laws* occur in 965b-d and 966b and are part of a wider argument that can roughly be summarized as follows: in order for a city to survive, it needs a kind of intelligence which will realize the supreme aim of politics (962b). This aim is virtue (963a), and the intelligence that will perform this role in Magnesia is the Nocturnal Council which has "virtue in all its completeness"

(962d). But to exercise their function, the members of this Council need first and most of all to be able to understand how virtue is one in all its manifestations:

"... [A] really skilled craftsman (δημιουργόν) or guardian (φύλακα) in any field must be able not merely to see the many individual instances of a thing, but also to win through to a knowledge (γνώσκειν) of the single central concept, and when he's understood that, put the various details (συνορῶντα) in their proper place in the overall picture" (965b). What exactly this means we learn in the next sentence: "[s]o what better tool can there be for a penetrating investigation of a concept than an ability to look beyond (βλέπειν) the many dissimilar instances to the single notion (πρὸς μίαν ἰδέαν)?" (965c). And in 965d Plato writes that "we have to compel the guardians of our divine foundation to get an exact idea of the common element in all the four virtues (ἀκριβῶς ἰδεῖν πρῶτον τι ποτε διὰ πάντων τῶν τεττάρων ταῦτόν τυγχάνει)-that factor which, though single (ἓν ὄν), is to be found in courage, restraint, justice and wisdom ... [on] [t]his element ... we must not relax our grip until we can explain adequately the essence (τι ποτ' ἐστίν) of what we have to contemplate, whether it is (πέφυκεν) a single entity (ἓν), a composite whole (ὄλου), or both, or whatever".

The ability to acquire an "exact idea" of something entails of course being able to give an account of it. In the *Republic* λόγον διδόναι καὶ δέξασθαι is presented as one

of the main features of dialectic (531e, 533c, 534b) and in the *Philebus* to be able to give an account of a thing is equated with knowledge (62a).<sup>95</sup> In the *Laws* itself this point is emphatically repeated: "ὅτι δεῖ τοὺς ὄντως φύλακας ἔσομένους τῶν νόμων ὄντως εἰδέναι τὰ περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν αὐτῶν, καὶ λόγῳ τε ἱκανοὺς ἐρμηνεύειν εἶναι"-(966b). We have here, in the space of two lines, four words which in their Platonic use can refer either to a reality beyond the sensible world (ὄντως twice, ἀλήθεια) or to knowledge and the ability to give an account of something (εἰδέναι, λόγῳ ἐρμηνεύειν). Taking also into account the passages from the *Republic* and the *Philebus* referred to above, the conclusion that true knowledge is the aim the members of the Nocturnal Council will strive for is inescapable. And it is further strengthened by 968e where Plato explicitly declares that the members of the Nocturnal Council will be able to leave a curriculum for their successors only if they possess ἐπιστήμη of the subjects involved.<sup>96</sup> Finally, there is a passage at 632c, where Plato most explicitly declares that some of the guardians (presumably the administrators not included in the Nocturnal Council) will proceed by true opinion, while others will do so by knowledge ("φρονήσεως"). Who can these others be if not the Nocturnal Council? It seems, then, that the existence in the *Laws* of a political body which aims at the acquisition of knowledge is irrefutable. (Plato, however, is not certain that the members of this Council will succeed in their aim of

acquiring full knowledge and for this reason does not allow them absolute power. This subject is developed in the next section).

Yes, but knowledge of what? Guthrie argues that it can only be knowledge of the Forms: "[f]rom the *Meno* onwards, and especially in *Rep.* 5, the objects of knowledge have been Forms ... and those of belief their changing copies in this world. The distinction was made most emphatically in the *Timaeus* (27d-28a), and could scarcely have been retained if Plato no longer believed in the existence of transcendent Forms".<sup>97</sup> This is a good argument, but Guthrie somewhat weakens it by not allowing for any passage in the *Laws* to be considered as conclusively proving the presence of Forms (with the merely possible exception of 966b).

It appears, however, that Plato does include an express reference to Forms in the *Laws*. It is 965b-d that gives us the clue for this. From 963d onwards Plato argues that the four virtues are actually one and that the knowledge of this fact is necessary for the Nocturnal Council in order to perform its political role. From the *Republic* and the *Politicus* we know that only true knowledge of Forms secures perfect government. From this point of view it is difficult to imagine what else this single virtue would be and why its political role would be so crucial if it was not a Form, i.e. a transcendent notion that supersedes the sensible reality. And there are very solid linguistic grounds for holding that 965c makes a clear reference to Forms.

The critical expression is πρὸς "μίαν ἰδέαν ... βλέπειν" (965c). The word ἰδέα is one of the three (the other two being γένος and εἶδος) that Plato uses in general to identify Forms. Its use here can only be justified by asserting that it does refer to actual Forms. Otherwise one would have to explain what Plato means with it in this context, which clearly is not one where the word is likely to be used in its common, unphilosophical sense. (We do not have a discussion of common things, but of the moral virtues, and it is stated that these virtues are in fact one).<sup>98</sup> Moreover, the whole phrase is practically interchangeable with the "πρὸς ἓν [βλέπειν]" (963a), and, as Cherniss has remarked, this expression in either form runs through the text from 963a to 965d as "a dominant theme".<sup>99</sup> With regard to the use of βλέπειν, sight is used in the middle dialogues as the predominant metaphor designating one's contemplation of the Forms, notably in the *Republic's* Sun simile and in the ascent towards the Form of the Beautiful in the *Symposium* 209eff. In the *Republic* 532c Plato talks of the "πρὸς τὴν τοῦ ἀρίστου ἓν τοῖς οὐσι [i.e. the Form of the Good] θεῶν" and in the *Symposium* he uses expressions like "θεωμένω αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν" (211d) and "αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν ἰδεῖν". In the *Republic* 596b Plato describes the relationship of an artisan with the Form which he imitates in language clearly close to that of the *Laws* 965c: "ὁ δημιουργὸς ... πρὸς τὴν ἰδέαν βλέπων οὕτω ποιεῖ". Another passage which shows Plato making in the middle dialogues a

point very similar, if not identical, to the one made in 965b-d is *Phaedrus* 265d, where the "dialectician" (266c) is said to be the one who was able to "[ε]ἰς μίαν τε ἰδέαν συνορῶντα ἄγειν τὰ πολλαχῆ διεσπαρμένα". Finally, in the *Republic* 507b the Form of a thing is "ὅ ἐστιν" and in the *Laws* 965d the guardians have to look for the "τί ποτ' ἐστιν" of the essential unity of virtue. The comparison of such middle dialogues passages to 965b-d provides us with the final necessary link needed to assert the existence of Forms in the *Laws*. All the elements required to support this thesis fall into place: first, Plato's distinction of knowledge and opinion, the former being consistently from the *Phaedo* onwards knowledge of Forms. Second, an argument purporting to show the unity of virtue and to support the familiar position that knowledge secures infallible government, i.e. a position practically impossible to argue for on an empirical basis and therefore strongly suggesting the metaphysics of other dialogues. Finally, a vocabulary that includes crucial terms used in the middle dialogues in connection with Forms. In view of all these Platonic assumptions, the evidence for the presence of Forms in the *Laws* has, I think, to be considered substantial.

At this point one final question remains to be settled. Could we suppose that in the *Laws* Forms lose their position as the highest metaphysical entities to Ψυχῆ or to the gods? After all, unlike the scarcity of references to the Forms, there is a whole Book in this work devoted to the proof of

the existence of the gods and of the anteriority of the Soul in comparison to matter. Severe punishments are prescribed even for socially harmless atheists (908d-e).<sup>100</sup> Theology is included in the subjects that the Nocturnal Council is obliged to study with the utmost care (966cff.) and astronomy is strongly associated with it.

For us, approaching this subject after two millenia in which Christian theology has been interacting with Western Philosophy this might appear a difficult problem. In the framework of Christian theology, where God has created the world and is unquestionably omnipotent, there is no space for entities independent of God acquiring the highest metaphysical status. God, by definition, stands at the top of the metaphysical pyramid and to suggest anything different would be blasphemy.

But Greek religion had none of these characteristics. The gods had not created the world and they were by no means omnipotent. Ἀνάγκη (Necessity) and Μοῖρα (Fate) stood beyond them and restricted their power; Plato himself submits on this point to popular opinion (*Laws* 741a). This completely un-Christian character of the Greek gods meant that a philosophy where gods did not occupy the highest metaphysical position was absolutely possible. In the *Laws*, Plato produces exactly such a philosophy.

Brochard has produced six good reasons in order to prove that the theology of the *Laws* is not at all incompatible with its metaphysics.<sup>101</sup> He argues that the popular character



of the dialogue explains why Plato emphasized more the theories of a universal Soul and of divine Providence, theories which would be more familiar to the unphilosophic reader, instead of the more demanding theory of the Forms. He remarks that the theory of the universal Soul is espoused in the *Phaedrus* (245d) and the theory of Providence in the *Republic* (613a), the inference being that since nobody doubts the existence of Forms in these dialogues, the two theories are perfectly compatible. He also points out that the Soul participates in degeneration (*Laws* 967d) and that Plato accepts a bad soul (he probably refers to 896e), whereas he nowhere admits that there could be a bad Form. (In fact, there is a single reference in the *Republic* suggesting the existence of Forms of bad things (476a), but Plato never follows up this remark and therefore this reference remains an isolated case). Brochard also draws attention to the fact that the Soul is described as in need of "necessary lessons" (967d). Finally, he adds that there is no textual evidence whatever for a change in Plato's metaphysical scheme that would bring the Soul, the gods, or both, to the position previously occupied by the Forms.

These arguments are decisive. There is no reference whatever in the Twelfth Book that would justify the conclusion that the study of theology is more important than the metaphysical issue of the unity of the virtues<sup>102</sup> and given the points made by Brochard on the inferiority of the Soul in comparison to the Forms it seems quite likely that

the opposite might be the case. In the *Phaedrus* 247d we read that god contemplates the Forms and returns to them after being separated from them. This passage leaves little doubt that the god is not omnipotent and has no control over the Forms. In the *Laws* 896d Soul is accepted to be the cause of bad as well as of good things. At 897b it is stressed that the Soul needs "intelligence" (νοῦς) to guide everything to "εὐδαιμονία", but it can also "all[y] itself with unreason and produce the opposite results".

On the other hand, Plato is anxious to present the priority of the Soul as a response to the materialists of his time (889b-e and 891b-c) in order to defend idealism. Although, by making the Soul the cause of all things, Plato has to admit it can be the cause of bad as well as good things (896d), the emphasis in the text from 897b onwards lies significantly on the beneficial work of the Soul, rather than on the "bad" Soul, which is hardly mentioned as anything more than a possibility. We are entitled then to say that the cosmic and the moral role of the Soul to which Plato pays most attention is a positive one. The gods, for their part, also take care of the universe and of men (905dff.) and they promote morality (e.g. 906c-d). From a moral point of view, then, both Soul and gods are in the same camp with the Forms. The role of theology in the curriculum of the Nocturnal Council can therefore be considered supplementary to that of the study of the Forms and, in any case, the two are not contradictory.

The final conclusion has to be, then, that neither gods nor Soul, itself a god (899a), qualify for a metaphysical stance higher than the Forms, although they can play a role supportive of them. Their study, as prescribed in the Twelfth Book of the *Laws*, is definitely no more important than the study of the Forms. The latter, as argued, do exist in the *Laws* and they remain the guiding principle of Plato's metaphysics to the very end.

## V THE ROLE OF THE NOCTURNAL COUNCIL IN THE LAWS

With the question of the Forms in the *Laws* settled, we can now proceed to an examination of the political role of the Nocturnal Council. At first sight, it might appear that the Council represents a collective version of the βασιλευς-φιλόσοφοι of the *Republic* and the βασιλικὸς ἀνὴρ of the *Politicus*. As already argued, the text from 962b to 966a leaves little doubt that the object of the Council will be to acquire ἐπιστήμη as opposed to δόξα, the distinction being clearly marked at 632c. This ἐπιστήμη will be knowledge of the μία ἰδέα that makes the four virtues one. From this point of view, and provided one takes the Council to exercise political authority in a disguised but efficient manner, the *Laws* might appear to end with a political message identical to that of the *Republic*: political power should be entrusted to the people with metaphysical knowledge.

A number of scholars have adopted this interpretation.<sup>103</sup> So Klosko, even though he does not fully accept the analogy, admits that "it seems at least possible that the nocturnal council is meant to play a role in the state similar to that of the Guardians in the *Republic*".<sup>104</sup> Guthrie takes the Council to be "in fact ... philosophers, analogous to the Guardians or philosopher-kings of the *Republic*".<sup>105</sup> Saunders insists that "[t]he Guardians of the *Republic* were the

supreme guiding authority of the state, the embodiment of full wisdom. The Nocturnal Council is intended to control Magnesia over and above the ordinary magistrates and deliberative bodies (964+); the studies it will pursue are at least similar to those pursued by the guardians (965+)".<sup>106</sup> Finally Barker writes that "[t]he end of the *Laws* is thus a return to the doctrines of the *Republic* ... Once more Plato turns to the rule of "genuine free mind", of which in earlier books he had almost despaired, and for which he had sought to substitute the rule of law: once more he turns to the ideal of unity in place of that of compromise and mixture; once more he turns to a scheme of philosophic training, and, with it, to the sovereignty of philosopher-kings. The nocturnal council is the "perfect guardians" of the *Republic*, turned collegiate and set to control, in ways that are never explained, a system of political machinery into which they are never fitted".<sup>107</sup> Barker's statement is quite useful because not only does it give some of the main reasons for taking the Nocturnal Council to be the Guardians of the *Republic* revamped, but it also clearly gives away the inability of this interpretation to explain much of what happens in the *Laws*. In order to support this argument Barker is obliged to accuse Plato (somewhat covertly but still quite clearly) of one gross default: that he is unable effectively to incorporate the Nocturnal Council in the political system of the *Laws* or even to explain the position in which it stands in

relationship to this system.

There are definitely serious problems arising if one takes the *Laws* as ending with a note practically indistinguishable from what was said in the *Republic*. The first is that, in this case, almost the whole of the former dialogue appears to be purposeless. From the Third Book onwards, Plato takes great pains to create a political and legislative system that does not depend on any metaphysical justification, but is deeply rooted in historical experience. In the central Books, the administrative apparatus of Magnesia is described in minute detail without the slightest attempt at a metaphysical justification of this system. Legislative issues are discussed almost to the end (they occupy even the first half of the Twelfth Book and they are given up only in order for the role of the Nocturnal Council to be discussed). Again, Plato's guiding principle in this most detailed exposition is not metaphysics but common Greek experience.<sup>108</sup> Is it then possible that after such a painstaking exposition covering practically eleven and a half Books the philosopher would in the few closing pages of the *Laws*, simply return to the ideal of the *Republic* in its full force? This would mean in practice that all the strenuous effort of composing most of the dialogue had been pointless. For what would be the aim of fleshing out a detailed political and legislative scheme if in the end Plato simply returns to the philosopher-kings?<sup>109</sup>

There are strong reasons suggesting that Plato never really intended the Nocturnal Council to be something similar to the ideal philosopher-rulers of the *Republic* and furthermore that by the time he composed the *Laws*, and maybe even as early as the *Politicus*,<sup>110</sup> he had given up hope that scientific rulers could appear. As we have seen, in the former dialogue Plato three times emphasizes that human nature precludes the possibility of a ruler staying incorruptible when he acquires absolute power (691c: "θνητης (mortal) ψυχης φύσις"; 713c: "ἀνθρωπεία φύσις"; 875b: "θνητῆ φύσις"). In the first two cases Plato is quite unequivocal in his statements: he insists that unrestricted power (691c: "ἀνυπεύθυνος"; 713c: "αὐτοκράτωρ") always brings about ὕβρις and ἀδικία. In the third case (875b-d) he declares that an incorruptible ruler should be above the law, but he immediately proceeds to declare with particular emphasis that such ἄρχοντες do not appear ("οὐδαμοσ οὐδαμωσ, ἀλλ' ἢ κατὰ βραχὺ"-875d: the particular force of the double negation definitely nullifies the possibility of an exception implied in κατὰ βραχὺ. In Vlastos' opinion the latter expression means only that the possible exceptions are "too slight to be worth talking about").<sup>111</sup>

These statements flatly contradict the spirit of the *Republic* where uncontrollable power is unhesitatingly bestowed on the philosopher-kings. If the political ideal of the *Republic* was restated in the *Laws* with the Nocturnal Council assuming the role of the philosopher-kings, Plato

would be guilty of an undoubted contradiction. The force of the language he uses in the three passages referred to above leaves absolutely no room for a compromise between these passages and an interpretation of the political part of the Nocturnal Council that would make it the corresponding feature of the rulers of the *Republic*. There are therefore two alternatives at this point: either we accept the identification of the political roles of the Nocturnal Council and the philosopher-kings, in which case Plato undoubtedly and straightforwardly contradicts himself in the *Laws*, or we reject the notion that the Nocturnal Council was ever intended to be the collective absolute ruler of Magnesia.

The real test case for either of these two alternatives is the relationship of the Nocturnal Council to the law. One of the pivotal political exhortations of the *Politicus* was that in the absence of scientific ἀρχοῦτες the law must always be obeyed. The same point, as we have seen, is made again in the *Laws* at 875d. Consequently, if the Nocturnal Council was designed to assume absolute power in Magnesia it should accordingly be placed above the law. But not only, as Morrow justifiably remarks, is there no "evidence that Plato intends to give it [the Nocturnal Council] power to override the law",<sup>112</sup> but one of the main (and indeed the basic practical) aim of the Council is the discussion of the laws ("περὶ νόμων", "τὰ περὶ νόμους") of their own and of foreign countries (952a) in order to instil the results of this



inquiry into the legislative apparatus of Magnesia (962bff.). This meticulous study of particular νόμοι would be completely out of place if the Council was supposed to be positioned above the law and it stands in sharp contrast with the spirit of the *Republic*. In the latter dialogue such issues are dismissed as trivialities unworthy ("οὐκ ἄξιον") of intensive study by good men ("ἀνδράσι καλοῖς καὶ ἀγαθοῖς") who will easily work them out for themselves ("ῥαδίως που εὕρησουσιν"-425d-e).

It is true that the Nocturnal Council is characterized by Plato as the "head" and the "intelligence" (νοῦ-969b) of the state and that this expression has been taken by at least one commentator as indicating an omnipotent political role for it.<sup>113</sup> But the way that the philosopher specifies the sense in which the Council is the "intelligence" of the state points exactly to the opposite conclusion. In 962b Plato says that the Council will perform its guiding role if it comprehends the aim of all legislation (which turns out to be virtue in 963a), the means to be employed for this aim to be achieved and *which laws, first, and which men, next* ("τῶν νόμων αὐτῶν πρῶτον, ἔπειτα ἀνθρώπων") will give the best advice in this direction. What is stated here is not that the Council does not need laws or is in any way beyond them, but, on the contrary, that its real role is to select the best possible laws. Crucially, laws are to be chosen before men, clearly because the laws are more important than individuals, no matter how intelligent or virtuous the

latter may be. The conclusion then can only be that the Nocturnal Council is to abide by the laws of the state once these have been created, and that it is there to serve as a consultative legislature and not in an uncontrolled executive capacity like the rulers of the *Republic*.

Not only is the Council not placed above the laws, but it cannot even change them without wide consent. There is one single case in the *Laws* where Plato discusses explicitly the procedure for changing a law; it occurs in 772c-d, long before the introduction of the Nocturnal Council. Here Plato insists that a particular law should be altered only if "all the officials, the entire citizen body and all the oracles"<sup>114</sup> agree. Significantly, if one single party does not accept the new proposal, the amendment to the law is abandoned. If we compare the procedure set up here with the absence of any explicit reference, on Plato's part, to the way that the Nocturnal Council might initiate, let alone dictate, changes in the laws, the natural conclusion seems to be that the Council is not given a free hand on this issue and that it has to operate through the existing administrative machinery of the state. This conclusion is confirmed by two cases mentioned in the text: if a convicted atheist is entrusted to the exhortation of the Council but after his release offends again, he is not punished by the Council but he goes on trial (909a-c); and if a visitor to a foreign country has been corrupted he is allowed by the Council to live as an ἰδιώτης; if he does get involved in common affairs, though,

he is to be tried by the courts of Magnesia. In this case the Council or at least some members of it act as prosecution (952c-d). So, on two occasions directly involving the Nocturnal Council, Plato positively refuses to allow it dictatorial powers, but insists that the final decision should come from the ordinary courts of the state. Far from being an unchallengable political authority, then, the Council has to restrict itself to an (undoubtedly influential) advisory role. Otherwise, one has to admit that both the passage in 772c-d about the revision of laws and those in 909a-c and 952c-d proving the subjection of the Nocturnal Council to the laws of Magnesia become pointless and that another insoluble contradiction is included in the *Laws*.

The fact that the Nocturnal Council has to work within the limitations of the law, rather than being positioned beyond it, is a decisive argument against the thesis that it represents an equivalent to the philosopher-kings. It is not simply that, to use Stalley's formulation, "with the introduction of the scrutineers and the nocturnal council, the top of the political pyramid becomes dangerously overcrowded".<sup>115</sup> It is also that it is completely unPlatonic to expect a clearly large body like the Council to possess the political expertise that Plato has always insisted is extremely rare.<sup>116</sup> There are two accounts of the membership of the Council in the *Laws* (951e and 961a) and they are not entirely consistent. On either account, however, the number

of the members is too high to allow the suggestion that all of them could be philosopher-kings in the style of the *Republic*. Klosko calculates that "membership is in the range of one hundred, ... a high figure".<sup>117</sup> Even if we suppose that the junior members, -included in the Nocturnal Council to provide it with the "senses" (964e) which are as crucial as *νοῦς* for the salvation of the city-<sup>118</sup> are not "full" members (Plato never quite clarifies this issue), we are still left with a large number of members of the Council. Moreover, the ten senior *νομοφύλακες* are included in the Nocturnal Council; but these are initially chosen by the Cnossians and the colonisers, neither of whom seem to have much qualification for identifying philosophers, in view of the notoriety of the lack of higher education among the Dorians.<sup>119</sup> Cleinias, whose ignorance of philosophical issues is, as we have seen, repeatedly exposed during the dialogue, is to be one of the law-guardians (753a). So Strauss has good grounds to remark that "men of Kleinias' kind will form no insignificant part of it [the Nocturnal Council]".<sup>120</sup> But Cleinias is not the obvious candidate for the part of a philosopher-king either alone or as member of a wider body.

Furthermore, the higher state honours in life and in death are attributed not to the Nocturnal Council but to the scrutineers (946e ff.).<sup>121</sup> This feature of the *Laws* is not simply at odds with the position that the Nocturnal Council is to be the equivalent of the philosopher-kings, but even undermines the assumed superiority of the Nocturnal Council

to all the other institutions of the state.

Finally, one more consideration can be brought against the position that the Nocturnal Council is to be composed of philosophers. At the very end of the dialogue Megillus urges Cleinias to join him in employing whatever means necessary to make the Athenian participate in the foundation of the new city and the two promise to help each other in this task. The Athenian, however, i.e. Plato himself, does not answer. It is difficult to see why he would hold such a meaningful silence had he been completely satisfied with everything said so far in the dialogue or had he conceived Magnesia to be a state ruled by philosophers in the manner of the *Republic*. The reason Plato refuses to commit himself unconditionally to the Magnesian experiment is that despite its meticulous planning it still falls short of his political ideal.<sup>122</sup> Here we have Plato using dramatic means to make a philosophical point, and this is even more important since the *Laws* is arguably one of his poorest dialogues in terms of dramatic quality.<sup>123</sup>

The one passage which gives rise to the assumption that the Nocturnal Council is intended to represent the personification of the philosopher-kings occurs in the very last page of the dialogue: "ἔάν γε μήν οὗτος ἡμῶν ὁ θεὸς γένηται σύλλογος, ... παραδοτέον τούτῳ τὴν πόλιν", Plato writes in 969b. Here the philosopher comes closer than anywhere else in the *Laws*, or so at least it appears, to bestowing upon the Council the unlimited powers of the

*Republic's* rulers. However, to hang an interpretation of the whole dialogue on this one phrase<sup>124</sup> is extremely precarious. First of all, the phrase itself is far from unambiguous; παραδοτέον τούτῳ τὴν πόλιν could mean either that the Council is to be entrusted with the highest political power in the state, or that its wisdom should be acknowledged by the other organs of Magnesia so that they take seriously its advice. The difference between these two versions is, from a political point of view, immense. In the first case the Council is to be the highest, though unofficial, executive organ in the state. In the second, Plato simply encourages the holders of constitutional power to pay serious attention to its recommendations. The text itself does not contain anything that makes either interpretation more likely. But, for the reasons suggested so far in this section, the second alternative is by far the most plausible. Moreover, Plato's abandonment of the ideal of the incorruptible ruler clearly makes the first interpretation of 969b untenable. Consequently, far from proving Plato's intention to give full power to the Nocturnal Council, the expression παραδοτέον τούτῳ τὴν πόλιν is perfectly compatible with the suggestion that the Council is to play an advisory role in Magnesia.

Furthermore, Plato here uses a hypothesis, indicating that he is not confident how easy it will be to set up a body with the superior knowledge required from the members of the Nocturnal Council. A close examination of the passage

in question reveals that, far from saying that the Nocturnal Council should be entrusted with the highest political power in the city, Plato seriously doubts whether it can appear at all. Plato employs here a hypothetical form signifying that something might occasionally happen at present or in the future (ἐάν ... γένηται), whereas, had he wanted to place emphasis on the fact that the city is indeed to be entrusted to the Council he could have used a stronger hypothetical type (εἰ ... ἐγένετο), indicating that the emergence of the Council is something very probable. Plato's choice not only to use a hypothesis (whereas he could of course plainly state that the city should be entrusted to the Council unconditionally), but moreover to select a hypothetical form suggesting something that is possible though by no means very probable, indicates his doubts over the possibility of such a body being created at all.<sup>125</sup> Actually, every measure has been taken, before the appearance of the Council on the scene, for the correct government of Magnesia. A complete administrative apparatus is in place by the middle of Book Twelve, which can guarantee the welfare of the state. This explains why Magnesia would be able to survive even if, for some reason, most probably due to lack of the high intelligence required from its members, the Nocturnal Council does not appear or is unable to perform its function properly. Therefore Magnesia, unlike the state of the *Republic*, does not ultimately depend on philosophical intelligence for its survival.

So far we have argued about what the Nocturnal Council is not. What now remains is to clarify what it is, i.e. to specify the political role it is intended to play in Magnesia. There are two passages which provide the key to the answer to this question. The first one occurs in 951e-952a and we have already referred to it. Plato explains there that the meetings of the Nocturnal Council will have as their object the laws, a point underlined by the fact that the word νόμοι is used twice. The second one is placed, importantly, in the introductory remarks before the last pages of the work which Plato devotes to the examination of the Nocturnal Council. Here Plato states that what is still missing from the laws is a way in which they could be rendered irreversible ("ἀμετάστροφον"-960d). This will be provided by the Nocturnal Council, who, inquiring into the "real nature" of the laws (966b) will, hopefully, be able both to intellectually grasp this nature and to apply the results of their studies to practice.

But in order to be able to grasp the nature of the laws, the members of the Council must be able to recognize the aim of the political art, i.e. virtue (963a), and the means by which this aim can be attained (962b). It is here that the essential link between politics and metaphysics occurs in the *Laws*. The real grasping of virtue, which as we have seen is one but manifests itself in different forms (in the common sense of the word), becomes, in the final pages of the *Laws*, the prerequisite for a deeper understanding of



what legislation and politics are about and how the best result can be achieved in both.

One can now see why Plato expects the Nocturnal Council to play a central part in the political and constitutional life of Magnesia. It is designed with the purpose of providing the superior wisdom required to remedy for what he conceives as a vital deficiency in written law, i.e. its inability to cover particular instances. Already in the *Politicus* the philosopher had laid his finger on this serious defect of the law (294aff.). The Nocturnal Council will be able, provided it apprehends not only the letter but also the spirit of the law, to make sure that the law takes the right form and is applied correctly in individual cases. Furthermore, Plato recognizes that no law can last for ever, and in a long metaphor from 769a onwards he explains how the laws are like the work of a painter that might be damaged by time or need improvement in details. What the painter needs is an equally skillful successor who will take care of his work after his death. It follows that if the successor is not good enough, or if nobody takes care of the painting, the latter will fade away. The same, says Plato, is true of the legislator. He also needs talented successors if his work is to be preserved. The Nocturnal Council, then, is the successor of the Athenian Stranger in Magnesia. It possesses the wisdom that will correct the "inescapable" errors of the legislator (769d) and will guarantee that the laws remain as good as possible.

The crucial issue, though, from a political point of view, is whether the Council will perform this function by having absolute power, or by employing the constitutional channels already existing in the state. As we have argued, the latter is definitely the case. The Nocturnal Council will restrict itself to an advisory role. Since most of its members hold very high official posts, it is clear that they will have ample opportunity to put the Council's wisdom into practice. Perhaps this is the reason that the philosopher does not feel the need to prescribe a specific constitutional role for the Council. Moreover, Plato nowhere suggests that a difference of opinion might occur between the other administrators and the Council. Should, however, this ever happen, it is clear that the Nocturnal Council is not armed with the means dictatorially to enforce its position on the rest of the citizens. As indicated by the passages in 772c-d, 909a and 952c-d, the opposite is probably true.

The Nocturnal Council operates then on what could be called a meta-political level. Its main function is to clarify legal questions that the original legislator did not tackle and to offer its insight when changes in the law are deemed necessary or desirable. To the extent that it possesses philosophical knowledge, its aim is to instil the results of this knowledge into the legal system of the state.

The underlying principles that run through the

institution of the Nocturnal Council are identifiably Socratic. So, in 961dff. Plato compares the legislator and the politician to the captain, the doctor and the general, the inference being that each one of them should positively know the aim of his art, if he is to perform his duties efficiently. This is indeed the old Socratic argument that politics is a specified τέχνη. In the *Protagoras* and the *Politicus* this argument became a basic element of Plato's attack on democracy. In the *Laws*, too, the introduction of this Socratic spirit at the end of the dialogue carries some of its anti-democratic overtones with it. Whatever its actual powers, the Nocturnal Council can claim that, by being the only institution in the state to aim at metaphysical knowledge, it functions on a different level from the rest of Magnesia's constitutional authorities. But this time the authoritarian tendencies inherent in this argument are properly checked. Plato is now disillusioned about the possibility of actual philosophers coming to rule states. There is a clear tension in the last pages of the dialogue between his desire for a philosophical authority with knowledge of the Forms to which the state could be entrusted and his realization that absolutism cannot be the answer to the riddle of Greek politics, since incorruptible government is beyond human limitations. So, on the one hand he often uses language that indicates that the constitution of the Nocturnal Council is a fait accompli (961aff., 964eff) and that this Council might have metaphysical

knowledge (962b, 965b). But, on the other, he realizes the exceptional difficulty of a full apprehension of the Forms; so he refuses to specify the studies of the Council (968d-e) and he suggests, by the hypothetical form he uses in 969b, that the appearance of a Nocturnal Council worthy of its task cannot be taken for granted.

In the end, it is the historical principle and the rule of law that prevail over the "Socratic" argumentation and the rule of the philosophers as such. There is little doubt that by creating and emphasizing the importance of an organ like the Nocturnal Council on top of a political construction informed by experience, Plato strives to achieve a high synthesis of the two. To a large extent, this attempt is successful. Provided that the Nocturnal Council operates within constitutional limits, it can undoubtedly integrate with the existing political apparatus of the state and provide it with much required wisdom. But Plato cannot avoid altogether the dilemma of choosing between the two. Either the Nocturnal Council has to be entrusted with absolute power on the basis of its provisional metaphysical knowledge, or the rule of law and a legislative construction based on historical grounds are to prevail. By choosing the latter alternative, by not sacrificing his "mixed constitution" right at the end, Plato permits his final political legacy to be one of moderation.

## VI ΔΟΞΑ IN THE LAWS

One of the features of the *Laws* which is decisively connected with its political outlook is the role that δόξα plays in it. Correct opinion (ἀληθὴς δόξα) is presented time and again as an extremely useful guide for practical action and even as an acceptable alternative to knowledge.

For example, in an important passage in the First Book (632c), Plato declares that some of the φύλακες will proceed "διὰ φρονήσεως" and others "δι' ἀληθοῦς δόξης". In 645e "δόξαι" are grouped with "φρονήσεις". In 688b the greatest virtue ("the first in the list")<sup>126</sup> is said to consist of "φρόνησις καὶ νοῦς καὶ δόξα". In 653a "φρόνησις καὶ ἀληθεὶς δόξαι βέβαιοι" pave the way to virtue. In 689a "ἀμαθία" is explicitly declared to be the opposite of "κατὰ λόγον δόξα". In 689b, in one of the strongest acknowledgements of opinion's usefulness, Plato groups δόξα with ἐπιστημαὶ and λόγος. In 770d opinion is something that helps in the acquisition of virtue. In 864a Plato writes that "[ἡ] τοῦ ἀρίστου δόξα" should dominate in the soul of a man. Finally, in the Tenth Book, Plato declares that opinion belongs to the properties of the soul and as such is (both temporally and metaphysically) prior to ὕλη and σώματα (892b, 896c).

In the light of these passages it becomes obvious that δόξα constitutes a substantial part of the intellectual qualities expected both from the citizen-body of Magnesia as

a whole and from its administrators; given that, unlike the *Republic*, no barriers exist to exclude any particular class from administrative duties and from the share in political power that these duties entail, it is apparent that Plato expects ἀληθῆς δόξα to be not a prerogative of a single class, but a property of the virtuous citizen as such. In putting forward a conception of opinion which emphasizes the decisively positive role δόξα can play in correct political decision-making, Plato in fact follows through a remark made in the *Politicus*. In the latter dialogue ἀληθῆς δόξα is described as a "θεῖος δεσμός" (309c) which alone can bring together the conflicting elements in the soul of the individual (310a).

One critical question is whether this elevated position of doxa invalidates the epistemology of the middle dialogues. In the *Republic* Plato underlined the substantial difference between episteme and doxa and asserted that only the former can legitimize political authority, an assertion inextricably linked with the authoritarianism of the work. But, on the other hand, he did not deny that opinion could have any positive value. Doxa served as the epistemological basis of the political virtue of the Auxiliaries, and, moreover, as a preparatory stage to knowledge: ἐπιστήμη and δόξα, their immense difference notwithstanding, were not distinct faculties but parts of the same cognitive process. This continuity between the two is the crucial factor that allows Plato to attribute a higher status to δόξα in the

*Laws* without formally contradicting the epistemology of the *Republic*. Such a contradiction would only exist either if Plato had asserted in the *Republic* that episteme and doxa are distinct cognitive capacities, or if he had denied the superiority of knowledge to opinion in the *Laws*. As argued in chapter 1, section 8, the former position is untenable and, as we will now proceed to see, there is no real evidence that Plato disqualifies ἐπιστήμη from being superior to δόξα in the *Laws*.

In two or three of the passages of the *Laws* mentioned above Plato comes close to treating opinion as something of equal value with knowledge: The first is 653a where φρόνησις is linked with δόξαι ἀληθεῖς βεβαιοί. In 688b the most important virtue is said to consist of "φρόνησις ... καὶ νοῦς καὶ δόξα μετ' ἔρωτός τε καὶ ἐπιθυμίας τούτοις ἐπομένης". It is clear that doxa is here grouped with phronesis and nous as one of the powers which control "desires and appetites", and therefore opinion belongs to those intellectual properties which are crucial for virtuous moral behaviour (see also 770d). The fact that in both cases phronesis and doxa are connected by the conjunction καὶ means they are syntactically equivalent and the same syntactical structure occurs in a second passage on the next Stephanus page (689b) where δόξαι are connected with ἐπιστημαὶ and λόγοι, this time by the conjunction ἢ. This syntactical structure seems to suggest that opinion is here regarded as equivalent to knowledge. Does this entail an abandonment of

the epistemological dogmas of the middle dialogues?

The answer is no. First of all, the fact that we have an enumeration of intellectual properties that contribute to virtue does not necessarily entail that they are all of the same value, although it could point in such a direction. Syntactical equivalence does not necessarily mean equality of value. An indication, albeit slight, that *doxa* might not be the most prominent member of any of the groups referred to above is given by the fact that it is always mentioned after *φρόνησις* or *ἐπιστήμαι*. What is more revealing, however, is the context in which the last two (and probably the most crucial) of those passages occur. They appear in roughly the middle of the Third Book, the most explicitly historical Book of the *Laws*. Their immediate context is Plato's attempt to explain the decline of the powerful Peloponnesian Federation. It is obvious why Plato would try to be as practical as possible in this context; given that the *Laws* is, as a whole, a work composed for the unphilosophical public, and also given that this is a point in the work where Plato needs to be particularly practically minded, it is understandable that *δόξα* should be placed next to *ἐπιστήμη* without any reference to their difference.

One passage which indicates the imperfection of *δόξα* is 864a. Plato there declares that it is important for one's moral character to have the *ἀρίστου δόξα* dominating in one's soul, but he adds "*καὶ σφάλληται τι*". Opinion, then, is important for practical purposes, but it might be slightly



off the mark: as the use of  $\kappa\acute{\alpha}\nu$   $\sigma\phi\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\eta\tau\alpha\acute{\iota}$   $\tau\iota$  indicates, it is by no means infallible. In the *Republic* Plato stated that  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\mu\eta$  is infallible (477e). There is no similar statement in the *Laws*, but this could perhaps be explained by the practical orientation of the work. In any case, this passage provides an indication, however slight, that *doxa* might not be the highest cognitive capacity which exists, though it may well be the highest capacity expected by ordinary citizens (Plato's reluctance to prescribe a curriculum for the Nocturnal Council and to bestow on it unconditional power clearly support this reading).

A better case for the supremacy of knowledge can be made on the basis of 632c, where it is declared that some of the administrators will proceed  $\delta\iota\acute{\alpha}$   $\phi\rho\omicron\nu\eta\sigma\epsilon\omega\varsigma$  and others  $\delta\iota'$   $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$   $\delta\omicron\acute{\xi}\eta\varsigma$ . This entails that the possession of  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\acute{\eta}\varsigma$   $\delta\omicron\acute{\xi}\alpha$  can be considered sufficient qualification for holding office, but the distinction between  $\phi\rho\omicron\nu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  and  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta\theta\acute{\eta}\varsigma$   $\delta\omicron\acute{\xi}\alpha$  clearly holds in this passage: there is little doubt that the officials operating with the help of *phronesis* (provided such officials can be found) will be better ones, because otherwise there would be no point in Plato making this remark. So, in this text, true opinion is accepted as an alternative to knowledge but it is also made clear that it is no equivalent to it.

In conclusion, although Plato does not explicitly state his adherence to the supremacy of  $\acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\eta}\mu\eta$  over  $\delta\omicron\acute{\xi}\alpha$  in the *Laws*, there is no evidence that he has abandoned it either;

and, as can be inferred from 632c, an epistemological distinction along these lines is probably at work in the dialogue. Therefore the new, elevated position of δόξα can be accepted as not formally contradicting the epistemology of the *Republic*. Nevertheless, it definitely leads in a different political direction. Whereas in the *Republic* almost all the emphasis was placed on the difference between knowledge and opinion, this difference becomes in the *Laws* very narrow and in certain cases almost imperceptible.<sup>127</sup>

This interpretation squares well with some central features of the *Laws*. In this work Plato reinstates, albeit in somewhat ambiguous terms, the theory of the Forms, but gives up the demand for philosopher-kings. He insists that κοινοκτημοσύνη is the best arrangement for a state (739a-e), but he goes into great detail in outlining a society where the criterion for political classification is movable property. In other words, Plato indicates that he still considers the political arrangements of the *Republic* (and their underlying metaphysical basis), as the best in absolute terms, but he does not prescribe them for Magnesia because this city is composed of ordinary human beings. The rationale behind this strategy becomes clear when we take into account the *Politicus*. There Plato dedicates a considerable extent of the dialogue to emphasizing the importance of a knowledgeable philosopher-ruler, only to concede in the last few pages that such an ideal is probably unattainable and that, given that this is the case, the best

has to be made of the purely human potential available in a state. It is the same philosophical movement away from the ideal towards the practical that determines the higher status of ὀρθὴ δόξα in the *Laws*. Without abandoning the doctrine of the supremacy of ἐπιστήμη Plato accepts that, in the absence of "divine" ideal rulers who possess such knowledge, opinion is a perfectly legitimate guide for moral and political action. This explains the large number of passages in the *Laws* where the usefulness of doxa is underlined. Since no "divine" human rulers are at hand to take control of the state by virtue of their knowledge, the lawgiver has to accept ordinary citizens, relying on their δόξαι, as the administrators of the state. In this sense, opinion does replace full metaphysical knowledge as the primary intellectual quality at work in the *Laws*, a fact which is in accord with the principle that practical historical experience and not metaphysics should be the basis of a humanly created and governed state.

It is for this reason that Plato stresses the importance of νομοθετήματα which ἐπιεικεῖς ἄνδρες (based of course on their opinions) in other cities may have created and asks from the lawgiver to put them to the test of experience (957a-b). He does not only permit, but actually encourages his citizens to travel abroad and study the laws of other cities because "[w]ithout this observation and research a state will never stay at the peak of perfection" (951c). Magnesia is, then, unlike Callipolis, to inquire into the

(opinion-based) wisdom of other cities and, moreover, such interaction is deemed necessary for constitutional perfection.<sup>128</sup> So, in the final analysis, ὀρθὴ δόξα plays in the *Laws* a political role which was unequivocally denied to it in the *Republic*. It becomes the main qualification required for holding political power.

As far as the purported change in Plato's attitude towards democracy is concerned, this undoubtedly constitutes a vital step: in the *Laws* Plato is ready to recognize that the intellectual capacities of the average citizen can be enough for a reasonably, if not perfectly, well governed state. His or her intellectual faculties not only do not preclude him or her from political participation but are emphatically acknowledged as entitling him or her to it. Furthermore, nowhere in his discussion of the intellectual capacities of the citizens or the education connected with them does Plato make the slightest distinction among members of the four classes. It becomes obvious, then, that although he does not regard all citizens as equally gifted in their intellectual capacities, he does not distinguish among them in terms of class. This fact is, from a political point of view, decisive: it testifies how the elevated position of δόξα, to the extent that it is a substitute for the unattainable ἐπιστήμη, and the confirmation of historical experience as a guide for political action, led Plato to moderate the extreme anti-democratic attitude of the *Republic*.

The elevation of doxa to a position where it acts, in practice if not in theory, as a substitute for the episteme of the *Republic* means that in his last dialogue Plato demonstrates an increased acceptance of the moral and political capacities of the average citizen. But if the ἀληθῆς δόξα of the latter were the result of pure indoctrination, if Plato denied individual choice in the *Laws*, then his concessions to the ordinary citizen would be significantly qualified, if not actually made pointless. In this case, ἀληθῆς δόξα would not be the result of the citizens' rational capacities but of the state's brainwashing and educational authoritarianism. As we will now see, despite the fact that there is a strong authoritarian element in the *Laws*, Plato does not deny individual moral choice and for this reason his concessions to the common citizen are not rendered insignificant.

Plato's educational proposals in the *Laws* have often been criticized, and with considerable justification, as leaving very little space for individual choice and therefore as being authoritarian. So Klosko writes that "[t]hroughout their early years children are watched closely; no aspect of their lives should be left unsupervised; no subject is too insignificant for the state's attention. Education is, thus, all-pervasive";<sup>129</sup> and he adds that "[t]he end result of Plato's prescriptions is an all-embracing public opinion, intruding into every aspect of people's lives".<sup>130</sup> Stalley remarks that the city of the *Laws* "severely limits personal

freedom and initiative" and supports this claim by referring, among other things, to the "rigid control of music and the other arts",<sup>131</sup> the educational importance of which is taken for granted by Plato. The main exponent of this view is Popper. Although for his charge of authoritarianism against Plato he relies mostly on the *Republic*, Popper quotes freely from the *Laws* in support of his claims.<sup>132</sup>

Plato's starting point in his educational policies is that young children have great plasticity, and therefore early education is crucial. The children should get used to a balance between pleasure and pain (792c-d), which will be extremely useful in later life since nobody can avoid pain. Plato considers this point so important that he suggests that pregnant women ought to be supervised in order to be made sure they have the appropriate psychological condition during their pregnancy (792e). Proposals like the supervision of pregnant women, the minute detail in which the education of young children is prescribed in Book Seven, the prohibition of innovation in their games (797aff.) and measures like the permission given to all citizens to punish children and tutors alike if they misbehave, with danger of being punished themselves if they ignore this duty (808e-809a), leave little doubt that Plato's educational ideal does not include anything like the free individual development of the children into adults with a powerful and active critical spirit. Censorship in the arts is also

envisaged: poets are not to teach children whatever they like (656c). The love of innovation in poetry is rejected as morally destructive and Egypt, with its ancient and unchanged musical norms, is declared to be the ideal pattern in this respect (656dff.). The judges in musical contests must be the eldest, who judge on the basis of the content of the works presented, not of the pleasure they give (658e). The poets should teach that the just life is the happy life (660eff.). The substance of these Platonic remarks in Book Two is canonized in the Seventh Book where a body of judges aged fifty or over are given the authority to approve of poetic works or to reject them if they do not satisfy the necessary moral criteria (802a-b).<sup>133</sup> And in 811b-d Plato explains that the best παράδειγμα of a poetic work appropriate for educational purposes is the *Laws* itself.<sup>134</sup>

Given that Plato holds views such as the ones presented above, it is undeniable that there are strong authoritarian tendencies in the *Laws*. This statement, however, has to be evaluated on the basis of certain features of the dialogue which do not neutralize its authoritarianism, but severely condition it. There is little doubt that Plato considers education as the paramount function of the state (the education officialdom is the greatest in the state-765e). Its purpose is to train children in virtue (643e); in Plato's opinion the way for this to be achieved is by strict adherence to a specific and almost unchangeable system of values. It is clear that in this framework, individual

initiative is more likely to hinder the achievement of the educational ideal than to promote it. But does Plato go as far as to deny any personal judgement or expression to the Magnesians? Although primarily ethical and political, this question has ultimately to be answered in the wider framework of the theological doctrines of the *Laws*; because if Plato denies any value to human deliberation in the fabric of his theology<sup>135</sup>, if he envisages an omnipotent god annulling human deliberation, then not only does his political message become plainly authoritarian, but Magnesia itself becomes a fully fleshed theocracy.

In his much quoted "puppet metaphor" in 644d Plato suggests that human beings are puppets of the gods, who created them either as a "plaything" (*παίγδιον ἐκείνων*) or for some serious reason beyond humans' grasp. Prima facie, this text seems to deny any significance to human free will. The central inference of it appears to be that men are completely dependent on the gods. The visual image of creatures controlled in their every single movement by a mighty power does appear to nullify human ethical autonomy. But one should not be carried away too far by the force of Plato's poetic language in this passage, for in the subsequent discussion Plato does not confirm this conclusion; on the contrary, he asserts the importance of human deliberation.

The philosopher declares that human beings are driven by powerful emotions (he likens these to cords) and are brought



back and forth by them, "across the boundary line where virtue and vice meet" (644e). The one cord that men "must" (δεῖ) try to hang on to is the golden cord of "λογισμός," which is also the "public law of the city". The force exerted by the golden cord is πρᾶος, not βίαιος (a strong indication that one's adherence to logismos and the public law is to be by accord, not by coercion-645a); and if human beings cooperate with it "the meaning of the terms "self-superior" and "self-inferior" [κρείττω ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἥττω] will somehow become clearer, and the duties of state and individual will be better appreciated. The latter must digest the truth about the forces that pull him, and act on it in his life; the state must get an account of it either from one of the gods or from [a] human expert ... and incorporate it in the form of a law to govern both its internal affairs and its relations with other states" (645b-c). This text provides a number of indicators that Plato does not imply with the puppet metaphor any kind of predetermination theory. Human ethical choice, and even the adequacy of man's intellectual abilities are established in this passage in more than one way. First of all, δεῖ is repeated three times in the space of a few lines. The fact that Plato *exhorts* human beings to do something by using "must", indicates that he regards them as having a choice. The conception that human beings have a duty which they ought to fulfil presupposes free ethical choice, because if they were predetermined, the exhortation would be pointless.

(Kantian ethics is a typical case of "duty ethics" and of course it emphatically verifies the individual's moral autonomy). This point is fortified by 727b where Plato remarks that it is the citizens' own duty to be virtuous, and they should not avoid this responsibility by accusing others of their own faults. Plato also asks for the co-operation of the citizen with the law and of course co-operation presupposes free choice. Moreover, Plato uses the concepts of self-superior and self-inferior. In their context, these notions refer to the individual who does not give in to emotions and follows the orders of λογισμός, consequently being self-superior, or does the opposite and is self-inferior. But neither of these terms would be meaningful unless we accept that one is free to choose between the two alternatives. Finally, god is not the only source of political wisdom: the alternative of a wise lawgiver is seriously proposed (645b). Therefore, not only is man not deprived of his ethical choice by an almighty god, but human wisdom is treated as a valid alternative to divine wisdom as far as constitutional issues are concerned.

The possible contradiction between a notion of man as a puppet of the gods and man as a free moral agent is removed if we realize that, in this passage, god is presented as the originator of a framework within which human beings are obliged to operate ethically. The cords that end up in them are held by god, who therefore provides the setting for their actions. But these actions are the result of free

(though not unlimited) human choice. From this point of view what Plato suggests is that both individuals and states find themselves in a battle to promote virtue and to defy vice. But the outcome of the battle is by no means decided in advance by the gods. It is the net result of human deliberation. So, in the final analysis, god is not omnipotent (in this Plato is in accord with Greek religious tradition) and does not annihilate human ethical choice.

A number of other features in the *Laws* reiterate the conclusion that human choice is accepted in the work. One has to remember that Plato relies on the administrators of Magnesia (and to a certain extent on the whole citizen-body) to take the right political decisions for the city. But it would be absurd to allow this kind of authority to such men, who, moreover, rely simply on opinion, if Plato believed that human deliberation was of no importance and that there was no human choice. Even though Socrates' position that no one is a wrongdoer voluntarily is reinstated (731c), it is not accepted in essence by Plato. This axiom does refute free ethical choice, since if wrongdoing is a result of ignorance it is fully involuntary and all ethical problems are reduced to questions of knowledge, not of choice. However, as Blair Campbell remarks, ignorance is only third in importance among causes of vice in 863c (Socratically it is the only one) and Plato also suggests that individual choices do not necessarily coincide with rational judgements (689a).<sup>136</sup> The inevitable conclusion is that Plato does not

regard human agency as nullified by an almighty god.<sup>137</sup>

Plato goes even further: in a crucial passage in 904b-c he declares that god "της δὲ γενέσεως τοῦ ποίου τινὸς ἀφηκε ταῖς βουλήσεσιν ἑκάστων ἡμῶν τὰς αἰτίας". Far from obliterating human will, god imposes it on men as a duty. This entails that vice is the choice of the vicious man himself. The force of the emotions is considerable: a war takes place within each man (626e) between those powers that drive him to virtue and those that propel him to vice. But god is in no way way responsible for the outcome in each individual case: man is the master of his own fate.

Platonic theology then does not simply accept human ethical choice, but practically imposes it as a duty. The problem, then, is how this attitude can be reconciled with the undeniably restrictive factors that are at work in Plato's educational system and in Magnesian society in general. Is there a contradiction at this point?

The issue is resolved if we realize that Plato considers that it is the uppermost duty of the state to provide for its citizens the conditions that will allow them to become virtuous, *κρείττους ἑαυτῶν*. By making virtue the primary aim of education, by attempting to forbid practically any innovation, Plato gives to the individual the utmost help the state can provide in his or her war with his or herself. However, the state (at any rate the human state of the *Laws*) can only have an auxiliary role in this conflict. It does all in its power in order to lead the citizen in the

direction of virtue. But the final result, on which the individual's virtue and happiness depends, is up to the citizen himself. That is why there will always be atheists in the state, sometimes more and sometimes less. The state is not omnipotent: all strictness in education and all censorship cannot eradicate atheism and vice.<sup>138</sup>

This rationale means that Plato can be vigorously anti-liberal (to use an anachronism) and uphold free ethical choice at the same time. Given the antithetical character of these two predicaments, this is no small achievement. As far as the politics of his Cretan city is concerned, Plato is able to give an all powerful role to the state, but leave the responsibility for moral failure with the individual.

It remains to see how Plato's authoritarianism relates to his stance on democracy. First of all, by accepting human free will, Plato indicates that the doxa of the citizens and the virtue these citizens acquire is not merely the result of indoctrination, but is also due to the capacities of the citizens themselves. This is important, because Plato's estimate of the moral and intellectual abilities of the average citizen is directly connected with his attitude towards democracy. Second, given that education is the principal area of the *Laws* where Plato's severe restrictions on what we would call "civil liberties" appear, it is interesting to see how Plato defines παιδεία: it is "education from childhood in virtue, a training which produces a keen desire to become a perfect citizen who knows

to rule and be ruled as justice demands" (643e). The one factor in this definition which is crucial from a political point of view is that the citizen is to be prepared to rule and be ruled. The ideal that one should rule and be ruled in turn is, historically, a democratic one. It could perhaps be partly applied to moderate oligarchies, but definitely not to hard-core ones like Sparta. So, in an important area of the *Laws*, Plato's authoritarianism, to the extent that it exists, does not entail opposition to democracy.

But the main feature of the *Laws* which divorces its authoritarianism from unconditional opposition to democracy is that here, unlike the *Republic*, Plato's anti-liberal measures are not directed to a specific class and are not envisaged as part of a strategy designed to keep one class in perpetual subjection by means of psychological repression and/or physical force. Plato's arguments apply to all four classes. Nowhere does he indicate a distinction between classes in discussing the moral and theological issues touching upon freedom of choice, and it is clear that such a distinction would run counter to the spirit of his assumptions. Quite unlike the *Republic*, we have in the *Laws* an authoritarianism that is not socially discriminating. No matter how much Plato might insult modern liberal sensibilities (which undoubtedly he does), his authoritarian stance is not a vehicle for the suppression of a part of the citizen-body and in this pivotal respect it is not unreservedly anti-democratic.

## VII VIRTUE IN THE *LAWS*

Virtue is not only the aim of education in the *Laws*. As Plato repeatedly underlines, it is also the aim of legislation as a whole (688aff., 705d-e, 707d, 708d, 770d, 963a). In a sense, this position constitutes the pivotal ethical and political axiom of the *Laws*. (As we know from 650b politics and ethics are inextricably tied together: politics is the art that creates good characters). Plato leaves no doubt whatever that virtue as a whole has to be the exclusive aim of any legislator worthy of the name. He declares this in explicit terms in 963a. And it is on the basis of this principle that he criticizes and ultimately rejects the widely respected legislations of Minos and Lycurgus: they did not target with their legislations virtue as a whole, but only one aspect of it, courage. (Plato makes this point by ironically suggesting that he and his interlocutors made the mistake of misunderstanding the two ancient legislators, but he most clearly places the responsibility for the monolithic Dorian emphasis on courage on them-630d).

However, as soon as we attempt to determine the particular conception of virtue that Plato puts forward in the *Laws*, a specific problem presents itself. While in all the passages mentioned above Plato refers to virtue as a whole either explicitly (e.g. "πᾶσαν [ἀρετὴν]"-688b,<sup>139</sup> 705e)

or quite clearly in the given context (707d, 708d, 770d) and while in 964a he unequivocally states that the four virtues are essentially one ("τέτταρα ὅντα ἓν ἐστὶ"), there is one passage in the *Laws* where a quite different approach to virtue is adopted. More specifically, in 630aff. Plato suggests that *andreia* can be demonstrated even by mercenaries, who are otherwise, with very few exceptions, "reckless and insolent rogues, and just about the most witless people you could find" (630b). If such people, who in Plato's opinion can hardly present any claim to virtue as a whole, are able to possess courage, then the latter must be distinct from the rest of the virtues and consequently the unity of virtue is contradicted. Furthermore, in 631bff. the philosopher distinguishes human from divine goods and in his enumeration of the latter he spells out a full hierarchy of the virtues with *φρόνησις* first, *σωφροσύνη* second, *δικαιοσύνη* (for some reason a combination of the other three) third and *ἀνδρεία* last. This stratification clearly defies the "unity of virtue" thesis in its strong Socratic form where virtues are all in the final analysis reducible to knowledge and therefore identical with each other. As Stalley remarks "[e]ven without the doctrine of the unity of virtue this ranking of the particular values would require explanation",<sup>140</sup> an explanation which is obviously not provided in the relevant passage. At the same time it is equally unclear why justice is a combination of the other three virtues.<sup>141</sup>



Plato had only slightly modified the Socratic principle of the unity of virtue in the *Republic*, without in essence abandoning it. There the Ideal Rulers possessed full virtue in the Socratic sense, whereas the Auxiliaries had a second-rate bravery based on *doxa* but not wisdom and the Producers no virtue at all. The reason for this slight modification of the Socratic thesis was clearly political: full virtue entitled the Rulers to an absolute claim to power, while the Auxiliaries were attributed the virtue which was necessary for them to perform their military duties and the Producers were deprived of virtue and consequently of any claim to power. Bravery, in its "raw" state, was also problematic in the *Politicus*. There it appeared as incompatible with the crude form of temperance (306b) and the intervention of the Scientific Ruler was necessary to reconcile them. Here the unity of the virtues was seriously compromised, given that at least at one stage of the individual's moral development two individual virtues were inimical to each other. The separation of courage from the rest of the virtues was probably part of common Greek opinion and Socrates encounters it as early as the *Protagoras*. There the sophist claimed that "ἡ δὲ ἀνδρεία πάνυ πολὺ διαφέρει πάντων τούτων [the rest of the individual virtues]" (349d). Does Plato, late in his career, come to accept the Protagorean dictum? As we will now see, the answer to this question is negative.

Plato's position on virtue culminates in the last Book.

In 963a Plato states that "every detail of our legislation ought to have a *single* end in view and the proper name to call it was, I think we agreed, virtue". He then goes on to argue that what the Nocturnal Council need to understand is how virtue is essentially one although it is expressed in four different ways. Plato does not explain what is the "ταῦτόν" which makes the four virtues ultimately one, but he does indicate that the answer presupposes training in the method of division, the method that characterizes the metaphysical inquiries of the late dialogues.

In this late stage of his career, Plato is obviously discontented with the strict form of the Socratic doctrine of the unity of virtue. This doctrine, by reducing all virtues to one thing, knowledge, tended to obscure the differences between the particular virtues. In fact, it practically left no scope for differentiation between individual virtues, because according to it, either one had knowledge and consequently virtue as a whole, or one lacked this knowledge and possessed no virtue at all. This aspect of the Socratic doctrine of the unity of virtue is clearly demonstrated in the *Protagoras*, where Socrates claims that individual virtues resemble each other like "τὰ τοῦ χρυσοῦ μορφαί" (329d), i.e. they are practically indistinguishable. Plato's dissatisfaction with the Socratic thesis is already evident in the *Politicus* where Plato admits that the reciprocity of virtues is not a universally valid position (306b). This admission demonstrates that in his later

ethical philosophy Plato becomes increasingly aware of the different character of individual virtues, a development which, as we saw in chapter 2, section 4, is closely related to his interest in history. On the other hand, Plato clearly wants to uphold the essential unity of virtue: in the *Politicus* this is demonstrated by the Ruler's reconciliation of the conflicting virtues and in the *Laws* by his repeated emphasis on a single and unified virtue. But if Plato is to resolve this issue, if he is to show how the unity of virtue is not invalidated by the differences between individual virtues, he needs to formulate a thesis which will confirm the unity of virtue without obliterating these differences. It is here that division comes into play. Division is a method designed to produce exact definitions. If such definitions were provided for each virtue separately, while at the same time the essential unity of virtue was upheld, a major advancement in Platonic ethics would have been achieved, in the form of a higher synthesis explaining the simultaneous unity and multiplicity of virtue. What Plato clearly aims at is a notion of the unity of virtue which goes beyond Socrates' strong identity thesis. Unfortunately, Plato does not clarify in what sense the four virtues are distinct and one at the same time. Guthrie's explanation is that "this was not the place for it"<sup>142</sup> and a similar suggestion is made by Stalley.<sup>143</sup> However, the undeniable philosophical complexity of the task could well mean that Plato had not reached the level of elaboration necessary to

present his solution of this problem in a written dialogue. An indication that this might be so is given by his obvious reluctance to prescribe a definite curriculum for the Nocturnal Council in 968d-e. In any case, though, the lack of textual clarification of this problem means that any interpretative suggestion has to remain speculative.

Nevertheless, there is one passage in the Twelfth Book which shows the way that one virtue might be differentiated from another. In 963e in a passage worth citing in full Plato writes: "Ἐρώτησόν με τί ποτε ἔν προσαγορευόντες ἀρετὴν ἀμφοτέρω, δύο πάλιν αὐτὰ προσείπομεν, τὸ μὲν ἀνδρείαν, τὸ δὲ φρόνησιν. ἔρω γὰρ σοι τὴν αἰτίαν, ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἔστιν περὶ φόβον, οὗ καὶ τὰ θηρία μετέχει, τῆς ἀνδρείας, καὶ τὰ γε τῶν παιδῶν ἦθη τῶν πάντων νέων· ἀνεὺ γὰρ λόγου καὶ φύσει γίγνεται ἀνδρεία ψυχῆ, ἀνεὺ δὲ αὖ λόγου ψυχῆ φρόνιμος τε καὶ νοῦν ἔχουσα οὐτ' ἐγένετο πώποτε οὐτ' ἔστιν οὐδ' αὖθις ποτε γενήσεται, ὡς ὄντος ἑτέρου".

Apart from the particularity of Plato asking himself a question on behalf of Cleinias (again an indication of the exceptional difficulty involved in the issue under discussion), this text provides a number of indicators which help explain the discrepancies between the "unity of virtue" thesis and the passages of the First Book mentioned above. First of all, it has to be underlined that Plato indicates, already in the First Book, that all forms of ἀνδρεία are not equivalent. In 630a-b, just before commenting on the fact that even mercenaries can display courage, Plato declares

that "δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωφροσύνη καὶ φρόνησις εἰς ταῦτόν  
ἔλθοῦσαι μετ' ἀνδρείας" are vastly superior ("πάμπλου  
ἀμείνων") to "αὐτῆς μόνῃς ἀνδρείας"; and in 630c he says  
that although natural bravery is "good" (καλῆν), it comes  
only fourth in the evaluation of the virtues. Now, at this  
early stage of the dialogue, the Athenian Stranger does not  
want to alienate his Dorian companions by directly  
challenging their ancestral legislations which rated courage  
highly; moreover, he has not yet developed his own  
conception of virtue, which alone can make clear why natural  
courage is not properly a virtue. He therefore goes along at  
this point with current Greek opinion and names this type of  
courage a virtue. But it is only at the end of the dialogue  
that he is in a position to explain why the courage which is  
φύσει and not λόγῳ is not a virtue proper. Plato in essence  
revokes in the end his statement in the First Book that  
unqualified courage is a virtue: a property which can be  
displayed by beasts and young children cannot be a virtue in  
the real sense of the word. The inference is that only when  
it is coupled to the other virtues, when it is led by reason  
and not merely given by nature, can andreia be considered a  
virtue in the philosophical and not simply in the common use  
of the term. For this reason the unity of virtue is not  
cancelled out by the remark in 630aff.

The fact that courage arises from instinct and can appear  
ἀλόγως also explains why it is rated last in the evaluation  
of virtues. Phronesis, on the other hand, which can only

exist in accordance with reason is duly placed in the top position as the highest of the virtues. Moreover, in a political framework, wisdom is obviously the most crucial quality expected of those that are entrusted with authority, and this helps us to understand why it can be considered the highest virtue in the *Laws*. What this text does not reveal is why justice is rated below temperance, and why it is specifically defined as the virtue which is created by the combination of the other three. Nowhere in the *Laws* does Plato clarify or follow through this remark. Stalley, who attempts to unravel the riddle of the ranking of the virtues sees wisdom coming first because "rational judgement must be in control" and temperance second because the "main danger" is that the individual might "succumb to pleasure".<sup>144</sup> But he is unable to explain justice's third place and he admits as much. I think it is fair to say that Plato does not offer any textual backing to the ranking of justice and therefore the problem cannot be resolved in the framework of the *Laws*. As for the fact that it is the combination of the other virtues, perhaps this is so because justice in the state presupposes the correct relationship between the different parts of the state, and, correspondingly, in the individual it presupposes a full harmony of the lower and the higher parts of the soul; as we will now proceed to see, this harmony is at the core of Plato's conception of virtue in the *Laws*. If virtues interact with each other in the way Forms (but not Forms of virtues) interact in the *Sophist*

(254dff.), it is possible that justice is the particular virtue that comes into being when the relationship of the other virtues is the right one: in this sense it would be a combination of the other virtues. But this again is not sufficiently clarified by Plato and one has to remain at the level of suggestion on this question as well.

Another important aspect of 963e is the way it associates reason with the highest virtue, phronesis, and with virtue in general. Reason was prominent already in the *Republic* (e.g. 402a), where it was exactly the fact that the rational element reigns in the souls of the philosopher-kings that constituted their virtue and entitled them to rule. In the *Philebus* the rational nous is described as "βασιλεύς ... οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς" (28c). In the *Timaeus* human beings are psychologically "healthy" if they do not follow the arbitrary movements generated by the material world, but the regular form of movement which is associated with reason. In other words human perfection depends on control of the bodily desires and correct education (44a-c). The *Timaeus* (69cff.) repeats the three-fold distinction of the soul found in the *Republic*, but Plato indicates in the former dialogue an increased awareness of the difficulty involved in taming one's mortal part of the soul. This part is "δεινὰ καὶ ἀναγκατὰ ἐν ἑαυτῷ παθήματα ἔχον, πρῶτον μὲν ἡδονῆν, μέγιστον κακὸν δέλεαρ, ἔπειτα λύπας, ἀγαθῶν φυγᾶς, ἔτι δ' αὖ θάρρος καὶ φόβον, ἄφρονε συμβούλω, θυμὸν δὲ δυσπαραμύθητον ἐλπίδα δ' εὐπαραγωγόν" (69c-d) and therefore it is not

easily controlled. This conception of reason as being identical with the immortal part of each human being is repeated in the *Laws* (713e-714a).

There is nothing new, then, in the thesis that conformity with reason is a cardinal prerequisite for the virtue which we find in the *Laws*. In this context virtue is the agreement of one's emotions with one's rational judgement, a point that Plato makes explicit in 653b. This agreement can be fostered in early life by education and when later one obtains reason, the latter confirms the soundness of previous training. Plato had already stated in the First Book that a conflict takes place within each man (626e) between those forces that lead to virtue and those that lead to vice and that "bad" (κακόν) is the individual who submits to ἡδοναί (633e). These passages suggest that the moral psychology of the *Laws* is based on a conception of internal conflict. But whereas in previous dialogues the emphasis was on the submission of the lower parts of the soul to the higher, in the *Laws* Plato appears keener to emphasize the need for harmony between these parts than the outright submission of the appetitive part of the soul. The difference is indeed a subtle one. Either way, if virtue is to come into existence, the lower part of the soul has to give way. But it is very much an indication of Plato's new spirit that he now meticulously explores the possibility of a harmonization between the conflicting claims of reason and appetite and places this harmonization higher than the



simple domination of the better party in either the individual or the state. This approach is clearly exemplified in 626eff. Plato uses there a parable in order to explain what he means when saying that a city or an individual can win a victory over itself ("νικᾶν αὐτὸν αὐτόν") or be defeated by itself ("ἡττᾶσθαι αὐτὸν ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ"-626e). The philosopher imagines a family which includes many brothers. Most of the brothers are ἀδικοὶ but a few are δίκαιοι (627c). Now this family would be worse than itself if the unjust brothers ruled and better than itself if the just ones did. This statement conforms fully with the spirit of the *Republic*: the best community is the one where the best rule over the worse. But in the *Laws* Plato is not content to let the matter stand at this. He envisages a judge who reconciles all brothers and restores peace in the family. Whereas in the first alternative the unjust brothers are either killed or violently subdued, in the second one they are accepted (presumably provided they morally improve themselves) as part of this small community. What is remarkable in this passage is the way Plato goes beyond the conception of "the rule of the best" with which he stayed content in the *Republic*. He now underlines that the best end in an internal conflict is the reconciliation of the fighting parties (628c-d).<sup>145</sup> This emphasis on moderation is a recurring theme in the *Laws*. It marks not a denial of the *Republic's* emphasis on the importance of the prevalence of the best parts in the city and the soul, but a

higher, more articulate version of it.

In the light of this concept we can now understand better why the aim of education is to instil in the souls of children the values that conform with reason (653b). If the emotions of these children are "canalized" in such a way as not to conflict with logos' demands, the ideal of harmony between emotion and reason is achieved. Plato clearly suggests that this harmony, starting at a young age, is far better than an outright subjection of emotions to reason. Already in the *Timaeus* he had stressed the particular force that emotions can have. By training them not to oppose reason, Plato puts this force into morally useful effect. To use a modern psychological conception, Plato wants to drive the instinctive energy of the individual into morally and socially acceptable tasks.

The idea that disharmony between emotion and reason is ultimately disastrous and that moderation is absolutely vital for good government is vindicated in the framework of the historical content of the Third Book. The disharmony between the feelings of pleasure and pain on the one hand and of reason on the other is declared to be the greatest ignorance (689a), while their accordance is the "καλλίστη καὶ μέγιστη ... σοφία" (689d). This disharmony explains for Plato the downfall of Argos and Messene. Sparta, for its part, survived due to the moderate provisions of its constitution (691eff.).

History then proves the priceless value of moderation.

The two greatest powers of Plato's own lifetime, Persia and Athens, did well as long as they stuck to the principle of moderation and held a middle course between absolutism and freedom. But the abandonment of this principle meant their decline (693dff.).

It is on these grounds that Plato advocates a middle course between monarchy and democracy as the best constitution (756e). By the statement of this principle the ethics of moderation is coupled by the politics of moderation and these two aspects of the *Laws* come to match each other. Without any doubt, the need for moderation is one of the pivotal exhortations of the *Laws*.

In his treatment of virtue in the *Laws*, Plato forcefully reinstates some of the principles that shape his theory of virtue in earlier dialogues. Virtue is the aim of all education and all legislation. It is *par excellence* the quality which legitimizes political power.<sup>146</sup> It is essentially one, though it takes the different forms of the four particular virtues. One of the main intellectual tasks of the theoreticians of Magnesia, the Nocturnal Council, is to understand its fundamental unity and simultaneous multiplicity (965c-d). Finally, virtue is brought about when there is harmony between the higher and and the lower parts in the agent's soul, this harmony presupposing that the latter through training willingly submit to the former.

From a political point of view, however, there is a distinct Platonic shift of emphasis in the ethical theory of

the *Laws* towards a notion of virtue which is more compatible with the moral abilities of the common citizen. Virtue ceases in the *Laws* to be a quality that can only be obtained by the very few. This is not to say that the road to virtue lies open to everybody. The strong force of the emotions precludes this possibility. However, one of the features which gave the *Republic* its particularly anti-democratic character is absent from the *Laws*: there is no class barrier to full virtue. Plato nowhere suggests that the members of any specific class might be better qualified to achieve virtue. Whereas in the *Republic* only citizens of one class, and the class with the fewest members at that, could achieve full virtue, in the *Laws* every citizen is, in principle, able to do that, provided he can reach the psychic harmony described by Plato. Virtue then shifts from being a class question to being an individual's question. This is supported in the political sphere by the fact that all major offices are open to all classes. From this point of view, the theory of virtue of the *Laws*, unlike that of the *Republic*, is not explicitly anti-democratic.

This aspect of Plato's ethico-political thought is coupled with his increased interest in the practical character of virtue and in moderation. The first is demonstrated by the fact that the term for wisdom becomes, at least in the lists of the virtues, φρόνησις instead of σοφία. Although the two words could be taken roughly as synonyms, φρόνησις has a more practical character, σοφία a more theoretical

one.<sup>147</sup> The fact that Plato gives more emphasis to the practical side of wisdom means that the notion of wisdom put forward in the *Laws* is more accessible to ordinary people than the highly theoretical and exclusive σοφία of the *Republic*. As regards the obviously increased significance of moderation in Plato's ethical thinking, again this points to a shift in his position on democracy: the fact that the emphasis is placed on the harmonization of the lower and the higher parts of the soul, rather than on the outright submission of the appetite, entails that the ideal in the state will be government by consent and that force will be unnecessary. The same ideal was expressed in the *Republic*, but Plato's repeated use of fighting analogies in the Fourth Book to describe the submission of the lowest parts of the soul to the highest ones, indicates that he envisaged force as an acceptable political means. In the *Laws*, where the class stratification is looser, the stress on moderation points towards a different attitude. The first aim in a situation of conflict, as Plato explicitly suggests in 627e-628a is not submission of the guilty party but reconciliation. Furthermore, in the *Laws* individuals are addressed as responsible citizens: this is the political function of the preambles to the laws. Plato uses an analogy between the προοίμια to the *Laws* and the actions of the free doctor who "μανθάνει" and "διδάσκει" his patient before he proceeds to treatment (720d). He distinguishes this method from the practice of the slave doctors who do not "[give]

any account" (λόγον ... δίδωσιν-720c) of their actions. As the language here clearly demonstrates,<sup>148</sup> the preambles are directed to the rationality of the citizens and this is an undeniable sign of Plato's increased trust in the rational capacities of ordinary people.<sup>149</sup> One has only to think how much they would be out of place in the *Republic* to realize that a major difference exists in the moral atmosphere of the two works. Klosko justifiably remarks that "[t]he need for consent to laws sets the *Laws* apart from Plato's other political works".<sup>150</sup> This need for consent is inseparable from the need for moderation; and no matter how repulsive other aspects of the dialogue might be, there can be no question that the extreme anti-democratic authoritarianism of the *Republic* is not reproduced in the moral content of the *Laws*.

There is a tendency among scholars to treat the *Laws* as some kind of aftermath to the *Republic*.<sup>151</sup> That this attitude fails to do justice to this dialogue and to Plato's late political philosophy as a whole, should, I hope, have been made clear by now. It is absolutely true that Plato's conviction of the superiority of the dogmas of the *Republic* never faded. Magnesia is explicitly a "second best" state. The theory of Forms, although to an extent irrelevant to a purely human state, is reinstated. Knowledge is confirmed as superior to opinion. Common possession of goods is the best economic arrangement. But all these assertions, Plato realizes, are by and large irrelevant to a human society in

the absence of a philosopher-ruler. Already in the *Timaeus* and the *Politicus* he distinguished sharply between what is divinely to be wished for and what is humanly achievable. In the *Laws* he sets out to explore the second alternative.

But this change of course is not without far-reaching philosophical consequences. In attempting to flesh out a constitution created by humans and directed to humans, Plato abandons the strategy of the *Republic*, which was based on justifying political arrangements on metaphysical principles (though he does not revoke these principles themselves) and replaces the latter with a historical principle; and, moreover, not with a historical principle in abstractio, but with a concrete historical example of legislation. This feature of the *Laws* has gone by and large unnoticed by commentators, to a certain degree, I would think, because of their tendency to look for the common grounds of the dialogue with the *Republic* rather than for the ways in which Plato departs in the *Laws* from his ideal of the middle dialogues. So Saunders treats the *Laws* as the other side of the coin of the *Republic*, and Stalley, who gives an excellent account of particular issues involved in the *Laws*, does not present an overall conclusion which captures the essence of the dialogue. Friedlander finds the Socratic principles in the work prevailing over the Solonian ones, a position which relies on some tentative conclusions extracted mainly from the last Book and ignores the vast amount of specific historical argumentation which finds its

way into the dialogue as a whole. Even Morrow, who in his monumental *Plato's Cretan City* offers a meticulously detailed analysis of the extent to which Plato incorporates historical examples in the *Laws*, and who according to one critic "has made the *Laws* readable for the first time",<sup>152</sup> does not spell out explicitly the fact that the main legislative principle Plato follows in the work comes, both in practice and in spirit, from Solon's Reformation. Having said that, Morrow does recognize the force of historical precedents which are at work in the *Laws* to a greater extent than any other commentator; he also provides an excellent account of the relationship between the Nocturnal Council and the rest of Plato's legislation, thus removing the suspicion that Plato at the end of the dialogue returns to an ideal state, in essence repudiating almost everything he had stated before the appearance of this Council in the *Laws*. Both these aspects of his work constitute major scholarly achievements.

The one point about the *Laws* which appears to be beyond dispute is its practical character. Nevertheless, Plato's orientation towards practice in his last dialogue is too vague a notion to explain the richness and the detail of his legislative proposals. The notion of the "mixed constitution", for example, which decisively shapes Plato's constitutional project, is defended in the *Laws* by a long historical narrative and is substantially Solonian in spirit. And it is on the basis of the necessity for a mixed



πολιτεία that Plato distributes power in Magnesia. Thus the Assembly is given some power, but does not become the sovereign organ of the state and a Council is created with the equal participation of all classes. Judicial authority is shared by popular courts and the magistrates, with the balance tipped in favour of the latter. The lot is used, but only for minor appointments. Whereas all these measures might cautiously promote an aristocratic rule, the fact that all officials are accountable for their actions (though not to the Assembly) and that all positions of real authority are open to all classes indicate a certain amount of acceptance of democratic practices. The "mixed constitution" is, consequently, the major conception on which Plato builds his administrative system. And, crucially, it is a conception derived from historical experience.

Moreover, the sheer number of Solonian measures that Plato incorporates in his system shows the extent to which history informs the *Laws'* political philosophy. Plato undoubtedly admired Solon. He follows him in introducing to his state four *τιμήματα*. The categorization serves political purposes in Magnesia as it did in Athens, with different prerogatives given to each class. Plato accepts an Assembly open to all citizens as Solon did, though he takes measures to secure greater participation by the higher classes. He creates a Council, a state organ that was Solon's innovation. He conforms almost completely to the spirit of the Solonian judicial system and he institutionalizes, again

in Solonian fashion, the officials' accountability, even if not directly to the people. Finally, one can add that Solon's is the typical example of a "mixed constitution" put into practice.

None of these features of the *Laws* would make sense in the framework of the *Republic*. Their existence in the *Laws* proves that a principle quite distinct from the metaphysics of the middle dialogues shapes the *Laws*. It is concrete historical experience and adherence to a plainly historical model which perform this task.

The same principles also explain the sovereignty of law and the changes in Platonic epistemology that one notices in the *Laws*. Although Plato links the law to transcendent authority, i.e. the gods (645b), there is little doubt that the law is mainly a human creation. Plato's repeated emphasis on the importance of an inspired human legislator indicates that, no matter how important the religious or metaphysical vindication of public law, the latter is always a human device. This is also demonstrated by the fact that in the *Politicus* the Ideal Ruler is placed beyond the law: the latter, no matter how thorough, remains an expression of human phronesis rather than of divine wisdom.

But the common citizen's ability is now ranked higher by Plato. Although a certain degree of pessimism can be found in his abandonment of the Ideal Ruler, Plato is in the *Laws*, unlike in the *Republic*, ready to accept that common human wisdom is politically vital. True opinion is accepted as a

legitimate alternative to knowledge; and although the sovereignty of the latter is again asserted, in the absence of a philosopher-king this becomes largely an academic matter. Similarly, Plato's conception of virtue changes. He is now interested in a more easily achievable form of virtue. The more practically orientated  $\phi\rho\acute{o}\nu\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$  becomes the word for wisdom instead of the more theoretical  $\sigma\omicron\phi\iota\alpha$ . Also, abandoning his Socratic inheritance on this point, he considers seriously the multiplicity of virtue, as a conception that has to be examined rather than to be rejected out of hand. On this point, fortified by the opportunities provided by the theory of diairesis, Plato is able to reach (though not fully to articulate) a notion of virtue which combines the Socratic insistence on the unity of virtue with a simultaneous acceptance of the differences between particular virtues, differences that tended to be obliterated by Socrates' reduction of all virtue to a common denominator, knowledge.

As it has been argued, the theory of the Forms, plus some pivotal political assertions of the middle dialogues (like the supremacy of  $\chi\omicron\iota\nu\omicron\chi\tau\eta\mu\omicron\sigma\upsilon\delta\eta$  to individual property) are reiterated in the *Laws*. But the absence of philosopher-kings entails that they do not function as the regulating principles of the work. They rather serve as indicators that Magnesia is not a model city, that there is a divine policy that vastly surpasses it. Nevertheless, the sheer amount of legislative and philosophical labour that Plato puts into

the *Laws* proves that, in his old age and wiser from his Sicilian experiences, he considers the enterprise of constructing a purely human state well worthwhile.<sup>153</sup>

The historical principle operating in the *Laws* also marks Plato's increased acceptance of democracy in this work. From the moment he adopts a historical perspective, he is prepared to attribute at least some value to democratic constitutional practices and to accept them, albeit partially, in his own constitutional provisions. Nevertheless, it is true that Plato never abandoned some of his aristocratic prejudices, like the contempt for traders and manual workers (e.g. 831e), or his low opinion of *οἱ πολλοί* as such (e.g. 670b). From this point of view, there is a crucial difference between the actual Athenian democracy of Plato's time and Magnesia. Whereas the former to a large extent depended on traders, sailors and manual workers, Magnesia is a farmer's city. This is probably the limit beyond which Plato is not prepared to go in his acceptance of democracy. Although he affirms democracy as one of the two constitutional poles of his mixed constitution and although he makes some use of democratic practices and ideological principles, Plato explicitly and unapologetically debars "banausics" from his "second best" city. This exclusion of the social strata which substantially supported democracy from the citizen-body of Magnesia (e.g. 847d-e, 919d) is indeed one of the pivotal reasons that makes the *Laws* more aristocratic than

pro-democratic. Nevertheless, it would be wrong on the basis of this one factor to deny the concessions to democracy included in the work.<sup>154</sup> If the *Republic* is Plato's greatest cry against democracy, the *Laws* demonstrate a spirit of moderation in this respect. From being a completely inefficient and morally unsound form of government, democracy is elevated to a position where it can contribute, at least to some extent, towards the best humanly achievable Greek city, the city that Magnesia purports to be.

Unlike the *Republic* which did not have any substantial effect on Greek political theory, the *Laws* with its moderation and its emphasis on the mixed constitution played a significant role in subsequent political thought. Through Polybius it reached Rome and Cicero and its influence can be attested even in such works as More's *Utopia* and Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois*.<sup>155</sup> On account of its later career, but even more for its considerable philosophical merits, the *Laws* deserves a place in the pantheon of the great works of political theory more than is generally recognized.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup>R.F. Stalley, An Introduction to Plato's Laws (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), p.3.

<sup>2</sup>Trevor J. Saunders, Introduction to Plato, The Laws (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p.28.

<sup>3</sup>Glenn R. Morrow, Plato's Cretan City (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960).

<sup>4</sup>See H. Rackham, Introduction to the Athenian Constitution, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. London: Heinemann, 1981), p.5. The latest event mentioned in the work occurred in 329 B.C. and as Rackham writes "the book also mentions triremes and quandriremes, but not quinquiremes; and the earliest date at which quinquiremes in the Athenian navy are recorded is 325 B.C. The treatise can thus be dated between 328 and 325 B.C."

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

<sup>1</sup>Gregory Vlastos, Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.49. Vlastos proposes ten theses, each of them referring to one aspect of the difference between the historical Socrates who appears in the early dialogues and the Socrates who expresses Platonic views in the middle ones. I agree with eight of them but disagree with points VI and VII which refer to the political positions of Socrates and where Vlastos is referring to Socrates as favourably disposed to democracy. It is very unfortunate that the theses are expressed in aphoristic style and therefore there is not any evidence offered by Vlastos at this point to be discussed.

<sup>2</sup>Gregory Vlastos, "The Paradox of Socrates", in The Philosophy of Socrates, ed. Gregory Vlastos (New York: Anchor, 1971), p.3, makes this point for the Apology, but it is obvious that it can be extended to cover the whole of the early dialogues.

<sup>3</sup>Vlastos, Socrates, pp.91-106.

<sup>4</sup>Though not necessarily leaders of the democratic party as well. Miltiades and Cimon, the son-in-law of Aristides, were leaders of the oligarchic party. But they all promoted the interests of democratic Athens and in this sense they all were leaders of the democracy.

<sup>5</sup>Out of the six passages mentioned here, four (a,d,e and

f) are quoted in the same context by Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.196-197.

<sup>6</sup>Not, however, if his attempt to be acquitted meant compromising his principles. As Thomas C. Brickhouse and Nicholas D. Smith, Socrates on Trial (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.viii, write "the real story of the Apology is that, constrained and propelled by the moral principles according to which he had lived and for which he would die, Plato's Socrates sincerely tried to win his release and failed".

<sup>7</sup>In 21a Socrates identifies his jury with the democrats who fled the city during the Thirty Tyrants' reign and returned after their downfall ("[Χαιρεφῶν] ἦν ὑμῶν τῷ πληθει εἰταίρος τε καὶ ξυνέφυγεν τὴν φυγὴν ταύτην καὶ μεθ' ὑμῶν κατήλθε") and in 32b with the democratic Assembly which convicted the Ten Generals after the naval battle in Arginusai and regretted the decision afterwards ("πᾶσιν ὑμῶν ἔδοξεν").

<sup>8</sup>Kraut, Socrates and the State, p.196, n.7.

<sup>9</sup>At this stage, αἰδώς and δίκη are innate capacities which have to be cultivated through education before they are transformed to actual πολιτικὴ ἀρετή. But the crucial point is that all men have those two capacities and therefore the potential to acquire this ἀρετή. This entails that political virtue is a goal which can, in principle, be achieved by everybody.



<sup>10</sup> Among the scholars who discuss Protagoras' political position, W.K.C. Guthrie, The Sophists (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p.268, Ellen Meiksins Wood and Neal Wood, Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p.129 and C.C.W. Taylor, Plato, Protagoras (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) pp.83-84, accept Protagoras as a democrat.

<sup>11</sup> G.B. Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.144.

<sup>12</sup> Mario Untersteiner, The Sophists, trans. K. Freeman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1954), p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement, p.143, is right to suggest that Protagoras' position is not the equivalent of unqualified egalitarianism: "it is important to realise that it is not the view of Protagoras that all men are to be regarded as sharing equally in *aidōs* and *dikē*. This is often stated to have been his view, but there is no evidence for it whatsoever ... It is not ... suggested [by Protagoras] that all men are equally qualified to give advice, only that no one is without some qualifications".

<sup>14</sup> In a sense Protagoras is manipulated at this point by Socrates who constructs an argument in discussion with (and against) the many. Taylor, Plato, Protagoras, p.174, remarks that "Protagoras makes it abundantly clear that at least in intention he is no mouthpiece for currently accepted views".

<sup>15</sup> It does not follow that all aristocrats will acquire the "measuring art". Philosophical inclination and

intelligence are required for this acquisition, and therefore only a minority of the members of the upper classes will be able to meet the Socratic standard of virtue. This point underlines of course even further the exclusiveness of the Socratic moral science.

<sup>16</sup> Kraut, Socrates and the State, pp.219-220.

<sup>17</sup> Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.121, reaches a similar conclusion on different premisses: "the desires for novelty and luxury that produce much actual akrasia are presumably still modifiable by teaching. But the persistent animal nature of appetite calls for a training more suited to its nature than rational teaching; it calls, in fact, for political control and suppression".

<sup>18</sup> See Kraut, Socrates and the State, p.214.

<sup>19</sup> W. Robert Connor, The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens (1971; reprint ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1971), p.196.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp.196-197.

<sup>21</sup> Among Socrates' associates the low-born Antisthenes and the democrat Chaerephon are rather the exception which proves the rule. They are heavily outnumbered by members of the highest class of Athens like Nicias, Critias, Charmides, Alcibiades, Xenophon and even Plato himself, to name only some of the most prominent.

<sup>22</sup> Vlastos, Socrates, p.180.

<sup>23</sup> Xenophon, Memoirs of Socrates, 2.6.26 and 3.7.1-9.

<sup>24</sup> Ernest Barker, The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle (New York: Dover, 1959), p.160.

<sup>25</sup> T.A. Sinclair, A History of Greek Political Thought (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p.122. Sinclair, however, is wrong in ascribing this pattern to Plato in general; it covers the Republic, but, as it will be argued in this thesis, not the Laws.

<sup>26</sup> G.E.M. De Ste Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World (London: Duckworth, 1981), p.70. The criticism of disregarding the Laws applies to De Ste Croix as well as to Sinclair.

<sup>27</sup> I.M. Crombie, An Examination of Plato's Doctrines (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 1:90 and Diskin Clay, "Reading the Republic", in Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings, ed. Charles L. Griswold, Jr (London: Routledge, 1988), p.25.

<sup>28</sup> This point is made by R.C. Cross and A.D. Woodley, Plato's Republic (1964; reprint ed. London: Macmillan, 1966), p.97.

<sup>29</sup> The expression signifies the transition from the economic principle of division of labour to the political principle of the division of classes. See Cross and Woodley, Plato's Republic, p.110 and Julia Annas, Introduction to Plato's Republic (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p.118.

<sup>30</sup> Here I slightly deviate from Lee's translation for reasons of clarity.

<sup>31</sup> Plato abandons the Craft Analogy in the Republic (i.e.

the idea that virtue presupposes knowledge of a kind identical or exactly analogous to the expertise of a craftsman). He is obliged to do so by the fact that the craftsman's knowledge belongs to the sensible world and therefore is unlike the metaphysical knowledge which in the Republic becomes the ultimate justification of political authority. The Craft Analogy is therefore nowhere used after the end of Book One, with one exception (488a ff.) which can be explained (see section 5). Nevertheless, Plato retains the anti-democratic implications of the Socratic argument by insisting that metaphysical knowledge, like the artisan's expertise, is to be found only in a very small minority.

<sup>32</sup> Annas, Introduction, p.113.

<sup>33</sup> Cross and Woosley, Plato's Republic, p.105.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory Vlastos, "Justice and Happiness in the Republic", in Plato II, ed. Gregory Vlastos (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), p.76.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp.74-75.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.76.

<sup>40</sup> The question of whether the Platonically just individual, whose justice depends on having the right psychic order, will also necessarily be just in the common sense of the word was asked by David Sachs, "A Fallacy in Plato's Republic" in Plato II, ed. Gregory Vlastos (New

York: Anchor Books, 1971). Sachs argues that Socrates does not prove to Thrasymachus that the commonly just individual is the happiest, but only that the Platonically just individual is. Given that the former proposition is what Socrates sets out to prove, this "fallacy of irrelevance ... wrecks the Republic's main argument" (p.35). Sachs correctly asserts that in order to connect Platonic and common justice Plato must prove that "the conduct of his just man also conforms to the ordinary or vulgar canons of justice" and that "his conception of the just man applies to -or is exemplified by- every man who is [vulgarly] just" (p.46), and that Plato proves neither. Plato only asserts without argument that his just man will abstain from deeds commonly held as unjust-442d-443b (p.37).

Apart from Vlastos' article discussed in the text, many attempts have been made to repudiate Sachs' argument, but none entirely successful. Raphael Demos, "A Fallacy in Plato's Republic?" in Plato II, suggests that Plato is not guilty, strictly speaking, of a fallacy, but he admits that there is a gap in his argument (p.52). Demos also concedes Sachs' main point, i.e. that Plato does not positively prove the connection between Platonic and common justice (p.54). Terence Irwin, Plato's Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), argues that the moral argument of the Republic invites the picture of a Platonically just individual who is concerned with the benefit of others (p.259); this provides a link between

Platonic justice which is basically a state of the soul and ordinary justice which is concerned with the relationships between individuals. But Irwin agrees that Plato does not answer all the relevant questions (p.261) and therefore the connection between the two types of justice is not proved beyond dispute.

Edith Watson Schipper, "The Relevance of Platonic Justice", Southern Journal of Philosophy 15, 1979, argues that "Thrasymachus and Socrates both refer their conception to the same kind of acts which are commonly (if only provisionally) reputed to be just" and that "those acts not only can be, but in some cases are, shown to be those of a "Platonically just" man" (p.113). But even if both points are conceded, Sachs is not refuted because Plato clearly expects his just man to be commonly just, but he does not prove this point and therefore Thrasymachus is not answered.

Julia Annas, "Plato and Common Morality", Classical Quarterly 28, 1978, finds the difficulty lying not "in any simple fallacy" (p.451) but in the ambivalence of Plato's theory of justice as a whole (p.451). She agrees, however, that Sachs' assumption is not implausible (p.450). Finally, Kraut's repudiation of Sachs' argument ("Reason and Justice in Plato's Republic" in Exegesis and Argument, eds E.N. Lee A.P.D. Mourelatos and R.M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973) is unsuccessful because it depends on an analysis of the Republic's moral psychology which, as I argue in the next section, is incorrect.

<sup>41</sup>Terence Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.329, n.26.

<sup>42</sup>The use of φαῦλοι here is particularly interesting, because the word designates the low-born, as opposed to the χρηστοί, the well-born who enjoyed social prestige (see Robert W. Connor, The New Politicians, pp.88-89). Plato's aristocratic and totalitarian inclinations have sometimes been questioned on the basis that he did not expect the ideal of the Republic to be realized (see for example W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4:469). But Plato's choice of terms which had specific sociopolitical connotations in his contemporary Athens cannot be ignored.

<sup>43</sup>In fact, it is a cardinal question whether the Producers, who are by definition ruled by their desires, can display any rationality at all. Given the city-soul analogy, the epithymetikon is the dominant element in their souls (see also 590c). In his definition of temperance in the soul, Plato claims that the soul will be σωφρων if the appetitive part in it is willingly subjected to the rule of reason. But this presupposes the existence of a reasoning part in the epithymetikon itself. Cross and Woosley, Plato's Republic, p.124, argue that this is an untenable position, for attributing a reasoning part to the epithymetikon can only be defended if one assigns "to each of the elements of the soul three sub-elements of reason, spirit and appetite" and this "would make nonsense of Plato's psychology and

would lead to a "vicious regress". I do not believe that Plato's argument leads necessarily to a regress, for the argument does not require a multiplication of the three elements of the soul; it only demands that the appetitive part has a reasoning capacity and this could be considered a peculiar case. However, even if it does not entail an infinite regress, Plato's argument is still untenable: an appetitive element ruled by a reasoning part within it is not an appetitive element any more: it is rather a contradiction in terms. (See also Bernard Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul in Plato's Republic", in Exegesis and Argument, eds E.N. Lee, A.P.D. Mourelatos and R.M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), p.199, who calls the suggestion that the epithymetikon has a logistikon of its own an "absurdity").

<sup>44</sup> Cross and Woodzley, Plato's Republic, p.108.

<sup>45</sup> Farming was not necessarily included in the "banausic" occupations (see chapter 3, n.19). In the Republic, however, Plato does nowhere give the slightest hint that he wishes to differentiate farmers from the rest of the Producers. On the contrary, he actually groups them together in 415a where he talks of "τοῖς τε γεωργοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις δημιουργοῖς".

<sup>46</sup> Annas, Introduction, p.117.

<sup>47</sup> The notion of enslavement is most strongly connected with war because the selling of a defeated population was common practice in Greek wars.

<sup>48</sup> The same conclusion is reached on a different basis by



Bernard Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul", p.199.  
D.H. Rice, "Plato on Force: The Conflict between his Psychology and his Definition of Temperance in the Republic", History of Political Thought 10, 1989, passim, examines some of the interpretations of Plato's two definitions of temperance that have been proposed by commentators and concludes that there is a major inconsistency between Plato's psychology and his political sociology which entails that the use of force cannot be ruled out.

<sup>49</sup> Annas, Introduction, p.136.

<sup>50</sup> Raphael Demos, "Paradoxes in Plato's Doctrine of the Ideal State", Classical Quarterly 7, 1957, pp.167ff.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.170.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.172.

<sup>53</sup> This criticism was made by R.C. Mulgan, "Individual and Collective Virtues in the Republic", Phronesis 13, 1968, p.85. Mulgan gives 435e as an example.

<sup>54</sup> J.B. Skemp, "Comment on Communal and Individual Justice in the Republic", Phronesis 5, 1960, p.37.

<sup>55</sup> I am in complete agreement with Mulgan, "Individual and Collective Virtues", p.85, that Skemp's thesis is in essence identical with that of Demos.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Kraut, "Reason and Justice".

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.217.

<sup>58</sup> On this issue see n.163 of this chapter.

<sup>59</sup> Kraut, "Reason and Justice", p.218.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.221.

<sup>63</sup> George Klosko, "Demotike Arete in the Republic", History of Political Thought 3, 1982.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.372.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.375.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.376.

<sup>67</sup> As regards Klosko's belief that δημοτικὴ ἀρετὴ in 500d refers to a generally attributable virtue, ("Demotike Arete", p.363, n.2), this is not beyond dispute. First of all it is very unclear whether δημοτικὴ ἀρετὴ refers to the Producers as well as to Auxiliaries or only to the latter. If the δημοτικὴ ἀρετὴ is analogous with the πολιτικὴ ἀρετὴ of 430c, then probably only the Auxiliaries will have this type of virtue. Second, as Terence Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory p.329, n.26, suggests, we could have here the δημοτικὴ ἀρετὴ of Phaedo 82a, where Plato talks of "τὴν δημοτικὴν καὶ πολιτικὴν ἀρετὴν ... ἣν δὲ καλοῦσι σωφροσύνη τε καὶ δικαιοσύνη, ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγονούαν ἀνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ". This virtue which is "devoid of philosophy and intelligence" is not a virtue proper: it is only called so. Earlier on in the dialogue Socrates had distinguished sharply the bravery and temperance of the philosopher from the "ἀνδραποδώδης ἀρετὴ" (69b) of the non-philosophers. (See also David Gallop, Plato, Phaedo (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p.99). If this is the kind

of virtue designated by the δημοτικὴ ἀρετὴ of 500d, then it is obvious that the Producers are not credited with any virtue worthy of the name in this passage. And even if one rejects the conjunction of δημοτικὴ ἀρετὴ in 500d with the Phaedo's conception of virtue, the text in 500d is too vague to support the claim that the Producers are bestowed with any type of virtue by Plato.

<sup>68</sup> A.E. Taylor, Plato: the Man and his Work, 7th ed. (London: Methuen, 1960), p.275.

<sup>69</sup> Guthrie, History, 4:464.

<sup>70</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory (New York: Methuen, 1986), p.150.

<sup>71</sup> Aristotle, Politics, 126b28-31.

<sup>72</sup> It is true that this suggestion is enveloped in the wider position that everything which participates in matter is destined to decay (546a). This, however, does not in any way diminish Plato's emphasis on eugenics.

<sup>73</sup> The mythical background of this suggestion is probably the widespread myth of the autochthony of the Athenian citizens.

<sup>74</sup> Annas, Introduction, p.172, writes that "the politically crucial divide is between the Producers and those who control them". The remark is correct in the framework of examining the Republic's politics in terms of control; but Annas fails to point out the close correspondence between political and economic control. In fact the above distinction is clearer in the economic sphere

than it is in the political. Politically, the Guardians and the Auxiliaries have different functions, the former to govern, the latter to furnish the armed power of the state. Economically, they are treated as one class by Plato: both are to be sustained by the Producers.

<sup>75</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.143.

<sup>76</sup> Guthrie, History, 4:469.

<sup>77</sup> Alban Dewes Winspear, The Genesis of Plato's Thought (New York: Dryden Press, 1940) p.259.

<sup>78</sup> This is the bulk of Aristotle's criticism of Plato's κοινωκτημοσυνη (Politics 1261a4ff.).

<sup>79</sup> I think this much discussed issue is pretty clearly settled by Plato himself: Callipolis is an "ἐν οὐρανῷ ἴσως παραδειγμα" (592b-παραδειγμα also occurs in a similar context in 500e), a pattern to be approximated as closely as possible, but maybe impossible to realize fully in the sensible world.

<sup>80</sup> This is asserted by Barker, Political Thought, p.141, Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, 4th ed. rev. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 1:227, Winspear, The Genesis of Plato's Thought, p.249ff., Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.142 and Francis MacDonald Cornford, The Republic of Plato (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.265.

<sup>81</sup> See Winspear, The Genesis of Plato's Thought, p.259.

<sup>82</sup> Aristotle, Politics, 1263b45-46 and 1264a11-12 (quoted).

<sup>83</sup> Ernest Barker, The Politics of Aristotle (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p.52, n.2 and p.55, n.J and Barker, Political Thought, p.391.

<sup>84</sup> I think "must" as a translation of δεῖν is preferable to Lee's "[the Guardians] were to".

<sup>85</sup> Williams, The Analogy of City and Soul, p.203.

<sup>86</sup> Even for this assertion one has to rely heavily on Plato. There is however some, admittedly flimsy, independent evidence that Protagoras was a democrat: he is reported to have been a personal friend of Pericles (Plutarch, Parallel Lives, Pericles, 36), who gave him the task of legislating for Thurii (Diogenes Laertius, Collections of the Lives and Doctrines of the Philosophers, 9:54). Diogenes also writes that he was prosecuted in Athens by Πυθοδωρος the son of Πολυζηλος, one of the Four Hundred. Given that trials of intellectuals were usually politically motivated, the information, if correct, indicates that Protagoras was at least conceived by his enemies as a democrat.

<sup>87</sup> M.I. Finley, Democracy Ancient and Modern (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p.28.

<sup>88</sup> On the pivotal significance of ἰσονομία and ἰσηγορία for democratic theory see W.K.C.Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 3:150 and n.2 (he does not mention ἰσηγορία but the latter definitely fits his argument), M.I. Finley, Politics in the Ancient World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.139 and De Ste Croix, Class Struggle, p.285.

<sup>89</sup> There are some occurrences of ἰσονομία in the literature of the fifth century B.C. which appear to cast doubt on the association of ἰσονομία with democracy. Thucydides talks of ὀλιγαρχία ἰσονομος (3.62); Isocrates applies it to Sparta (Panathenaicus 178); and Plato to the aristocratic Athens whose encomium he writes in the Menexenus (239a). Vlastos ("<sup>3</sup> ἰσονομία Πολιτική" in Gregory Vlastos, Platonic Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) has convincingly argued that none of these cases invalidates the association of ἰσονομία with democracy. In Thucydides' case, the Theban constitution described as ὀλιγαρχία ἰσονομος comes between oligarchy and democracy, ἰσονομος being used to designate the democratic characteristics of the constitution (pp.179ff.). Isocrates' text suggests that the Spartans had established ἰσονομία and δημοκρατία. It therefore reinforces the connection between the two terms rather than denies it (pp.183ff.). Finally, according to Vlastos, the ἰσονομία Plato endorses in the Menexenus "is a far cry from that which [he] attacked in the Republic. Subordinated to the aristocratic principle of deference to virtue and wisdom, it no longer stands for the crazy justice of equality for unequals" (p.201).

<sup>90</sup> Finley, Politics, p.139.

<sup>91</sup> Finley, Democracy, p.19.

<sup>92</sup> This is a point which is often ignored in the literature. One exception is Popper, The Open Society, p.93, who writes that in Plato's "survey and discussion of current

theories, the view that justice is equality before the law ("isonomy") is never mentioned" and that "Plato did not dare to face the enemy openly".

<sup>93</sup>Universal in the sense that it includes all citizens, not all human beings.

<sup>94</sup>See Guthrie, History, 3:151 and E.R. Dodds Plato, Gorgias (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), ad loc. I think it is a deficiency of Terence Irwin's commentary on the Gorgias that he fails to point out the wider political significance of this type of equality (Plato, Gorgias (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), ad loc).

<sup>95</sup>Dodds, Plato, Gorgias, ad loc.

<sup>96</sup>Vlastos, "Ἴσονομία Πολιτική", p.195, n.119.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Aristotle, Politics, 1280a8ff. and 1307a27-29.

<sup>100</sup>See Thucydides 2.37. Also De Ste Croix, Class Struggle, pp.284-285 and Finley, Politics, p.140.

<sup>101</sup>See Republic 557b: "Granted that freedom, won't everyone arrange his life as pleases him best?"

<sup>102</sup>As I argued earlier in this section, a consistent democratic theory was not developed in Classical Greece, but there were a number of notions which were strongly associated with democracy. Ἐλευθερία was one of them. Plato's refusal to confront a democratic argument is demonstrated in the case of Ἐλευθερία by the fact that he does not essentially discuss the democratic conception of

freedom, but simply presents it as leading to ethical and political anarchy.

<sup>103</sup> Πᾶσις, freedom of speech, not only in the negative sense of absence of censorship but also in the positive sense that every citizen can address the Assembly, was another key word in democratic theory.

<sup>104</sup> Finley, Democracy, p.80.

<sup>105</sup> Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 9.1.

<sup>106</sup> In interpreting the ship simile along these lines I follow Cross and Woodzley, Plato's Republic, pp.197-198 and Guthrie, History, 4:499.

<sup>107</sup> The τεχνῶν are despised as βαναυσῶν also in 522b. The passage occurs at the beginning of the discussion of the education of the Guardians and purports to dismiss any suggestion that τεχνῶν might have anything to do with this education.

<sup>108</sup> For the uses of δῆμος see Finley, Politics, pp.1-2 and Finley, Democracy, pp.12-13.

<sup>109</sup> I am here in agreement with Winspear, Wood and Wood and De Ste Croix. Winspear, The Genesis of Plato's Thought, p.215, asserts that "[i]n building the ideal state, Plato has in mind turning back the clock of social evolution and entrusting the control of the state to the landed proprietors (and this in spite of his fine talk about divorcing the "guards" from economic rewards)".

Wood and Wood, Class Ideology, p.142, put it thus: "[I]f one extracts the principles contained in Plato's imaginary



ruling class, isolating them from their fictional personification, it is not so difficult to identify the one class in the concrete world of historical Athens which most nearly embodies those principles. Above all, Plato's rulers must belong to a leisure class not corrupted by labour, trade, or profession ... In the historical reality of Greece, one class satisfies those conditions: a landed hereditary aristocracy which gains its livelihood from inalienable property acquired without effort".

De Ste Croix, Class Struggle, pp.411-412, writes: "[according to Plato] ruling should be a prerogative of those who have the right kind of intellectual equipment and have received a proper philosophical education. In practice, needless to say, virtually all such men would be members of the propertied class ... [Plato did not advocate an oligarchy] according to the normal meaning of the term ... he did not wish access to political power to be given to the whole propertied class as such ... Plato would have entrusted all political power to those men who were in his opinion intellectually qualified for ruling and had received a full philosophical education-and such men would necessarily have to belong to the propertied class".

<sup>110</sup> Popper, The Open Society, 1:86.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 1:90.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 1:93.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 1:98.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 1:125-126.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 1:138ff.

<sup>116</sup> For censorship of content see 377b-378a, 379d-380c, 381d-e, 383a-c, 386b-389b, 389e-392b. For censorship of form (Plato's rejection of  $\mu\lambda\eta\nu\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) see 395d-396c, 397a-b, 397d-e, 398a. For censorship of musical  $\acute{\alpha}\rho\mu\omicron\nu\iota\alpha\iota$  see 398e-399a and for expulsion from the city of specific musical instruments 399c-d. For censorship of musical  $\rho\upsilon\theta\mu\omicron\iota$  see 400b-c.

<sup>117</sup> This point is well made by Annas, Introduction, pp.91ff. who is followed by Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, pp.153ff.

<sup>118</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.151, Annas, Introduction, p.177 and Gregory Vlastos, "The Theory of Social Justice in the Polis in Plato's Republic" in Interpretations of Plato, ed. H. North (Leiden: Brill, 1977), p.27.

<sup>119</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.149.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.150.

<sup>121</sup> Annas, Introduction, p.177.

<sup>122</sup> Vlastos, "Social Justice", p.24.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>124</sup> Vlastos' point ("Social Justice", p.21) that the rulers will have less leisure than the Producers because they will have to govern is untenable. Leisure involves abstinence from manual labour, and intellectual preoccupations can be, and in the context of the Classical Greek world definitely were, a prerogative of the social

strata which were not working for their living.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.27.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp.27-28.

<sup>127</sup> Popper, The Open Society, 1:62-67.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 1:159.

<sup>129</sup> Laszlo V. Versenyi, "Plato and his Liberal Opponents", Philosophy 46, 1971, p.228.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.229.

<sup>131</sup> Popper, The Open Society, 1:157.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 1:162.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 1:169ff.

<sup>134</sup> R.F. Stalley, An Introduction to Plato's Laws (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), p.182.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p.183.

<sup>136</sup> This is an area where Popper (The Open Society, 1:236, n.19) gets it completely wrong. Based on the scantiest of evidence, a couple of references from Euripides, a quotation of Hippias in Plato's Protagoras and two fragments from Alcidamas and Lycophron, Popper makes the incredible claim that Athens came "very close to abolishing slavery" (1:43). But not only eminent historians like Finley and De Croix argue that there was virtually no challenge to the institution of slavery in Greece, but it is also true that democracy created the most developed forms of slavery. (On the whole issue see chapter 3, section 1 and for references notes 10 and 11 of chapter 3).

<sup>137</sup> I am grateful to Professor Myles Burnyeat for pointing

this out to me.

<sup>138</sup> Aristotle, Politics, 1279b31-32.

<sup>139</sup> 1279b8-9, 1281a16-17, 1290a34-42, 1291b2-13,  
1296a24-36, 1296b24-35, 1317b9-10.

<sup>140</sup> Popper, The Open Society, 1:108.

<sup>141</sup> Two examples are Annas, Introduction, p.171, who discusses the whole Platonic political philosophy from this angle, and Cross and Woosley, Plato's Republic, p.132.

<sup>142</sup> Sinclair, History, p.6.

<sup>143</sup> Popper, The Open Society, 1:66.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 1:129.

<sup>145</sup> Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State, p.204.

<sup>146</sup> Popper, The Open Society, 1:139.

<sup>147</sup> A similar remark is made by Kraut, Socrates and the State, p.204: "Popper's Socrates prefigured the democratic liberalism of J.S. Mill". Kraut, however, does not pursue the issue further. It is important that this criticism comes from Kraut, because Kraut is basically sympathetic to Popper's thesis, a modified version of which he presents in his book. Kraut writes that "[t]he authoritarianism we find in Plato's Republic has its roots in the early dialogues, but those who cherish free critical inquiry justifiably look upon Socrates as their patron-saint" (p.244).

<sup>148</sup> Apart from those discussed in the text, Plato's defenders include Ronald B. Levinson who produced a detailed justification of Plato in his In Defense of Plato (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), *passim*,

G.C. Field "On Misunderstanding Plato", passim, E. Unger, "Contemporary Anti-Platonism", passim and H. Meyerhoff, "Plato among Friends and Enemies", passim, the last three in Plato, Popper and Politics, ed. Renford Bambrough (Cambridge, Mass.: Heffer, 1967).

Some scholars, on the other hand, sided with Popper. One example is Renford Bambrough, "Plato's Modern Friends and Enemies", passim and "Plato's Political Analogies" passim, both in Plato, Popper and Politics.

<sup>149</sup>Popper, *The Open Society*, 1:87.

<sup>150</sup>Versenyi, "Plato and his Liberal Opponents", p.231.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., p.235.

<sup>152</sup>It is interesting that Versenyi here attributes to Plato a repetition of the famous paradox of the Meno 80d.

<sup>153</sup>Versenyi, "Plato and his Liberal Opponents", p.234.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., pp.234-235.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., p.235.

<sup>157</sup>See also 472e.

<sup>158</sup>Guthrie, History, 4:457.

<sup>159</sup>Versenyi, "Plato and his Liberal Opponents", p.234.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., p.232.

<sup>161</sup>D.C.D. Reeve, Philosopher-Kings (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). Reeve for example questions the explicit anti-humanitarianism of 406dff., where Plato suggests that a craftsman unable to work should be let to die on the basis that "Plato thinks that the craftsman

himself would refuse medical treatment" (p.214). But Plato's assumption that a craftsman will prefer to die rather than to submit to a lengthy treatment is too obviously and too strongly counter-intuitive and his motives are clearly revealed in 407d-e where he states that such an individual would be "of no use to himself or society". The only beneficiary of this inhuman prescription is a society unwilling to undertake the support of its invalid members. There is nothing "enlightened" (p.215) about the prescription, nor can the notion of a "life worth living" (p.214) justify the extreme inhumanity of the measure.

Reeve also asserts that Plato only condoned slavery, but that there is no evidence that he favoured it (p.216). Strictly speaking, this is true. But Reeve cannot produce anything better than an argument ex silentio for this assertion; and the fact that Plato sanctioned a treatment of slaves harsher than the usual practice of his time in the Laws (see Glenn R. Morrow, Plato's Law of Slavery in its Relation to Greek Law (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939), p.127), a more moderate work where social hierarchy is not elevated to a major political principle as in the Republic, is revealing. As for Reeve's assumption that if slaves are subject to the principle of specialization they "will be legally and constitutionally on a par with every other member of the Kallipolis" (p.217), the statement ignores two crucial facts: first, the majority of the citizens of Callipolis have no legal or constitutional

protection themselves. There is absolutely no way that a Producer who feels himself wronged by a decision of a Guardian can legally challenge the decision. Second, slaves were definitely part of the division of labour in ancient Greece, but they were nowhere given legal or constitutional equality with citizens; it is therefore most improbable that somebody as insistent on the importance of social stratification as Plato would grant them such rights.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.234.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., pp.186-190. Reeve argues, in my opinion conclusively, that Plato does not intend primary education to cover the Producers. In this he follows George F. Hourani ("The Education of the Third Class in Plato's Republic", Philosophical Quarterly 43, 1949). This is also the position of Guthrie, History, 4:455 and n.2.

<sup>164</sup> Reeve, Philosopher-Kings, p.190.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.233.

<sup>166</sup> My position on this issue is not identical with Bambrough. Bambrough remarks that Plato's critics go deeper than their opponents because they challenge "not the connection between the particular proposals and the premises from which they are derived, but rather the premises themselves" (Plato's Modern Friends and Enemies", p.11). So far I am in agreement with him. But the major Platonic premiss with which Bambrough finds fault is that value judgements can be based on factual judgements, whereas I believe that it is another Platonic premiss, the

philosopher's unconditional acceptance of the natural inequality of human beings, which his "friends" have generally failed to consider.

<sup>167</sup>In the tradition of Greek conservative philosophy, to which Plato is in some ways indebted, the distinction between opinion and knowledge figures as a prominent theme. So, according to Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Life, 200, trans. Gillian Clark (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), the Pythagoreans believed that "it is silly to adhere to any and every belief, especially if it is widely held, for only a few are capable of having the right beliefs and opinions", whereas Parmenides emphasized that all the opinions of mortals are false and practically worthless (Cathleen Freeman, The Pre-Socratic Philosophers, A Companion to Diels, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), p.141: B1,v.30, B8,v.50 and B7,v.2). This is indeed the aspect of opinion that Plato chooses to stress in the Republic.

<sup>168</sup>See H.F. Cherniss, "The Philosophical Economy of the Theory of Ideas", in Plato I, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), p.20; R.E. Allen, "The Argument from Opposites in Republic V", Review of Metaphysics 15, 1961, passim; Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory, p.154; Guthrie, History, 4:493ff.; Cross and Woosley, Plato's Republic, p.145; Desmond Lee, Plato, The Republic, 2nd ed. rev. (London: Penguin, 1974), p.265; Sinclair, History, p.145; Cornford, The Republic of Plato,



p.180.

<sup>169</sup>Gregory Vlastos, "A Metaphysical Paradox", in Gregory Vlastos, Platonic Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), passim.

<sup>170</sup>Annas, Introduction, p.198.

<sup>171</sup>The same position is taken by Vlastos, "A Metaphysical Paradox", pp.48-49.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., p.47 and n.16.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., pp.45-47.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., p.47.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid.

<sup>177</sup>Guthrie, History, 4:495.

<sup>178</sup>Vlastos, "A Metaphysical Paradox", pp.46-47. Vlastos' opinion on this issue is shared by G.E.L. Owen, "Plato on Not-Being" in Plato I (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), p.225 and Michael Frede, "Plato's Sophist on False Statements" in The Cambridge Companion to Plato (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The opposite view, i.e. that Plato distinguishes the existential and the predicative uses of einai in the Sophist is held by J.L. Ackrill, "Plato and the Copula: Sophist 251-259" in Plato I (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), pp.211ff. Francis Macdonald Cornford, Plato's Theory of Knowledge (1960; reprint ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p.296 and n.1, believes that Plato separated the existential sense of einai from the sense declaring

identity.

<sup>179</sup>This passage is pointed out by Guthrie, History, 4:495. The "predicative" reading is here impossible because one cannot literally talk of "what becomes f but never is f" where f a predicate.

<sup>180</sup>Charles H. Kahn, "The Greek Verb "To Be" and the Concept of Being", Foundations of Language 2, 1966, p.247.

<sup>181</sup>Ibid., pp.248-249.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid., p.259.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., pp.252-254.

<sup>184</sup>Here I am in agreement with Allen, "The Argument from Opposites", pp.325-326.

<sup>185</sup>Allen, "The Argument from Opposites", p.335.

<sup>186</sup>Cherniss, "Philosophical Economy", p.17, suggests that this might well be the starting point of Plato's metaphysics: "[t]he interests of Socrates, the subject-matter of the early dialogues, the "practical" tone of Plato's writings throughout make it highly probable that he took his start from the ethical problems of his day".

<sup>187</sup>Cross and Woosley, Plato's Republic, p.152.

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., p.158.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., p.156.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.

<sup>191</sup>Lee, The Republic, p.345.

<sup>192</sup>Guthrie, History, 4:490.

<sup>193</sup>J.C. Gosling, "Δοξα and Δυναμις in Plato's Republic", Phronesis 13, 1968, p.130.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>195</sup> Guthrie, History, 4:490.

<sup>196</sup> Annas, Introduction, pp.262-263.

<sup>197</sup> The Timaeus' date is disputable, but its close connection with the Republic is indicated by the fact that it effectively begins with a recapitulation of the conclusions of the Republic.

<sup>198</sup> Guthrie, History, 4:528 and n.2 and Barker, Political Thought, p.105 and p.176 and The Politics of Aristotle, p.250, n.3. In the last case Barker goes to absurd lengths in his defence of Plato. He writes that "Plato's treatment of constitutional change was meant to give an account of its inner logic rather than of its historical chronology. Aristotle's criticism is therefore hardly relevant". But to state that the "inner logic" of constitutional change is irrelevant to history is to suggest that history is irrational. And how else could one judge any theory which purports to display the "inner logic" of a historical phenomenon except by testing how well it conforms with the historical facts? History is therefore immediately relevant to the examination of Plato's description of the existing states of his time.

<sup>199</sup> Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul", p.200.

<sup>200</sup> Plato here flatly contradicts himself: timocracy is said to follow directly the aristocracy of Callipolis (545c). It is therefore completely inexplicable how the timocrat's father could live in a badly run state.

<sup>201</sup>Williams, "The Analogy of City and Soul", p.201. The same position is held by Annas, Introduction, p.302.

<sup>202</sup>See e.g. Thucydides 1.24, 3.2-3.14, 3.27-3.28, 3.69-3.74, 4.66, 8.48-8.54.

<sup>203</sup>Annas, Introduction, p.304.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

<sup>1</sup>Stanley Rosen, "Plato's Myth of the Reversed Cosmos", Review of Metaphysics 33, 1979, p.79, comments on this point that the "Stranger seems to agree with Hegel and Marx that properly human existence depends upon human labour". I think this is wrong as regards both Plato's overall conception of human labour and the myth in particular. The Republic proves beyond dispute how lowly Plato rated manual labour (which is fundamental in both Hegel's and Marx's conception of labour): only the Producers do such labour and they are the lowest class, practically deprived of any social or political rights. As for the myth, Plato recognizes in it human labour as a fact of life; but this does not entail that he attributes to it a cardinal importance, in particular since labour is necessary only in the present "age of Zeus".

<sup>2</sup>According to Rosen, "Plato's Myth", p.73, there are at least three distinct mythological sources that Plato utilizes in his myth: the fable of the "quarrel of Atreus and Thyestes", "the myth of the golden age of Cronus" and the "myth of the race of autochthonous mortals".

<sup>3</sup>The other two tales that Plato uses in his myth are structurally subordinated to the "age of Cronus" myth. It is to explain the "fall" from this age to his own that Plato utilizes the story of the reversal of the universe (included

in the Atreus and Thyestes myth) and the tale of the earthborn appears only in the framework of this reversal.

<sup>4</sup>Vidal-Naquet, "Plato's Myth of the Statesman, the Ambiguities of the Golden Age and of History", Journal of Hellenic Studies 98, 1978, p.134.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.133.

<sup>6</sup>J.B. Skemp, Introduction to Plato, The Statesman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p.52.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p.57.

<sup>8</sup>See Ibid., p.58.

<sup>9</sup>See Ibid., pp.58ff. and V. Tejera, "Plato's Politicus: an Eleatic Stranger in Politics", Philosophy and Social Criticism 5, 1978, pp.93-94.

<sup>10</sup>Xenophon, Cyropaideia, 8.2.14, summarized by Skemp, Introduction to Plato, The Statesman, p.60.

<sup>11</sup>Xenophon, Cyropaideia, 8.2.42, summarized by Skemp, Introduction to Plato, The Statesman, p.60.

<sup>12</sup>The position that Plato's myth is primarily targeted to a political conception justifying personal absolutism on the basis of natural superiority is developed in detail by Skemp, Introduction to Plato, The Statesman, pp.54ff.

<sup>13</sup>Vidal-Naquet, "Plato's Myth", p.137, argues correctly that the myth goes back in time far beyond the πατριος πολιτεια of the Crito, to a state of affairs where politics as we know it did not exist.

<sup>14</sup>Here I am in agreement with Skemp, Introduction to Plato, The Statesman, p.54, Paul Friedlander, Plato, trans.

Hans Meyerhoff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 3:289, and Christopher Gill, "Plato and Politics: the Critias and the Politicus", Phronesis 24, 1979, p.151. G.E.L. Owen, "The Place of the Timaeus in Plato's Dialogues", in Studies in Plato's Metaphysics, ed. R.E. Allen (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p.332 and George Klosko, The Development of Plato's Political Theory (New York: Methuen, 1986), p.190, suggest that the philosopher-king of the Republic is repudiated by the myth. But, despite their divine wisdom, the philosopher-kings are no gods. They belong to the same species as ordinary humans, and since there is compelling evidence in the Politicus for the practical identification of the Scientific Ruler and the philosopher-king, Owen's and Klosko's position cannot be sustained.

<sup>15</sup> Gill, "Plato and Politics", p.152.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. Gill writes that "the Statesman contains "second thoughts" about government, at least in the sense of different (if not necessarily contradictory) thoughts to those of the Republic" (my emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell H.Jr. Miller, The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), p.66.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Gill, "Plato and Politics", p.152.

<sup>22</sup> There is an analogy between this line of thought and

the passages in the Phaedrus asserting the superiority of oral discourse to the written work: 274eff. and the famous passage in 275d: "Δεινόν γάρ που ... τοῦτ' ἔχει γραφή, καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁμοίον ζωγραφία. Καὶ γάρ τὰ ἐκείνης ἔκχονα ἔστηκε μὲν ὡς ζῶντα, εἰάν δ' ἀνέρη τι, σεμνῶς πανυ σιχαῖ".

<sup>23</sup> Lewis Cambell, Introduction to the Politicus of Plato (New York: Arno Press, 1973), p.16.

<sup>24</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5:185.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, The Philosopher, p.90.

<sup>27</sup> This has been demonstrated in Christopher Bobonich's unpublished article "What's wrong with Ordinary People in Plato's Politicus?".

<sup>28</sup> These passages are suggested by Bobonich, "Ordinary People", p.23.

<sup>29</sup> These reasons for accepting the rationality of doxa are proposed by Bobonich, "Ordinary People", pp.23-24.

<sup>30</sup> See chapter 3, section 6.

<sup>31</sup> Guthrie, History, 5:184, writes that "the distinction between (i) ["the ideal statesman, god rather than man, whose enlightened will is his only law"] and (ii) ["the best sort of human statesman or political reformer (who himself has not yet appeared), whose qualifications and policies form the main subject of enquiry in the Politicus"] is not always clear". Guthrie points out that Plato uses the same name for both, as he admits in 301a-b, and assumes that



"[t]his leads him into at least apparent contradiction on the use of a written code of laws and the desirability of government by consent of the governed". There are a number of points worth commenting on in this interpretation. First of all, Guthrie's description of the Scientific Ruler and the constitutional monarch is unfortunate. The former is not divine in the strong sense the gods of the myth were, but only to the extent that he has knowledge of the transcendent Forms, and he definitely belongs to the same species as his subjects. Therefore he is hardly "god rather than man". Secondly, the activities of the law-abiding monarch relying for his rule on opinion do not form "the main subject of enquiry in the Politicus". This position is consistently held by the ἐπισημῶν and to suggest otherwise is a misreading of the dialogue. Furthermore, when Plato says in 301d-e that no such king appears, he means the Scientific Ruler, not the non-philosophical monarch. There is no contradiction, apparent or real, on the question of the use of a written code of laws, because Plato's thesis is clear: among the constitutions which are not based on episteme, written law is always and unconditionally preferable to disrespect for law (301aff.). Finally, the question of government by violence or consent depends primarily on the ambiguity of Plato's stance on the issue of the ordinary citizens' rational ability, not on his alleged confusion between the Scientific Ruler and the constitutional monarch.

<sup>32</sup> Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, (1867;

reprint ed. New York: Arno Press, 1973), comment ad loc., Skemp, Plato, The Statesman, p.161, n.1, J.M.E. Moravcsik, "The Anatomy of Plato's Divisions" in Exegesis and Argument, eds E.N. Lee, A.P.D. Mourelatos, R.M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), p.331 and Rosen, "Plato's Myth", p.64.

<sup>33</sup> Moravcsik, "Plato's Divisions", p.331.

<sup>34</sup> Skemp, Plato, The Statesman, p.161, n.1.

<sup>35</sup> Here I am in agreement with Guthrie, History, 5:177, n.1, who argues that Skemp's point is not proven beyond dispute by the text in question.

<sup>36</sup> Skemp translates εἰδωλον somewhat inaccurately as "visible resemblance".

<sup>37</sup> G.E.L. Owen, "Plato on the Undepictable" in Exegesis and Argument, eds E.N. Lee, A.P.D. Mourelatos, R.M. Rorty (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), p.351.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.350.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., pp.349-350.

<sup>40</sup> Guthrie, History, 5:178-179.

<sup>41</sup> Owen, "Plato on the Undepictable", p.354.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.355.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.358.

<sup>45</sup> These texts are suggested by Guthrie, History, 5:179-180, as implying Forms.

<sup>46</sup> A clear majority of eminent scholars accept Forms as present in the Sophist. They include Campbell, The Sophistes, 253a, 254d and 254e (ad loc.), Friedlander,

Plato, 3:275, Guthrie, History, 5:147ff. and especially 5:149, n.2, Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.184 and Moravcsik, "Plato's Divisions", pp.330ff. It is also significant that commentators presenting works specializing in Plato's late ontology take the existence of Forms in the Sophist for granted and do not feel the need to argue for it: see Edith Watson Schipper, Forms in Plato's Later Dialogues (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), pp.34ff. and Kenneth M. Sayre, Plato's Late Ontology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p.183.

<sup>47</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.197. See also Friedlander, Plato, 3:299.

<sup>48</sup> The reference is of course to the Apology 38a: "ὁ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ".

<sup>49</sup> Ellen Meiksins Wood and Neal Wood, Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p.181.

<sup>50</sup> Gill, "Plato and Politics", p.162. Gill's statement refers to the impossibility of an absolute ruler remaining incorruptible which is a cardinal position of the Laws (it has to be added that even if Plato does not accept the strong form of this position already in the Politicus, at least he clearly moves towards it). Gill also assumes that "[t]he starting-point of this realistic appraisal of human nature is Statesman 300-303 ... rather than 291-300" (Ibid.). On this point I am in agreement with him. Although 293-300 provides the first evidence of Plato's "second

thoughts on government" (Ibid.), the real locus of Plato's change of attitude is indeed 300bff.

<sup>51</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.191.

<sup>52</sup> See also μένος ἐν ἀρετῆς and μορῶν ἧς [ἀρετῆς] (306b).

<sup>53</sup> See Eve Browning Cole, "Weaving and Practical Politics in Plato's Statesman", The Southern Journal of Philosophy 29, 1991, p.203, who refers to Thucydides 1.31-1.44, 3.37-3.49 and 5.85-5.113 (p.207, n.19) and Melissa Lane's unpublished "A New Angle of Utopia: the Political Theory of the Politicus", pp.7-8, which refers to the first and third of these examples.

<sup>54</sup> Lane, "A New Angle", p.7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>57</sup> See 306e-308a and 308e-309a.

<sup>58</sup> Lane, "A New Angle", p.11.

<sup>59</sup> Skemp, Plato, The Statesman, p.223.

<sup>60</sup> It is my view that the Politicus' interest in history has not received its due attention by commentators. The one considerable exception is Lane, "A New Angle", passim.

<sup>61</sup> Skemp, Plato, The Statesman, pp.222-223.

<sup>62</sup> See Guthrie History, 5:191-192; Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.194; Miller, The Philosopher, pp.107-108.

<sup>63</sup> Skemp, Plato, The Statesman, p.222.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.223.

<sup>65</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.194. For a similar

argument emphasizing the importance of the Scientific Ruler's "weaving" enterprise see Miller, The Philosopher, p.108.

<sup>66</sup> Guthrie, History, 5:191 and n.2.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 5:192.

<sup>68</sup> I do not agree with Skemp, Introduction to Plato, The Statesman, p.65, who writes that this "takes us a long way from Republic, VIII, with its unfriendly picture of the democratic man and is really the greatest practical acknowledgment of the merits of democracy to be found in Plato, since the Laws, though technically approving democracy to an even larger extent, does not mean by it anything like the Athenian democracy but only Plato's own small citizen body of landholders all having votes". But the Politicus includes in seed a number of concepts which lead to a more pro-democratic predilection and which are fully developed only in the Laws. So in the Laws the absolute rule of the scientist is abandoned as an impossibility and human law is elevated to the position of the major criterion of good government. Some practices of the Athenian democracy are partially approved and, even on the constitutional plane, democracy is not mainly characterized by its impotence but becomes one of the two principles of the state's constitution (the other being monarchy).

<sup>69</sup> Bobonich, "Ordinary People", p.25.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

<sup>1</sup>There are a number of passages, scattered throughout the dialogue, which demonstrate that Plato's ideological commitment remains essentially aristocratic. So, in 630b he attacks mercenaries for being in their vast majority "θρασεῖς καὶ ἄδικοι καὶ ὑβρισταὶ καὶ ἀφρονέστατοι σχεδὸν πάντων". Mercenaries came predominantly from the lower social strata and did for money what in the traditional Greek moral code one should do only for one's city, i.e. fight in war. This explains why "[w]riters of oligarchic sympathies sometimes abuse the mercenaries bitterly" (G.E.M. De Ste Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek world (London: Duckworth, 1981), p.295). Plato's absolute contempt for them is therefore indicative of his political ideology. Of similar vein is also his praise of the Egyptian adherence to a strict prohibition of any innovation in art (656d-e) which is sharply contrasted to the "θεατροκρατία τις πονηρά" that according to Plato prevailed in his own days and which he explicitly connects with δημοκρατία (701a). Both the praise of ancient rules and the abuse on the democratic public exercising its prerogative to judge in artistic contests (the "πολύς ὄχλος" is "γελοῖος" if they think they can judge on matters concerning art-670b) are typical instances of aristocratic ideology. The same is true of Plato's fierce attack on trade (705a) and on tradesmen

(831e-832b) who are depicted as individuals corrupt and sinister beyond help. Tradesmen of course were the specific class in Athens who bound their fortunes with the expansion of the Empire, vital for their prosperity, and in general supported the democracy faithfully.

Plato also reveals his ideological preferences in attacking naval power. He disapproves of naval battles because for victory in them honours are attributed to "παντοδαπούς και οὐ πανυ σπουδαίους ἀνθρώπους" (707a-b). He even goes as far as to claim that the victories on land, at Marathon and Plateai saved the Greeks from the Persians and made them (morally) better, whereas the naval victory at Salamis only made them worse (707b-c). This is a surprising statement and as Plato knows all too well it goes against common Greek opinion ("οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ... λέγουσι ταῦτα"-707b-c). Plato's position becomes understandable when one realizes first that the navy was manned by the poorest citizens and second that the battle at Salamis was a crucial event in the political history of Athens because it gave to the lower classes who participated in it an opportunity to increase their political power. As Aristotle puts it (Politics 1274a 12-15) "τῆς ναυαρχίας γὰρ ἐν τοῖς Μηδικοῖς ὁ δῆμος αἴτιος γενόμενος ἐφρονιματίσθη καὶ δημαγωγούς ἔλαβε φαύλους ἀντιπολιτευομένων τῶν ἐπιεικῶν". In view of his aristocratic inclinations, there is little doubt why Plato felt distaste for this development.

The recurrence of such attacks on aspects of democratic

ideology discloses that Plato remained an aristocrat at heart until the end. The question then is, how this attitude can be reconciled with the slightly more sympathetic approach to democracy that Plato adopts in the Laws. This issue is addressed in the text.

<sup>2</sup>As Glenn R. Morrow, Plato's Cretan City (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p.113, remarks "although there will be exactly 5040 lots, it does not follow that there will be only 5040 citizens, as it is sometimes hastily assumed. For we must not forget the sons and heirs of lot holders; these will be liable to military service upon the age of twenty (785b) and thereafter qualified ... to take part in the elections; and at the age of thirty they can hold office (785b). But none of these will count as the owner of an allotment until his father dies and he has succeeded him to the property".

<sup>3</sup>Ellen Meiksins Wood and Neal Wood, Class Ideology and Ancient Political Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p.183. The economic analysis of the Laws is the bedrock of the authors' interpretation of the dialogue. The fact that this analysis can be proved to be deficient makes their whole interpretation more than questionable.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.187.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Wood and Wood's argument entails that there is no real economic or political distinction among the four classes. They are "no classes at all" because essentially they are the same class divided in four parts.



<sup>6</sup> Plato's interest in the right proportion is demonstrated by the use of the notion of the "essential measure" in the Politicus, which was discussed in the previous chapter, and by his insistence on the importance of proportionate (or geometrical) equality in the Laws 757b-758a.

<sup>7</sup> It is more than obvious from the context that the laws laid on this point are addressed to citizens. Trevor J. Saunders, Notes on the Laws of Plato (London: The Institute of Classical Studies, 1972), pp.76-77, argues correctly that in two close passages (841d and 845c) Plato uses the word ἐλευθερος as a synonym for citizen rather than for free man. It seems that Plato is doing this in the whole section, including 842d.

<sup>8</sup> This is how both R.F. Stalley, An Introduction to Plato's Laws (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p.102, and Trevor J. Saunders "Plato's Later Political Thought" in The Cambridge Companion to Plato, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.476, interpret Plato's prescription for the abstinence of the lower classes from some stages of the voting procedure. It appears that an overwhelming majority of scholars are in favour of the "working citizens" view:

E. David, "The Spartan syssitia and Plato's Laws", American Journal of Philology 99, 1978, p.489, writes that "[o]ne passage in the Laws [806d-e] gives a schematic picture of the state which presents many similarities to such a Spartan-fashioned ruling minority based on serf

labour, but it should be remembered that this isolated passage is in contradiction to the general picture of the society Plato imagines in his last dialogue. The citizens of the Laws' state are not similar to the Spartan "peers" (homoioi); they are not meant to concentrate exclusively on military and political activities, ... but are to be allowed certain economic activities, especially in agriculture. Those who insist on the difference between the Spartan society and that of the Laws are certainly justified. The passage mentioned above is, indeed, the exception rather than the rule."

Glenn R. Morrow, Plato's Law of Slavery in its Relation to Greek Law (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939), p.22, writes that "Plato clearly recognized that his citizens would be compelled, in greater or less degree, to give personal attention to their lots, if not to engage in actual manual labour". Later, in his Plato's Cretan City Morrow seems clearly inclined to accept the "actual manual labour" interpretation (pp.531-532); although sensitive to the fact that "[t]here is no glorification of physical labor in Plato; it seems to be regarded as a disagreeable necessity", he adds: "it seems not to be Plato's intention that his citizens shall be exempt from the care of their property and from personal labor on their land."

Leo Strauss, The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p.85, and George Klosko, The Development of Plato's Political Theory

(New York: Methuen, 1986), p.208, appear also to accept the same view. Thus Strauss writes that Plato "gives the poorer citizens greater freedom to mind their own business" and Klosko suggests that "[p]erhaps the poorer citizens, who have the fewest slaves, will engage in heavy physical labour".

Finally Stalley, Introduction, p.102, who discusses the subject at some length, finds four reasons for supporting the view that citizens are expected to engage in agricultural labour: the fact that there is no "prohibition of agriculture" for citizens; the agricultural laws and the Council election discussed in the text and Aristotle's remark (Politics 1265a15) that an enormous territory would be necessary to support five thousand and forty unproductive families.

<sup>9</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p. 110, criticizes Wood and Wood to whom he objects that "[m]uch of the evidence suggests that the citizens will be small farmers rather than aristocrats". This is true of the third and fourth class, but doubtful of the other two which have both wealth and leisure. As a criticism of Wood and Wood it is correct, however, because they assume that all citizens are to be maintained by metics and slaves and they completely disregard the differences, economic and political, between the four classes themselves.

Less fortunate is Stalley's second criticism of Wood and Wood. He says (p.110), that "[n]either the metics nor the

slaves are intended to form permanent classes within the state". But this is simply irrelevant to Wood and Wood's interpretation, because their point is that these classes are needed to sustain the citizenry, and whether they are constituted permanently of the same individuals or there is a constant flow of new metics and slaves in the city does not influence their role in production.

<sup>10</sup> Moses I. Finley, Economy and Society in Ancient Greece, ed. Brent D. Shaw and Richard P. Saller (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p.114, writes: "the more advanced the Greek city-state, the more it will be found to have had true slavery rather than the "hybrid" types like helotage. More bluntly put, the cities in which individual freedom reached its highest expression-most obviously Athens-were cities in which chattel slavery flourished".

This phenomenon looks paradoxical if examined in terms of the degree of "liberty" existing in each Greek city, as Finley seems to do. (In his statement advancement is measured by the degree of freedom enjoyed by the citizens). An excellent economic analysis of this problem, which also has the advantage of clarifying how misleading modern liberal notions can be when uncritically transferred to the ancient world is given by De Ste Croix, Class Struggle, p.141, who explains how increased political power for the lower citizen classes could mean harder repression for non-citizen classes and especially slaves: "[I]n a city like Athens ... just because it was a democracy and the poorer

citizens were to some extent protected against the powerful, the very most had to be made out of the classes below the citizens ... We need not be surprised, then, if we find a more intense development of slavery at Athens than at most other places in the Greek world: if the humbler citizens could not be exploited, and it was inexpedient to try to put too much pressure on the metics, then it was necessary to rely to an exceptional degree on exploiting the labour of slaves".

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle makes a vague remark in Politics 1253b20-21 to some people supporting the notion that slavery is "παρα φύσιν". But from other sources we have precious little information suggesting that the institution was actually seriously debated in the fifth and fourth centuries. For the fifth century there is Antiphon's assertion that "by nature" Greeks and barbarians are the same (Antiphon the Sophist, frag. 5), but it is far from certain that Antiphon actually questioned slavery: in Kerferd's formulation "[i]t may be an implication of the opposition developed by Antiphon between nomos and physis that all slavery is contrary to nature, but we have no record that he drew out the implication, and it is not sufficient to argue that he did so condemn it because "he must have done so" (G.B. Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.156). Alcidas in the fourth century definitely condemned slavery, but only in the framework of urging Athenian help for the Messenians against the Spartans

(Kerferd, The Sophistic Movement, p.156). Therefore it is not very likely that he was expressing a wider current of thought on this point. There must have been some kind of intellectual challenge to the institution of slavery for Aristotle to make his remark, but the lack of specific evidence suggests that it could well have been a kind of left-extreme minority view. Aristotle's vagueness at this point is most unhelpful. At the end of the day, however, one can only agree with Finley who writes: "How completely always the Greeks took slavery for granted as one of the facts of human existence is abundantly evident to anyone who has read their literature" (Economy and Society, p.97). Identical is also the position of De Ste Croix, Class Struggle, p.284.

<sup>12</sup> An excellent illustration of this fact is provided by Thucydides in Nicias' speech to his troops during the Sicilian Expedition: "[i]t is men who make the city, and not walls or ships with no men inside them" (7.77).

<sup>13</sup> Finley, Economy and Society, p.81.

<sup>14</sup> De Ste Croix, Class Struggle, p.288.

<sup>15</sup> As M.I. Finley, Politics in the Ancient World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.9, puts it "[r]ule by the few" or "rule by the many" was a meaningful choice, the freedom and the rights that the factions claimed for themselves were worth fighting for, despite the fact that even "the many" were a minority of the whole population".

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle's definition ignores two factors which were crucial for citizen status: ownership of land, which at least in Athens and probably throughout the Greek world was a prerequisite for one to be accepted as citizen (though non-landowners could sometimes also qualify-see Philip Brook Manville, The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.95; and autochthony, one's ability to trace one's ancestry from free members of the community as far back as possible. In 451/450 B.C. Pericles institutionalized autochthony as a prerequisite for citizenship in the strict form that both one's parents should be Athenians. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between citizenship and the myth of autochthony see Nicole Loraux, The Children of Athena (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp.6-21.

<sup>17</sup> I am referring to the distinction between the two higher classes and the Producers. Plato only drew from the social reality of his time in creating such a scheme. Nor is it true that he attributed his third citizen class with a productive role because he did not allow slaves in the Republic. Gregory Vlastos, "Does Slavery exist in Plato's Republic?" in Gregory Vlastos, Platonic Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp.140-146, argues conclusively that slavery does exist in the dialogue. The reason why no attention is paid to it is, in his opinion, that "Plato [admits] slaves in his society without thinking

of them as a proper part of the polis" (p.141).

<sup>18</sup> Despite Plato's explicit assertion that the political system of the Laws is halfway between monarchy and democracy (756e), Aristotle is definitely right when he asserts that the πολιτεία of the Laws has nothing monarchic about it but is composed of democratic and oligarchic elements: "οὐδ' ἔχουσα φαίνεται μοναρχικόν οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ὀλιγαρχικά καὶ δημοκρατικά" (Politics, 1266a5-6).

<sup>19</sup> Trevor J. Saunders, "The Structure of the Soul and the State in Plato's Laws", Eranos 60, 1962, p.43, n.1, writes: "... scorn for τὸ βαναυσὸν in Greece was generally reserved for artisans and traders; farming was an eminently respectful occupation not included in the general condemnation (See e.g. Xenophon Oeconomicus IV 3, V 11)". The remark is correct, apart from the fact that one should be cautious not to identify what is an essentially aristocratic point of view (Xenophon's political sympathies are well-known) with the view of the Greeks in general. The attitude that Saunders describes here is not the "Greek" attitude but the "aristocratic Greek" one.

<sup>20</sup> There is a problem here. Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.212, is undoubtedly right when he remarks that "[t]here are numerous gaps and other difficulties in Plato's account of the constitution of the state. To some extent these can be attributed to the fact that Plato probably died before completing the Laws". Also Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, writes that "Plato's account of the offices in his



state is at many points incomplete" (p.229) and that "Plato's qualities as a systematic legal thinker are, in part at least, responsible for [the] gaps in his account of the offices" (p.233). Nevertheless, there are a substantial number of points in this account that are well established. In our discussion in the text we will try to concentrate on those.

<sup>21</sup> Whether women would be accepted in the Assembly is unclear. Since women are to participate in military training (804d-805c) and εἰς [τας] ἀρχάς (785b) one could suppose that they would. But as Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.157, remarks "there is no hint that Plato has this point in mind" in the discussion of the Assembly.

<sup>22</sup> On this point see Strauss, Argument and Action, p.85 and Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.157.

<sup>23</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.164.

<sup>24</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.113.

<sup>25</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.177.

<sup>26</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, pp.213-214.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.212.

<sup>28</sup> By election or by lot, the Assembly is in both cases the body responsible for this appointment.

<sup>29</sup> It is however a step in a democratic direction that any citizen can question the morality of one of the examiners and bring him to trial (947e-948b).

<sup>30</sup> It is, in my opinion, a deficiency of both Klosko and Morrow that in their discussion of the Assembly (Plato's

Political Theory, pp.212-215 and Plato's Cretan City, pp.157-165 respectively), they fail to point out that the fact that state officials are not accountable to the Assembly is the single most vital factor which deprives the Assembly of becoming the ultimate authority in the polis.

<sup>31</sup>Twice in the Politics Aristotle defines this procedure of participation in the Assembly as oligarchic: in 1266a10-12 where the Laws is explicitly referred to (1266a1) and in 1297a17-19.

<sup>32</sup>Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.158-159.

<sup>33</sup>This is exactly the measure ferociously criticized by Socrates in the Gorgias 515e.

<sup>34</sup>The first case is not perfectly clear: Plato refers to "πάντες" that bear or have borne arms (753b). However, the Greek strongly suggests that all will participate, not that simply all will be allowed to participate. The second passage (772d) is free from any ambiguity: "πάντα τὸν δῆμον" means explicitly a full Assembly.

<sup>35</sup>This is how Aristotle interprets the whole procedure (Politics 1266a15-30). Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.171, underplays the political intention of Plato's scheme: "Plato's reason for excusing the third class from one day's proceedings, and the fourth class from two, is probably -despite Aristotle's suggestion of oligarchical intent- that some of the poorer citizens could not neglect their affairs for the whole period". But the socio-economic rationale to which Morrow refers does not entail that there is not an

evident political intention on Plato's part. The political direction in which the procedure points is fairly clear and, whatever excuses one can find for it, Aristotle's interpretation of it as oligarchic remains essentially valid.

<sup>36</sup>The point is established by Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.170 and followed by Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.214.

<sup>37</sup>Plato does not assign specifically this task in the Laws, but since he follows an Athenian model it is most likely that it would go to the Council. The point is made by Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.175-176 and Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.214.

<sup>38</sup>For a full list of such assignments see Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.173-174.

<sup>39</sup>In Athens the Council was manned by equal representatives of each tribe.

<sup>40</sup>As Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.176, remarks: "the elaborate procedure of selection Plato devises for the council shows that he thinks it will be an important organ of deliberation. It is indeed seldom mentioned after the sixth book of the Laws; but this feature of Plato's text like the rarity of references to the assembly may be taken as evidence that the assembly and council are everywhere presupposed as functioning in the familiar Greek manner".

<sup>41</sup>Plato talks about a "tribal" court (956c), but as Morrow has shown (Plato's Cretan City, pp.257-261) in fact

he refers to the "familiar heliastic courts of Athens". There is little doubt that Morrow is correct on this point. The interpretation that these courts are composed of members of one tribe is unlikely for quite a few reasons. Morrow's argument is that if Plato was referring to one-tribe courts a) he would violate his principle of adhering to existing Athenian constitutions, b) he would ascribe importance to the tribes which are otherwise completely insignificant in the Laws, c) he would have left undiscussed the case of members of different tribes having a dispute and d) he would not refer to these courts as "common".

<sup>42</sup> Here Plato accepts an essentially democratic practice, but he takes measures to avoid what he regards as the worst manifestations of ὀλιγαρχία.

<sup>43</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.267-268, suggests that this court actually usurps cases that, according to 767e-768a should be tried by the Assembly, and therefore this provision is straightforwardly oligarchic. He also compares this court with the Areopagus of Athens. Now, it is beyond doubt that this "select" court is of aristocratic inspiration. But does it really undertake cases that should belong to the jurisdiction of the Assembly? This depends, in my opinion, on how widely one interprets the term "crimes against the state" (767e). Treason ("προδοσις"-856e) falls definitely under this description and Morrow is right on this point. The other crimes referred to this court, however, are primarily of a religious rather than of a

political character: temple robbing (854d-e), homicide (871d) or attempted murder (877b) and impiety (910c-d). But given Plato's increasing concern about religious offenses after the Seventh Book and the fact that he expects his senior magistrates to be the upholders of religious orthodoxy, there are good reasons for him to refer religious crimes (homicide is also a strongly religious matter for the Greeks) to a select court rather than to the Assembly. The only case where the contradiction between the Sixth and the Ninth Book is obvious is treason. But this only partially justifies Morrow's point.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.289.

<sup>45</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.214.

<sup>46</sup> This is all the more important since Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 9.1, asserts that democracy came about as a result of the judicial powers entrusted to the people.

<sup>47</sup> The reason for this seems to be that κληρος is θεοφυλης (690c) and therefore in a sense the god chooses his priests on his own through the lot.

<sup>48</sup> I disagree with Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.224, who believes that "both means [election and lot are] employed fairly". There is little doubt that election is the predominant means of appointment of state officials, while the lot's role is minimal.

<sup>49</sup> On the democratic connotations of arithmetical equality see chapter 1, section 4.

<sup>50</sup>For a discussion of the lot in the context of Plato's political intentions see Trevor J. Saunders, "Plato's Later Political Thought" in the Cambridge Companion to Plato, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.474.

<sup>51</sup>Politics 1294b8-10.

<sup>52</sup>See Stalley, Introduction, p.119; Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.162; Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.223.

<sup>53</sup>For the procedure of their election see: Nomophylakes 753b-e; Examiners 945e-946c; Official for Education 766a-b; Select Judges 767c-d.

<sup>54</sup>In his Plato's Cretan City Morrow has demonstrated in meticulous detail that Plato's Magnesia is by and large modelled after the Athenian constitution of an earlier time, roughly what in Plato's time was known as the πατριος πολιτεια. But Morrow, although including in his work some specific comparisons between Platonic proposals and Solonian measures, does not insist particularly on the relationship, which, as it is argued in the text, is crucial for the shaping of the Laws.

<sup>55</sup>See Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 5.3.

<sup>56</sup>The extreme oligarchs preferred to look as far back as Drako. On the subject see Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.78-79.

<sup>57</sup>See Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 12.1 and 12.5 where he cites, obviously with approval, Solon's poems asserting that he conceived himself as a mediator. In a

cryptic remark in the Politics 1296a38-40 the philosopher refers to "[only one of a long succession of statesmen [who] succeeded in introducing a social order of this kind [a "middle constitution"]". He might well mean Solon who is mentioned a few lines earlier (1296a19) along with Lycurgus and Charondas. Of the three Solon fits the description better, although other possible politicians not mentioned in the chapter could also be meant (Pittacus of Chius for instance). T.A. Sinclair, Aristotle, The Politics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p.171, thinks it is Solon that is referred to here and in my opinion this is the most plausible suggestion, especially as in 1273b39 Aristotle describes Solon as "μειζαντα καλῶς τὴν πολιτείαν".

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle's sympathies lay, to a considerable extent, with the moderate oligarchs (see the Athenian Constitution 26-28 and his glorification of Theramenes in 28.5) and this might have played a role in the way he understood Solon's Reformation.

<sup>59</sup> See e.g. Protagoras 343a; Charmides 155a; Timaeus 20d-21c and 27b; Republic 599e; Phaedrus 258c and 278c; Symposium 209d.

<sup>60</sup> Although Morrow does not press very far the relationship of Plato's constitution to that of Solon, he plainly agrees on this point (Plato's Cretan City, p.135).

<sup>61</sup> Victor Ehrenberg, From Solon to Socrates (London: Methuen, 1968), p.63, suggests that before Solon there were three classes defined in terms of military function: hippeis

serving in the cavalry, zeugitai constituting the infantry and thetes with no military duty. Solon then established a new higher class from the richer of the knights: this was "the cream of the hippeis" and the highest τιμημα in the state.

<sup>62</sup> See Ibid., p.67.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.63.

<sup>64</sup> If women are accepted in the Assembly (which is likely though not certain) Plato goes far beyond Solon. But at the same time he goes far beyond his time as well. The measure would indeed be unthinkable for the common male citizen of the Classical era.

<sup>65</sup> See Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 8.1

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 8.4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. Aristotle states that despite this fact, the Areopagus retained significant authority.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 9.1.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. Aristotle might be referring exactly to this first-level system of distributing justice when he uses the word "ἔφεσις" (appeal), since an appeal normally presupposes a prior decision. This would mean that this system was embodied by Solon in his judicial legislation. The passage is not clear, however, and appeal might mean simply resorting to a popular court.

<sup>70</sup> Laws: On homicide 871d; on attempted homicide 877b; on treason 856e. As regards Solon, see Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution 8.4 and Ehrenberg, From Solon to Socrates,



Socrates, p.66.

<sup>71</sup> At least it is taken as such by Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution 9.1.

<sup>72</sup> See Aristotle, Politics, 1274a19.

<sup>73</sup> See Solon's poems cited by Aristotle, The Athenian Constitution, 12.1 and 12.5.

<sup>74</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.82.

<sup>75</sup> In fact, Plato never uses the term "μεικτη πολιτεια" (mixed constitution).

<sup>76</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.521, argues that "[t]his passage, occurring at the end of the third book and concluding the preliminary discussion of principles, may properly be taken as supplying the clue to the legislation for Cleinias' Cretan colony which begins with the following book".

<sup>77</sup> Kurt Von Fritz, The Theory of the Mixed Constitution in Antiquity (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p.80 and Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.525-526 admit that Aristotle is at least literally correct. Stalley, Introduction, pp.117ff., and Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.222, simply attack his interpretation.

<sup>78</sup> Von Fritz, The Mixed Constitution in Antiquity, p.80.

<sup>79</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.52-527.

<sup>80</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.120.

<sup>81</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.223.

<sup>82</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.524.

<sup>83</sup> V. Brochard, "Les "Lois" de Plato et la theorie des

idees", in Etudes de philosophie ancienne et de philosophie moderne (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1926), p.154, suggests that the "exclusively political" character of the Laws does not give Plato the opportunity to expound the theory of the Forms, but this does not entail that he has abandoned it. W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 5:380, has criticized this expression as a "considerable exaggeration", but even so Brochard has a good point: Plato's orientation towards a practical conception of politics in the Laws makes the dialogue a work inappropriate for the expression of an elaborate metaphysical theory, in the sense that Plato's main interest throughout almost the whole of the Laws lies in actual political institutions and the way they could be adopted in a "second best" state, rather than in a transcendent theory that would justify this state. Brochard also supports his claim with a successful analogy: "If Spinoza, in the Tractatus Politicus, does not speak of the distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas, it is clear that nobody can legitimately conclude for that reason either that he does not hold this theory any more or that he has abandoned it" (p.154; all Brochard's quotations are in my translation).

<sup>84</sup>The theology of Book Ten supplements the theory of Forms rather than repudiates it. The issue is discussed below in the text.

<sup>85</sup>Brochard, "La theorie des idees", p.154, strongly

supports the case of Forms in the Laws but he nevertheless writes: "Let us recognize then from the beginning that one can go through all the twelve books of the Laws without encountering, even once, a formal and explicit mention of the theory of the Forms".

<sup>86</sup> Saunders, "Plato's Later Political Thought", pp.467-468.

<sup>87</sup> See 818e and 886b.

<sup>88</sup> Quite surprisingly, Karl Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 4th ed. rev., 1962), p.215, n.5, takes the passage in 739d-e to prove the existence of Forms in the Laws. But here there is nothing more than an assertion of the point about common property that is made in the Republic. Nothing in the language of the text indicates a reference to Forms. If one wanted to connect this passage with Forms one would have to show why it is necessary that common property in the Republic entails Forms. Popper does not give any arguments for his position and is therefore unjustified to read Forms in this passage.

<sup>89</sup> A similar point is made in the Politicus 274c-d.

<sup>90</sup> Brochard, "La theorie des ideas", passim, provides the most detailed defence of this view. Popper, The Open Society 1:215, n.5, finds seven passages in the Laws suggesting Forms, but provides no argumentation for this position whatever. Guthrie, History, 5:378-381, takes a somewhat paradoxical stance by denying that there is a clear reference to the Forms in any of the passages referred to by either Brochard or Popper, but in the end agreeing with

their conclusion. Harold Cherniss, Selected Papers, ed. Leonardo Taran (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), pp.385-387, gives some good reasons for accepting Forms in the Laws. J.A. Stewart, Plato's Doctrine of Ideas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), p.106, believes that 965c-966a proves the case beyond dispute, but he does not offer detailed argumentation. Joseph P. Maguire, "Plato's Theory of Natural Law", Yale Classical Studies 10, 1947, pp.169-171, argues that we can assert the existence of Forms in the Laws both in the Tenth and the Twelfth Books. Leo Strauss, Argument and Action, pp.183-184, claims that "the ideas retain in the Laws, if in a properly subdued or muted manner, the status which they occupy, say, in the Republic."

Saunders, "Plato's Later Political Thought", pp.465-469 and Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.235 are inclined to accept the same conclusion, though neither expresses certainty on the subject.

<sup>91</sup> Brochard, "La theorie des idees", p.158.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.553.

<sup>94</sup> Another of Brochard's arguments ("La theorie des idees", p.160), is that Forms are implied at 817e-818a, where Plato writes that all citizens should know the basics in calculation, geometry, stereometry and astronomy, but only few, to be identified at the end of the work, ought to have a deeper knowledge of them. But not only, as Guthrie has remarked, is dialectic not mentioned here (History,

5:381), but also this better knowledge to be acquired by the few is left completely unexplained and the language of the passage has nothing whatever to do with language associated with Forms. Brochard wants to link this passage with the crucial passages in the Twelfth Book. But the passage in 817e-818a in itself is too vague to allow for this link; we can assert that the "few" to obtain deeper knowledge are the members of the Nocturnal Council, but this does not prove anything in itself. Therefore it is questionable whether this passage provides the slightest clue in the search for Forms in the Laws.

<sup>95</sup> See Cherniss, Selected Papers, p.385, n.3.

<sup>96</sup> This point is underlined by Saunders, "Soul and State", p.45. Saunders concludes that the Nocturnal Council corresponds exactly to the Rulers of the Republic. This question is addressed in the next section.

<sup>97</sup> Guthrie, History, 5:381.

<sup>98</sup> I strongly disagree with Guthrie, History, 5:379, that the word in this context could mean simply "sort" or "kind". This, I believe, is highly unlikely in the context of a discussion of virtues.

<sup>99</sup> Cherniss, Selected Papers, p.385, n.3.

<sup>100</sup> Plato's strict attitude on this point appears even more uncompromising if we consider that this practice was not in fact part of the Greek political or religious culture. See James K. Feibleman, Religious Platonism (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1971), p.39.

101 Brochard, "La theorie des idees", pp.164-165.

102 Strauss, Argument and Action, p.185, presents the superiority of the metaphysical inquiry to the theological one as the reason that proves the existence of Forms in the Laws. I agree with his comment on the hierarchy of the two, but this would definitely not be sufficient proof of the presence of Forms in the dialogue without the textual evidence and the linguistic analogies presented in the text.

103 The first to suggest this interpretation was Aristotle (Politics 1265a3-4).

104 Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.235.

105 Guthrie, History, 5:369.

106 Saunders, "Soul and State", p.43.

107 Ernest Barker, Greek Political Theory, 1918; reprint ed. (London: Methuen, 1960), p.406.

108 In the second Part of his Plato's Cretan City Morrow proves by detailed argumentation that almost every little piece of Plato's legislation is based on existing Greek institutions.

109 According to Morrow (Plato's Cretan City, p.500 and n.2), this obvious contradiction has made some commentators suppose that the Nocturnal Council is not Plato's invention, but was introduced by Philippus of Opus, or at least that it was a kind of afterthought, hardly integrating with the rest of the Laws. But there is no reason to accept this extreme interpretation since there are good philosophical grounds for taking the Council as an integral part of Plato's

initial plan. At this point I am in agreement with Morrow (pp.500ff.), who provides an adequate defence of the position that the Council does not contradict in any insoluble way the rest of the dialogue. The issue is discussed at length in the text below.

<sup>110</sup> See 301c-d.

<sup>111</sup> Gregory Vlastos, "Socratic Knowledge and Platonic "Pessimism" in Gregory Vlastos, Platonic Studies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.215, n.25.

<sup>112</sup> Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.512.

<sup>113</sup> Saunders, "Soul and State", p.45.

<sup>114</sup> There is some ambiguity in the text regarding whether this procedure applies to all changes in the law or only to amendments to the laws concerning choruses. Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.571, n.54, remarks that "the context shows ... that it is the laws regarding the canons of dancing and choruses that Plato has in mind here". He admits though that "[t]he language of 772cd could be interpreted as actually prescribing this procedure for all changes in the laws". In my opinion the latter interpretation is preferable for two reasons: first, the critical passage referring to revision of the law (from ὧν περὶ κλυεῖν onwards) is stated in general terms, i.e. there is no indication that Plato here has in mind merely the particular laws about choruses. Secondly, this is the only case in the Laws where such a procedure is described and therefore it is very likely that it is intended to cover all similar instances.

115 Stalley, Introduction, p.112.

116 See e.g. Republic 496a-b; Politicus 293a; Laws 875c-d.

117 Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.236.

118 See the metaphor in 961d.

119 See 666b and 818e.

120 Strauss, Argument and Action, p.180.

121 The scrutineers are of course members of the Nocturnal Council, but they are not the only ones. What is more important, however, is that they are not honoured as members of the Council, but in their capacity as scrutineers.

122 This idea is hinted at by Strauss in his final comment on the Laws (Argument and Action, p.186).

123 See Stalley, Introduction, p.3.

124 Morrow's (Plato's Cretan City, p.512) first objection to the thesis that this passage "proves" Plato's intention to give full power to the Nocturnal Council is that it is a "peroration". This is formally correct, but still nothing would preclude the possibility of a peroration containing important philosophical points. Morrow has a better argument when he shows that the Council is not designed to be permitted to override the law and that such an interpretation would invalidate all the principles that Plato employed in the Laws until the closing page: "Is it possible that on the very last page Plato completely reverses himself and repudiates not only what he just said, but also the fundamental principles he has insisted upon in three hundred and forty-five previous pages of text? To



assume this is to violate all sound criteria of interpretation" (p.513).

Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.241, has suggested that "Morrow somewhat weakly attempts to undermine the force of this line". But even if there is a degree of weakness in the "peroration" argument, Morrow has definitely a tenable position overall, since he has demonstrated two things: first, that Plato employs on a large scale historical precedents in the construction of the Magnesian institutions, the point of which is to ensure that the city will be reasonably successful even though it is based on common experience instead of philosophical wisdom; and second, that the Nocturnal Council is supposed to operate within the law rather than against or beyond it.

<sup>125</sup>One could of course suggest that the hypothesis in this passage is used in a trivial manner, i.e. that it is a *façon de parler*. If 969b is taken in this way the interpretation we suggested in the text would be invalidated. However, this is obviously a critical point of the Laws, indeed Plato's final remark in this lengthy dialogue, and both the possibility of the Nocturnal Council's emergence and its political role (i.e. two major issues of the Twelfth Book and actually of the whole dialogue) are discussed here. I find it therefore unlikely that Plato would not pay particular attention to the syntactical form in this passage, or that this form would not have any philosophical significance. Moreover, one can

understand why the author would be cautious with regard to his commitment to the appearance of a body with the exalted knowledge of the Nocturnal Council in an actual Greek city inhabited predominantly by Dorians.

<sup>126</sup> My translation.

<sup>127</sup> Saunders, "Soul and State", p.49, misses this point when he argues that the inability to "δοῦναι λόγον" which is described in 966b as "ἀνδραποδου εἴς" is a characteristic of ὀρθῆ δόξα. There is abundance of evidence in the Laws that Plato operates with a conception of such a doxa which is fully appropriate for citizens; on Saunders' interpretation, every citizen except for the members of the Nocturnal Council would then be an ἀνδραποδον; but this is incompatible with the trust that Plato displays towards the ὀρθῆ δόξα of the average Magnesian citizen by allowing all the formal offices of the state to be filled by men who operate on the basis of right opinion.

<sup>128</sup> Blair Campbell, "Deity and Human Agency in Plato's Laws", History of Political Thought 2, 1981, p.441, defends on different grounds the "priority of "opinion" over metaphysical insight" in the Laws and cites as examples the passage in 951c referred to in the text and 665d where the chorus of the elders is characterized as the "κυριώτατον" of the city because of their age and their phronesis (Campbell obviously infers from these texts that Plato has in mind their experience here and this is quite probable). There is little doubt that Plato in many ways envisages a

gerontocracy in the Laws, but I do not think this can be taken as full proof of his emphasis on experience, although it could be an indication. In the Republic, for example, where experience is dismissed as a guide for political action, the philosopher-kings have to be above a certain age and to have experience, but it is not this experience in itself which entitles them to power.

<sup>129</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.204.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.205.

<sup>131</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.180.

<sup>132</sup> Stalley, Introduction, pp.181-182, isolates two passages from Popper, on which the latter "relies heavily" for his charges of collectivism against Plato: the first is 739c-d where Plato supports  $\kappa\omicron\lambda\nu\kappa\tau\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma\upsilon\nu\eta$  of all goods. Stalley accepts that Popper "is justified in citing this passage as evidence of Plato's collectivism", but remarks that "Popper is wrong to suppose that Plato ever considered the community of family and property an attainable ideal". However, I think it is wrong to discuss this passage in the context of the Laws at all. Here Plato simply reinstates the position of the Republic and indicates that there is a socio-economic arrangement which is substantially superior to that of the Laws. The fact however that he abandons this ideal and works painstakingly to establish a very different social structure in the Laws shows that this passage refers to the ideal world of the Republic and not to the "second best" city of the Laws. It appears to me that not only

Popper but also Stalley misses this point. As for 942c-d, where Plato emphasizes the importance of a leader in military life, Stalley correctly remarks that Popper takes the passage out of its context and that the charge of "totalitarian militaris[m]" (Popper, The Open Society, p.103) should be weighed against Plato's rejection of Dorian militarism in the early Books of the Laws.

<sup>133</sup> However, as Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, p.375, remarks "[d]espite this appearance of drastic censorship, the procedure Plato proposes is-formally, at least-quite similar to that followed at Athens."

<sup>134</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.204, makes on this point the caustic but justifiable remark that "[a]t this stage in his life Plato wishes to put an end to the age-old battle between philosophy and poetry by declaring his philosophy to be the only permissible poetry".

<sup>135</sup> For a list of leading Platonists accepting this position see Campbell, "Deity and Human Agency", p.417.

<sup>136</sup> Campbell, "Deity and Human Agency", p.435, n.70.

<sup>137</sup> The "puppet metaphor" is the one passage in the Laws on which the assumption that Plato denies free human agency for theological reasons can most forcefully be based. As I have argued, this position is untenable. Campbell, "Deity and Human Agency", passim, examines the issue on the basis of the theology of Book Ten and reaches the same conclusion.

Also Richard Mohr, "Plato's Final Thoughts on Evil: Laws X, 899-905", Mind 87, 1978, proposes a theological

justification of what could be called "free will" in Plato. He writes that "[g]iven that the Demiurge of the Laws X is perfectly good (900d) and is not ignorant of evil goings-on (901d) and is also ready, willing, and able to eradicate evil (902e7-903a1) and yet does not eliminate evil from "small things" or "parts of the whole" (901b8, c1), we must assume that the Demiurge's action or rather inaction with regard to small evils is actually a choice for the best" (p.573). From this point of view "the Demiurge supposes the whole which he constructs of parts that are both good and bad is better than a whole of only good parts. The specific advantage to the whole of permitting evil souls to exist seems to be the preservation of something like the free-will of moral agents (τὴν αὐτῆς βουλήσιν, 904d5)" (p.574).

<sup>138</sup>The state's response to this fact is then violently to suppress atheism. Here Plato really goes over the top: even atheists who do not attempt to "proselytize" anybody and live an otherwise blameless life are to be jailed (908b-e).

<sup>139</sup>There is a slight ambiguity in 688a<sup>ff</sup>. Plato suggests first that the lawgiver should aim at one of the four virtues, but he immediately corrects himself by explaining that the lawgiver "θεοῦ δὲ δὴ πρὸς πᾶσαν μὲν βλέπειν" (688b); and then he emphasizes that the highest virtue, phronesis, ought to be uppermost in the lawgiver's mind. The way to understand this swift succession of lawgiving aims is, in my opinion, the following: the lawgiver has to start by aiming at one of the particular virtues; because of the

essential unity of virtue, however, this means he will be aiming at virtue as a whole, while the particular virtue he first targets will be merely a starting point. The good lawgiver must, of course, be aware of this fact, and not lose sight of the whole when he aims at a part. The best way for this to be achieved is by starting with the highest of virtues, wisdom. Read in this way the passage proves Plato's belief in a single virtue.

<sup>140</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.45.

<sup>141</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.44, finds 632d-e as posing problems for the "unity of virtue" doctrine as well. In this text Plato suggests that different institutions should aim at different virtues. But this does not necessarily deny the unity of virtue, because these institutions could still be aiming at the whole of virtue. For practical reasons it might be better for the lawgiver to start with a specific virtue in mind. But if virtue is one, then the final aim of the institutions will still be virtue as a whole. So, there is no reason to take this passage as a downright rejection of the essential unity of virtue.

<sup>142</sup> Guthrie, History, 5:330.

<sup>143</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.57.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp.57-58.

<sup>145</sup> Although this can only be an educated guess, it is likely that the disastrous outcome of Dion's expedition in Sicily might have finally convinced Plato that in the context of a civil conflict reconciliation is better even

than the rule of the philosophically minded.

<sup>146</sup> Plato insists almost unfailingly in his provisions for the appointment of Magnesian officials that the first prerequisite for holding office is virtue.

<sup>147</sup> Stalley, Introduction, p.48, makes this point referring to Aristotle's use of phronesis in the Sixth Book of the Nicomachean Ethics.

<sup>148</sup> R.F. Stalley, "Persuasion in Plato's Laws", History of Political Thought 15, 1994, p.169, n.60, questions this assumption on the grounds that Plato uses "ἡμεροῦμενον" in this passage (720d), the word being used in the Republic to designate the taming of the irrational part of the soul. Nevertheless, Stalley himself admits that the description of the patient as ἡμεροῦμενον is "controversial" and even if his linguistic point is accepted, the implication that the patient is treated as a rational being is not cancelled out, because in this case the doctor appeals both to his emotions and to his rational capabilities.

<sup>149</sup> This has been forcefully argued by Christopher Bobonich, "Persuasion, Compulsion and Freedom in Plato's Laws", Classical Quarterly 41, 1991. Glenn R. Morrow, "Plato's Conception of Persuasion", Philosophical Review 62, 1953, and Stalley, "Persuasion in Plato's Laws", cast doubt on whether Plato intends the preambles to address the rational part of his citizens, arguing that they are directed to their emotional side as well. But the critical issue here is that Plato's appeal to emotions does not

invalidate the fact that the preambles are also directed to the rationality of the citizens. Plato would have denied this rationality in his use of the preambles if he appealed only to their emotional side. The fact that, as a good psychologist, Plato directs his exhortation to both parts of the citizens' personality demonstrates that he takes the Magnesians to have reason as well as emotions. In the end, both Stalley and Morrow accept that the use of the preambles indicates an increased Platonic acknowledgement of ordinary people's rational abilities. Stalley admits that "[t]he citizens of the Laws will certainly have a much truer conception of the principles on which their state is based than would those of the Republic" ("Persuasion in Plato's Laws", p.175) and Morrow writes that the preambles are "persuasion at the high level of rational insight suffused with emotion" ("Plato's Conception of Persuasion", p.242; Morrow uses exactly the same expression in Plato's Cretan City, p.558).

<sup>150</sup> Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.227.

<sup>151</sup> One obvious example is Saunders, "Soul and State", *passim*, who argues that the political and psychological schemes of the two dialogues are identical. Friedlander, Plato. The Dialogues: Second and Third Periods, trans. Hans Meyerhoff. Bollingen Series, no 59, Vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 3:444, sees the spirit of the early and middle dialogues prevailing in the end over Plato's late turn to historical models (Socrates winning out



over Solon). Wood and Wood, Class Ideology, pp.183-202, find in the Laws only the reinstatement of the political doctrines of the Republic. Popper, The Open Society, passim, uses the Laws to support conclusions formulated on the basis of the Republic without arguing for any kind of connection between the two. Barker, Greek Political Theory, p.406ff. claims that Plato returns to the rule of the philosopher-king at the end of the work. Finally, Zdravko Planinc, Plato's Political Philosophy (London: Duckworth, 1991), explicitly follows Strauss in acknowledging the philosophical significance of the Laws (p.156), but otherwise treats its political message as similar to that of the Republic.

<sup>152</sup> Charles Kahn, "[Review of] Plato's Cretan City" by Glenn R. Morrow, in the Journal of the History of Ideas 22, 1961, p.424.

<sup>153</sup> One passage in the Laws which typifies Plato's attitude towards human beings is 803b: "ἔστι δὴ τοίνυν τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πράγματα μεγάλης μὲν σπουδῆς οὐκ ἄξια, ἀναγκαῖον γε μὴν σπουδαζειν". This statement is sometimes interpreted as a purely negative evaluation of the importance of human matters (see e.g. Klosko, Plato's Political Theory, p.203). But although Plato clearly rates human issues far lower than those concerning divinity, he still asserts the importance of their study: ἀναγκαῖον is a powerful term indicating an inescapable necessity. Therefore, man's significance might be nowhere near the

divine one, but still it is given a positive rating.

<sup>154</sup> It is on this point that I fundamentally disagree with Wood and Wood (Class Ideology, pp.183ff.). Whereas they are absolutely right to emphasize that in the socio-political context of Classical Greece the exclusion of manual workers from the citizen-body is an oligarchic device, they are wrong to assume that all Magnesian citizens will be labour-free aristocrats (see section 1) and to ignore the considerable extent to which democratic practices are accepted in the Laws as part of the constitutional apparatus of Plato's city.

<sup>155</sup> See Morrow, Plato's Cretan City, pp.539-540, Friedlander, Plato, 3:414, Walter Nicgorski, "Cicero's Focus", Political Theory 19, 1991, p.249, n.33, and Thomas I. White, "Pride and The Public Good: Thomas More's Use of Plato in Utopia", Journal of the History of Philosophy 20, 1982, pp.239-254. According to Von Fritz, The Theory of the Mixed Constitution, p.78, "[t]he theory of the mixed constitution, in the narrower sense in which "mixed constitution" means above all a system of checks and balances, appears for the first time in Plato's political writings". Von Fritz refers to the Politicus when he makes this point, but he argues for it mainly on the basis of the Laws.

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