THE STRANGER’S KNOWLEDGE:
POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE IN PLATO’S STATESMAN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Notre Dame
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Xavier Márquez

_______________________________
Catherine Zuckert, Director

Department of Political Science
Notre Dame, Indiana
March 2005
THE STRANGER’S KNOWLEDGE:

POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE IN PLATO’S STATESMAN

Abstract

by

Xavier Márquez

This dissertation examines the Platonic view of the nature of political knowledge, its relations to other forms of knowledge, and its alienation from the political community. It is structured as a commentary on two Platonic dialogues: parts of the Sophist and all of the Statesman.

I first contextualize the question of political knowledge in relation to the questions of the nature of philosophy and sophistry with which it is intimately bound in the Sophist. There, philosophy is shown to be different from political knowledge; it is at best a striving for such knowledge. I then carefully dissect the way in which the nature of this knowledge is brought to light in the Statesman. There political knowledge is shown to be a form of human care with a troubled relationship to practice, which is the province of the technai or what we might now call “technology.” Political order thus emerges in the Statesman from the proper regulation of all forms of human know-how.
Yet this achievement is both improbable and highly unstable. The statesman appears as a messianic figure, an accident of both nature and society – a perfect stranger – whose knowledge is impossibly scarce and necessarily suspect. His knowledge and his presence are in tension with the basic need of the city for law: the city needs its independence, but the law is a poor substitute for the statesman.

I conclude by confronting some of the criticisms raised against the Platonic conception of political knowledge by various thinkers, starting with Aristotle. I argue that many of these criticisms are based on a misunderstanding of the relationship of political knowledge to practice, or rather, of the conceptual function of the notion of political knowledge as a critical ideal of practice. I also sketch some ways in which the Eleatic Stranger’s ideas about political knowledge are fleshed out and institutionalized in the *Laws*. 
To Bela and Sophia
# CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................. vii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Basic questions............................................................................................. 1
  1.2 Synopsis of the argument and plan of the work........................................... 8
  1.3 Methodological remarks............................................................................ 12

CHAPTER 2: THE ELEATIC STRANGER AND THE USES OF μήμης ...................... 21
  2.1 The question of the status of philosophy................................................... 24
    2.1.1 The connection of the Sophist and the Statesman to the Theaetetus and the question of philosophy ................................................................. 24
    2.1.2 The questionable status of the Stranger and Socrates as philosophers and statesmen....................................................................................... 27
  2.2 The question of the relationship of sophist, statesman, philosopher .......... 38
    2.2.1 Sophists, statesmen, madmen as distorted images of philosophers............. 38
    2.2.2 Socrates’ question: one, two, or three? ..................................................... 45
    2.2.3 Counting originals and images: appearance and reality of sophist, statesman, philosopher................................................................. 48
  2.3 Sophistry as imitation of wisdom .............................................................. 52
    2.3.1 Mimicry of arts or forms of knowledge............................................... 55
    2.3.2 Opinion-mimetics and its relation to φανταστική................................ 58
    2.3.3 Mimicry and the imitation of the wise................................................. 62
    2.3.4 The philosopher as a possible imitator of the wise: “inquiring” imitation...... 66
    2.3.5 Counting forms of knowledge: The conditions of possibility of sophist and statesman................................................................. 70

CHAPTER 3: THEORY AND PRAXIS ..................................................................... 72
  3.1 The prologue to the statesman and the question of philosophy ................. 74
    3.1.1 External evidence for the distinction between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη............ 78
    3.1.2 Internal evidence for the distinction between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη: the connection of ἐπιστήμη to σοφία.................................................. 80
    3.1.3 The “technical” ἐπιστήμαι ...................................................................... 84
  3.2 Theory and practice.................................................................................... 86
CHAPTER 4: HUMAN BEINGS .............................................................................. 120
4.1 Young Socrates’ confusion about the soul ............................................. 125
4.1.1 Genesis or nurture of the human herd? ........................................... 129
4.1.2 The praxis of statesmanship: individual or common? ...................... 130
4.2 Young Socrates’ mistakes and their significance .................................... 136
4.2.1 Names and things ........................................................................... 136
4.2.2 The choice of ἠγελασιοτροφική: an innocent choice? ..................... 139
4.2.3 The question of φρόνησις ............................................................... 144
4.3 The problematic nature of the tame-wild distinction ............................ 153
4.4 The Stranger’s bullying and the inadequacy of the diairesis of human being ......................................................................................... 159
4.5 Long and short ways ............................................................................ 163
4.5.1 Measuring long and short ways ......................................................... 163
4.5.2 The long way .................................................................................... 167
4.5.3 The short way and the unwinged nature of human beings ............... 173
4.6 A preliminary diagnosis of the mistake in the first genealogy .................. 174

CHAPTER 5: THE MYTH AND THE FORMS OF CARE ........................................... 182
5.1 The need for the myth ........................................................................... 186
5.2 The sources of the myth and their treatment by the Stranger ............... 192
5.3 The alternating motion of the universe. Its philosophical significance .. 196
5.4 The universe under the direction of the god ......................................... 200
5.4.1 The reversal of the direction of generation ....................................... 200
5.4.2 The age of Cronos ........................................................................... 204
5.5 Transition: Evaluating the age of Cronos ........................................... 208
5.5.1 The question of philosophy in the age of Cronos ......................... 208
5.5.2 The applicability of the first genealogy to the age of Cronos .......... 210
5.6 The universe under its own power ......................................................... 216
5.6.1 The effects on the cosmos as a whole of its release by the god ...... 216
5.6.2 The mimetic character of the care of the parts of the cosmos ....... 220
5.6.3 The harshness of nature and the development of the τέχναι ......... 224
5.7 The mimetic character of care ............................................................... 235

CHAPTER 6: CORRECTIONS AND METHODS ..................................................... 237
6.1 The corrections and justifications of the myth and the diairesis ......... 239
6.1.1 The myth as an instrument of measurement .................................... 239
6.1.2 First corrections .............................................................................. 243
6.1.3 The problem with the willing/unwilling correction ....................... 245
6.1.4 Measuring the myth: too much, too little, or just right? ................. 249
6.2 Paradigms ............................................................................................ 251
6.3 Weaving ............................................................................................... 257
6.3.1 The significance of weaving ........................................................... 257
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the patient advice of my Dissertation Director, Professor Catherine Zuckert, whose timely comments and incisive questions helped sharpen my arguments and trim a still too unwieldy manuscript. The members of my committee, professors Walter Nicgorski, Fred Dallmayr, and David O’Connor also helped me think through difficult issues and provided fresh challenges to my naive Platonism. Kevin Cherry, Emma Cohen de Lara, and many other members of the Department of Political Science at Notre Dame also provided valuable comments and criticisms at various points. Finally, my beloved wife Nancy forced me to be clear and helped me survive the writing process and bring the work to completion.

A Presidential Fellowship from the University of Notre Dame and a grant from the Earhart foundation allowed me to put the finishing touches to this work.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Basic questions

This work is primarily a study of Plato’s *Statesman*. Among Plato’s dialogues, the *Statesman* has long suffered from a certain amount of scholarly neglect, as commentators have been put off by its strange methodological quirks, overly elaborate and professorial humor, and the fact that its explicitly political content (the discussion of the rule of law and the virtues) is small relative to the bulk of the dialogue and full of apparently “unplatonic” paradoxes.¹ Until recently at least, discussions of the political theory of late Plato have therefore tended to treat the *Statesman* merely as a kind of halfway house between the mature political philosophy of the *Republic* and the final elaboration of Plato’s political thought in the *Laws*.² And even though lately the study of the dialogue

---


² See, for example, Charles H. Kahn, "The Place of the *Statesman* in Plato's Later Work," in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995) and Trevor J. Saunders, "Plato's Later Political Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Discussion of the *Statesman*'s purely “philosophical” content has not fared much better, as the dialogue has usually been neglected in favor of the *Sophist* (with the possible exception of the passage on measure).
has experienced something of a resurgence (in the last decade, several new translations have been published,\(^3\) along with a new commentary,\(^4\) a collection of essays,\(^5\) and at least one book-length study of selected aspects of the dialogue\(^6\) the *Statesman* nevertheless continues to figure in the scholarly literature for the most part as a transitional dialogue, important not so much for what it says about political knowledge but for what it says about the evolution of Plato’s thought or for the methodological and political contrasts it provides to earlier and later dialogues. It is the basic premise of this study that the *Statesman* is worth reading on its own terms, that is, by taking the basic question it raises as an important question in its own right.

The basic question of the conversation depicted in the *Statesman* is the question of the nature of political science,\(^7\) which in the dialogue is identified, perhaps surprisingly to modern ears, with the knowledge of the statesman. The dialogue attempts to answer this question by means of an elaborate series of contrasts and comparisons to other forms of knowledge, including, implicitly, the knowledge of the philosopher. It thus also raises (but does not answer) the question of the relationship of philosophy to statesmanship, a relationship that has often been treated by scholars as if it were one of

---


\(^4\) That of Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*.


\(^7\) I do not think that the main point of the *Statesman* is therefore to serve as an elaborate methodological exercise, a philosophical “protreptic,” pace Rafael Ferber, "Für eine propädeutische Lektüre des *Politicus*,” in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995).
identity. Finally, in comparing and contrasting the knowledge of the statesman with all the other forms of knowledge in the city, the dialogue also raises the question of the place of statesmanship in the city, and specifically of its place vis à vis the law.

These three questions – the nature of political knowledge or statesmanship, its relationship to philosophy, and its place in the city – are also the key questions of this work. As an interpretation of the Statesman, therefore, this study is primarily concerned with explicating the answers that Plato gives to these questions via the actions and arguments of his characters in that dialogue. In brief, I argue that in the Statesman political knowledge is that supervisory knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble that arranges all the other forms of knowledge in the city for the sake of the care of human beings. This knowledge is human wisdom, which means that it is distinct from philosophy, i.e., from the search for this wisdom: philosophy is “in between” sophistry and statesmanship, as we shall see. However, statesmanship is such that it finds no permanent place in the city: the statesman, if he exists at all (that is, if the knowledge of statesmanship is truly available to human beings, something that is never unambiguously asserted in the Statesman) can only be a founder and shaper of the laws of the city, not its permanent, day-to-day ruler. Political knowledge is a stranger’s knowledge.

Interpretation, however, can hardly be neutral with respect to the truth of what it brings to light; and to that extent this study is also a positive revaluation (more implicit than explicit) of the Platonic conception of political knowledge and its relationship to philosophy and the city. This revaluation addresses itself to two broad positions.

The first concerns Plato’s understanding of knowledge in politics. The dominant view on this point suggests that Plato misunderstands it. This argument (which is
sometimes accompanied by a relatively unfavorable contrast to the Aristotelian view of practical knowledge or φρόνησις) rests on the claim that Plato understands statesmanship to be the imposition of an externally determined, “eternal” order, on unwilling or reluctant matter, on the model of an artisan, leading to what Popper famously called a “closed society.” It is also sometimes (and relatedly) argued that by understanding statesmanship as a science, whose objects are unchanging, measurable, and graspable by means of general rules, Plato decisively misunderstands the realm of praxis, whose objects change and are not susceptible of being grasped by means of number or contextless general rules. Though both of these arguments contain elements of truth, in this work I argue that Plato’s understanding of political knowledge and its limits is a good deal more nuanced and powerful, at least in the Statesman, than these accounts make it seem. In particular, I claim that though statesmanship is rooted in general insight into the good, the noble, and the just, such insight is never articulable in general rules or applicable in a contextless manner, and that the kind of relationship between this knowledge and the world of practice is such that statesmanship can never be the simple application of an externally determined order on a mass of unwilling or reluctant citizens.

---

8 This is a concise way of stating the Arendtian challenge to Plato. See Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); a similar argument also surfaces in Martha Craven Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).


10 This is another argument that can be found in Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, though her work does not treat the Statesman except in a footnote (p. 218, note *), where she recognizes that practical reason in the Statesman does not give priority to contextless general rules.
The second, more general question is the question of what we can still learn from Plato about knowledge in politics. Is there a “science” of politics? What would such a thing look like, if it existed? And what kind of role could it have in actual political life? Here I claim that the Platonic answer to the question of political knowledge is worthy of serious consideration. Though the Statesman does not unambiguously assert anything regarding the actual existence of such a science (i.e., its embodiment in particular individuals, or the processes of education that would lead one to acquire it), it does provide us with a powerful account of the kind of thing it would have to be if it existed. By presenting the Platonic account of this form of knowledge in the best possible light, and addressing at the end of this work some of the objections raised against it by Aristotle and other thinkers, I show that the Platonic account of political science is capable of enhancing our current understanding of modern political science and its place in the political community.

This dissertation also touches, more indirectly, on two scholarly debates concerning the Statesman. The first of these concerns the place of the philosopher in Plato’s late work. Does the philosopher king “disappear” in the “late” dialogues, as some scholars would argue, to be replaced by the authority of the law?11 In this work, I am only indirectly concerned with this question, as my main focus is on the Statesman as such rather than on its relation to the Republic and the Laws; but I take it that knowledge

——

never ceases to be the standard by which proper rule is to be evaluated in Plato. The *Statesman* asserts little about the actual existence of this knowledge: it merely describes the shape it would have if it did exist, as well as the relationship it would have to the city and to other forms of knowledge. In doing so, however, the *Statesman* shows that direct rule by a knowledgeable individual is extremely unlikely except in “emergency” situations. It thus suggests that even though knowledge is the standard by which all forms of rule are to be judged, in actual fact the best one can hope for, at least in times of “normal” politics, is the rule of law. Moreover, the *Statesman* shows that philosopher and statesman are different forms of knowledge. There are thus no philosopher-kings in the *Statesman* because philosophy and kingship are two different, if related, forms of knowledge. These two conclusions imply that at least in the political theory of the *Statesman* the philosopher king does not play a significant role, though, as we shall see, the philosophical attitude (the knowledge that one does not know, combined with the desire for inquiry into these things one does not know) remains the right attitude for any sort of ruler, including kings. We might even say that the *Statesman* contains a vindication of the philosopher king by suggesting that kings should adopt a Socratic attitude towards their own abilities.

The second debate that this study touches on indirectly concerns the question of the similarities and differences between the positions and methods of the Eleatic Stranger as a character in Plato’s work and the positions and methods of other Platonic characters, in particular Socrates and the Athenian Stranger. If the question of the disappearance of the philosopher king in Plato’s work depends on assumptions about the relevance for the
interpreter of “developmental” schemes that one may not share, one may nevertheless raise the dramatic question about the compatibility of apparently distinct methods and positions. Are the philosophical method and the conception of politics advocated by the Eleatic Stranger fully compatible with the philosophical method and conception of politics advocated by Socrates in other dialogues? And if they are not, why does Plato present the Eleatic’s position as different from the Socratic position? With respect to the Statesman’s politics, in particular, the assertion of incompatibility (partial or total) is often expressed by the claim that the Eleatic Stranger has a conception of politics that is limited to the care of the body, whereas the true Socratic (and Platonic) conception of politics is the care of souls. I argue in this work, however, that the conception of political knowledge developed in the Statesman does not support this contention. Political

---


 knowledge in the *Statesman* is the science of the care of human beings as a whole, body and soul, though it is not the care of *individual* souls, unlike the Socratic practice of philosophy. Yet I also argue that the Eleatic conception of political knowledge is in no way *incompatible* with the Socratic conception of philosophical and political practice.

1.2 Synopsis of the argument and plan of the work

The *Statesman* argues that political science is the science of the care of human beings, also known as “wisdom.” “The care of human beings,” I argue, is to be understood as the preservation of the εἴδος or form of human being – the ideal pattern of human being – in a universe that tends to disorder. This care thus does not simply mean the physical *preservation* of human beings in the cosmos, though it *does* include such preservation. It involves rather the enhancement of what Platonic characters call the “divine” part of human beings – that part of human beings that is attuned to the order of the whole.

This care is also not restricted to the preservation of the individual *polis* that an individual statesman happens to rule, though it is necessarily limited in its application by the accidents of fate and the bodily nature of human beings. The statesman’s responsibility is never merely for his own city, but for human beings as such (something that is connected to his “foreignness”), even though his work is only effective, when it is effective at all, in limited political communities (“cities” in Greek thought).

This care requires the use of human knowledge in its manifold forms, or what we may call *technology*. I use this word in a broad sense, encompassing its roots in the Greek
word for art or expertise (τέχνη) and its more modern meaning denoting the products of the application of human knowledge. The point here is that statesman’s knowledge is limited: the Stranger does not do everything required for the care of human beings (such as, e.g., make him healthy or feed him). His expertise is enmeshed in a fragile web of other arts that can also be used for the care of human beings. We may thus characterize political knowledge as the form of knowledge that, in its regulation of “technology,” ensures that all the branches of human knowledge reliably contribute to the care of human beings.

Moreover, this knowledge cannot be fully integrated into this web of arts – the web of technology – that constitutes the city. This is so, I argue, for at least three reasons. Because statesmanship is dependent on the other arts to do its own specific work (whereas the converse is for the most part not true⁴), there is a gap between political theory and practice. While this gap between theory and practice also exists in other arts, since other arts also depend on subordinate expertises to accomplish their own work (as weaving depends on carding and spinning, for example), the gap is greater in the case of statesmanship, for reasons we shall explore below (cf. chapter 4). This gap is the first reason for the foreignness of statesmanship in the city: it is a theoretical art in a world of practical arts.

Moreover, because of its scope and difficulty, the statesman’s knowledge is extremely scarce. The statesman’s knowledge deals with the highest forms of human order in their occurrence in historical time (it must know the appropriate time for action); it must have a synoptic view of the ways in which the arts interact with one another; and

⁴ The exceptions are the arts of rhetoric, generalship, and judging, discussed in chapter 9, sections 17.1.2-17.1.4.
it can only be learned by people of a certain (very scarce) nature. These characteristics of
the statesman’s knowledge mean that it cannot be reproduced in the city as a cobbler
reproduces his own knowledge by taking on apprentices. This is the second reason why
the political knowledge remains foreign to the city: it is a non-reproducible art.

Conversely, the people of the city, who are for the most part unable to gain this
knowledge, harbor justifiable (though sometimes incorrect) suspicions of those who
claim to have this knowledge. These suspicions lead to the rule of law, which the
statesman, who is aware of the scarcity of his own knowledge, must ultimately support as
a second-best alternative to his personal rule. But the rule of law, as we shall see,
excludes the statesman except as founder or re-founder of the polis. This is the final
reason for the foreignness of the statesman’s knowledge: it is necessarily and
unavoidably suspect in the city.

The argument is developed in nine chapters. In chapter 2, I first place the question
of the nature of political knowledge in the context of the questions of the nature of
philosophy and sophistry with which it is intimately bound in the Sophist. I make two
related arguments there regarding the relationships among sophistry, philosophy, and
statesmanship or political knowledge. First, I show that, contrary to a widespread
interpretation of Plato’s thought, philosophy cannot be properly considered to be identical
to political knowledge, and that at any rate the relationships among these activities are
anything but simple. Second, I show that sophistry, understood as the imitation of
wisdom, must also be seen as the imitation of political knowledge, with the result that
statesmanship appears to be wisdom pure and simple. These two arguments together
point to the thesis that philosophy, as the search for wisdom, is not statesmanship, but is
at best a striving for such knowledge as the statesman has. Hence political knowledge and philosophy must be distinct, and the interpreter must be wary of confusing them; philosophy is “in between” the pretend knowledge of the sophist and the real knowledge of the statesman.

I then carefully dissect (chapters 4 to 16) the way in which the nature of this knowledge is brought to light by the Eleatic Stranger in the *Statesman*. The exposition follows the order of the dialogue. Hence chapter 4 discusses the relationship between the statesman’s theoretical knowledge and the world of *praxis*; chapter 4 discusses human beings, i.e., the object of statesmanship; chapter 8 discusses the myth and its lessons for our understanding of statesmanship as a form of care; chapter 10 discusses the methodological interlude after the myth (with an emphasis on the example of weaving) and its implications for the way in which the relationship between statesmanship and all the other arts must be understood; chapter 12 explores the specific relationship between statesmanship and the majority of the arts of care in the city; chapter 14 explains the relationships between the rule of the sophists, the rule of law, and the rule of the statesman in the city; and chapter 16 discusses the way in which the effect of statesmanship is “mediated” by other arts, as well as the specific educational task of the statesman. Throughout, I develop the argument sketched above concerning the nature of statesmanship and the reasons for its foreignness in the city.

In a concluding chapter, I turn to a discussion of some of the most important objections that have been leveled against the Platonic conception of statesmanship (by Aristotle, Arendt, and others) and show that the *Statesman* provides excellent resources for meeting most of them. I argue that the conception of political knowledge in the
Statesman is ultimately intended not as a plausible proposal for actual rulers, but as a critical and conceptual tool for the understanding and evaluation of practice. In the end, the Statesman argues that the most important thing about actual rulers is not their knowledge but their Socratic ignorance. The Statesman is the true vindication of the philosopher king in the light of the unattainable knowledge of the true statesman; but this ideal knowledge is still a useful tool for constructive political critique.

1.3 Methodological remarks

Methodologically, this study proceeds by means of a very close reading of the dialogues. But the study of Plato has always been riven by controversies concerning their proper interpretation. This is not entirely surprising; the Platonic dialogues are open-ended and opaque about the intentions of their author to a degree that few other texts in the history of thought ever are. Major schools of interpreting Plato can trace their roots almost to the beginnings of the Academy, and the passage of time has multiplied, rather than reduced, the number of approaches.


Much of the twentieth century was nevertheless dominated by the so-called “developmentalist” approach, though there were always variations in emphasis and dissenting voices, including the Tübingen school and those interpreters associated with the work of Leo Strauss. Interpreters tended to approach the dialogues as systematic expositions of doctrine, and explained the variations in argument and “doctrine” from one dialogue to another as the result of Plato’s “development.”

Yet in the last decade or two the scholarly consensus over this approach has vanished. Scholars are perhaps more divided than ever over whether the dialogues should be taken to be expositions of Platonic doctrine, whether Platonic characters should be taken to express Plato’s views or how seriously to take the dramatic elements of the dialogues. I will not rehearse here all of these arguments, which have been well explored elsewhere. Like many recent scholars, I believe that the dramatic elements of

treatment of the history of 19th and 20th interpretations of Plato is E. N. Tigerstedt, Interpreting Plato (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell international, 1977); Tigerstedt’s work doubles also as a good primer to the problems of Platonic interpretation.


the Platonic dialogues are of genuine importance for our understanding of the arguments in them, or else Plato would not have written dialogues. I thus refuse to read the arguments in the dialogues as if they were the straightforward expressions of Plato’s beliefs. Methodologically, this means that I prefer such locutions as “the Stranger argues,” or “Socrates says,” rather than “Plato argues” or “Plato says.” Whatever Plato says is filtered through his characters; and it is simply good interpretive practice to avoid attributing to Plato the beliefs that are expressed by them, even when the evidence suggests that Plato would have shared such beliefs, since he chose (for whatever reasons) to distance himself from these beliefs by using the dialogue form.

This is not to say that I deny that Plato “says” anything or has “beliefs.” On the contrary, there is much of immense philosophical value in the dialogues, and this study is predicated on the assumption that much of interest can be learned from him on the question of the nature of political knowledge. But the dialogues are portrayals of philosophy in action, and in particular of philosophers as teachers, not convenient fictions for presenting the pro- and con-sides of arbitrary arguments, or mere window-dressing for the presentation of doctrine. At any rate, the dialogues clearly have multiple purposes, and these need not always (or ever) include the straightforward presentation of doctrine.

Indeed, it seems to me that often the search for Plato’s real doctrines is of little philosophical value;²⁴ to echo Socrates in the Phaedrus, it hardly matters if the arguments depicted in Plato come “from an oak or a rock” (Phaedrus 275b5-c2) if they happen to lead to true conclusions and to foster the development of knowledge (which, we do well

²⁴ A point made by Nails, "Mouthpiece Schmouthpiece," p. 20f., with reference to the “developmentalist” approach. Nails is I think correct in saying that the attempt to figure out the “development” of Plato’s thought is at best of antiquarian interest, if it is even possible.
to remember, is *not* identical with true beliefs or opinions). We do just as well if we merely evaluate the arguments of “Socrates” or “the Eleatic Stranger” than if we make unsupported claims about the arguments of “Plato” (who is at any rate unavoidably responsible for all the arguments he puts into the mouths of his characters, no matter how mutually contradictory). In Plato, in a way, everything is on the surface. There is no secret doctrine. What Plato *means* is what the arguments and actions of his characters entail.

Yet the arguments of the dialogues are not to be evaluated in a vacuum. The dialogues are portrayals of philosophy in action that reflect on philosophy itself. This element of self-reference is, I submit, key to understanding the dialogues, for it makes the relationship between form and argument reciprocal. To take a simple example, if Socrates is an image of a philosopher, then what is said about philosophy in the dialogues must in some way refer (perhaps ironically) to Socrates’ own activity. Methodologically, this means that no immediate preference is to be given to claims about philosophy put into the

---

25 The concern for truth is sometimes lost in the scholarship on Plato, especially when interpreters start from the position that Plato’s dialogues have little to teach. The only interesting question from that point of view concerns Plato’s specific (and more or less equally erroneous) positions on the issues of his time. For an example of this sort of interpretive strategy, see Slobodan Dusanic, "The True Statesman and the Young Tyrant of the Laws: An Historical Comparison," in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995). Cf. also the comments in David Blank, "Comments on Sedley," in *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, ed. Julia Annas and Christopher Rowe (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2002), p. 60. For a bracing corrective to this view, see the excellent paper of Terry Penner, "Platonic Justice and What We Mean by 'Justice'," *Plato: The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society* 5 (2005).


27 Cf. Harvey Yunis, "Writing for Reading: Thucydides, Plato, and the Emergence of the Critical Reader," in *Written Texts and the Rise of Literary Culture in Ancient Greece*, ed. Harvey Yunis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 205–06, as well as the more technical, but excellent treatment of the question of meaning in Penner, "Platonic Justice and What We Mean by 'Justice'," *passim*. 

15
mouths of characters over the activities of the philosophical characters themselves. To put the point more generally, either the drama or the argument of the dialogue may take precedence, and either one may indicate a deficiency in the other.

Furthermore, the movement of every dialogue, including the so-called “late” dialogues, depends to a great extent on the interactions of a main philosophical character with one or more non-philosophical interlocutors. The reactions of these minor characters must therefore be scrutinized for what they reveal about the limits of the arguments presented by the main characters. This methodological principle is based on the assumption that Plato nowhere uses superfluous characters, contrary to a widespread belief among some commentators.

A more delicate question concerns the use of different philosophical spokesmen in different dialogues, such as Socrates or the Eleatic Stranger. Most scholars have generally assumed that what one philosophical spokesman says is more or less compatible with what other philosophical spokesmen in the corpus say, allowing for

28 Though this scrutiny is common for the so-called “Socratic” dialogues, it is less common for the “late” dialogues, where the interlocutors have tended to be regarded as blank slates, mere yes/no machines. I follow instead Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, in considering the reactions of young Socrates and Theaetetus in the Eleatic dialogues to be of great importance to the proper interpretation of the Eleatic dialogues.

29 For a particularly egregious example of this sort of thinking, see A. E. Taylor, *Plato, the Man and his Work* (New York: The Dial Press, 1929). Taylor’s position is still implicitly accepted by the vast majority of commentators on the Eleatic dialogues, though that is perhaps starting to change. See the grudging admission in Michael Frede, "The Literary Form of the *Sophist,*" in *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, ed. Christopher Gill and Mary Margaret McCabe (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) that the literary form of the *Sophist* might be of some interest.

differences in Plato’s views stemming from the development of his thought. Thus, the argument goes, any differences between the views and pedagogical methods of the Eleatic Stranger and Socrates merely indicate a change in Plato’s views, not a dramatic conflict in which Plato’s views remain distinct from those of his characters.

Yet Plato chose to use different philosophical characters for reasons that are not always clear, instead of using a single character with changing views, something he could well have done: the Socrates of the Laches does not strike one (at least on first inspection) as holding the same views as the Socrates of the Republic, and neither of them seems identical to the Socrates of the Philebus. These characters, moreover, have

---

31 This argument is usually buttressed by the evidence of stylometry, which purports to show the order in which Plato composed the dialogues. While I do not dispute that stylometry can in fact separate the dialogues into two (and perhaps three) broad groupings, I do not believe it can do much more than that. See Charles H. Kahn, "On Platonic Chronology," in New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient, ed. Julia Annas and Christopher Rowe (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2002). Kahn rightly notes that stylometry can at best distinguish three dialogue groups; it cannot determine the order of composition within these groups. I believe that he is nevertheless too accepting of the possibility of distinguishing a “middle” group, and presents little evidence for it. Pace the arguments in Kahn, it seems to me that the differences in hiatus avoidance and other criteria often cited for distinguishing a middle group from a third group are statistically insignificant. For a more positive account of the possibilities of stylometry see Leonard Brandwood, "Stylometry and chronology," in The Cambridge companion to Plato, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); a more exhaustive account is found in Holger Thesleff, Studies in Platonic Chronology (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1982). The use of stylometry has come under fire in recent years (see Debra Nails, Agora, academy, and the conduct of philosophy (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic publishers, 1995)), though the basic two-group division (stemming from the pioneering work of Lewis Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, with a Revised Text and English Notes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1867; reprint, 1973, Arno Press, New York)) seems to me to be basically accurate. No more than that can be established, and the significance of even that bit of evidence seems to me to be philosophically neutral; after all, Plato also chose to put the dialogues in specific dramatic relations to one another, which shows that he did not think that they had to be read in the order in which he composed them, as both Cropsey, Plato’s world: Man’s Place in the Cosmos and Zuckert, "The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrates' Political Art," see.

32 The reason for Plato’s use of an Eleatic Stranger rather than Socrates as the main character in both the Sophist and the Statesman has caused particular puzzlement, since the Philebus (where Socrates is the main character) is normally considered to have been written later than these dialogues (though the stylometric evidence does not prove this). From such facts Catherine Osborne, "Socrates in the Platonic Dialogues," Philosophical Investigations 29, no. 1 (2006), has argued that the Socrates of each Platonic dialogue is “taylor made” for each dialogue, and that we should not look for a spurious consistency in his views. I think this view is a bit too extreme, as Socrates does strike me as having a relative consistency of philosophical practice.
distinctive “philosophical personalities:” their backgrounds, styles, pedagogical methods, and interests form a relatively coherent whole, i.e., a character.33

A view of the dialogues as portrayals of philosophy (rather than expositions of specific doctrines) thus has to contend with the fact that these portrayals appear to be multiple: different philosophical spokesmen use different pedagogical methods, are interested in different objects of inquiry, and present different kinds of arguments.34 This multiplicity has led some scholars to conclude that the multiplicity conceals a conflict, in which some portrayals of philosophy – in particular the portrayal of Socrates – are intended to be seen as better than others.35 I grant that these portrayals are indeed multiple, but I do not believe that they are meant to sharply conflict with one another, as I indicated above: their practices seem to me equally reasonable for different contexts and purposes.36 At any rate, as we shall see, many of these differences among philosophical spokesmen can be attributed to the character of the interlocutors they face, the subject-matters they discuss, and the purposes of the conversations they lead, rather than to any fundamental disagreements among themselves. To paraphrase Heidegger, all philosophers in Plato think only one thought; the multiplicity of their approaches and arguments conceals an essential agreement about fundamental matters.

33 This is a key insight of Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues.*


35 This is the argument of Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman,* and Victorino Tejera, *Plato's Dialogues One by One: a Dialogical Interpretation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999). Zuckert, "The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrates' Political Art," takes a different tack: the different portrayals of philosophy complement each other in some ways, though Socrates seems to remain the ideal.

36 I am thus in agreement with the view of Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman,* and to a lesser extent with that of Zuckert, "The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrates' Political Art," who emphasize the differences between Socrates and the Stranger more than the similarities.
This view of the relationship among the different philosophical spokesmen in the *corpus* conditions in turn my attitude to the interpretation of the relationships among dialogues. I take it, as many recent scholars do, that each dialogue has an internal unity that demands that the arguments and claims made within it be read *primarily* in relation to their own fictional context.\(^{37}\) But a) this fictional context necessarily includes (to some contextually indeterminate degree) those dialogues that share the same fictive space as the dialogue being read, regardless of when they were actually written;\(^{38}\) and b) arguments and claims in other dialogues, even those that do not share the same fictive space as the dialogue being read (because they are set at a different date, for example), *can* sometimes be used to illuminate arguments and claims in the dialogue under examination. With respect to b), I do not mean to say that other dialogues may be *indiscriminately* used to support a given thesis concerning the dialogue under examination (as is common practice in some quarters, where random passages from the entire *corpus* are torn out of their original contexts to buttress various theses concerning Plato’s doctrines), but that similar fictive contexts in other dialogues can sometimes illuminate difficult passages in the dialogue under examination. More generally, if an argument happens to lead to true conclusions in one context it does not automatically cease to do so in a different context, especially if it is not explicitly disavowed in the new context. Plato could hardly have thought that his readers would suspend all knowledge of other dialogues of his when thinking about a new one; and powerful arguments in a given dialogue have echoes and resonances in many other dialogues.


\(^{38}\) See note 31. For example, the eight dialogues surrounding the trial of Socrates share the same fictive space. Plato *chose* to set them in that space, overriding any need to determine when they were actually written.
The notion of “echoes” leads me to my last point concerning the interpretation of the dialogues. Below, I occasionally make much of word-echoes in different parts of a dialogue and of literary analogies. I take it that a dialogue solves the problem of cross-referencing before the invention of footnotes, numbered subheadings, and page numbers, by explicit references in the conversation to earlier arguments as well as by such devices as repeating unique words. These latter devices would present cross-references that would be invisible to the characters in the dialogue but visible to its readers, helping the latter interpret the complex arguments woven throughout the whole. On the assumption that Plato was an exceptionally careful writer (something which I believe to be true), I thus pay particular attention to word choice and literary structure for what they reveal about the arguments. With these interpretive remarks in mind, we can now turn to the dialogues themselves.

39 The assumption is not always accepted. Julia Annas’ work, for example, seems to be often premised on the assumption that Plato’s writings are a muddle.
CHAPTER 2

THE ELEATIC STRANGER AND THE USES OF μίμησις

It is a commonplace among commentators and interpreters of Plato that one must understand the Sophist in order to understand the Statesman, though, as with many such lofty sentiments, the maxim is often honored more in the breach than in the observance. It should also be said, though it is in fact said much less often, that in order to understand the Sophist one must understand the Statesman. If the Sophist frames the question of statesmanship, prospectively illuminating the way forward, the Statesman must also shed light retrospectively on the question of sophistry. This is all the more true since a form of sophistry emerges in the Statesman (291a1-303c7) as the only alternative to the rule of the true or genuine statesman, indeed as a form of imitation of the statesman.

A central contention of this work is that the Stranger’s discussion of sophistry as the imitation of the statesman developed in the Statesman helps us understand the discussion of sophistry as the imitation of wisdom in the Sophist and vice-versa.¹ The

¹ This claim may seem somewhat controversial. Most scholars take the relevant passages of the Statesman as more or less “metaphorical” references to sophistry, as if the definition of the sophist in the Sophist had suddenly become of merely academic interest, without power to illuminate the discussion of the false rulers. Even when scholars refer back to the Sophist in their discussion of the “imitative” constitutions (as, e.g., Lidia Palumbo, “Realtà e apparenza nel Sofista e nel Politico,” in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), does), they tend to forget important facts about the conclusions reached there.
oddities of the final definition of the sophist in the *Sophist* – its apparent inapplicability or only partial applicability to actual sophists and its apparent applicability to Socrates\(^2\) – become fully understandable only in light of the understanding of sophistry as the imitation of the statesman in the *Statesman*. Indeed, as I argue, the light that the *Statesman* sheds retrospectively on the *Sophist* illuminates not only the discussion of sophistry as the imitation of wisdom, but also the central theme of the “Eleatic” dialogues, namely, the question of the status of philosophy *vis à vis* sophistry and statesmanship.

In a nutshell, the argument of this chapter is the following. The fundamental question of the “Eleatic” dialogues is the question of the status of philosophy, a question that is raised both dramatically (by the connection of the dialogues to the trial of Socrates) and explicitly (by the elder Socrates at the beginning of both dialogues). Philosophy, a practice of which Socrates and the Eleatic Stranger provide examples, appears as a certain kind of relationship to *wisdom*, somewhere between the mere imitation of it (which is revealed to be sophistry) and the possession of it. But if sophistry is seen to be the imitation of wisdom in the *Sophist*, and it is also seen to be the imitation of statesmanship in the *Statesman*, then statesmanship is wisdom, while philosophy is not. Hence sophist, statesman, and philosopher are indeed three, as the Stranger says (*Sophist* 217b1-2), the philosopher being in-between the other two.\(^3\)

---


\(^3\) This perhaps surprising thesis is I believe consistent with the thesis of the so-called “disappearance” of the philosopher king in Plato’s later dialogues, namely, the idea that the philosopher king is gradually de-emphasized in favor of the rule of law, a position recently defended, in different ways,
This argument is presented through a detailed interpretation of the prologue and the concluding passages of the *Sophist*, in three parts. In the first (section 2.1), I show how the question of the status of philosophy is indeed the fundamental question of the Eleatic dialogues. In the second, (section 2.2), I discuss how this question frames the further questions about both sophistry and statesmanship in terms of the relationship of originals to images, central concepts in both the *Sophist* and the *Statesman*. I also show the implications of the Stranger’s further re-framing of these questions in terms of forms of knowledge. In the third (section 2.3), I examine the final definition of the sophist as the imitator of wisdom, attempting to make clear what it means to say that the sophist imitates the wise man. In this last section I also indicate how the final definition of sophistry at which the Stranger arrives works perfectly well in the context of the *Statesman*, despite its apparent restriction to private exchanges rather than to public governance.

The reader will notice that the three sections of this chapter cover only the beginning and the end of the *Sophist*, and that I do not discuss the middle part of the dialogue, containing the arguments on being and non-being, which is traditionally considered the most important and philosophically significant part of the work. This is because I believe the arguments in the middle part of the *Sophist*, however significant in themselves for the latter history of philosophy, are essentially preparatory for the project of the Eleatic dialogues. They bring to light the conditions for the possibility of false opinion, and thus sophistry, but do not otherwise affect our understanding of

---

in Schofield, "The Disappearance of the Philosopher King," and Samaras, *Plato on Democracy*. In my view this would simply be a consequence of the fact that philosophy is de-coupled from the knowledge of statesmanship and the later is seen as wisdom itself, though I do not necessarily think that philosophy was ever fully identified with statesmanship in the dialogues.
statesmanship, which is our main concern. A detailed interpretation of their content would thus not further the purposes of this work.

2.1 The question of the status of philosophy

2.1.1 The connection of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* to the *Theaetetus* and the question of philosophy

The importance of the question of philosophy for the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* can be gathered from the way in which the conversation is placed in dramatic continuity with the *Theaetetus*. There is only one other case in the Platonic corpus where three dialogues are (apparently) placed in such close connection, namely, the *Republic*

---

4 It should be noted that at the end of the *Theaetetus* Socrates simply says “let us meet tomorrow here again” (*Theaetetus 210dh*). The book from which Eukleides’ slave has read the dialogue (*Theaetetus 143c8*) apparently does not record Theodorus’ answer. In other words, we only learn that Theodorus has accepted Socrates’ invitation once we “step out” of the framing dialogue; the conversation we are about to hear was not vouchsafed to Eukleides by Socrates (*Theaetetus 142c5-143a5*), for unknown reasons. Thus, the difficulty (observed by some commentators) that the prologue of the *Theaetetus* presents for the dramatic connection of that dialogue to the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* is only apparent. Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman*, p. 7, argues, for instance, partially on the grounds of the difficulty that the prologue supposedly presents, for a looser connection between the *Theaetetus* and the other dialogues of the “trilogy;” and Jacob Klein, *Plato’s Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 75, is led by this difficulty, in my view wrongly, to rely on dubious ancient reports of a different prologue to the dialogue and so discards the prologue that has come down to us for the sake of preserving the tight connection between the dialogues. It seems to me that Paul Friedländer, *Platon*, 2nd enlarged and improved ed., 3 vols. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964), p. III.224, has it right when he argues that regardless of when exactly Plato wrote the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*, and whether he thought he would write a sequel to the *Theaetetus* when he wrote it, he chose to place it in obvious connection with the problematic of the *Theaetetus*, and thus with the problematic of knowledge discussed there. The three dialogues are indeed tightly connected, despite their methodological differences (*pace* Annas and Waterfield, *Plato: Statesman*, p. 1, note 1). One should note that without assuming a tight connection between the *Theaetetus* and the two “Eleatic” dialogues the presence of a silent young Socrates in the *Theaetetus* (cf. τούτω *Theaetetus 147d1-2* implying actual presence) makes little sense, since the character could have been absent from the *Theaetetus* without prejudice to the argument and introduced, along with the Stranger, in the *Sophist*. 
Timaeus-Critias sequence. The structural similarities do not end there, since in both sequences a missing fourth dialogue seems to be envisaged in the conversation in the second dialogue of each series, a Philosopher and a Hermocrates respectively, which do not exist. The coincidence is striking; the implication seems to be that the fourth dialogue in each series is left as an exercise for the reader, so to speak. If this is so, however, the incompleteness of this series indicates that what is at stake is the question of the status of philosophy itself, which must be understood from the status of its two chief

5 See here Hayden Ausland, "Who Speaks for Whom in the Timaeus-Critias?," in Who Speaks for Plato?, ed. Gerald A. Press (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), pp. 192-95, as well as Eric Voegelin, Order and History, 5 vols. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987/1956), p. III.142; both discuss, in different ways, the significance of this curious structural similarity between both series. The Epinomis is also dramatically closely connected to the Laws (it presents itself as the continuation of the conversation of the previous day), but so ineptly that I am convinced that it is not Plato’s work; I accept the arguments of Leonardo Taran, Academica: Plato, Philip of Opus, and the pseudo-Platonic Epinomis (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1975), regarding its spuriousness, contra the minority view (asserting the authenticity of the Epinomis) represented by, e.g., Taylor, Plato, the Man and his Work, p. 497-98.

6 The question of the missing dialogues Philosopher and Hermocrates has generated a fair amount of idle speculation. It is, nevertheless, a question that has major importance for the interpretation of Plato. Older mainstream scholars mostly waved it away, often simply asserting that Plato must have planned to write them but for whatever reason did not; typical in this respect is Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, p. iv, who thought that Plato abandoned the project after he realized that it was not possible “in the infancy of science.” Similarly G. E. L. Owen, “The Place of the Timaeus in Plato's Dialogues,” Classical Quarterly, New Series 3, no. 1/2 (1953), p. 81, who, in the course of his polemical argument for dating the Timaeus earlier than the so-called “critical” dialogues, argued that “the Timaeus and its sequel or sequels were designed as the crowning work not of the latest dialogues but of the Republic group. The project was abandoned from dissatisfaction with certain basic theories, and in the first works of the critical group Plato dropped the confident didacticism of the Timaeus to make a fresh start on problems still unsolved.” (Owen does not – and on his own terms, cannot – account for the missing Philosopher in the same way). Later, more drama-aware (or should we say “dramatically aware”?) scholarship has often moved away from these purely “external” explanations and has sometimes sought to find both dialogues (but in particular the Philosopher) somehow “within” their respective series, or, as Voegelin, Order and History, p. III.142, puts it, “as part of the internal meaning of the dialogues;” already Martin Heidegger, Plato's Sophist, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997/1924-25), p. 169 [246 in vol. 19 of the Gesamtausgabe], ridiculed those scholars who persisted in thinking that Plato really intended to write a dialogue called the Philosopher, as if he were “a grade-school teacher ... bent on composing a trilogy” (Heidegger thought the Philosopher was to be found in the Sophist; more usually commentators have suggested that the Philosopher is to be found in both the Sophist and the Statesman, as in fact I argue here). The Critias is a harder case, since it really does look unfinished; nevertheless the arguments of Ausland, "Who Speaks for Whom in the Timaeus-Critias?," pp. 194-98, and Voegelin, Order and History, pp. III.183-84 and chapter III.5 more generally, seem to me to strongly suggest that it was Plato’s intention not to complete it. I accept their arguments, and, more generally, I take it that the incompleteness of both series is deliberate and not to be attributed to “external” factors; the Philosopher, in particular, is to be sought in the dialogues of the trilogy.
alternatives – sophistry and statesmanship – and the evidence of two apparently equally able practitioners (Socrates and the Stranger), who nevertheless behave quite differently in the dialogues of the series (the *Theaetetus* included).

The importance of the question of the status of philosophy for the dialogues is further reinforced by the fictional connection of the dialogues with the upcoming trial of Socrates. It was only at the end of the *Theaetetus* (210d2-4) that we learned that Socrates was about to stand trial. The *Sophist* and the *Statesman* do not overtly remind us of this fact, though in their explicit allusions to the *Theaetetus*, and their thematic allusions to the issues of the trial – in fact, their thematic discussion of the issues of the trial (cf. *Statesman* 299b2ff) – we find Socrates’ practice being quietly evaluated.7

There are at least two ways in which the allusions to the trial of Socrates could matter, however. We could consider the Stranger to be fundamentally friendly to Socrates, a judge who will exonerate him where the Athenian people – and even his friends, like Theaetetus8 and Theodorus9 – did not;10 or we could consider him a rival to

7 Among scholars who pay attention to the drama of the dialogue there tends to be a fair degree of consensus on this question: see, e.g., Cropsey, *Plato's world: Man's Place in the Cosmos*, Friedländer, *Platon*, chapters III.26 and 27, Jacob Howland, *The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosophic Trial* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, Voegelin, *Order and History*, chapter III.4, and others. The point, however, has been denied, even by people who take seriously the dramatic character of the dialogues. See, for example, Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, pp. 386-89, who argues that Plato doesn’t sufficiently indicate dramatically the connection to the trial to make it the central issue. This argument is all the more curious given that her general argument (on “silencing” Socrates) actually lends itself to a trial-focused interpretation. I think the arguments in Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 1-3 and passim, sufficiently show that the trial is an important issue. Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman*, p. 154 note 37, more specifically suggests that the allusion to Socrates’ trial at *Statesman* 299b2-e10 is flawed, though she does not suggest that it is not an allusion to Socrates. For further discussion of this passage, see chapter 14, section 15.3.5.4.

8 Theaetetus seems to think Socrates a sophist at *Sophist* 231a4-5; see also note 44 and associated text.

9 Theodorus at various points seems to suggest that Socrates is not measured enough to be a philosopher; see *Theaetetus* 169a6-b4, *Sophist* 216b7-c1. See also note 25 and associated text. Miller Jr.,
Socrates, someone who will (wholly or in part) convict him for being a bad citizen, a bad philosopher, or both, and thus someone whom we – the readers – will need to correct if we believe the Socratic project to be fundamentally correct. Our view of the “philosophic” trial – and thus of who is a philosopher – will be significantly altered depending on whether we locate the main tension of the dialogue between Socrates and Theodorus (and what he represents) or between Socrates and the Stranger. I stand with those who believe that the Stranger is fundamentally friendly to Socrates and what he represents, though his practice is not identical with Socrates’ own.

2.1.2 The questionable status of the Stranger and Socrates as philosophers and statesmen

Neither the Eleatic Stranger nor Socrates, however, appear to have a wholly secure claim on either philosophy or statesmanship. As we shall see, the Stranger appears to be a philosopher only insofar as he is a stranger to all community; but such radical strangeness undermines any claim he might have to statesmanship. In the presence of Socrates, moreover, even his claim to be a philosopher is quietly questioned, just as he himself implicitly puts Socrates’ claims to philosophy and statesmanship in question.

This “putting in question” of the claims to philosophy and statesmanship of both Socrates

---

*The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, pp. 3-10, develops the theme of the substantive antipathy of Theodorus and his circle to Socrates very carefully, though he emphasizes that this antipathy is masked by a real warmth in personal relations. Theodorus and his circle – the mathematicians Theaetetus and young Socrates in particular – do not really understand Socrates or his project.

10 Essentially the position taken in Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*.

and the Stranger is accomplished in the prologue to the *Sophist* allusively and dramatically rather than argumentatively, underlining the *existential* importance of the question of philosophy and its relation to statesmanship. By carefully examining the web of dramatic detail and Homeric allusion that Plato weaves in the prologue to the *Sophist*, we shall see how complex the relationship between philosophy and statesmanship actually is, and how much each of these appears as the possession of “strangers.”

Let us start with the Eleatic Stranger. The “Elea” whence the Stranger comes is a philosophical, not a political community; as Theodorus puts it, the Stranger was a companion (ἐταῖρον) of those around Parmenides and Zeno. The political Elea appears to be of no interest to him: he would perhaps be as much of a political stranger in Elea as he is in Athens. Moreover, his status as ἐταῖρον of Parmenides does not indicate his belonging to any but the loosest sort of community, even a philosophical one. As in the *Theaetetus* Theodorus, despite being a companion (ἐταῖρον) of Protagoras (*Theaetetus* 168c3), was not a very good defender of the latter’s doctrines, so the Stranger, the companion of those around Parmenides and Zeno, will not always refrain from apparently attacking Parmenides’ doctrines (*Sophist* 241c7ff). His loyalties, in other words, are rather to what he takes to be the truth rather than to any particular community: *amicus Parmenides magis amicus veritas*.

This detachment from all community, which is the hallmark of the Stranger’s philosophical activity, also affects his attitude towards politics. Since, as a ξένος in Athens, he is “a man lacking political responsibility,”12 dependent on the goodwill of his hosts, like all ξένοι, he shows little interest in political reform, and presents himself as a

“spectator” of political life. He is not, and does not present himself, as a statesman, much less as a reformer of Athenian politics and moral life, unlike Socrates; and unlike the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*, moreover, he is not asked by the assembled company to put any knowledge he might have about politics to use. Indeed, whatever knowledge he has about sophistry or statesmanship is first and foremost knowledge *about* them (knowledge-that), not necessarily *of* them (know-how), just as his knowledge of angling is not (or not necessarily) knowledge of how to fish. We might even say that it is the knowledge of a man who is equally a stranger to both sophistry and statesmanship, a philosopher in the “purest” sense – like the man Socrates described, somewhat ironically, in the “digression” of the *Theaetetus* (*173c7ff*). Such a man, we were given to understand then, was not exactly a proper philosopher, or rather was a philosopher who did not properly understand politics; though whether the Stranger does understand politics is something we cannot prejudge at this point.

If the Stranger appears to be a “pure” philosopher, he nevertheless does not appear to be secure in his position *vis à vis* Socrates, to whom he shows great deference (*217d8-e3*). On hearing Socrates’ veiled request that he proceed by means of short exchanges in his investigation, he says that he would be ashamed (more literally, αἰδόως,

---


shame/reverence grips him) to put on an exhibition (ἐπιθετικῶς; like a sophist), either by himself or with another; due to this shame, he will instead proceed by means of short exchanges. The Stranger’s αἰδων thus seems to mirror Socrates’ own remembered αἰδων at encountering Parmenides as a young man, an encounter that Socrates has just recalled (217c5-7): Socrates is – to the Stranger – a figure inspiring reverence and 

---

15 An evocative word: an ἐπιθετικῶς is what sophists often do, at least in Socrates’ view. Cf. Protagoras 320e3. The Stranger does not wish to appear like a sophist to Socrates.

16 The Stranger is thus ashamed of merely acceding to Socrates’ request only to put on an exhibition by using his interlocutor. This is usually ignored by commentators who find the dialogue “dogmatic” or “non-dramatic”; the Stranger is explicitly warning us that young Theaetetus and young Socrates will not be treated as merely passive respondents in an exhibition that is altogether unrelated to them (though he does want them to be painless and easily guided, 217d1). If he accedes to Socrates’ request, he will not use them merely as convenient yes- or nay-sayers for his exposition of doctrines, contra Frede, “The Literary Form of the Sophist,” pp. 138-39, though the view is extremely common. At least Frede makes the effort to ask why, then, Plato actually wrote a dialogue, being able to write a treatise. Though his answer to this question is not entirely wrong, it is far from complete and at some points misleading. One should also note here that though the Stranger, in his earlier conversation with Theodorus and the boys (Sophist 217b5-9; this happens “off camera,” so to speak, before the meeting with Socrates) is reported by Theodorus to “remember well” what he heard about sophist, statesman, and philosopher from the Eleatics, this need not imply that he is about to merely recite it mechanically, pace Zuckert, “Who’s a Philosopher? Who’s a Sophist? The Stranger v. Socrates,” p. 70; this would be, after all, an ἐπιθετικῶς, an exhibition. Remembrance, at any rate, will play an important role later on; it designates the human relation to the divine in the myth. The Stranger’s good remembrance has to be proven in his treatment of Theaetetus and young Socrates.

17 Cf. Theaetetus 183ec; there, Socrates, quoting Homer, says that Parmenides appeared αἰδοίος to him.

18 It should be noted that in the Parmenides Socrates does not evince, at first, any sort of αἰδων upon meeting Parmenides. He shows himself ready to refute Zeno and not at all ashamed of taking on Parmenides. His awe there can only come after he has been refuted – or at least rendered uncharacteristically at a loss – by Parmenides. This is in contrast to the Stranger, who must have heard of Socrates’ fearsome powers of refutation before meeting him; otherwise his αἰδων could only be explained as the conventional shame of a younger man upon meeting an older man (a possibility, since Theodorus describes him as merely a companion of those around Parmenides and Zeno, not as a companion of Parmenides himself” the Stranger may never have met Parmenides, if we take Theodorus literally).
do so before Socrates. His very presence is thus a challenge to Socrates. And yet he
seems ashamed of his possible challenge: if he is there to pass judgment on Socrates’
philosophical practice, the presence of a silent Socrates observing him also constitutes a
test of the Stranger’s own philosophical activity.

In fact, the Stranger does not appear to Socrates to be a philosopher, at least on
first impression. Socrates suggests to Theodorus that perhaps Theodorus has unawares
brought to their meeting not a Stranger, but some god, according to the λόγος of
Homer. This λόγος of Homer, as Socrates explains it, says that various gods, but in
particular the god of strangers (τῶν ξένων, 216b2; in Homer identified with Zeus) looks
down on the ἄβρισ and the ἐυνομία of human beings, as a journey-companion of those
who share in just αἰθήμον. And so, Socrates continues, perhaps this Stranger is one of the
more powerful beings (i.e., the gods), come to observe and refute those of us who are
vulgar in the practice of λόγοι, a kind of “refuting god.”

Socrates here plays the Cyclops to the Stranger’s Zeus/Odysseus, who gives his
name as οὐτίς, no one; and the Stranger is neither asked for nor offers us his name. In

19 In fact two λόγοι: Odyssey 9.269-271, where Odysseus is reproaching the Cyclops there for his
treatment of strangers, as well as Odyssey 17.485-7, where an anonymous suitor addresses Antinous,
another of the suitors, who has just struck Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, in anger; this anonymous suitor
reminds Antinous [“contrary to νοσώματος”] to treat Strangers well. The first quotation, however, is more
appropriate to this particular passage; the second will come into play after Theodorus’ response, and will be
discussed later in this section.

20 Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note to 216b1, notes how this is a compliment
to Theodorus who, “in reward for his modest and candid temper ... may unawares be entertaining a superior
being.”

21 φαύλους. Note the ironical use of the word φαύλος by Socrates to refer to himself. Cf.

22 Howland, The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates’ Philosophic Trial, develops the
Odyssean themes of the dialogues of the trilogy in much greater detail, though somewhat differently from
the λόγος of Homer Odysseus’ cunning triumphs over the Cyclops’ brutality; and, as we learn from the Athenian Stranger, the civilization of Odysseus eventually displaces the barbarity/simplicity of the Cyclops (*Laws* 680b-681e). Socrates evidently fears that the Stranger has come to displace him; his own status as a philosopher is being put in question, and he is aware of this.23

In particular, Socrates seems to fear being unmasked as a sophist,24 which, as we shall see, appears to be a φάντασμα or distorted image (cf. 235e5ff) of the wise man. Such an unmasking would have to take the form of a “sufficient” (cf. 236b6) examination of the “image” Socrates “projects” (to use a non-Platonic term) as well as of the “original” he is said to be like (presumably, a wise man), an examination that would show that he is not in fact like that which he is said to be like (Sophist 236b7). But the examination could also work in Socrates’ favor: for it could also show that he is not like a sophist, which he is also said to be like. We shall see that such an examination actually leads to the (mis)-identification of Socratic practice with a certain form of sophistry, a misidentification that turns out to be true in a special sense later on, for the philosopher

---

23 Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues*, chapter 6, makes this argument on more theoretical grounds: Plato introduces the Eleatic Stranger to “put Socrates in his place,” so to speak. Noburu Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 60-64, comes close to making this argument (“[t]he visitor from Elea, who is free from any historical image (except for his origin and his relationship with the Eleatic thinkers), leads the dialogue in a more constructive manner. Here, although Socrates is present and observing the dialogue, the model philosopher is no longer Socrates. On the contrary, we have good reason to suspect that the Sophist casts serious doubt on the figure of Socrates as a philosopher,” p. 63) but seems to draw back from somewhat from it as a general argument on the evidence of the supposed lateness of the *Philebus*, where Socrates is the leading philosophical character (cf. note 66, p. 63).

24 See Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. II.70.
emerges as the proper model for lawful rule, even though he lacks the knowledge of the statesman (see chapter 9, section 9.2.1, especially pp. 421ff).

Theodorus reassures Socrates: this is not the way of the Stranger; he is more measured than those who take disputation too seriously. There is a more than a hint that Theodorus includes Socrates among the latter (cf. *Theaetetus* 169a6-b4).25 He proceeds to make a distinction between a god (which no man can be), and philosophers, who can be called divine. Socrates seems satisfied with Theodorus’ reply. After all, he himself had argued in the *Republic* (381d1-5), with reference to the very passage of Homer he will use immediately afterwards, that the gods do not take human form,26 and he had seemed to hint in the digression the previous day (*Theaetetus* 176b1f) that philosophers are images of the god or at least try to make themselves into such images. He nevertheless warns Theodorus that this γένος, this race, this class, this family, namely that of

25 “More measured” translates μετριώτερος, a μέτρον - word which brings up the question of measure that the Stranger discusses in the *Statesman* (283b1ff). The Stranger, according to Theodorus, seems to be more in accordance with measure as he understands it than Socrates. See also Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. I.186, note 38 and II.70: “Theodorus, ... [w]ith his usual rudeness, tacitly agrees that Socrates is poor in speeches ... The Stranger is not another Socrates, whose “love of naked exercise in speeches” lets no one get away from him without first rendering an account of himself.” It is unclear whether Theodorus means that a philosopher should not engage in serious eristics, i.e., that all proper eristics must be playful, or that no sort of eristics, playful or serious, is proper for a philosopher. At any rate, Theodorus is a mathematician, and that means he can hardly possess the art of measure that would allow him to properly judge of whether or not the Stranger is indeed more measured than Socrates in speeches, since his art of measure is mathematical, and thus relative to greater and less, not to the too much or too little; see *Statesman* 283b1ff. In turn that means that he is hardly the person to judge whether the Stranger’s concerns are in accordance with due measure. And yet again, Theodorus might be right for the wrong reasons. See also here Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 11-12; I think Miller minimizes the actual antagonism between Theodorus and Socrates, and perhaps does not pay enough attention to the possibility that Theodorus’ judgment with respect to the Stranger might be wrong. Most commentators simply follow Campbell, *The Sophistes and Political of Plato*, note to 216a5, in thinking that all that is at stake here is that Socrates expresses an “ironical fear” of having the “Zenonian negative dialectic to bear on his own (i.e. Plato’s) mode of reasoning.” See also Auguste Diès, *Le Sophiste*, vol. VIII, *Platon Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Société d’édition “Les Belles Lettres”, 1925; reprint, 1985), pp. 268 and 296.

26 This irony is noted by Friedländer, *Platon*, p. III.227, though he ultimately draws a different conclusion, relating it to Socrates’ accusation and upcoming trial: “Nicht nur in ihrer Unsinnigkeit wird die Anklageschrift getroffen, sondern vor dem Blick des höchsten Gottes weiß Sokrates sich und seine Ankläger stehend.”

33
philosophers, is no easier to discern than that of the gods. Presumably, as we shall see, it is even harder to determine if a given individual belongs to the γένος of philosophers. Certainly Socrates does not belong to the γένος of Elea; does he belong to the γένος of philosophers? Does the Stranger? Socrates has thus implicitly questioned Theodorus’ judgment on whether or not the Stranger is a philosopher; but he has not (yet) suggested that he is a philosopher instead.

Socrates continues, quoting Homer again (216c4-217a2); the quotation is from Odyssey 17.485-7, where an anonymous suitor (“one of the crowd of young bucks,” Fitzgerald translation) addresses Antinous, another of the suitors, who has just struck Odysseus in anger, with a reminder to treat strangers well, for they might be gods dressed as beggars, who come to punish human beings for their ἁμαρτίας. Such human beings (philosophers) appear (φαντάζομαι) in fantastic, distorted ways due to the ignorance of the others (those who are not philosophers), and they visit cities (just as the Stranger is doing, we might add, and Socrates never does).

Socrates again plays with the allusions to Homer. This time Socrates ironically plays a suitor (an illegitimate pretender to kingship) addressing Antinous, who is the illegitimate pretender to kingship (his rule, we might surmise, would be “contrary to νομός”). This suitor is described simply in Homer as one of the “overweening youths.”

---

27 A word connected to φάντασμα and φανταστική (cf. Sophist 235e9ff).

28 This is not merely the ignorance of “the Athenians” who are confused about the issue, in contrast to the people from Elea, pace Notomi, The Unity of Plato’s Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, p. 22 note 73, and Frede, "The Literary Form of the Sophist," p. 147. Socrates’ comment hides an irony; for it is clear that among “the others” Theodorus should be included, given that not only is he a non-philosopher (as he himself admitted, Theaetetus 165a2), but he is also mistaken about the proper worth of the philosopher (cf. Statesman 257a1-b8), the first mistake that Socrates goes on to mention as made by the others.”
who are gathered in Odysseus’ house. Socrates, of course, is hardly young himself; as φαῦλος, however, he seems to have cast his lot with the “crowd” of young human beings who will now listen to the Stranger. In Socrates’ play-acting the philosopher (who may or may not be the Stranger, as Socrates is now talking in more general terms) is cast as Odysseus, the legitimate king who indirectly threatens the suitors with the possibility that he just might be a god and hence restrains their actions so long as they retain any νοῦς (i.e., so long as they are not Antinous, who is unimpressed with the appeal).  

The philosopher, according to Socrates’ playful allusiveness, seems to be the king, while Socrates merely pretends to kingship. Or perhaps it is the other way around: Socrates who, like Odysseus, is dressed poorly enough that one might describe him as dressed like a beggar, goes unrecognized among his countrymen, and now reminds Theodorus, by impersonating – mimicking – the address of an anonymous suitor to Antinous (Theodorus?), to treat strangers well (after all, Theodorus has just been quite rude to him in hinting that Socrates is not a philosopher) or face punishment from the god, is the legitimate philosopher and king, whereas the Stranger (perhaps) is merely a pretender.

Here pretender and legitimate king thus blur within both the figure of the Stranger and that of Socrates; both are simultaneously the disguised Odysseus and mere pretenders, depending on one’s point of view. Socrates is similar to Odysseus in the passage he cites in being dressed like a beggar (he presents himself as φαῦλος, vulgar); the Stranger in being concealed as a stranger. Like Theaetetus and young Socrates, who

29 For a somewhat different interpretation of this allusion (which I believe is nevertheless compatible with my own interpretation except in points of detail) see Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher*, pp. 69-70. Notomi emphasizes the similarity of gods and philosophers more than I would.
resemble the elder Socrates in two different respects (the first in physical appearance, the
second in having the same name; see Statesman 257d2-258a2), Socrates and the Stranger
seem to resemble the true king – Odysseus – in two external respects: the first in his
physical appearance, the second in his anonymity. And just as the elder Socrates is
conducting a test of the youths regarding their kinship with himself (i.e., with
philosophy), so the readers are invited to test the Stranger and Socrates for kinship with
kingship.30 in Homer, Odysseus has to be tested before being recognized by Penelope as
the rightful king. But just as neither Theaetetus nor young Socrates are identical to the
elder Socrates as philosophers – they are on the way to philosophy, but are not yet
philosophers – so neither the elder Socrates nor the Stranger turn out to be true kings. The
philosopher is merely on the way to statesmanship, but is not yet the king, as we shall see
in this study.

Nevertheless, the ambiguous possibility of the philosopher being the king is in the
type of Socrates’ allusion: in both cases the philosopher seems to be like the legitimate
king in some respect, and yet unlike in some other respect. But we cannot tell who is the
philosopher, at least not yet, and we may never be able to tell who is the legitimate king.
We should remember that in the λόγος of Homer the legitimate king will ultimately have
to be assisted by a goddess,31 and will have to use violence, indeed brutality, to claim the

30 Cf. Statesman 258a2-6. For the recognition motif see Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's
Statesman, pp. 5-8 and his reflections in the epilogue. Miller does not push the matter as far as I do; he does
not seem to think that we are invited to test Socrates and the Stranger for their kinship with the statesman,
but seems to assume simply that Socrates is the statesman.

31 To be sure, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, is the one who helps Odysseus reclaim his throne;
so one could say that her assistance is the assistance of wisdom. But philosophers are never said to be
simply wise, either by the Stranger or by Socrates.
throne from the pretenders. Thus Socrates introduces the theme of the two Eleatic dialogues (Sophist and Statesman) as the relation of philosophers to politics.\footnote{32 The theme was already present near the beginning of the Theaetetus (145e8-146a5) though in a slightly different form: there, Socrates playfully suggested that whoever could give an account of knowledge would be king (he did not, however, say that whoever had knowledge would be king). It is worth noting that Socrates and Theaetetus failed at producing a satisfactory account of knowledge then; they could hardly, therefore, be considered fit candidates for kingship. Perhaps this is why Socrates seems to identify with the anonymous suitor who addresses Antinous; he does not think himself fit for kingship.}

Yet the theme of the dialogues also concerns the relation of appearance to reality, as Socrates goes on to make clear, somewhat ironically: he is not talking about those philosophers who are πλαστῶς, artificial, molded (from πλάττειν) – perhaps, we might venture, merely images of philosophers – but about those philosophers who are truly in being.\footnote{33 There is some (Platonic) irony here; for the one philosopher who appears to have been molded (πλάττειν) by Plato is Socrates himself, his greatest ἐργον (cf. Sophist 235e5-6). Socrates is πλαστῶς, “made by Plato,” “artificial.” See also further Socrates’ similar disclaimer at the beginning of the portrayal of the philosopher of the digression (Theaetetus 173c7-9), which also excluded himself (also note 14).} These philosophers look over from above the life of those below; they are not altogether unConcerned with human beings, but they don’t seem altogether concerned either.\footnote{34 The imagery that Socrates uses recalls the Socrates of Aristophanes’ Clouds, suspended from above and looking towards the people below, but not essentially concerned with them. On the other hand, note that Socrates, in suggesting that the Stranger may be like the god of strangers, implicitly grants the Stranger a “political” mission (observing – and perhaps punishing and rewarding? – the ὑβρίς and εὐνομία of human beings) that in turn the Stranger implicitly seems to disclaim; the philosopher of the digression, much like the Stranger, finds little interest in looking over the life of human beings below (as Socrates puts it a little later, Sophist 216c6-7); he hardly cares in which regime he lives (cf. Statesman 302b5-9) and much prefers to look upwards (cf. Statesman 285d5ff). In this connection Heidegger’s interpretation of these Socratic comments is noteworthy (though it is certainly different from mine): he notes that Socrates says that the task of the philosopher is to see the βίοι of human beings, not their ζωή. A βίος, in turn, is characterized as the leading of a life that has a τέλος, which is the object of a praxis. “The theme of philosophy is the βίος of man and possibly the various kinds of βίοι. “They look down from above.” That implies that the philosopher himself, in order to be able to carry out such a possibility in earnest, must have attained a mode of existence guaranteeing him the possibility of such a look and thereby making accessible to him life and existence in general.” Heidegger goes on to say that the activity of the philosopher, thus conceived, is intimately related to the polis; he fails to realize that this could hardly apply to the Stranger, at least not in any simple way. See Heidegger, Plato’s Sophist, p. 168-69 [244-45 in vol. 19 of the Gesamtausgabe].} Surely Socrates, who is not lofty but rather low, can hardly be said to look down on the life of those below, as if it were the life of a different species; but
perhaps the Stranger fits the description. Whatever the case, it is clear that the practices of both Socrates and the Stranger are liable to the charge of artificiality: both are merely written images of the original we are enjoined to seek.

2.2 The question of the relationship of sophist, statesman, philosopher

The question of the relationship among sophist, statesman, and philosopher now moves to center stage in the prologue of the *Sophist* as the form in which the question of the relationship between theory and practice has emerged. In the following three sections, we shall see how the way in which this question is raised, and the possible ways in which it might be answered, suggest that the philosopher and the statesman are *different* forms of knowledge.

2.2.1 Sophists, statesmen, madmen as distorted images of philosophers

Socrates says that these non-artificial philosophers appear to some to be worthy of no honor, to others to be worthy of every honor; sometimes they appear in a distorted way (φαντάζονται) as statesmen, sometimes as sophists, and to some people they are such as to give the impression that they are totally crazy. This is a complex suggestion, and it will be fruitful to spend some time disentangling it.

Socrates’ use of the words φανταζόμενοι and φαντάζονται anticipates, in a non-technical way, the Stranger’s later discussion of images (*Sophist* 235b8ff). There, the Stranger asserts that φάντασματα are images that can correct for a certain kind of
perspectival distortion, in particular the kind of distortion that can make big and beautiful things look ugly (Sophist 235e5-236a1). Furthermore, φάντασματα look like something but are not actually congruent with what they look like (Sophist 236b4-7).

What this means in relation to Socrates’ suggestion can be interpreted in two related ways.

First, and most obviously, Socrates suggests that philosophers appear as what they are not: the philosopher is not truly congruent, i.e. does not truly have a common measure, with the sophist, though in some circumstances he looks like the sophist. Similarly, however, for the statesman: this suggests that philosophers may look like statesmen, but are not truly congruent, i.e. do not truly have a common measure with them. The case of madmen is a bit more complicated, for here Socrates varies his form of expression: he does not say that the philosopher appears as a φάντασμα in the guise of a madman, but rather “gives the impression” to some (δῶξαν παράσχοιντ’, 216d2) of being totally mad. But the basic point would seem to be the same: the philosopher is not a madman, but merely gives the impression of being one.

Yet there is a curious ambiguity in Socrates’ suggestion that is evident if we say, for instance, the sophist is the φάντασμα of the philosopher, or the statesman is the φάντασμα of the philosopher. For here the image-original relation is reversed; it is no longer a matter of the philosopher imaging, however involuntarily, independent originals (sophists, statesmen, and madmen). Now the philosopher appears as the non-appearing original that is imaged by these three (sophists, statesmen, and madmen).35 Here we have the seeds of the question that Socrates will ask in a moment: are sophist, statesman, and

philosopher three independent originals, so to speak, that the others can on occasion appear as (like a wolf may appear as a dog, or a dog as a wolf, 231a6), or is one or more of them entirely dependent on one or another of the others, like a shadow of a tree is dependent on the tree?

Either way, Socrates seems to suggest that all of these images of the philosopher (the one worthy of no honor, the one worthy of all honor, the statesman, the sophist, and the madman) are, in important ways,36 distorted; they are misleading appearances all, adapted to a specific point of view, the statesman no less than the sophist. They seem to have the συμμετρία (235d7-8, 236a5), the common measure of the philosopher, but in fact do not have it. This is not to say that they are all equally distorted; though I cannot support this here in any detail, a φάντασμα can be beauty-preserving if it is guided by proper measure in its departures from the original. If this is so we might think that Socrates is suggesting, in the Stranger’s terminology (which of course Socrates has not heard yet) that the sophist is an unsuccessful φάντασμα (failing in respect of the preservation of the beauty of the philosopher, and is thus a distortion guided by other, presumably baser, purposes), the statesman a successful one (preserving the beauty of the philosopher, and hence his/her political and pedagogical effectiveness37), and the madman an εἰκόν of the philosopher.38

36 Note that this would imply that the philosopher is neither worthy of all honor nor worthy of no honor, and different from the statesman as well as the sophist.

37 See Stanley Rosen, Plato's Sophist: the Drama of Original and Image (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 172. One could perhaps think of this differently and suggest that the sophist preserves the beauty of the philosopher for the point of view of untutored humanity, the statesman for the point of view of educated humanity.

38 The suggestion gains force from the way in which Socrates’ presentation of the appearances of the philosopher parallels his enumeration of the three γένη to be investigated in the conversation that
Socrates’ use of this deponent verb, φαντάζομαι, which like all deponent verbs expresses neither activity nor passivity clearly, leaves it unclear whether the philosopher can craft his own image at will (i.e., whether he has the image-making art allowing him to do so) or whether it is an inevitable fact that the philosopher will appear to others in a distorted way. Even if the philosopher bears some responsibility for crafting his own image, it is significant that Socrates does not say that the philosopher can ever appear as a philosopher; he appears as statesman, sophist and madman. From the Phaedrus we know that for Socrates ἔρως, and in particular philosophical ἔρως, can appear as a form of divine madness (Phaedrus 253c-257b), and from the Symposium we know that Socrates claims that the his only art is the art of ἔρως (Symposium 177d8); but this is still a far cry from saying that the philosopher, insofar as he appears as a madman, appears as what he is, namely a philosopher.

If it is the case, however, as I have suggested, that the madman is in a sense the undistorted appearance of the philosopher in our everyday world, this could be because the philosopher’s concerns may inevitably seem to most of us to be those of a madman. The madman is someone whose concerns appear to lack measure in our normal world of purposes: too much concern for X (e.g., justice or the god), too little for Y (e.g., money), just like the large painting that is the εἰκών of some large figure would appear to be too

follows (“sophist, statesman, philosopher” at 217a4 paralleling “statesmen ... sophists ... madmen” at 216d1-2, indicating that both statesman and sophists are indifferently φαντασματα [hence interchangeable in the enumeration] of the philosopher, but madmen are εἰκόνες of philosophers) and by the language that Socrates uses when saying that philosophers sometimes give to some the impression (δόξαν παράσχουντες, 216d2) of being totally mad, varying his expression from φαντάζονται at 216d1.

39 Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note to 216d1, also quotes appositely Symposium 218b3-4: Alcibiades speaks there of the madness and frenzy of philosophy.
small in some places and too large in others (Sophist 235e5-236a2\textsuperscript{40}). A madman, in other words, is someone who is not serious about the matters one should be serious about in our normal “political” opinion, someone who speaks nonsense. Thus the philosopher does not appear to be able to fashion his own image as a philosopher; the best that he can hope is to appear as a statesman, but it is unclear whether the philosopher can actually create even this image of himself, let alone have the knowledge of statesmanship.

It seems thus that the philosopher’s effective choices (if they are indeed choices) are two: appearing as a sophist (and running the risks that sophists run in cities) or as a statesman (and thus perhaps ruling in the city?). This in turn seems to be the meaning of the first two ways in which the philosopher appears in Socrates’ view: he seems either worthy of no honor (i.e., he appears indistinguishable either from a [poor?] sophist or from a madman) or worthy of all honor (i.e., he appears as a statesman).\textsuperscript{41} His worth is uncertain to non-philosophers due to his inability to appear properly as a philosopher, though Socrates appears to imply that the proper measure of his worth is in-between none

\textsuperscript{40} See also in this connection Socrates’ story about Thales, Theaetetus 174a4-b7.

\textsuperscript{41} Interestingly, Socrates does not appear to consider the possibility that a philosopher might appear to be worthy of some honor (neither all nor none), as indeed historical sophists might have appeared to his contemporaries. One should also note here another possible interpretation of Socrates’ remark: the philosopher, as philosopher, appears to some as worthy of no honor, to others as worthy of all honor, in each case as sophist, statesman, or madman. Indeed, since the Stranger appears as a philosopher to Theodorus this might seem to be a possibility (and to Theodorus, who thinks the Stranger “divine,” the Stranger might indeed appear to be worthy of all honor). The point would nevertheless be that the worth of the philosopher is indeed uncertain, distorted by his appearance, even for those who identify a given philosopher (correctly) as a philosopher; the proper or due measure of his worth is not available to them as non-philosophers. Their further attribution of honor to the philosopher, therefore, confounds the philosopher with either the sophist or the madman or the statesman, i.e., grants the philosopher the kind of honor due to the sophist or madman or statesman.
and all honor, i.e., in between the worth that should be accorded to the sophist and the worth that should be accorded to the statesman.  

Socrates’ suggestion as to the manifold appearances of the philosopher finds some purchase in the dramas of the corpus. He appears as a sophist to the Athenian people, presumably involuntarily, and similarly to Theaetetus, though the latter is perhaps unaware of the implications of his assent to the image of the “cathartic” sophist (Sophist 231a2-5); it is unclear whether Socrates appears as a sophist to the Stranger (Sophist 231a6-b8).  

He seems to appear as a statesman, however, only to himself, and even there he is not entirely certain of this (Gorgias 521d6-8).  

42 It is worth noting that the question of the proper honor due to sophist, statesman and philosopher re-emerges at the beginning of the Statesman (257a1-b8), but no further light is thrown on it. Socrates certainly implies there that sophist, philosopher, and statesman are not all of equal worth, but it is not clear from Socrates’ remarks there that the philosopher must have the highest honor over the statesman.

43 Or at the very least to Aristophanes in the Clouds. One could also interpret thus the charges against Socrates in his trial.

44 A variety of reactions are found among commentators who notice this. The usual reaction is to deny that the image of the “cathartic” sophist really applies to Socrates at all (applying, instead, to some imitators of Socratic practice; see, e.g., Richard Stanley Bluck, Plato's 'Sophist': A Commentary, ed. Gordon C. Neal (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), pp. 40-46, Diès, Le Sophiste, p. 272, G. B. Kerferd, "Plato's Noble Art of Sophistry," Classical Quarterly, New Series 4, no. 1/2 (1954); more ambiguously and more aware of the dramatic implications, Friedländer, Platon, p. III.237), or that Plato himself is in doubt; see Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, p. li for an example. Others deny that the Stranger “disvalues” this sort of sophistry (sometimes while denying that this sophistry applies to Socrates, as Kerferd, "Plato's Noble Art of Sophistry," pp. 85-97); the best argument for this view I know of is that of Kenneth Dorter, Form and good in Plato's Elatic Dialogues: the Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 131-34, though already in the 1920s, Heidegger, Plato's Sophist, p. 263, insisted that this was a definition of philosophy as “legitimate” sophistry and in the 1930s Francis Macdonald Cornford, Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1935), also argued that this division did not define any sort of sophistry. Among those who see here a kind of indictment of Socrates we find Howland, The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosophic Trial, pp. 203-06, Notomi, The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, section 2.3, pp. 64-68 (with some interesting caveats and nuances), and, in a more ambiguous way, Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. II.99. Francis Wolff, "Le chasseur chassé. Les définitions du sophiste," in Etudes sur le Sophiste de Platon, ed. Pierre Aubenque and Michel Narcy (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1991), esp. p. 51, has a fairly nuanced position in which the question of whether Socrates is associated with sophistry here is ultimately secondary. Though he accepts that Socrates is identified with a kind of sophist, sophistry is shown to be necessary and universal.

45 But see Roslyn Weiss, "Statesman as ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΟΝ: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt...
some as a madman (cf. Gorgias 481b6-c4, 489b7f, Republic 336b8f, and above, p. 41, the discussion of what a madman is).

As the Stranger only appears in two dialogues, unlike Socrates, we cannot fully judge the way he appears within that fictional world, though he has certainly given a manifold impression to readers of Plato. He has appeared to some as a sophist, though he apparently does not appear so to assembled company; and at one point he fears appearing as a madman to Theaetetus (μανικός at Sophist 242a11), but Theaetetus, ever mild, does not seem to think of him in that way. Socrates hints that the Stranger may be a god, but does not tell us what the Stranger looks like to him. Does the Stranger also appear, in some sense, as a statesman? This is hard to believe, as I have already indicated (see above, section 2.1.2).

---

46 E.g. Tejera, Plato's Dialogues One by One: a Dialogical Interpretation, chapters 10 and 11. Monique Lassègue, "L'imitation dans le Sophiste de Platon," in Études sur le Sophiste de Platon, ed. Pierre Aubenque and Michel Narcy ([Napoli]: Bibliopolis, 1991), makes the more easily defensible claim that the Stranger imitates the sophist in the last division, an interesting but I think ultimately unsustainable argument. One could also add that at one point the Stranger does imitate a sophist fairly explicitly, at Sophist 239e1-240c3, a passage commented on already by Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, p. xxii: “The Eleatic Stranger is like the Sophist he describes, whose “sense is shut” to everything but the dry light of reason.” Notomi, The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, p. 72, notes that it is only Theodorus “who introduced and regarded him as a philosopher” and sees quite rightly that no one can be neutral in the question; it can never be absolutely clear that the Stranger is not a sophist. I should also note in passing that certain features of the definitions of the sophist (primarily the second, the itinerant merchant of learning, and the last, the human producer of phantastic images [such as the Statesman’s myth]) in an intelligible medium, ironically, in private with short speeches that can produce contradiction) seem applicable to the Stranger.

47 See Kochin, "Plato's Eleatic and Athenian Sciences of Politics," pp. 71-72. But see Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.74 and passim, as well as (less definitely and in a weaker sense) Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman p. 202. Of course, for most commentators this is a moot question: they simply identify Plato with the statesman, with the Stranger, and with the philosopher as well. But within the world of the dialogues neither Socrates nor the Eleatic Stranger seem to appear as statesmen to the other characters, unlike the Athenian Stranger.
In sum, the statesman himself seems to be absent from the Eleatic dialogues, in the sense that none of the philosophical characters ever appears to the rest as a statesman, as Socrates says philosophers nevertheless sometimes do appear. This dramatic fact, in addition to the others we have already discussed, points to the distinction between statesman and philosopher, a distinction that holds throughout the Eleatic dialogues, and further supports the inference that statesmanship is distinct from, and higher than, philosophy.

2.2.2 Socrates’ question: one, two, or three?

The question we might raise at this point, in light of Socrates’ suggestion regarding the manifold appearance of the philosophers, is whether there is some way for us to properly identify philosopher, statesman, and sophist without ourselves being philosophers, statesmen, or sophists (according to Socrates, philosophers themselves do not seem to have trouble identifying each other). Does such an instrument exist? It turns out that the answer to that question is negative. Yet that instrument appears to exist: in modern parlance, it is called a definition, though Platonic characters tend to speak of a λόγος, which is a broader and more appropriate term, better translated as “account.” But such a definition would not constitute knowledge when it is not accompanied by the

---

48 Though he is perhaps present in the dialogues as a whole in the person of the Athenian Stranger.

49 In calling a definition an “instrument” I am obviously indebted to Wittgenstein’s thought, as will become clear, though I think this is a thought that is not alien to the dialogues, for reasons that should become clear as we progress. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd ed. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001 [1953]). For some interesting thoughts on names (not definitions) as instruments in the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* see Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman*, especially pp. 31-32.
ability to apply it to specific instances of philosophers, statesmen, and sophists.

Moreover, any account of these figures that is merely verbal necessarily leaves out their “measure,” as we shall see, and without this “measure,” these accounts are useless for the purpose of identifying specific people as philosophers, statesmen, or sophists. We might say that the accounts the Stranger produces are incomplete representations of the form or look (in a sense that will become clear later) of philosophy, statesmanship, and sophistry, and hence insufficient as a way to make individual identifications, i.e., to make knowledgeable judgments. The proper identification of specific philosophers, statesmen, and sophists turns out to require the know-how of the philosopher himself.

Socrates does not directly raise this question. Instead, he raises (very indirectly) a different, though related, question, that of the distinction between the three families, γένη: the families of the sophist, statesman, and philosopher. Socrates, it turns out, wants to know the “Eleatic” or perhaps the “philosophical” opinion about the following matter (217a7-9): whether the members of the “Eleatic” γένος consider all of these (sophist, statesman, philosopher) to be divisible into one or two or, just as there are three names, into three γένη, three families or tribes, to each of which the particular name is attached. The question is odd, for it is not at first clear how knowing this would resolve the important point at issue, namely who in particular is a sophist, a statesman or a

---

50 I translate γένος as “family” conscious that the usual term is “class,” “genera,” or even “form.” This brings out the fact that a) families have members (and thus that the main issue is always about individual people) and that b) they can also be related (in fact, in some sense, they are always related); it also makes central the notion of descent, with which the Stranger will play so effectively in both the Sophist and the Statesman: in his divisions he constructs “genealogies,” a very ancient and effective form of “identifying” people, as well as ascertaining their worth (though the Stranger does not emphasize this aspect, for reasons that should become clear later; see note 65). “Family” also avoids the tangled and at times utterly misleading associations that the apparently more “precise” terms bring with them, e.g. the whole confused discussion of whether γένος means “Form.” (The Wittgensteinian associations of “family” are also not unwelcome).
philosopher, and what is the proper worth of each, and thus the proper honor/punishment due to him/her. The point is important because this is precisely the life and death question facing Socrates; we must remember that it was just yesterday, in dramatic time, that he went to answer Meletus’ indictment before the king-archon (*Theaetetus* 210d2-4), an indictment that seems to have arisen at least in part, if not entirely, because Socrates has not managed to distinguish himself sufficiently from the sophists. It would seem that neither Socrates nor we should be interested in a merely abstract issue of “counting” families.

The question is also odd because it is not Socrates’ usual question, “what is a sophist/statesman/philosopher”? Socrates is instead merely inquiring as to whether the Eleatics think these are one, two, or three families. He does not even ask which of them is of greatest value, though he seems later to assume that philosophers are (judging by *Statesman* 257b2-4, which is nevertheless not entirely clear evidence of this). How would knowing that sophist, statesman, and philosopher constitute one, two, or three families help us understand either the question of *what* they are or the question of their value?

Yet the question does set up a kind of test for the Stranger, a test that Socrates will not get to carry out himself (he is not, after all, painless and easily controllable as an interlocutor, and thus the Stranger would rather prefer not to talk to him directly; *217d1-3*). This is because the kind of answer one gives to this question is pregnant with all sorts of philosophical and political implications, especially in light of the image/original and appearance/non-appearance framework in which the question is asked. Let us examine this more closely.
2.2.3 Counting originals and images: appearance and reality of sophist, statesman, philosopher

According to Socrates, the possible answers to his question are one, two, and three.\textsuperscript{51} The Stranger seems to agree: he says that it is easy to say that the sophist, statesman, and philosopher are considered to be three families by the people in the place (presumably including himself) Socrates has referred to (ἵγοςντο \textsuperscript{217b2}, reprising Socrates’ ἱγοςντο at \textsuperscript{217a1}).\textsuperscript{52} He does add that it is no small or easy ἔργον, no small work/deed, to define clearly what each of these is.

At this point, readers of the dialogue have often felt, however fleetingly, slightly uncomfortable. After all, isn’t there a (minor) inconsistency here between the view that the Stranger is taken to express here and the “signature” view of “Plato,” expressed by Socrates in the \textit{Republic}, that philosophers should be kings, i.e., that philosophers and statesmen are one rather than two, and hence that the correct answer to the question is two and not three? Or is the correct answer “one” for the so-called “middle period Plato,” given that Socrates in the \textit{Gorgias} does not even consider sophistry to be a τέχνη

\textsuperscript{51} Note that “zero” is not a possible answer. “Zero,” in the Socratic framework, would perhaps mean that all three appearances (sophist, philosopher, and statesman) are aspects of the sophist – i.e., that there is only sophistry; but this would imply that there is one family, contradicting the hypothesis that there are none.

\textsuperscript{52} The Stranger does not appear fully committed to the view that these are three distinct beings, a fact which some commentators have seized on to keep open the possibility of an identity between philosopher and statesman; see here Notomi, \textit{The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher}, p. 22: the Stranger’s “answer is that they assume (ἵγοςντο) these three kinds, and he adds that it is nonetheless no easy task to determine what each of them is (\textsuperscript{217b1-3}). The view that these are three kinds is presented as an assumption (not as fact), and remains such throughout the Sophist and Statesman. It really matters whether these three figures constitute independent, real kinds (γένη).” We shall see in this work, however, that the kind of knowledge the statesman has cannot be possessed by a philosopher without the φιλόσοφος becoming simply σοφός.
(Gorgias 463a6-b6), and that the Stranger seems to want to define all three families in terms of the “technical” knowledge they represent?53

We have already seen that the question Socrates asks can be formulated in terms of originals and images: are there three independent originals, or two (and one image), or just one (and two images)? (And which of the three would be the originals and which the images in the last two cases?)54 Thus we might interpret Socrates to be asking as to how

53 Insofar as some discomfort is expressed by commentators here, it is admittedly not great. Straussians and others concerned with the dramatic elements of the dialogues tend to be more concerned with the question, whereas older “mainstream” commentators hardly even notice it, though it is significant that when they do notice it, it is in the context of the political question; see, for instance, J. B. Skemp, Plato's Statesman, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1952/1987), p. 21, who argues that philosopher and statesman are really one, but that the “specific activity” of statesmanship can be isolated from philosophical activity more generally. (It is not clear if this means Skemp thinks that the correct answer to Socrates’ question is two or three). Among those who do notice it we basically find two answers: somehow the three are really two, or there were already three from the beginning (i.e., the Socratic view does not imply that statesman and philosopher are the same). For the former view, see Klein, Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman, p. 200. For the latter view, see Strauss, "Plato," p. 218: “[t]he fact that the philosopher is not identical with the king was recognized in the central thesis of the Republic, according to which the coincidence of philosophy and kingship is the condition for the salvation of cities and indeed of the human race: identical things do not have to coincide.” Strauss notes that the matter is not as simple as it looks, for the difference between statesman and philosopher is not made sufficiently clear in the Statesman. See also Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, p. 7, note 19 (three), Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 263, note 13 (three), Rowe, Plato: Statesman note to Statesman 257b3-4 (two, though he seems to suggest that statesmanship involves “special skills” that the philosopher by himself does not necessarily have), Notomi, The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, p. 25, especially note 82 (uncertain, but thinks the question is extremely important, and seems to lean towards the “two” answer), Samaras, Plato on Democracy, chapter 8, especially p. 146 (unambiguously two, though different conceptions in the Republic and in the Statesman), Voegelein, Order and History, p. 150 (unambiguously two: the philosopher is the statesman), and Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. II.73-74, who has the most interesting analysis, without settling on a specific number, though in his earlier piece, Seth Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," Philologus 107, no. 3/4 (1963), pp. 212, 223, he was much more explicit in thinking that philosophy and statesmanship were different. I argue, as I have already indicated, that there are three figures here, not two. See also section 2.3.5 for further discussion of the reasons behind this confusion.

54 Note here that the Athenians in general might think that the answer to Socrates’ question is “one” – the sophist being the original, the statesman and the philosopher the images – even though they might differ on the kind of honor due to the sophist. See also here Wolff, "Le chasseur chassé. Les définitions du sophiste," p. 25. Wolff thinks “one” is the sophistic thesis (not so much that of the Athenian people), and though he does not use the image/original language, it is clear that in describing the thesis that the three figures are one, he would place sophistry as the original and the other two as the images. (He places the whole question in the framework of names – applying the same or different names to the same or different things. While this is certainly part of the issue Socrates raises, it misses the fact that the confusion of names is ultimately a byproduct of the confusion of appearances: these three families appear as each other, and hence people are unsure as to whether to use one name or more than one to talk about them).
many “originals” are in question here, as opposed to images/appearances. Behind this question one can also detect the echo of a further question about the value of each of these figures – sophist, statesman, philosopher – insofar as the framework of image and original seems to contain the seeds of a question about what gives an original its “ontological priority,” so to speak, over its image. To say that one of these figures is an image of one of the others seems to imply that it is for that very reason utterly dependent on the being of the other (as a tree-shadow from the tree that projects it), and thus, in some sense, less than the thing it is an image of.\footnote{The Stranger will appear to deny this implication in the famous argument on non-being, for non-being turns out to “be” no less than being, and images are entangled with non-being (see, in particular, \textit{Sophist} 258a7-258c7 and context and compare with \textit{Sophist} 239c9-240c3, where images had emerged as peculiar combinations of being and non-being). It should be noted that the Socrates of the \textit{Republic} appeared to subscribe to an ontology of “degrees of being” which seems to be totally absent from the Stranger’s arguments: for him, images either turn out to be just as much in being as originals, or they have no being at all, contra Cornford, \textit{Plato’s Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato}, pp. 198-99. This is part of his “Eleatic” heritage, also in display in Socrates’ arguments in the \textit{Theaetetus}. It is unclear at this point whether the Stranger’s ontological arguments can make sense of the notion of “dependence” between image and original; Heidegger, \textit{Plato’s Sophist}, pp. 276-77 (400 in vol. 19 of the Gesamtausgabe) apparently did not think they could do so.} A pure image (as opposed to an accidental confusion of appearances, as in the case of wolf and dog) seems to point beyond itself; it cannot be understood fully without some idea of that of which it is an image, and it certainly cannot \textit{be} an image \textit{of that thing} without the being, in some form, of its original.\footnote{I use the qualification “in some form” advisedly. Certainly I can paint a unicorn without presupposing that unicorns exist; but this still means that “unicorn” must be a recognizable referent of the picture. It would be, after all, a picture \textit{of} a unicorn, not \textit{of} a gryphon or a lion. Cf. Wittgenstein, \textit{Philosophical Investigations}, part I, section 518 (with reference to the \textit{Theaetetus}).} This would seem to justify \textit{not} counting the images in the same way that we count the originals, for the images would be counted \textit{with} the originals.

On the other hand, given later developments in the Eleatic dialogues, Socrates might have asked instead about four families, or even five; for two possible “originals” that sophist, statesman, and philosopher might imitate do appear at various points in the
dialogues, and are sometimes distinguished from sophist and statesman. These are the wise man and the god, and their introduction rather complicates the sense in which sophist, statesman, and philosopher might be said to constitute three families. This is because all three figures – sophist, statesman, and philosopher – might be said to be “imitators” of the wise and/or of the god, as we shall see later in more detail (section 2.3.3), and thus as images of the wise and the god. The question “how many” then becomes a question of specifying the exact imitation relation between each of these three images and their particular original (the wise or the god). If the imitation relation is essentially the same for all three figures, then we should count them as one; if it is different, we should count them as three (or two, according to what the case may be). Here it is no longer a question of counting originals, but of counting imitation-relations.

This is a somewhat delicate matter. The way an image looks, and thus what it looks like (the form or look, ἔνδος, it manifests), according to the Stranger (236b4-7) depends not only on the kind of image it is, but also on the point of view from which the image is viewed; the same image of the same thing may look different from different points of view. Hence, the task of distinguishing sophist, statesman, and philosopher, on the assumption that they are images of the wise/the god, cannot simply be accomplished by pointing out that these are three different appearances, for this may only indicate that we are viewing the same thing from different points of view.

To answer Socrates’ question, therefore, we must move to a point of view where the particular character of the imitation-relation of sophist, statesman, and philosopher to

57 To say that the philosopher and the statesman are “images” of the wise/the god might sound strange in light of the modern connotations of such terms as image and imitation. We could, however, speak just as much of “approximations to a model,” as we shall see.
their respective originals is visible. Achieving this point of view involves, in part, seeing that insofar as all three figures – sophist, statesman, philosopher – are constituted by a particular imitation-relation to wisdom and/or the god, they are therefore constituted by relations to knowledge, and in fact by ways of knowing: they are forms (looks, ἔνδη) of know-how. Thus the Stranger will give a genealogy of sophist and statesman (and implicitly, of the philosopher) in terms of their form of knowledge (cf. below, section 2.3.5). Yet the connection to the image/original framework is not thereby lost. To put the matter bluntly, to have the knowledge of the sophist, statesman, or philosopher, whatever such knowledge may be, is necessarily to appear in a certain way to different people (and in particular, to people situated in the world of the “we,” the political world). In order to understand a bit better what this might mean, it is necessary to digress. We must now examine in some detail what it means to say that sophist, statesman, and philosopher imitate the wise and/or the god, even though this examination will take us far into the dialogues and will involve a certain amount of speculation.

2.3 Sophistry as imitation of wisdom

The clearest and most explicit example of an imitation-relation to wisdom in the Eleatic dialogues is of course the sophist. The wise man is distinguished from the sophist in the Stranger’s last genealogy of the sophist at 268b10. There, the sophist is said to be a non-knowledgeable imitator of the wise in the phantastic mode, i.e., in a “distorted” way

\[58\] Cf. Theaetetus 145d7-e7.
rather than in an *eikastic* or non-distorted way, but not wise himself. In other words, the sophist makes himself into a distorted image of the wise; he looks like one from the point of view of those who are neither wise nor experienced enough by age nor philosophical. This result is a bit Strange from the point of view of Socrates’ original

---

59 The distinction between φανταστική and εικαστική, the art of making properly distorted images for some purpose and the art of replicating the exact proportions of images, already briefly discussed above (section 2.2.1), is introduced by the Stranger at 235d4ff. It has caused a great deal of misunderstanding, though it seems to me relatively clear and useful. J. A. Philip, "Mimesis in the Sophistes of Plato," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 92 (1961), p. 459, for instance, makes the strange suggestion that "[e]ikastike would appear to be a class without members, serving only a purpose of symmetry," tangling himself up with the Cratylus (where Socrates does not make the Stranger’s distinction) and disallowing all comparisons to the Timaeus (comparisons which in fact could be quite useful, though Timeaus does not make the Stranger’s distinction). Cornford, *Plato’s Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato*, p. 198, makes the equally misguided suggestion, under the influence of arguments in the Republic (where, again, the distinction does not occur) that “[b]oth here and in the Republic the whole of fine art, considered as ‘imitative’, falls under the art of making ‘semblances’, not ‘likenesses’. Plato does not mean that there is a good and honest kind of art which makes ‘likenesses’ reproducing in all three dimensions and the natural colors of the original” – something which in fact he does mean, though without the “honest.” The confusion is compounded by Cornford’s idea that only the carpenter who makes a second bed is creating an εικών of a bed, but somebody who made a plaster cast of a bed does not, another strange suggestion. (Cornford, by the way, appears to have no inkling of the enormous “mimetic” implications of consigning all the mimetic arts – including, presumably, writing, and thus the Platonic dialogues themselves – to the phantastic side of the division). Blondell, *The Play of Character in Plato’s Dialogues*, pp. 365ff., argues, much more interestingly and closer to the mark, that εικώνες are “analytic images;” this is closer to what I believe, though it goes far beyond the text, and she maras her argument by suggesting that only eikastic μίμησις is pedagogically beneficial. For a better discussion of the distinction between phantastics and eikastics see Andrea Wilson Nightingale, "Distant Views: "Realistic" and "Fantastic" Mimesis in Plato," in *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, ed. Julia Annas and Christopher Rowe (Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2002), and Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, pp. II.105-12; I am particularly indebted to the latter in my own thinking about the issue.

60 It should be noted that the distinction between wise and sophistic is not part of a division: it comes up as the Stranger asks Theaetetus to assign a name to the results of their genealogy, and offers him two choices: wise and sophistic. But “wise” is not thereby the name of the other branch of the division. The Stranger thus contrasts the genealogy of the sophist in toto with wisdom.

61 Cf. Sophist 234c2ff.

62 See here Notomi, *The Unity of Plato’s Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher*, pp. 282-97, for this argument in detail. Notomi mars his argument by also arguing, unnecessarily and without sufficient evidence, that the philosopher, in contrast to the sophist, makes himself into an εικών, an undistorted image, of the god (p. 287f). I do not think, however, that there can be εικώνες of the god, but only, at best, knowledgeable φαντασμάτα, distorted images. Notomi essentially ignores the distinction the Stranger makes (267b4-ed) between doxominetics, i.e., the non-knowledgeable or opinion-based form of φανταστική, and “inquiring” – ἱστορική, 267e2; this word does not mean merely “knowledgeable” – φανταστική. Notomi in fact has the resources to make this argument (see, e.g., his subtle treatment of the
suggestion, for it now seems that the sophist is not an image of the philosopher (which seemed to be the implicit suggestion in Socrates’ comment at 216a1; see also the discussion in section 2.2.1 above) but of the wise. The wise was not among those mentioned in Socrates’ original remarks, and the relationship of the wise to the philosopher is nowhere made explicit or clear by the Stranger, though it eventually becomes clear enough that the philosopher for the Stranger is the same seeker of wisdom that he is elsewhere in Plato.

The Stranger, however, has given us some hints about what the sophist imitates when he imitates the wise. In the discussion of ἀντιλογική, after the six preliminary definitions/genealogies of the sophist, which, though interrupted by the necessary argument on non-being, leads directly to the last genealogy, the Stranger and Theaetetus characterize more fully the kind of image the sophist projects in his performance, namely, the image of a wise man (a false image). The wisdom the sophist appears to have (but does not) seems to concern 1) divine matters and whatever is invisible to the many (232c1-2; we could call this “theology” or “metaphysics”); 2) whatever is visible between earth and heaven (232c4-5; “physics” and “astronomy”); 3) private affairs concerning wealth and birth (232c7-8; “economics”); 4) public affairs concerning laws and all

“investigatory” use of appearances, pp. 87-94), but is misled by the usual treatment of phantastics – the art of creating properly distorted images – into believing that φάντασμα must be the sole province of sophistry. See also here, though less convincingly, Dorter, Form and good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues, pp. 171-72, who notes that in the final division the sophist is distinguished “perfunctorily” from the statesman, but not from the philosopher, only from the wise.

63 For this reading, see Notomi, The Unity of Plato’s Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, p. 84, note 24; alternatively, we could translate γενέσεως τε καὶ οὐσίας “becoming and being,” in which case this would include everything – “physics” in the broadest sense of the word. I am inclined to find here an ambiguity in great part due to the presence of the phrase ἐν ταῖς ... ἱδίαις συνουσίας right before it, the fact that the next subject is politics, that otherwise “becoming and being” would seem to repeat the previous subject, and the fact that without ambiguity “private affairs” would seem to be left out of the sophist’s power of refutation, too clearly falsifying
political matters (232d1-2; “politics”); and finally, 5) all particular τέχναι (232d5-8).

Theaetetus considers this to leave practically nothing out (232e5), and indeed it does not. To be wise, apparently, means to know and understand all of these things; but this appears now to both the Stranger and Theaetetus to be impossible (232e6-233a7), though it sometimes appears to be possible to the young and inexperienced (233b1-7). More importantly for our purposes, such wisdom is not available to a philosopher, though it is perhaps available, in a restricted sense, to a statesman, as we will learn in due time.

The Stranger has led young Theaetetus to the point where he can see that the image projected by the sophist is not congruent with the original of wisdom; but in doing so, he has exposed the apparent original, wisdom, as something more than human.64 But this entails a certain puzzle: if there is no such thing as human wisdom, how can the sophist imitate it?

2.3.1 Mimicry of arts or forms of knowledge

Before we can answer that question, it is necessary to understand what it means to imitate forms of knowledge generally. For this task, in turn, it will be useful to proceed as the Stranger does, namely, by looking at a small example before we look at the larger case of the imitation of wisdom. The example of “angling,” used by the Stranger to show

---

64 See here also Notomi, *The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher*, p. 285.
Theaetetus the way to proceed at the beginning of the *Sophist* (218e2-221c3), should serve our purposes.

The knowledge of angling – for it is a form of knowledge, a τέχνη – can be described by means of a “genealogy.” This genealogy is essentially a list of the elements or eidetic parts (cf. *Statesman* 262a9-263b11) that together constitute the εἴδος, the characteristic look of angling as a particular power to do something (cf. *Sophist* 219a6). Some of these eidetic parts refer to characteristic actions (such as upward motions), others to the characteristic circumstances of angling (such as daytime), others to characteristic instruments (such as rods), others to the characteristic beings captured by the angler (fish), and yet others to the immediate purposes pursued by angling as such (the capture of fish). But the most important of these elements is the only one that cannot be directly observed, namely τέχνη. τέχνη gives the measure of all the other

65 It is not often noted that the Stranger’s top-most category in his divisions, the “original ancestor” in all his genealogies, is Δύναμις, power (*Sophist* 219a4-6; a partial exception to this is Hemmenway, "Pedagogy in the Myth of Plato's "Statesman": Body and Soul in Relation to Philosophy and Politics," p. 265, note 12, though he seems to misunderstand the implications of this fact); this is partly because the Stranger does not bring it up in his summaries nor does he discuss explicitly the powers that are not forms of knowledge. Δύναμις is also used as an (apparently provisional) definition of being (*247d8-e4*), and never really retracted (see here Heidegger, Plato's Sophist, section 68.b, pp. 328-30 [480-483 in vol. 19 of the Gesamtausgabe]; see also, for a more properly scholarly argument, Dorter, *Form and good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues*, pp. 161-62). This makes sense, as the genealogies all seem meant to begin from the original ancestor of everything, namely being.

66 It is true, as Zuckert, "Who's a Philosopher? Who's a Sophist? The Stranger v. Socrates," pp. 71-72, notes, that the Stranger’s genealogies are unlike Socrates’ definitions of the arts in that they do not emphasize the ends to which the arts aim; the Stranger, for instance, in his definition of angling does not say why anybody would practice angling, or even explicitly say what is the end of angling, and in his last definition of sophistry he does not discuss why anybody would practice sophistry (since the references to money which were such an important part of the first four definitions of the sophist drop out in the sixth and seventh). Nevertheless, they do incorporate the *immediate* function of the art (its ἔργον), a function which is naturally called an “immediate” purpose. What an art does – its ἔργον - is its *qua* art, i.e., its function, though it may not be the ultimate purpose of the person practicing the art. The angler’s function, in this sense, is to hunt fish; and the function of sophistry is to seem wise, and these are things that the Stranger’s genealogies can inform us of. To ask why should anybody hunt fish or want to seem wise is to ask the question of the good of fish and that of wisdom, and this is a question that the Stranger certainly does not openly discuss, unlike Socrates.
eidetic parts of the ἐἰδος of angling (rods, motions, immediate purposes, circumstances, etc.) and arranges them into a whole that is reliably able to do the work of angling, i.e., catch fish.

Such a list of elements of angling serves as a model that can be imitated, if one so wishes. To imitate an angler means, primarily, to look like an angler without actually being one. One way in which one could do this would be, for instance, to sit at a riverbank, attempting to catch fish using upward motions with a rod during the daytime hours. From a distance, it is possible that such a performance might confuse somebody into thinking that the person imitating the angler is actually an angler, though one’s purposes in doing so need not be deceptive: one may be trying to learn to fish, for example. But so long as one does not have the τέχνη that gives measure to all the external marks of angling, one cannot be said to be an angler; and this τέχνη is not captured discursively in the divisions of the angler but merely mentioned.

Note that, in imitating the knowledge of the angler without the possession of the τέχνη, the image – the look or εἰδος – produced is necessarily distorted vis à vis the original, for it does not preserve the proper measure among all the eidetic parts of the original, at least not at all times. If the imitation did preserve the proper measure of all the parts, this would constitute a mark of knowledge: for only somebody with the τέχνη of angling could reliably produce an image of angling that preserved the measure of all its proper parts. Somebody with knowledge of angling could still produce a distorted

---

67 An image of a form of knowledge might preserve the proper proportions among the original parts accidentally and for a short period of time, so to speak.
image of angling for some particular purpose, but no one without knowledge of angling could produce a non-distorted image of it (cf. Statesman 300d4-e2).

Since it is possible to imitate an angler “phantastically” or in a distorted way without having the τέχνη of angling, the question is how to distinguish a true angler from a false one; and here the genealogy the Stranger creates does not help us very much. Such a genealogy allows one to easily distinguish a non-angler (e.g., a forester) from an presumed angler (i.e., somebody who looks like an angler), but not to distinguish between a true and false angler, since not all the features by which an angler is defined are visible and available to untutored inspection. In particular, τέχνη, the most important feature in the genealogy of the angler, is not visible. To know that someone is an angler one may not need to be an angler oneself, but one must be able to determine whether he has the proper τέχνη; and the only art that can reliably do this (without itself being identical to the art of angling) is the Socratic art of refutation (cf. Apology 22c9-d4). The same is true for statesmanship; a genealogy of statesmanship can distinguish it from such things as angling, but it will not be useful for determining whether a presumed statesman is actually a true statesman unless the person using the genealogy has the proper Socratic art of refutation, which need not be identical with statesmanship itself.

2.3.2 Opinion-mimetics and its relation to φανταστική

Let us now return to the question of how the sophist can imitate the wise man when the wisdom he is supposedly imitating does not appear to exist as a human possibility. The answer to this question must surely lie in the fact that the sophist imitates
with opinion, not with knowledge. The opinion in question here takes the place of the genealogy of angling in our hypothetical example above of imitating the angler; only such an opinion would be wrong, and yet still be somehow an opinion of wisdom.

The distinction between “opinion-mimetics” and “knowledgeable” phantastic imitation is made by the Stranger at 267b4-267e7. This distinction is usually ignored by commentators; perhaps it seems to them simply to replicate the distinction between φανταστική and εἰκαστική that the Stranger re-introduced earlier (266d9-e6). If the sophist is engaged in creating phantastic images, and such images look like but are not like their originals, then one hardly needs to add that the sophist does not have knowledge of the original – for whether or not he does, the fact is that the images he creates are not like wisdom. The sophistic performance of wisdom (the image he creates using his own soul and language) would be distorted to fit the point of view for which the sophist performs; and that point of view seems to be the point of view of the “we” of politics;68 he appears to be wise to “us,” but is not. Whether or not he knows what wisdom is would seem to be immaterial; in fact, the sophist’s perversity would seem to be increased if he knew what real wisdom was like but persisted in creating distorted images of it. Thus, the distinction between δοξομιμητική and knowledgeable imitation seems idle, merely “academic.”

Yet the distinction between φανταστική and εἰκαστική was originally introduced (235d6-236c8) in a context that seemed to assume knowledge of the original: it is because a sculptor knows what the proportions of the human body are really like that he can create a statue that looks beautiful from afar, or when placed on high pillars, or

68 Though it might be something even more restricted, as was hinted at in note 63, something like private affairs, desires that can be satisfied by the goods of wealth and reputation.
when blown-up to greater-than-life size. Imitation without knowledge, furthermore, cannot mean imitation without having any idea of what one imitates. As we saw in the case of the angler, one can imitate an angler without being an angler, but one could hardly imitate an angler if one did not know what the word “angler” meant, i.e., if one did not have any idea of what an angler looked like to oneself.69

The Stranger, indeed, says that these imitators of the wise have opinion (δοξάζοντες) of what they imitate. Opinion, as we have seen already in the introduction, is related to how things look to us: we have an opinion (δόξα) when something seems to be so and so to us (το δοκεῖν ἦμιν), i.e., when we accept some appearance as showing us truth rather than falsehood. It should go without saying that opinion can be true or false (as indeed, the Stranger and Theaetetus laboriously demonstrated in the face of various sophistic arguments to the contrary); hence to imitate with opinion, but not with knowledge, of the thing imitated, cannot simply mean to always imitate with false opinion of the thing imitated.

In the case of the sophist, to imitate with opinion means that he imitates according to the appearances of things, in particular the appearance of wisdom at the “political” level, rather than the thing itself, an image of wisdom rather than wisdom. Thus he is a phantastic maker of images of images, an image maker at two removes from his original. He does not care to investigate whether or not the opinion we have of wisdom is the

69 There are degrees here: we might perhaps be willing to say that I imitate the angler even if I think that the angler’s purpose is not to catch fish but to splash water in other people’s faces with my rod, i.e., even if I have a partially false opinion as to what constitutes the knowledge of angling. But if I sat at my computer and started typing, saying all the while that I am imitating an angler, my opinion of angling would be so out of touch with the way anglers “look” that most people would be unwilling to accept that my intention really was to imitate an angler; instead, they would say that I was mad.
correct opinion;\textsuperscript{70} he imitates it because it is held to be desirable, just as most people imitate (or rather, mimic) the σχῆμα, the outward look, the surface, of justice and of the whole of virtue in both words and deeds, for such things are held to be desirable (267c4-6), without actually investigating whether or not this is the correct opinion of justice, or, to put it in other terms, without passing from the surface to the depth of justice, from the visible “skin” to the life of the thing: they mimic without understanding what it is that they are supposed to be mimicking, as if one were to think that all that was necessary to imitate Socrates were to dress like Socrates and parrot his words; one would then be imitating the appearance of Socrates (the image Socrates yields in our everyday world), but not Socrates properly speaking.

This leads to the suspicion that wisdom, or rather, human wisdom properly speaking, is not even quite \textit{like} what it appears to be in the sophist’s mimetic impersonation of the wise, since the sophist sets out to imitate human wisdom and ends up imitating divine wisdom unawares. This φάντασμα cannot even serve as a good guide, from our “political” point of view, of what human wisdom is actually \textit{like}. But if wisdom is not \textit{like} what it appears as in the sophistic performance, what is it like? Can one be shown an εἰκών, an undistorted image, of human wisdom? And what would such an εἰκών be \textit{for}? If we could see a good εἰκών of wisdom, then presumably we could, to use Platonic terminology, attempt to imitate it. But what would this mean? For, what we are after, presumably, is not merely to mimic the wise without being wise, but to become

\textsuperscript{70} It is no accident that the counterpart of doxomimetics, knowledgeable imitation, is called by the stranger “ἰστορική” or “inquiring” or “investigatory” imitation (267e2), i.e., the kind of imitation that is not satisfied with the opinion of the thing imitated, but wants to know what the thing is truly \textit{like}.  

61
wise ourselves. It is thus necessary to examine more carefully in what ways one might imitate the wise, different from the ways in which the sophist does imitate the wise, so that we can see if it is indeed possible to imitate the wise in a better way, presumably in a way that would make one wise.

2.3.3 Mimicry and the imitation of the wise

The human art of making distorted images, from which the sophist is ultimately descended, is divided into imitation “with instruments” and imitation with oneself as an instrument. This is called μίμησις, properly speaking, according to the Stranger; we can also call this “impersonation” or “mimicry” (267a1-267b3). This is in turn divided into “knowledgeable” or “inquiring” mimicry and “non-knowledgeable” or “opinion-based” mimicry, a distinction we have already partially discussed above (267b4-e7; see section 2.3.2 above). Finally, “opinion-based” mimicry is divided into ironic and non-ironic mimicry (267e8-268a9).

Note, first of all, that all the divisions of φανταστική can be applied to εἰκαστική. It is possible to create εἰκόνες “with instruments” (e.g., properly proportioned statues of human beings), as well as in the same medium (e.g., if I properly imitate the

71 For an older, more “orthodox” perspective that nevertheless makes substantially the same point, see Philip, “Mimesis in the Sophistes of Plato,” pp. 467-68. Blondell, The Play of Character in Plato's Dialogues, chapters 1 and 2, has many interesting things to say on this problem from a more general point of view. I am indebted to her treatment at many points in the following section (2.3.3) even though I silently disagree with her at many other points.

72 Note that early on μιμητική seemed to be the name of the more general activity of making images (235d1), whereas now it is merely the name of a part of the image-making art. This is explained by Notomi, The Unity of Plato's Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, pp. 279-82, in terms of the paradigmatic function of mimicry for the argument in the last genealogy.
call of some animal with my own voice; though more complications will ensue below).

Similarly, it is possible to create εἰκόνες with knowledge of the original as well as merely with opinion, in the sense that one creates an εἰκών of the opinion itself (see the discussion above, section 2.3.1); in the case of the sophist, this would demand that he actually have the knowledge demanded by the common opinion of wisdom. Finally, if one may be allowed to say that one can create undistorted images of at least some things with opinion, and not merely with knowledge (something that may be disputed, but is not at any rate essential to the present argument) it follows that one can do so either naively or ironically (in the special sense of “irony” used by the Stranger). Thus, in theory, one could create images of the wise either phantastically or eikastically, and such images in turn could be created with instruments or “in the same medium,” and at least φάντασματα could be created with opinion or with knowledge.

If we accept these propositions, then one sense in which one could be said to “imitate” the wise is a very simple one. Suppose I am told, “Socrates is wise,” and this happens to be true, though I have no way of verifying the fact (for I am not myself wise, or have the Socratic art of refutation). If I then were able to follow Socrates around and record his conversations, I would be creating an image of Socrates and thus, a fortiori, an image of a wise man; that is, I would be engaging in imitation with “instruments” (267a3-4) in writing down his conversations. I could even then “perform” such Socratic conversations, thus apparently “mimicking” a wise man (see again 267a3-4). This would be a form of opinion-based imitation, both with instruments and (apparently) without them.
Yet I would not thereby be imitating Socrates as a wise man. The constituent elements of wisdom are not, unlike in the case of angling, merely external marks, but forms of knowledge. Thus, when one imitates the wise qua wise one does not intend to imitate the physical being simply, but his wisdom, or more specifically the relations (the proportions) obtaining between the different parts of his soul. These have to “show” in and through the image created, i.e., the image must appear to be (from a certain “beautiful” point of view) that of a wise man even if the circumstances in which it is placed were changed. But this implies that the knowledgeable eikastic imitator of the wise – whether in creating εἰκόνες in writing or in performing (mimicking) himself such εἰκόνες – must create images that act just like a wise man would act in the circumstances in which the image is placed. So, if Socrates is wise, and I am a knowledgeable eikastic imitator with instruments of Socrates, I should be able to invent new Socratic conversations where Socrates would say and do the things that he would have said or done as a wise man. And if I then mimic Socrates as a wise man in some situation, this means that I would myself act wisely, just like Socrates would have. More specifically, the various parts of my soul would preserve the συμμετρία, the co-measure of each to the others, that they would have in the wise man himself, namely (in this case ex hypothesi) Socrates.

Note that this implies that by merely performing “Socratic” conversations that I have written down I would not really be mimicking the essential proportions of the original. I would have appeared to be mimicking Socrates, but in fact I would be merely mimicking his external features with myself as an instrument. True impersonation of wisdom, in other words, would require a form of mimicry with the soul for imitating
Socrates’ soul (assuming Socrates to be wise). This is the deeper significance of the distinction at 267a3-4: the point is not merely to distinguish imitation with “instruments” (e.g., painting, writing, and the like; the Platonic dialogues are an example of imitation with instruments) from imitation with one’s own body or voice (though this is part of the point, to be sure), but from imitation with one’s own self; i.e., ultimately, with one’s soul. To put in more general terms than the Stranger does, the distinction the Stranger points to (but does not draw) is between imitation in the same medium and imitation in a different medium as the thing imitated. Ultimately, the sophist imitates the wise (phantastically and non-knowledgeably) with his soul; it is only because his soul is such and such that he can produce – can even want to produce – the images of wisdom that he does. And because, as Theaetetus and the Stranger demonstrated, the image he produces is not wisdom, we can say that the proportions of the wise, the proper arrangement of the parts of the soul of the wise are not being imitated properly by the sophist, even if we know nothing about what this arrangement would really be like.

If my argument is correct, however, the distinction between the image and the original, in the case of eikastic mimicry (not the sophistic case), would be blurred. To be sure, the written εἰκόνι of Socrates as a wise man is not itself wise, though only somebody who is himself wise could create such an εἰκόνι, on the assumption of Socrates’ wisdom (remember, this is merely an illustrative assumption, not an assertion of Socrates’ wisdom). Such a written image remains an image – it is not (the same as) what it depicts, though it does depict truly. But somebody who is eikastically and

73 Thus, the earlier definitions of the sophist, which emphasized how the sophist acted for the sake of money-making, are subtly and implicitly incorporated here. Cf. Dorter, Form and good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues, pp. 127ff, though Dorter eventually arrives at a different conclusion than I do here.
knowledgeably able to mimic the wisdom of Socrates must himself be wise; the performer in his performance, in this case, would be indistinguishable from the wise man \textit{qua} wise.\textsuperscript{74} The εἰκών would indeed be indistinguishable from the original.\textsuperscript{75}

It is in this sense that the \textit{eikastic} imitation of wisdom (insofar as it is a form of mimicry) can be said to be identical with wisdom; and it is for this purpose that an εἰκών of wisdom would be wanted. In other words, we would want an εἰκών of wisdom if we loved wisdom – if we were philosophers – to serve as a model for our actions. The (unsuccessful) attempt to mimic wisdom \textit{eikastically}, however, is of course not identical with wisdom.

2.3.4 The philosopher as a possible imitator of the wise: “inquiring” imitation

But what happens when we try to apply this model (of “knowledgeable” \textit{φανταστική}) to the imitation of the wise? There appear to be two obstacles standing in the way of using this model in order to become wise. The first concerns the identification of the model: how are we to say that this or that particular person is wise, or even that this

\begin{footnotes}
74 Lest this argument appear to be merely a quaint Platonic notion, note that it is based on the same principle behind the Turing test of artificial intelligence: if a machine could imitate a human being in intelligent conversation, then the machine should be considered intelligent. Only Turing was not as precise as Plato, despite being a mathematician, on what this would \textit{mean}, though he was clearly right, in my opinion.

75 Cf. \textit{Cratylus} 432b1-432c6. There, Socrates argues that as an image approaches closer and closer to its original, it eventually becomes another original if it replicates \textit{everything} about the original, and is no longer an image of it. The Cratylus is connected to the \textit{Sophist} and the \textit{Statesman} both externally (it is considered a so-called “late dialogue”) and internally (the conversation depicted in the \textit{Cratylus} appears to have happened the day before the conversation depicted in the \textit{Sophist}, in the fictional world of the dialogue, after the \textit{Theaetetus} and the \textit{Euthyphro}; cf. \textit{Cratylus} 396d4-7, 428c7, though the references are slight and controversial; see Howland, \textit{The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosphic Trial}, chapter 5, for discussion.)
\end{footnotes}
or that particular image of the wise – in poetry, in film, or even invented by myself – truly represents wisdom? The second concerns the possibility of interrogating the model: how are we to properly learn the measure of the wise?

The first obstacle is common to all learning and all arts, but it is easier to surmount on the “smaller” τέχνας. If I want to become an angler, I need a good teacher; and there is always a greater or smaller number of people willing to present themselves as teachers of angling – i.e., as models of angling – for a small fee, even though they do not, in fact, have the art. Most of the time, however, the problem is negligible; not only because most people have no reason to claim to be anglers without being so (there is not much profit in the business), but because the angler is, under normal circumstances, proven in praxis. A true angler will not only regularly catch fish (whereas a bad imitator will only accidentally and occasionally do so) but presumably will be able to teach others to do so. And even though an expert sophist might occasionally be able to refute him or her even with respect to his or her angling (as Theaetetus and the Stranger agree, Sophist 232d5-e2), it is significant that Socrates himself does not think he has been able to refute people like the true angler with respect to their expertise (Apology 22c9-d4). A purely sophistic refutation cannot take away the art from the angler; and Socratic refutation, apparently, recognizes this; the sophist who refutes the angler, after all, will himself be unable to catch fish despite his rhetorical victory.

On the other hand, it often pays quite handsomely to imitate the wise; and it is radically unclear what would it mean for the wise to be proven in practice. The wisdom of the wise is not measurable in the number of fish captured. It is not even clear in what is the wisdom of the wise measurable: a life well lived? Knowledge? If so, what kind of
knowledge? We do not even have a good λόγος about what constitutes (human) wisdom – an ordered list of features of wisdom from which we could even attempt to create an εἰκῶν of wisdom. Thus our second question: how are we to learn the measure of the wise when we do not even know what wisdom is in the sense in which we know what angling is – when we do not even have a proper λόγος of wisdom?

In the Platonic dialogues, of course, the figure of the philosopher is presented as one (apparently) capable of bridging this gap, i.e., of properly attempting to imitate wisdom. To be sure, neither Socrates nor the Stranger ever speak of philosophy directly as the imitation of the wise, though Socrates had said that philosophy was a form of likening oneself to the god (Theaetetus 176b1), and reiterated that suggestion in the Sophist (216a5-6). What Socrates meant by saying that the philosopher likens himself to the god in the Theaetetus is not entirely clear, for Socrates there did not emphasize the god’s wisdom but his justice, though it does not seem farfetched to think that the figure of the god represents the limit of wisdom, and hence that the philosopher, if he does imitate the god, imitates (perhaps in a first instance) the wise.

Further, the argument we have gone through seems to suggest that philosophy, as the love of wisdom, can be understood as a form of imitation of wisdom, or rather, the attempt to imitate eikastically wisdom. As we have shown, however, whatever Socratic “love of wisdom” – philosophy – is, it seems that it cannot be a successful form of eikastic imitation of the wise;76 and it is even hard to say that it is properly speaking “knowledgeable,” at least in the case of Socrates, for Socrates does not know what σοφία

76 Contra Notomi, The Unity of Plato’s Sophist: Between the Sophist and the Philosopher, p. 287.
is (Theaetetus 145d6-146a1), though it would certainly be “inquiring.” Socrates’ love of wisdom is therefore understandable as a form of imitation of the wise.

The Stranger also points to a form of phantastic imitation that is not exactly knowledgeable in a sense and yet not non-knowledgeable, namely “inquiring” imitation. Such a form of mimicry would entail the attempt to learn exactly how wisdom looks, i.e., what is the ἐνδος of wisdom, an attempt that would require, in order to succeed, the kind of knowledge that the Stranger describes as the science of the free, that of the philosopher (Sophist 253b9-253c9), namely, the knowledge that allows one to properly sort through all the ἐνδη. This process would of course entail also showing that certain opinions about wisdom are incorrect (something the Stranger does in the Statesman), in fact pernicious, namely the opinions of wisdom that sophists or ignorant people have, and which they imitate in ruling or attempting to rule cities, and so the art of the free is thus compatible with the Socratic art of refutation. The philosopher may not be the wise or the statesman, but he may be the one able to distinguish between the wise and the “pretend” wise, i.e., the sophist.

77 I must once again emphasize that ἱστορικὴ cannot mean merely “scientific” (Fowler) or “savante” (Diès) or “by acquaintance” (Cornford; a rather far-fetched guess) or even “informed” (White; though this is closer to the mark) mimicry; it is mimicry that inquire, and thus becomes informed about the object of imitation (Benardete’s “historical” is too literal-minded, even with his explanatory note). In any case, it seems to me that ἱστορικὴ means the art that uses ἱστορία, i.e., that uses research or inquiry – that is based on learning by inquiry.
2.3.5  Counting forms of knowledge: The conditions of possibility of sophist and statesman

As we have seen, Socrates’ question, concerned apparently with the abstract issue of “number,” and seemingly demanding little more than “definitions,” conceals unexpected complexities concerning the interrelationships, and in particular the relations of subordination and imitation prevailing among all three families, those of sophist, statesman and philosopher, as well as among some families not directly mentioned, that of the wise and that of the god.

As embodiments of forms of knowledge, as we have seen, these figures represent relations to the idea of wisdom. We have seen that the sophist cannot be wise, though he does have some sort of real τέχνη, at least according to the Stranger. But there are intimations throughout the Eleatic dialogues (and throughout the Platonic corpus) that statesman and philosopher are, in some sense, wise. Hence the question of whether these figures are one, two, or three, reduces (by the time the conversation in the Statesman begins) to the question of whether the lover of wisdom (the philosopher) is identical with the wise (the statesman, who rules by wisdom; cf. Statesman 296e3); it is thus a question of whether sophist, statesman, and philosopher are two or three.

78 The thought that the statesman is wise – i.e., a ruler by wisdom – is formulated perhaps most explicitly in Paul Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," American Political Science Review 91, no. 2 (1997), though the assumption is widespread and natural, even though, as Stern recognizes, the word translated “wisdom” in the Statesman is φρόνημα, not σοφία, except at 296e3. The potential tensions with the idea of the philosopher as a lover of wisdom, but not himself wise (and hence not as a statesman), on the other hand, are hardly ever so much as considered in passing. Stern, in fact, suggests that the wisdom of the statesman is in the first instance the philosophical “wisdom” of Socrates, who is aware of the limits of his wisdom. This may well be true, but the tension between the wise (the statesman) and the lover of wisdom (the philosopher) deserves more attention. At any rate, I think this is the matter at issue in the discussion in the scholarly literature (see note 53) over whether sophist, statesman, and philosopher are two or three, namely, whether we are to identify the “wisdom” of the
We can see the problem of the wisdom of the statesman in a fairly clear way in a passage at the very end of the *Sophist*, which we have already discussed a bit. In very last division of the last genealogy of the sophist (268b1-268c4), the Stranger asks Theaetetus to consider the ironical imitator who does his business in public with long speeches and the one who does his business in private by means of short exchanges. The Stranger more specifically asks Theaetetus whether the first should be called a statesman or a demagogue – to which Theaetetus, unsurprisingly, answers “demagogue” – and whether the second should be called a sophist or a wise man – to which Theaetetus answers, more at length, “sophist.” It should be clear that the distinction is immaterial to the art: the demagogue’s art is also the art of appearing to be wise, of imitating the wise without knowledge, and thus the same art of the sophist, as will be eventually confirmed by the Stranger himself at *Statesman* 291c3-4, where such demagogues are called the greatest of all sophists. But if the statesman is to the wise what the demagogue is to the sophist – i.e., the “public” face of the knowledge imitated by the sophist – then the statesman must be wise; and if the statesman is wise then his relation to the philosopher must be complicated, for the philosopher does not claim to be wise, only to be a lover of wisdom. The question of the possible wisdom of the statesman is the question that guides the inquiry in the rest of this work.

statesman (there is hardly any other way to describe his knowledge, as we shall see) with the “wisdom” of the lover of wisdom.
CHAPTER 3

THEORY AND PRAXIS

We might divide the Statesman into two unequal parts: a short prologue that restates the central concern of the trilogy – namely, the question of philosophy and its place vis à vis sophistry and statesmanship (something that we have already discussed in chapter 2), and a long section in which the nature of statesmanship is laboriously described, starting with a long “genealogy,” in ten steps, of the statesman, in which the form of knowledge that the statesman possesses is contrasted with most other forms of knowledge. This long genealogy leads to a definition of statesmanship or political science as the science of the nurture of human beings, a definition that is later shown to be partially wrong (the statesman’s knowledge is of the care, not the nurture of human beings), though not wholly discarded: the first three steps of it, in particular, are never said to be wrong, and their value is re-emphasized late in the dialogue (cf. 292b9, 305d1ff). These first three steps describe the relationship between theory and praxis. More specifically, they show that political science is a theoretical science, and that it relates in a specific way to the realm of praxis. These steps are the main concern of this chapter.
Two lines of argument are developed in the following interpretation of these passages. First, I show (section 3.1) that the prologue to the *Statesman* and the way in which statesmanship is introduced as an ἐπιστήμη rather than a τέχνη raise once again the central concerns of the trilogy, namely, the relative place of sophistry, philosophy, and statesmanship *vis à vis* each other, a question which we explored in some detail in the discussion of the *Sophist* in the previous chapter (chapter 2). I introduce here further evidence for my contention that statesmanship must be considered to be distinct from philosophy and that statesmanship has a strong claim to be “wisdom,” unlike philosophy.

The bulk of the chapter, however, is taken up with an examination of the first three steps of the first genealogy of the statesman, i.e., those steps that deal with statesmanship as a form of knowledge independently of its objects. In this part of the chapter, I develop a second line of argument that aims to show that statesmanship is a form of knowledge that cannot be easily integrated into the *polis* due to its fragile relationship to the everyday world of *praxis*. This argument is presented in three sections.

First, I examine the distinction the Stranger makes between theory and practice (section 3.2). This involves understanding how the practical/theoretical distinction contrasts with the productive/acquisitive distinction that governed the divisions in the *Sophist* (section 3.2.1), how the arguments concerning the identity of king and statesman, household manager and slave master bear on the relationship between theory and practice (section 3.2.2), and the eventual reasons for placing kingship among the “gnostic” or “theoretical” sciences (section 3.2.2.3). I show here that the contrast between theory and practice is essentially the contrast between soul and body, and in particular between forms of knowledge that are tied to *specific* bodily practices and forms of knowledge that
are not so tied, and which constitute the vast majority of the forms of knowledge in society.

Second, I will examine the relationship of statesmanship as a theoretical science to the world of *praxis* implied in its placement among the commanding sciences (section 3.3). I show here that, as in the case of the soul-body relationship in the individual human being, there is always a *gap* between statesmanship and the practical forms of knowledge on which it depends to carry out its task. This gap is not unbridgeable (just as the gap between soul and body in the individual human being is not unbridgeable), but it never vanishes completely (unlike the gap between soul and body in the individual human being). This gap can also be characterized as the problem of obedience.

Finally (section 3.4), I show how the placement of statesmanship among the *originating* forms of knowledge in turn brings to light the need for *mediating* or *translating* forms of knowledge. This further determination gives us the *measure* of the fragility of the relationship of statesmanship to the world of practice.

3.1 The prologue to the statesman and the question of philosophy

The *Statesman* begins with a short exchange between Theodorus and the Elder Socrates, which raises the question of the measure of the relative worth of sophist, statesman, and philosopher (257a1-257b8). It is clear from this exchange that Socrates does not think that these three figures are of equal worth, but it is not clear that he thinks that their rank-order has been adequately established. If the sophist is of much lesser worth than the statesman and philosopher, it is not yet clear whether the philosopher is of
equal, greater, or lesser worth than the statesman. The Stranger will give us the tools to make this judgment, the result of which, as I have already indicated, is that the statesman is the wise man, the ideal towards which the philosopher or lover of wisdom strives.

The exchange also raises the question of measurement more generally, a question that is central for understanding the dialogue.¹ If Theodorus’ mathematical art is unable to properly rank the three figures, then what art is able to do so? Probably, one might think, either the art of the philosopher or the art of the statesman, though Socrates does not say. Furthermore, what kind of measure would be appropriate for this task? The Stranger will later introduce, in the central section of the dialogue, an argument to the effect that there are two types of measure, one for comparing things merely against each other, another for comparing things them against their “due” measure (283a1ff). One might think that Socrates is already pointing to the need for this sort of measure, for a proper ranking of the three figures – sophist, statesman, philosopher – can only be achieved when these figures are measured in relation to the good they are able to bring about (see chapter 6, section 6.4, especially p. 290). Here we may anticipate: the statesman, more than the philosopher, is the one figure able to bring about the human good in the polis, and hence the highest in rank, though this claim will not be evident until much later in this work.

After this introductory exchange, Theodorus asks the Stranger to continue with the inquiry, focusing indifferently on either the philosopher or the statesman (257b8ff); clearly, for him, these two figures are of equal worth. But the Stranger evidently thinks

¹ See Auguste Diès, Le Politique, vol. IX, Platon Oeuvres Complètes (Paris: Société d’édition “Les Belles Lettres”, 1935), pp. xi, xlv-l, for the importance of the notion of measure to the dialogue, though his interpretation of it is rather different from mine.
that this is not a matter of indifference; it is necessary (258b2-3), he says later, to proceed with the statesman after having described the sophist, a necessity that becomes understandable if the statesman, as the possessor of wisdom, represents the original which the sophist imitates and which the philosopher strives to be.\(^2\)

The potential wisdom of the statesman is already evident in the very first terminological choices the Stranger makes. The Stranger began the inquiry into the sophist by asking whether the sophist had a \(\tau\varepsilon\chi\nu\eta\) (221c9-d6); he now begins the inquiry into the statesman by asking whether the statesman has an \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\) (258b3-5).\(^3\) At no point in the \textit{Sophist}, however, is the sophist said to have any sort of \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\); in fact, the sophist is explicitly said at many points not to have the forms of knowledge – \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\) – that he seems (to others) to have.\(^4\) He is also never said to be \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\omega\nu\),

\(^2\) Cf. Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 258b2-3: “quite why the E.S. thinks it ‘necessary’ ... to take the statesman first ... is not immediately clear; but it is surely not irrelevant a) that one of the central aspects of the process of the definition of the statesman will be his separation from existing politicians ... and b) that these will be described as ‘greatest of the sophists’ ... in virtue of their skill as illusionists.”

\(^3\) Plato is occasionally taken to task for this “unargued assumption,” as Annas and Waterfield, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, p. 4, note 5 ad loc., puts it. See also Cornelius Castriadias, \textit{Sur Le Politique de Platon} (Paris: Seuil, 1999), pp. 56-57. I hope to show that the assumption is somewhat less unargued than it might seem; at any rate, the Stranger proceeds by “bracketing” the question of whether anybody actually possesses this knowledge, and goes on to talk about the \textit{shape} of this knowledge in contrast to other forms of knowledge.

\(^4\) The word \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\) occurs only 11 times in the \textit{Sophist}, in contrast to 47 times in the \textit{Statesman}. (The word \(\tau\varepsilon\chi\nu\eta\) occurs 49 times in the \textit{Sophist} and 73 in the \textit{Statesman}). \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\) never applies to the sophist, as we can easily see: 233c10 (the sophists seem to have \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\) about everything, but do not; also 233c1, they seem to hold themselves \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\nu\) in respect of that which they refute/dispute, but are not), 235a3 (the Stranger asks again whether the sophist has the \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\) he seems to have or is an imitator; note that the sophist’s imitative art is not an \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\) but a \(\tau\varepsilon\chi\nu\eta\)), 249c7 (not about the sophist; in the argument against the friends of the forms, which makes vanish \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\)), 253b10 (in the argument about the science of the free), 253c4 (Theaetetus’ agreement that they are in presence of an \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\)), 253c8 (the science of the free, the \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\) of the free, that of the philosopher), 253d3 (the \(\delta\iota\alpha\lambda\varepsilon\kappa\tau\iota\kappa\eta\) \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\)), 257c8 (the nature of the other is broken up into small change like \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\)), 257d2 (\(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\) is one, but the part that becomes applied to something holds some peculiar name of its own; hence there are many \(\tau\varepsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\) and \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\alpha\iota\); note that this is not a \textit{hendiadys}), 265c10 (as part of a question to Theaetetus, the god creates things with \textit{logos} and \(\epsilon\pi\sigma\tau\tau\mu\eta\mu\)), 267e2 (distinguishes between
but only to seem to be so. The designation of the statesman as ἐπιστήμων, by contrast, already indicates that the status of his knowledge is much higher than that of other arts.

To be sure, in the Statesman statesmanship is also often characterized as a τέχνη (e.g., 287d4, 296e5, 300e7, 311c1-2). This has led commentators to the conclusion that the terms ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη are used interchangeably in the Statesman. There is some truth in this. I do not mean to say that ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη are two distinct families of knowledge. The Stranger nowhere proposes a division of ἐπιστήμη into technical and non-technical forms, and the modern terminological distinction between “art” (τέχνη) and “science” (ἐπιστήμη) – the one imprecise and not governed by rules, the other precise and governed by rules – is alien to the dialogues of the trilogy and indeed to Plato, as I implied in my discussion of knowledge in the Introduction.

Nevertheless, I believe that the story is somewhat more complicated, even granting that

doxomimetics and ἱστορική imitation, the latter of which has ἐπιστήμη; see also Statesman 301b2). See Kenneth M. Sayre, Plato's Analytic Method (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 149, 175-179, who emphasizes this fact to show that the knowledge of the philosopher is not merely a τέχνη, and Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, p. 23, who also notices this but thinks its significance is merely to "cast a faintly pejorative shadow back on the status of sophistry."

5 The word ἐπιστήμων occurs only 2 times in the Sophist, and in both cases the sophist is explicitly declared not to be ἐπιστήμων: at 232a1 (whenever one seems to be ἐπιστήμων in many things but is called by the name of a single τέχνη this φάντασμα of the person is not ύψις, not healthy – also implying the φάντασμα can be ύψις, by the way), 233c1 (the sophists seem to be ἐπιστήμων in respect of that which they controvert). By contrast, the word is used 10 times in the Statesman, often of the statesman himself (cf. 293e7, for instance).


7 Though it is perhaps prefigured in the discussion of more and less precise forms of knowledge at Philebus 55c4ff. My quick reading of this section suggests that there the term ἐπιστήμη is especially reserved to the "precise" part of a form of knowledge, leaving τέχνη for the non-mathematical, imprecise aspects of it; cf. ἐπιστήμης at 55d6 with τέχνη at 55e7. Even here, however, the term τέχνη is sometimes used to refer to the "precise" part of knowledge (cf. 56c8).
there is substantial overlap in the Stranger’s usage of ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη. In fact, I will argue in the subsections that follow that the term ἐπιστήμη is especially reserved in the Statesman for those forms of knowledge that have something to do with the good, the just, and the noble, i.e., those forms of knowledge that can justly lay claim to the title of “wisdom” (σοφία).

3.1.1 External evidence for the distinction between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη

There are at least two “external” reasons (external, that is, to the text of the Statesman itself) for why we might want to object to the easy conclusion that the words τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη are used interchangeably in the dialogue. First of all, there seems to be no reason to think that Plato used the word ἐπιστήμη in a consistent way in the Sophist (never using it of the sophist, as we have seen, though he is explicitly said to have a τέχνη) but not in the Statesman, a dialogue that must have been written concurrently with the Sophist, or at any rate at around the same time.8 Second, the word ἐπιστήμη is also clearly not used interchangeably with τέχνη in the other dialogue of the trilogy, the Theaetetus.9 This is, of course, not decisive, for Socrates, and not the Stranger, is the

8 I am agnostic about attempts to directly date the dialogues using stylometry (cf. Introduction, note 31), but it should be clear that the Sophist and the Statesman form really a single work, like the Timaeus-Critias series; they are the two necessary parts of a single project, and if they were not written simultaneously they must have been written in close proximity.

9 The claim that Plato avoids “technical terminology” (made, for instance, in Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, p. 34), which could be used to buttress the thesis that ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη truly are interchangeable in Plato, while containing a grain of truth, cannot really be sustained. If Plato avoids “technical” terminology in some narrow Aristotelian sense, he is nonetheless always extremely precise in his choice of words; and at any rate in the Statesman a mistake appears to happen because of a lack of attention to terms (cf. the Stranger’s ironical compliment to young Socrates at 261e5-7;
main speaker in that dialogue; but Socratic usage does not seem dissimilar from the Stranger’s usage.

For instance, it is clear that ἐπιστήμη includes the τέχναι in the *Theaetetus*, as is evident in Theaetetus’ first (and inappropriate) response to Socrates’ question concerning knowledge, as well as in Socrates’ response to that response (*Theaetetus* 146c7-147c6); every τέχνη is evidently a form of ἐπιστήμη. Yet it is also clear that Socrates does not assume that τέχνη is simply ἐπιστήμη. The later term is never exhausted in τέχνη, however important τέχνη may be to Socrates. In fact, one of the peculiar features of the argument of the *Theaetetus* is that the discussion of knowledge is conducted in splendid isolation from the τέχναι. Socrates at no point asks *Theaetetus* what he thinks τέχνη is, but always what ἐπιστήμη is. At the very least one should say that in the *Theaetetus* the term ἐπιστήμη is more “general” than τέχνη. The Stranger, in the *Sophist*, also explicitly states that ἐπιστήμη in general can be divided into several τέχναι and several ἐπιστήμαι, according to the particular thing each part of ἐπιστήμη as a single thing is set up over (*Sophist* 257c10-d2); it is clear, again, that for the stranger in the *Sophist* ἐπιστήμη is not exhausted by τέχνη but is always more “general,” for lack of a better term.

---

10 One could also cite here the “aviary” image, *Theaetetus* 197a5ff, where the dependence of τέχνη on ἐπιστήμη is also clear.

11 None of the three proper definitions of ἐπιστήμη offered by Theaetetus, except perhaps the third and last, and this one only indirectly, seems to capture the kind of knowledge embodied in either Socrates’ or Theaetetus’ own practices; and while this fact is not thematically treated in the dialogue, I suspect that this may be one of the reasons their discussion does not end quite as successfully as it might have done.
3.1.2  Internal evidence for the distinction between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη: the connection of ἐπιστήμη to σοφία

We should also note that at the very beginning of the *Theaetetus* Socrates connects ἐπιστήμη and σοφία (in fact, identifies them; cf. *Theaetetus* 145e6 and context). The Stranger’s use of ἐπιστήμη rather than τέχνη at the very beginning of the *Statesman* thus awakens in the attentive reader the question of wisdom. Is the statesman the possessor of one knowledge among others – a τέχνη that is merely a part of ἐπιστήμη as such (cf. *Sophist* 257c10-d2) – or does he have a kind of supreme knowledge, wisdom itself, as I have and will argue?

The connection of political knowledge to wisdom has some bearing on the distinction between τέχνη and ἐπιστήμη, since τέχνη, unlike ἐπιστήμη, is never identified with σοφία. This is as it should be; for while Greek usage might sometimes speak of one who has a specific τέχνη as one who is σοφός concerning that subject (cf. *Statesman* 290b2), the converse is, to my knowledge, never true: the τεχνίτης is never the simply wise man. Wisdom – σοφία – can be of the whole, whereas τέχνη must always have some restricted field of application. Here, aside from any evidence from the argument of the dialogue (which we will examine in more detail in due time), it is worth turning our attention to the use of the word σοφός in the trilogy.
The word σοφός occurs 44 times in the trilogy, 32 of these in the *Theaetetus*. It occurs 7 times in the *sophist* and 5 times in the *Statesman*.

The *sophist*, unsurprisingly, is never described as truly σοφός, but only as seemingly so, as we saw in great detail in chapter 2, section 2.3. More importantly, however, the statesman is strongly implied to be σοφός in the last genealogy of the *Sophist*, where the parallel *sophist*/imitator of the wise and statesman/wise is nearly inescapable (cf. 268b7-c4), and actually called σοφός at *Statesman* 296e3, where he is said to manage the *polis* in the interest (the σύμφορα) of the ruled (language reminiscent of the discussion of justice in the *Republic*, by the way; cf. *Republic* I, 343b1ff, especially 343c4 and elsewhere).

The connection of the statesman’s ἐπιστήμη/τέχνη to wisdom is further enhanced by the terminological ambiguity of the phrase βασιλικὴ τέχνη, which would at first glance seem to offer irrefutable evidence regarding the interchangeability of ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη in the *Statesman*. Like the English “kingly art,” the Greek βασιλικὴ τέχνη is ambiguous between the sense “art of the king” and the sense “art

---

12 To be precise, σοφός occurs at 230a7 (on the people who think themselves σοφός not being such, and their imperviousness to admonition), 233b2 (the sophists are in some way able to give the young the impression of being σοφώτατοι, wisest of all in all matters), 233e6 (the sophists seem to be σοφοί to their pupils; note also ἐπιστημόνος at 233e1), 234e7 (the art of the sophist makes him appear wisest, σοφώτατον), 268b10 (is the sophist wise or sophistic, in the last genealogy?), 268b11 (Theaetetus emphatically replies that he cannot be wise), 268c1 (the sophist is an imitator of the wise).

13 At 284e11 (critique of the κοινοὶ who think they are saying something σοφός when they say there is a metretics of everything), 290b2 (on the heraldic race and those who become περὶ γράμματα σοφοί in serving others; apparently the same as πάνθειον at 290b4; there is some irony here), 296e3 (the wise – σοφός – and good man manages [διοικήσει] the interest [the σύμφορα] of the ruled; this is the criterion of the true regime), 299c6 (one must not be wiser, σοφώτερον, than the laws, under penalty; in the critique of law).
which rules like a king.”¹⁴ In the first sense, the τέχνη of the king is a τέχνη among many others: a τέχνη, one might say, that has rivals for the title of wisdom, just as the king as shepherd of human beings encounters rivals for the title of nurturer of human beings, or a τέχνη that cannot pretend to represent the whole of ἐπιστήμη (cf. Statesman 267d7-268e4, Sophist 257c10-d2). In the second sense, the kingly τέχνη orders and rules all the other τέχναι and ἐπιστήμαι, as indeed it will turn out to be the case in the end (cf. Statesman 304a6-305e6 as well as the discussion in chapter 16, especially sections 9.1.1 and 9.2.2). Is such an articulating τέχνη wisdom? We do not yet know, though this τέχνη sounds like an extremely promising candidate for the title, since wisdom could plausibly be defined as the kingly – the king of – ἐπιστήμη.

While the phrase πολιτική τέχνη does not show the same sort of ambiguity as βασιλική τέχνη, it nevertheless points to the same conclusion. As the Stranger will note, πολιτική τέχνη gets its name from the whole it cares for, namely the polis (Statesman 305e2-6). The Stranger had earlier argued, in a somewhat curious fashion, that πολιτική is essentially the same as βασιλική (cf. Statesman 279e5-280a6) “except in name,” just as ἱματιουργική, which gets its name from the ἱμάτιον, the πράγμα, the thing that is the product of its πράξις, is essentially the same as ὑφαντική, which gets its name from the action by means of which ἱμάτιον are mostly made (and is thus called in turn “the biggest part” of ἱματιουργική).

¹⁴ A contrasting, but less clear in English, ambiguity haunts the phrase μιμητική τέχνη (the “mimetic art”), which describes the sophist. This is at the same time the τέχνη that uses μίμησις (the τέχνη of imitation) and the τέχνη that camouflages as ἐπιστήμη (the τέχνη that imitates τέχνη, is merely a μίμησις of τέχνη, i.e., is not really a form of knowledge in the final analysis).
Context is important here, of course; this argument occurs at the end of the first division of weaving, which is explicitly problematic. The Stranger has not yet made clear at this point the connection between ἰματιουργική as the sum total of all the arts having to do with the making of the ἰμάτιον (and therefore as *more* than mere weaving) and ύφαντική as the “biggest part” of ἰματιουργική and as in some sense its *directive* part (more on this below, chapter 6, section 6.3.2). Nevertheless, the basic analogy between the pairs ἰματιουργική and πολιτική and ύφαντική and βασιλική holds; these two sets of names show two different aspects of the art under discussion, aspects that may not be fully congruent. In particular, the Stranger’s analogy suggests that as πολιτική, the art of the statesman – the πολιτικός – in some sense includes all the other arts in the *polis.*

As the art that uses (in some as yet unspecified sense) all the τέχναι within the *polis*, πολιτική τέχνη appears once again as a plausible candidate for the title of wisdom.

Nevertheless, we need to note the limitation that the name πολιτική (unlike the name βασιλική) imposes on this τέχνη/ἐπιστήμη as a claimant to the title of wisdom; for as πολιτική, it is concerned with a merely partial whole (namely the *polis*), not with the whole as such, with the κόσμος.

---

15 A fuller discussion of the distinction between πολιτική and βασιλική will be provided later (chapter 4, section 4.3.2.1).

16 Note that if we followed the Stranger’s suggestive naming scheme, the articulating ἐπιστήμη of the whole would be called κοσμετική, which is a form of μμητική. That this suggestion is not entirely fanciful is shown by the *Timaeus*. Such an art, however, would belong to the god rather than to human beings (cf. *Statesman* 273b6-7, 273d4), though the mere knowledge of the whole – not the ordering power of the whole – might plausibly be said to be the knowledge of the philosopher, whose field of exploration goes beyond the *polis*. This mere knowledge of the whole, without the commanding component of the statesman’s knowledge, would hardly qualify a man as wise; a philosopher with this knowledge would be like that of the digression of the *Theaetetus* (cf. 173c7ff). We also have the option of conceiving of the knowledge of the philosopher as the erotic art, as Socrates more than once conceives of his own art; what the Eleatic would say of such a conception of philosophical knowledge we cannot know.
To be sure, the question of whether or not πολιτική (and/or βασιλική) is or is not wisdom is not to be settled merely on the basis of terminological evidence. For one thing, there is another candidate for the title of wisdom, namely διαλεκτική. Unlike πολιτική, διαλεκτική is never called a τέχνη. Yet it is never entirely clear whether or not διαλεκτική should be identified with βασιλική, even though the Stranger does identify it with philosophy (Sophist 253c9). Dialectic, as the Stranger describes it there, seems to be the skill of “spelling” the eidetic structure of the cosmos, but it does not seem to be the full knowledge of this structure or the ability to issue commands on the basis of this knowledge, something that statesmanship would seem to require. Nevertheless, one could also argue that just as βασιλική is the articulating τέχνη/ἐπιστήμη in connection with the whole that is the polis (i.e., as πολιτική), διαλεκτική is the articulating ἐπιστήμη in connection with the whole as such, i.e., the κόσμοι, an articulating ἐπιστήμη that, due to the limitations of human life, remains purely “critical” rather than commanding. In this view, both διαλεκτική and βασιλική would be aspects of wisdom rather than the whole of it. For the moment, however, let us re-emphasize that πολιτική and/or βασιλική, unlike (apparently) διαλεκτική, both seem to have a τέχνη aspect as well as a non-τέχνη aspect, though this does not mean that they are merely τέχναι.

3.1.3 The “technical” ἐπιστήμαι

A further piece of evidence for the view that there is a distinction between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη is the fact that the only other arts that are dignified with the
appellation ἐπιστήμη in the *Statesman* are generalship, true rhetoric, and judicial knowledge, the true servants of statesmanship (cf. 304c10, 305a9, 305c11). Apart from these arts (and statesmanship itself), the appellation ἐπιστήμη is reserved for “generic” forms of knowledge, such as γνωστική. Only statesmanship and generalship are called both ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη. The question is, why?

A full answer cannot be given at this point, and at any rate a better perspective on this problem will emerge once we have considered the relation of the theoretical/practical distinction to the acquisitive/productive distinction (below, section 3.2.1). But I expect that the answer is to be found in the ways in which the knowledge of the general or the statesman transcend merely “technical” knowledge, and in particular in the way in which they are entangled or pervaded by the knowledge embodied in the “moral” virtues (see chapter 8, section 8.3.4, and chapter 9, section 9.1). It is possible to be a good weaver and be a terrible person; it is impossible to be a good general and lack courage. Similarly, it is impossible to be a good rhetorician, in the sense discussed by the Stranger, and be a sophist (cf. 303e10-304a2); or a good judge and take bribes or be intimidated (cf. 305b4-c2). The statesman’s activity is itself said to be that of a wise and good man (296e3) and to be accomplished with both τέχνη and νοῦς, not τέχνη alone (297a7-b1).

---

17 Thus, we have πεζονομική (called an ἐπιστήμη at 265c6), γνωστική (267a8), or κοινωτροπική (267d13). Such ἐπιστήμαι, however, are generic, comprising other ἐπιστήμαι and τέχναι under them. The Stranger, by contrast, never calls any of the arts that constitute weaving, or even any of the arts of the city, an ἐπιστήμη, with the exception, as noted, of generalship, rhetoric, and judicial knowledge, though individual arts may partake of a part of ἐπιστήμη (cf. 290c5).

18 For generalship as a τέχνη, see 305a5.
The ἐπιστήμη of the statesman thus bridges the apparent disjunction between the technical and what we might call the “moral” aspects of his competence,\(^{19}\) an apparent disjunction that plays a role later in the origin of law (see chapter 8, section 8.3.4). His knowledge therefore appears as both technical and non-technical insofar as part of that knowledge – a part that is not truly separable from the other – transcends what we might call the “amorality” of technical competence in being knowledge of the proper order of a human life. The apparent confusion of terms throughout the dialogue comes from the fact that the Stranger and young Socrates approach the statesman’s knowledge from the standpoint of τέχνη, i.e., in relation to all other forms of technical competence, many of which are clearly possible in the absence of “moral” knowledge. By contrast, properly considered, statesmanship just is moral knowledge of the highest order, though it also has a non-moral component (which we might call knowledge of economics, law, and political science narrowly understood), as we shall see in this study.

3.2 Theory and practice

After placing the statesman among those who possess an ἐπιστήμη, the first proper division of the Statesman concerns the distinction between theory and practice, or, more specifically, between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge.\(^{20}\)


\(^{20}\) I follow the usual convention in translating γνωστική as “theoretical” and πρακτική as “practical.” Γνωστική, however, may perhaps be better translated as “cognitive” (using cognition alone), and the translation of πρακτική as “practical” has many unwarranted Aristotelian associations. It should be kept in mind, therefore, that what the stranger means by “theoretical” and “practical” is quite different from what Aristotle means by “theoretical” and “practical.”
3.2.1 The theory and practice distinction in its relation to the production and acquisition distinction

The Stranger introduces the distinction between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge (Statesman 258d4-e7) with the example of arithmetic “and other such τέχναι,” which are “bare” [ψιλαί] of πράξεις, of actions, and provide solely “insight” (τὸ γνῶναι). These τέχναι are contrasted with carpentry “and all other handiwork,” which possess ἐπιστήμη as something that emerges or grows naturally in their πράξεις, their actions. The contrast here is between activities where knowledge is embodied\(^{21}\) in bodily performance (praxis), and in particular in handiwork,\(^{22}\) such as, for example, wrestling or carpentry, and activities where knowledge is distinct from any bodily performance necessary to make it effective, such as, for example, the activity of the wrestling coach and that of the master carpenter.

The point should be stressed, since it is commonly misunderstood: one cannot have the knowledge of a wrestler without being able to do the moves of wrestling with one’s body, or of a carpenter without being able to handle a hammer, which makes them practical arts; whereas one can be a wrestling coach even if one is unable to do the moves of wrestling due to some physical disability, or a master carpenter even if one is

\(^{21}\) Cf. Skemp, Plato's Statesman, p. 122, note 1.

\(^{22}\) Note that carpentry is said to be a form of χειρουργία, handiwork (258d9). The Stranger’s argument, at 259c6-8, for the theoretical character of statesmanship, also confirms this, for there the contrast is between “strength and force of soul” and the work of one’s hands and body. This has the odd consequence of limiting praxis to what one can achieve with the body (a very un-Greek, and definitely un-Aristotelian, way of thinking about praxis).
unable to lift a finger.23 We might say that this is a contrast in the degree of embodiment of an art, for to be sure every art needs some bodily performance in order to be effective in the world (even pure mathematicians need chalk or sticks or paper occasionally). But the “theoretical” arts merely require a way to express λόγοι,24 whereas the “practical” arts simply are specific skills in the use of one’s body rooted in some prior insights into some part of reality.25 More generally, the practical arts directly result in the expenditure

---

23 This point is entirely separate from the question of whether one can acquire the knowledge of the wrestling coach or the master carpenter without having been first a wrestler or a carpenter, something that seems unlikely. It may be that one has to go through the “practical” forms of knowledge in order to acquire the “theoretical” ones, but this concerns the process of learning, not the possession of the knowledge as such.

24 Pure mathematics is thus not the skill of knowing how to write with chalk on a blackboard, but merely requires that skill or a similar one in order to be effective in the world. The view that mathematics consists in “doing” things (of engaging in praxis in a broad sense), however, is not altogether contrary to the self-interpretation of mathematics. Most mathematicians speak of their activity as a form of doing, as Socrates already complained in the Republic (527a1ff). In the opening page of his Apology, Hardy (one of the great mathematicians of the 20th century), characterizes his own art as a practical one: “[t]he function of a mathematician is to do something, to add to mathematics, and not to talk about what he or other mathematicians have done” (G. H. Hardy, A Mathematician’s Apology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940; reprint, 1967, reissued in the Canto series in 1994, with a foreword by C. P. Snow, p. 61; he goes on to cast aspersions on what he is about to do, as well as more generally on the sort of activity in which I am currently engaged, the activity of the commentator, since the doer, for him, is higher than the mere explainer of the deed). Hardy, the great defender of “pure” and “real” mathematics, mathematics without “useful” applications, characterizes a mathematician as being “like a painter or poet, ... a maker of patterns” (p. 84) and like a creative artist (cf. p. 139: “mathematics must be justified as art if it can be justified at all,” also p. 143 “[m]athematics is not a contemplative but a creative subject”). And yet Hardy, despite all this, still says (probably like most mathematicians) that “mathematical reality lies outside us, that our function is to discover or observe it, and that the theorems which we prove, and which we describe grandiloquently as our ‘creations’, are simply notes of our observations” (p. 124-124). The tension between the understanding mathematics as praxis and mathematics as devoid of praxis is in fact very deep; its source lies in the ambiguous appearance of mathematical reality.

25 In the Gorgias (450c7ff), Socrates made a distinction between the τέχναι that are in need of ἔργασία and can even be conducted in silence, and the τέχναι that are in need of λόγοι and whose most important business is conducted through λόγοι (450c7-e2). This distinction is similar to the distinction the Stranger makes between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge, though Socrates does not characterize the arts that the Stranger calls gnostics as devoid of praxis, but rather says that their praxis happens through λόγοι (450d9-e1), whereas the praxis of the other sort of art (which Socrates, unlike the Stranger, does not bother to name) is accomplished mostly in silence (450c9). This is not an unessential difference between Socrates and the Stranger (indeed, Socrates does not say that the arts that accomplish their work by means of ἔργασία actually have a praxis, but rather restricts praxis to what is accomplished by λόγοι, the opposite move to the Stranger), but the basic contrast is similar: some forms of knowledge require bodily performances rather than λόγοι, others require λόγοι rather than bodily performances.
of energy and the movement of bodies in very specific ways, whereas the theoretical arts at best result in the expression of judgments regarding the movement of bodies.\textsuperscript{26} Needless to say, most arts that make society work are in some way practical, since society requires the movement of a myriad of bodies in specific ways in order to survive: seeds have to be sown knowledgeably, grain has to be stored and transported properly, swords have to be wielded skillfully, dances have to be performed, tools have to be made, ores have to be extracted, and so on.\textsuperscript{27} One of the key questions of the Statesman concerns the relationship between the theoretical art of the statesman and the practical arts that make society work, i.e., care for human beings.

This contrast of praxis and λόγοι (cf. Sophist 219c5) as the contrast between bodily performances and activity independent of such performances also emerges from a consideration of the difference between theoretical and practical arts, on the one hand, and acquisitive and productive arts, the ruling distinction among the forms of knowledge in the Sophist, on the other. The first contrast is between soul-based activities and body-based activities; the second is between activities whose objects pre-exist and activities whose objects do not. This implies, in particular, that there can be theoretical forms of production, of which “statesmanship” appears to be an example, as well as non-theoretical forms of production.

\textsuperscript{26} Technically, of course, even the theoretical arts require expenditure of energy and the (internal) movement of the body: the mathematician uses his brain, a physical object, which uses energy and “moves” (i.e., changes) in specific ways in the process of finding an answer. But the point still holds: in purely theoretical forms of knowledge, nothing outside the person is necessarily moved, and the amount of energy expended is nearly always minimal compared with the energy expended by practical arts.

\textsuperscript{27} The notion of a “machine” (in which some of this practical knowledge can be embedded) complicates the distinction between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge, though it does not altogether abolish it. This is, however, a philosophical problem beyond the scope of this study.
It may be objected to this view of the practical/theoretical distinction that practical forms of knowledge, according to the Stranger, assist in the completion or bringing to an end (συναπτελούσαν) bodies that become and were not before. They thus appear to be concerned with bodily generation. But this seems to make practical forms of knowledge identical with the productive arts that were described in the *Sophist*.

Indeed, some of the language the Stranger uses here to describe practical forms of knowledge is reminiscent of the language he used in the *Sophist* to describe the productive arts (*Sophist* 219b4-6). In both cases something that had no being beforehand is brought to being. Similarly, when the Stranger discusses the acquisitive arts (219c2-8) he speaks of the γένος of knowing (τὸ τῆς γνωρίσεως) and of the things that are learned (τὸ ... μαθηματικών), language which is clearly connected to the description of theoretical forms of knowledge in the *Statesman*. The acquisitive arts do not generate anything, but merely acquire or preserve (by not yielding to others) what has been already generated.

Yet the division between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge was introduced in a way that emphasized its *difference* from the acquisitive/productive distinction. In an amusing passage,28 the Stranger asks young Socrates whether they are to divide the forms of knowledge just as they did during their previous inquiry on the sophist. Young Socrates, however, is uncertain about how to proceed. It is not even clear that he remembers what was the cut to which the Stranger is referring; at any rate the Stranger does not volunteer this information (the cut was between the productive and

---

28 Few scholars note this; see Klein, *Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman*, p. 148, who notes the “amusing” character of this exchange between the Stranger and young Socrates.
acquisitive τέχνας, *Sophist* 219d1-4), and young Socrates does not ask for it. He behaves as a student who has not done his reading for class may behave upon being called on to answer a question by his professor; he cloaks his ignorance in a vague “perhaps.” He is soon easily persuaded, without any show of evidence on the part of the Stranger, that the earlier cut has to be abandoned (*Statesman* 258c1-2).29 The effect of this curious exchange is precisely to call attention to the earlier distinction, to bring it to mind, and to note very specifically that the distinction the Stranger is now drawing is different from the earlier distinction despite its superficial similarities to it.30

Furthermore, the Stranger’s description of the acquisitive arts is not entirely congruent with his description of the theoretical arts. The acquisitive arts, as the Stranger characterizes them, “get in hand” (χειροτα, 219c5; remember that the Stranger consigns all χειρουργία to the practical arts, *Statesman* 258d9) “by means of λόγοι and πράξεις” (*Sophist* 219c5) some of the things that are or become, and some others they do not yield to those people attempting to “get them in hand” (χειρουμένοις, 219c6). This indicates that acquisition is not necessarily devoid of πράξεις: there is such a thing as practical acquisition, as well as probably also a theoretical acquisition (arithmetic...

---

29 One can also interpret young Socrates’ behavior here as reflecting a too easy acceptance of the Stranger’s authority. He is too quick to accept, without asking for any evidence, the Stranger’s claim that the cut must be different (258b10-c2); and is disinclined to share in the work of finding the Statesman (258c8-9). Young Socrates expects to be told what the statesman is. This is problematic, for given that the Stranger does not introduce the topic by means of an example like the angler means that young Socrates will not have experience of how the division of the forms of knowledge that the Stranger is about to propose works itself out in a smaller science or τέχνη (e.g., carpentry, for instance) than statesmanship. He is ill-prepared, in other words, to object to some of the dubious claims the Stranger is about to put forward. See Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, pp. 7-8.

understood as the acquisition of arithmetical knowledge, for instance, by means of λόγοι but not πράξεις).

As I indicated above, the distinction between acquisitive and productive arts in fact rests on a difference in the status of the objects of their concern. Acquisitive arts are concerned with objects that exist independently of the art, such as fish or mathematical theorems, whereas productive arts bring into being the objects of their concern, such as chairs or ordered πόλεις. The distinction between practical and theoretical sciences, by contrast, rests on a difference in the relationship of knowledge to body: in the practical arts, knowledge is “embodied” in some physical performance, whereas in the theoretical arts knowledge is independent of any particular physical performance. Thus, theoretically, any art can be characterized both according to the pre-existence or lack thereof of its object (i.e., as acquisitive or productive) and according to the way in which its knowledge is tied to the performance of particular bodily actions (i.e., as theoretical or practical), leading to a fourfold characterization of arts as theoretical-acquisitive (e.g., arithmetic), theoretical-productive (e.g., master-carpentry, statesmanship), practical-acquisitive (angling) and practical-productive (carpentry, perhaps wrestling). At first glance, this looks implausible; how can production, which is concerned with the bringing into being of something, be theoretical? Yet this is precisely what the Stranger will suggest by introducing the distinction between critical and commanding

---

31 The distinction is not always clear in specific cases (cf. Rosen, Plato's Sophist: the Drama of Original and Image, p. [find exact reference], Rosen, Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics, p. viii): one might say, for instance, that the angler creates the dead fish from a live one; and it is not clear whether we should say that the wrestler produces his performance or acquires victory. But the basic distinction between arts whose objects pre-exist and arts whose objects do not remains unaffected.

arts, as we will see (cf. Statesman 261a10-b2 and discussion below, section 3.3). To anticipate a bit, theoretical-commanding is the family name of those (mostly) productive arts that operate by means of λόγοι (more specifically, commands) and are thus not tied to the performance of any specific skilled bodily actions. By means of commands they bring into being things that did not exist before in the physical world; they initiate the expenditure of energy and set bodies in motion without themselves moving much more than the vocal cords of the knower. They thus stand to the realm of praxis as the soul stands to the body.

From this point of view, the Stranger’s surprising placement of statesmanship among the theoretical arts is not only understandable but altogether necessary. Political science, since it need not be embodied in any particular physical performance, cannot but be theoretical. The Stranger, however, does not make this identification directly, perhaps sensing that it seems to outrage the common usage of the terms “theoretical” and “practical.” He first asks young Socrates to consider a different matter before proceeding to the classification of statesmanship as either theoretical or practical, namely, the question of the identity of kingship, statesmanship, the art of household management and the art of the slave-master (258e8ff).

33 As it has outraged the sense of many commentators, who persist, even when sympathetic to Plato, in attempting to see statesmanship as somehow both theoretical and practical or in seeing some sort of contradiction in the argument. For the view that there is some sort of tension or even incoherence in the argument, see Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 27-30 (who is fundamentally hostile to the Stranger), Sprague, Plato’s Philosopher-King: A Study of the Theoretical Background, p. 101 (who seems fundamentally hostile to Plato), and Skemp, Plato’s Statesman, pp. 122-23, note 1 (who is not nearly as hostile); for the view that statesmanship is eventually revealed as both theoretical and practical, see Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.79 (but also passim, as the argument extends throughout the entire work), Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 152, Hemmenway, "Pedagogy in the Myth of Plato's "Statesman": Body and Soul in Relation to Philosophy and Politics," p. 257, Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," p. 267 (who seems to make an elementary mistake in thinking of statesmanship as practico-productive), and much more subtly Strauss, "Plato," p. 221.
3.2.2 The identity of πολιτική and βασιλική

It is not immediately clear what hangs on identifying kingship (βασιλική), statesmanship (πολιτική), household management (οίκονομική), and slave management or tyranny (δεσποτική) for the purposes of classifying βασιλική as a theoretical form of knowledge, since it is not clear that all of these are theoretical forms of knowledge.

Even if we were well disposed to accept that πολιτική and βασιλική (the more properly “political” arts) are theoretical forms of knowledge, it is hard to accept that household management is or requires a theoretical form of knowledge, and even harder to accept that the management of slaves is or requires a theoretical form of knowledge. To put the problem in the terms of the argument the Stranger presents a bit later for why the art of the king must be classed among the theoretical forms of knowledge (259c6-8), it would be very hard to believe that the slave master accomplishes more “by the force of his soul” than by the terror of his whip.

---

34 For a somewhat plausible reconstruction of the connection, see Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*, note to 258e11. Rowe suggests that the argument proceeds from a kind of reduction to the lowest common denominator: slave-masters do not do anything with their hands (“that’s what slaves are for”), ergo statesmen do not do so either. He, however, like others, thinks that the argument is more “persuasive than strict,” especially in view of the later linking of statesmanship with the rule of the city rather than the household (a connection also noted by Monique Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), pp. 257-58) and the identification of statesmanship with the rule of free human beings. John M. Cooper, "Plato’s "Statesman" and Politics," in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. John J. Cleary and Gary M. Gurtler (1997), pp. 75-78, goes further in indicting the argument as flagrantly invalid and superfluous for the ostensible task at hand. He thinks it is designed to make the provocative identification of the statesman with the king (provocative for Athenian politics, at least), an identification that is however softened in the course of the rest of the argument – the meaning of kingship changes. I would not go as far as Cooper, but there is clearly something provocative about the argument, as we shall see.

35 Though Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*, note to 258e11, notes correctly that slaves are for manual labor (ideally the slave-master would thus not have to do anything with his hands), he neglects to note that the management of slaves is usually accomplished by the application of physical force: see *Laws* 777a4-7.
Indeed, insofar as the ὀικονόμος and the δεσπότης represent the “private” realm, which we may describe as the realm of the body – where feeding and sexual activity take place – whereas the βασιλεύς and the πολιτικός represent the “public” realm – the realm, if not of the soul, at least of the self-disclosure of the soul through action and especially through λόγοι36 – we might have expected that the Stranger would insist on the difference between the knowledge of the δεσπότης and the ὀικονόμος on the one hand, and that of the βασιλεύς and the πολιτικός on the other.37 I shall argue that in collapsing the statesman and king with the household manager and the slave master, the Stranger highlights several features of the complicated relationship between the theoretical form of knowledge represented by statesmanship and the practical forms of knowledge. First, by identifying statesman and king (section 3.2.2.1) he suggests that the effectiveness of statesmanship in the world is in a crucial way independent of the knowledge of the statesman. This part of the argument thus widens the gap between theory and practice. Second, by identifying the statesman/king with the household manager/slave master (section 3.2.2.2), he a) attempts to minimize or efface the tension between theory and practice by identifying the statesman with the one figure who is always obeyed unquestioningly, namely, the slave master (narrowing the gap between theory and practice that he just opened); and b) foreshadows the essential lawlessness of the statesman’s knowledge.

Though the identification of statesman and household manager argument is later silently exposed as at the very least misleading (since the household is not normative for


37 As Aristotle will insist in Politics I.1, clearly criticizing this argument.
the *polis* but the other way around), it is not altogether wrong, *pace* Aristotle, for, as we learn later in the dialogue, only the statesman would have the knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble that would make the management of the household fully successful. There might be a science or sciences of household management (a τέχνη of nurture, 288e9ff), but such a science would not include the knowledge of the good (it would have only a partial good – a partial care of human beings – for its object), and would therefore have to be subordinated to political knowledge. Yet the statesman’s knowledge would still depend for its effectiveness on the practical knowledge of such household managers (and more generally on the practical knowledge of the craftsmen of nurture).

The argument proceeds on the basis of two complex analogies: one between doctors and statesmen, and another between the city and the household. We will examine each of these in turn.

3.2.2.1 Doctors and Statesmen

The Stranger starts by asking whether if someone is able to sufficiently give advice to a “public” doctor, though being in private life himself, it is not necessary to grant that his τέχνη deserves the same name as the one of the person advised.38 Young Socrates says yes. The Stranger then asks whether if someone, himself a private citizen, is clever (δεινός) at advising a man who is king (βασιλεύοντι) over some land, we should not say that that person has in hand the ἐπιστήμη which the ruler himself must

38 See Skemp, *Plato’s Statesman*, note to 259a1ff, p. 124, for the evidence concerning the private and public practice of medicine at this time.
possess. After young Socrates agrees, the Stranger then identifies this ἐπιστήμη with βασιλική, the ἐπιστήμη of the genuine or true king, and goes on to ask whether the possessor of such an ἐπιστήμη should not rightly be called βασιλικός, kingly, whether he be a ruler or a private citizen; young Socrates says that it would be just for such a person to be so called (259a1-b5).

Note that there are at least two cases in which the advice of a “private” doctor could be called for. In the first case, the private doctor is a true doctor, and the public doctor is a sham doctor; knowledge is all on the “private” side, and authority (and thus the actual praxis of treating patients) is all on the “public” side. Without the private advisor, the public doctor is no better than a snake-oil salesman; but with it, he seems to be at best a herald, a transmitter of someone else’s knowledge (cf. Statesman 260c6-261a1). In the second case, both private and public doctors are true doctors, but the private doctor is a specialist, or has more experience, or simply the situation the public doctor is called upon to deal with calls for discussion and the pooling of the “cognitive resources” of a number of doctors, including some who are not actually authorized to treat the patient.

In the first case, a private advisor would be faced with the difficult problem of how to get the sham doctor to transmit his instructions to the patient or to operate on him or her, for we may assume that the public doctor does not believe he or she has no knowledge, but on the contrary thinks he does know how to treat people. For the private advisor to succeed in making effective his knowledge of medicine in someone ignorant of medicine who nevertheless believes he is not ignorant, he would have to make the “public” doctor submit to the kind of purification that the Stranger associated with “noble
sophistry” in the *Sophist* (226b1-231b8). This “noble sophistry” would not be the kind of knowledge that the *true* doctor would need if he were a “public” doctor, but something *additional* to medicine, even if they were related forms of knowledge (cf. *Sophist* 226e1ff). At any rate, it is clear that the relationship between the “theoretical” knowledge of the private doctor and the “practical” activity of the public doctor is by no means unproblematic; on the contrary, the gap between the one and the other needs to be mediated by some other form of knowledge.

The second case is, of course, more “realistic,” but it suggests that the knowledge of medicine is incomplete – and perhaps cannot even be completed. There are always unsolved problems; consultation among experts might improve the chances of solving them, but does not ensure it. Medicine would emerge, to use modern terminology, as a science susceptible of progress. More importantly perhaps, despite the existence of hierarchies of knowledge in this situation, doctors would be speaking to each other essentially as equals. The advice of the private doctors, given and received in good faith, need not be presented by means of an art such as the noble sophistry described in the *Sophist*. In this case, the relationship between the two doctors is not as problematic as in the first case, but this is only because each doctor has some partial knowledge that allows them to properly evaluate the advice they give and receive.

Now, what happens when we transpose these two situations to the political domain? Which of these two situations is the Stranger taking as his model in the analogy with statesmanship? As we have seen, the Stranger speaks of the one who, as a private citizen, is “clever” (δεινὸς) at advising a man who rules as king over the land; this adviser has the knowledge that the ruler should possess (but, by implication, does not). It
would seem that the Stranger is thus pointing to the first rather than the second situation.\textsuperscript{39} However, while in the example of the doctors the asymmetry between the public and private doctors in respect of their knowledge was more or less hidden, here the public/private distinction has widened into a gulf. The relationship that the Stranger presents to young Socrates is no longer one of equals (either merely social equality or even a rough equality of knowledge), of doctors advising other doctors or even of citizens advising other citizens in the assembly, but a doubly unequal one. This is so in two ways.

First, the private citizen cannot simply set up shop somewhere else in the city and call himself king, unlike the private doctor, who can set up shop somewhere else in the city next to the “state” doctors, whether or not the latter are true doctors or sham doctors. The private citizen is obligated to submit to the power of the king whereas no doctor is so obligated to submit to the power of another doctor \textit{qua} doctor; he is not, and cannot be, the social equal of the king. Yet at the same time, the Stranger suggests that this situation is absurd, for it is the private citizen who, \textit{ex hypothesi}, has the knowledge necessary to rule, whereas the official power (be it king or assembly, we might add) does not.\textsuperscript{40} The official king is not really the equal of the private citizen with knowledge; the only way of acknowledging this is to make the private citizen king. It is thus “just” (\textit{dikaios}, \textit{259b6}, in young Socrates’ answer) for this person to be called kingly; but the actual situation described, in which this person is merely a “clever” advisor, is presumably not just.

---

\textsuperscript{39} See Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 259a8.

\textsuperscript{40} This is merely the suggestion contained in the Stranger’s \textit{tēn epistēmēn hēn eite tov āρχontas autón kēkτhēsai} (\textit{259a8}) and in the \textit{dēnós} of the line above. He does not explicitly say that the public or official king does not have any sort of knowledge.
The Stranger calls the hypothetical advisor δείνος, clever (an epithet often applied to the sophists in Plato), a term that brings to mind images of deviousness and trickery, but also of power and awe. Such an advisor is clever in part insofar as he cannot let it be known that it is he, not the official king, who should rule; his cleverness consists not only in giving good advice to the king, but in making it seem that the king nevertheless should continue to rule, a situation which is not, in fact, just. One thinks here of Plato attempting to give advice to monarchs who think they know more than they actually do, using something like the “noble sophistry” that seemed to refer to Socrates in the *Sophist*. Contrast this with the (hypothetical) situation in which a citizen (a πολίτης) gives advice to another citizen, who can think through and accept that advice in good faith. This case would correspond to the situation in which private doctors give advice to public doctors in good faith, where both public and private doctor are in fact doctors, though perhaps of different degrees of skill. The citizen who takes the advice and acts on it (a πολιτικός in the assembly⁴¹) and the private citizen who simply gives advice without participating in the carrying out of policy deserve the same name; both are πολιτικοί, people who act in the *polis*. In this second case, in other words, political knowledge is a science susceptible of improvement through the give and take of open debate, and compatible with a certain sort of democracy. In the first case, the arrangements in the *polis* stand condemned as unjust; in the second, they do not.

Yet in the first case the cleverness of the advisor is an implicit acknowledgement that the effectiveness of a ruler’s activity in the realm of *praxis* depends on matters extraneous to knowledge, such as birth, which of all the claims to rule is the most

arbitrary and unrelated to knowledge. The advisor cannot rule directly, apparently, because he does not hold the office of king; and effectively holding the office of king does not depend on knowledge. He remains a stranger to his polis qua knowledgeable individual; by identifying the king as the man with knowledge (rather than as the man who holds the office of the king) the Stranger has thus widened the gap between theory and practice.

The collapse of the distinction between the king and the man with knowledge, however, is also the collapse of the distinction between the public and private spheres, as we shall see shortly. This fact provides an opportunity for the Stranger to temporarily close the gap between theory and practice he has just widened by collapsing the political arts of the statesman and king into the arts of the household, with a great deal of help from an inattentive young Socrates, whose mathematical training has left him ill prepared to distinguish the true king from the tyrant (cf. also chapter 4, sections 4.1-4.2, chapter 6, section 6.1.3). With this second argument, however, the inequality of the oikos becomes normative over the potential equality of the polis, and the statesman starts to look like a god.

3.2.2.2 The mathematical identity of the city and the household.

The argument for the identity of king and slave-master begins with the assertion that oikonomos and despotes are the same thing (259b7). The claim does not come out of nowhere, since the Stranger had, in effect, identified the possessor of kingly

knowledge with the private citizen, the ἰδιότης, the one who does not hold office; hence it makes sense that the Stranger would now consider the form of knowledge specific to the private citizen. But the private citizen for the purposes of (Greek) politics is always an ὀικονόμος, the head of a household. The private counterpart of the king is not a “private king” in the way that the private counterpart of the “public” doctor is a private doctor, but a household head, the ruler of a family.

Yet the Stranger’s assertion that the head of the household— the one who uses νόμος, law/distribution in the house, ὁικός – is the same as the master of slaves is somewhat startling; for between master and slaves there seems to be no true νόμος, only violence. The identification of slave master and ὀικονόμος thus directly parallels the identification of king and πολιτικός, an identification that the Stranger has not yet asserted but will soon; in Greek life, one might say, the βασιλεύς is to the slave-master as the πολιτικός is to the ὀικονόμος. The first pair is defined by lawlessness; the second by νόμος (law) and νομός (distribution). The double identification of ὀικονόμος and δεσπότης on the one hand and of πολιτικός and βασιλεύς on the other thus blurs the distinction between law and lawlessness, which becomes an issue as the Stranger

43 Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 259b9-10, notes that ὀικήσις in this context means any productive enterprise, including but not restricted to the household. The basic point, however, remains the same even if the distinction meant is that between “society” as the realm of economic exchange and “politics” as the realm of non-economic action.

44 Unless one accepts Robinson’s transposition. The argument is logically tidier then, but the dramatic signals seem wrong; the Stranger’s jump to the private realm seems right after 259b6, as I have indicated, since he has privileged the private “king” over the public “king,” just as he privileged the private doctor over the public doctor.

45 As Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 258e11, notes, δεσπότης (slave master) is often used in Greek of the tyrant; and in Athenian political life the βασιλεύς is often identified with unfreedom and thus, in a certain sense, with tyranny (cf. Cooper, "Plato's "Statesman" and Politics," p. 76).
attempts to correct the first genealogy of the statesman (cf. 276e1-14). There the Stranger implicitly recognizes that the simple identification of statesman and δεσπότης is not correct; but the tension between law and lawlessness, λόγος and violence, pervades the entire inquiry, all the way to the argument on the rule of law, which presents the statesman’s knowledge as above the law and employing, as circumstances might require, law and lawlessness (see chapter 8, sections 8.2, 8.3.1). More importantly for our purposes, however, the conflation of the force of the δεσπότης and the persuasion of the πολιτικός deceptively presents the knowledge of the statesman as immediately effective in the world of praxis, like the knowledge of the δεσπότης, which exists only insofar as slaves obey.

At any rate, the Stranger’s next move is even more dubious. He now asks Socrates whether the two-dimensional figure – σχῆμα – of a large household differs at all from the three dimensional bulk – ἡγκώς – of a small polis with respect to their ἐρξή (259b9-10), and young Socrates immediately answers that they do not differ at all. This leads the Stranger to argue that therefore there is only one ἐπιστήμη for all of these, namely, for polis and οἰκήσις, whatever name it may have, a conclusion that Aristotle famously disputed in the Politics (I.1).

"πρὸς ἀρχήν" is normally, and rightly, translated “in point of rule” (Benardete) or “so far as the exercise of authority is concerned” (Skemp) or by some similar phrase. But the Stranger is also playing here on young Socrates’ knowledge of mathematics, since ἀρχή also means “principle” and in particular the generative principle of space (the
point; cf. *Laws* 894a1-5\(^{46}\); and in this respect no tri-dimensional figure differs in respect of a two-dimensional figure. They are both “transformations,” so to speak, of the point, their χρηματικός. To that extent, the tri-dimensional solid and the two-dimensional figure do not differ.

In another sense, however, young Socrates has been entirely misled by the Stranger’s phrasing; for if it is true that city and figure do not differ in respect of their χρηματικός, it is also true that the Stranger fails to account for the difference between tri-dimensional solids and two-dimensional figures. Properly speaking, no tri-dimensional solid, however small, is ever a two-dimensional figure, and no two-dimensional figure, however large, is ever a tri-dimensional solid. That “at the limit” a tri-dimensional solid is nearly indistinguishable from a two-dimensional figure does not warrant the Stranger’s conclusion (to which young Socrates does not object) that there is only one ἐπιστήμη for household head, slave master, king, πολιτικός, just as the observation that a bas relief is nearly indistinguishable from a painting does not warrant the conclusion that the sculptor’s art is the same as the painter’s art.\(^{47}\) After all, plane geometry and solid geometry can be considered distinct sciences, \(^{48}\) with solid geometry being the higher one that provides the measure for the lower, even if one must learn plane geometry before learning solid geometry.

---


\(^{47}\) It should be noted that confusions of two- and tri-dimensionality have a special significance in this dialogue; another important one occurs at 277a3-c6.

\(^{48}\) See *Republic* 528aff.
Thus, we can take the Stranger’s point in two senses. If we take the tri-dimensionality of the city as normative (as the measure, to anticipate the Stranger’s later doctrine, cf. 283c3ff), and the two-dimensionality of the household as the limit case, then only those who have true political knowledge (that is, the knowledge necessary for ruling in a polis) have in turn the knowledge necessary for ruling in a household; only true statesmen are true oikouvōmos. However, if we take the two-dimensionality of the household as normative, and the tri-dimensionality of the polis as the limit case, then knowledge of how to rule the household well is all that is required for knowing how to rule the polis.

In the first case, the λόγος/νόμος (the lawful persuasion) of the politikós and the νόμος (the lawful violence) of the king are the measure of the private as well as the public realms; in the second, the νομίς (distribution of goods) of the oikouvōmos and the violence of the slave master become the measure of the public as well as the private realms. In the first case, the private is absorbed into the public as a “surface;” in the second, more likely case in the context, the public is flattened into the private.49 In either case, however, the collapse of city into household leads directly to the identification of the human community with a “herd,” where there can be no distinction between public and private.

It is the latter position that seems to be implied by the Stranger’s language: the private becomes the norm for the public. This leads eventually to the conflation of the statesman’s knowledge with nurture (τροφή; cf. 261d4ff), namely, the kind of care that

49 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.77-78. Benardete also makes the important observation that this collapse of the public/private distinction is particularly adequate to young Socrates’ mathematical training.
usually happens in the household. The criticism of this (mistaken) identification after the myth (275d4ff) will later reverse the order of priority between public and private, restoring the public to its rightful position of prominence and making the polis the measure of the household rather than the other way around (see chapter 6, section 6.1.2). Hence the statesman is eventually defined in terms of his care for the polis, not the household, and the household manager and slave master disappear from the discussion. But for the moment the Stranger’s argument, which has played on young Socrates’ inability to understand ambiguity as a mathematician, suggests that statesmanship is akin to the patriarchal rule of the household manager and indeed to the tyranny of the δεσπότης. To put the point more generally, young Socrates misunderstands the implications of the theoretical character of political science: he thinks of it as having the direct effectiveness of the household manager’s science, i.e., as having an unmediated relationship to praxis. But such an unmediated relationship would only be possible if the statesman were a god, as the myth eventually shows (see chapter 8).

3.2.2.3 The theoretical character of βασιλική

It is only now that the Stranger makes explicit the theoretical character of βασιλική, by saying (259c6-8) that it is clear that all that the king is able to do with his hands and is whole body is very little with respect to the holding down of his áρχή in

50 This does not exactly mean, pace Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," pp. 257-58, that the identity of king/statesman/household manager/slave master is rejected, only that the private realm is no longer normative for the public.

51 If there were a need for transposing 259d4-d6 (which there isn’t, in my opinion), I would place it just before this point (259c6).
comparison to what he can do with “the wit and strength of his soul,” i.e., his “charisma,” an extra-rational property of his person.\textsuperscript{52} After young Socrates agrees, the Stranger continues, asking him whether the king is “more at home” (οἰκείοτέρον \textsuperscript{259d1}) in the theoretical form of knowledge than in the τέχνη that uses handiwork (χειροτεχνικῆς) and more generally practical form of knowledge. With young Socrates’ perfunctory agreement, the Stranger caps the previous set of arguments by finally identifying βασιλική and πολιτική and thus securely placing the latter among the theoretical forms of knowledge.

It has been noted by other commentators that the Stranger’s use of the comparative (the “smallness” of the things the king can do with his body; the way in which he is “more at home” – but not entirely at home – among the theoretical forms of knowledge) makes his argument less than sound as a way of classifying the king’s knowledge among the theoretical forms of knowledge.\textsuperscript{53} The Stranger’s move here resembles his earlier collapse of the city into the household, in that a matter of more and less is turned into grounds for a distinction of is and is not. Yet the basic point he makes is sound: the king’s physical activity is residual, disconnected from his real knowledge, though perhaps necessary for this knowledge to become effective. His effectiveness,

\textsuperscript{52} πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς σύνεσιν καὶ ρώμην is an unusual phrase, hence my unusual translation “charisma.” The word ρώμη makes the soul into a kind of body, as it is used mostly of physical strength (see LSJ s.v. ρώμη); and the word σύνεσις suggests a kind of “animal” cunning (see LSJ s.v.), untutored by learning or real knowledge, in contrast to the expected φρόνησις. This is another pointer to the uneasy relationship between theory and practice.

\textsuperscript{53} See, e.g., Scodel, \textit{Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman}, p. 31: the “use of the comparative degree belies the notion that \textit{diaeresis} is simply an application of the law of excluded middle.” Strauss, "Plato," p. 221, also notes that the Stranger “abstracts from the fact that sheer bodily force is a necessary ingredient of the rule of human beings over human beings,” but does not draw the same conclusions as Scodel; he thinks, on the contrary, that this abstraction is necessary insofar as “statesmanship is understood as a kind of knowledge or art, or because abstraction is made from that which distinguishes the political from the arts.” (Note that, in typical Straussian fashion, the alternatives are not exactly equivalent).
furthermore, depends not on his knowledge but on his charisma, that indefinable “presence” of soul that great leaders have.

We find that the king is more “at home,” more in his oikos, when he is of the theoretical forms of knowledge. A king who needs to accomplish something with his body is not fully at home there. And yet, we seem to have been warned, the king will have to accomplish something with his hands and his whole body. The king then seems to be perpetually not at home in some respect; or, to put it in other words, the place of the king is not to be found in the oikos, to which the Stranger’s collapse of city and household has confined him. That is, unless the king really does not need to accomplish anything at all by bodily might, or in other words, unless he is a god: the true king would only be at home if he were a god ruling over human beings in the age of Cronos, where the distinction between oikos and polis is rendered meaningless and rule could occur without any exertion of the body, due to the perfect obedience of human beings. The Stranger is already preparing the way to his great myth (268e4ff), and being helped by young Socrates’ inattentiveness.

But how is the king to achieve anything by the “wit and strength of his soul,” by his “charisma”? Surely if the wit and strength of his soul is to have an effect in the world, then somebody must, at some point, carry out actions with his hands and body. The Stranger has forcibly closed this gap between theory and practice at least partway by collapsing the wide world of the polis with its heterogeneity and potential political equality into the narrow world of the oikos with its homogeneity, inequalities, and violence. But he must still re-establish the connection between the soul and the body, λόγος and praxis, that his distinction between theoretical and practical forms of
knowledge threatens to destroy. Thus he proposes the division of theoretical forms of knowledge into critics (judgment-only forms of knowledge) and epitactics (commanding forms of knowledge).

3.3 Judgment and command

The Stranger introduces this distinction (259d10-260b6) to young Socrates by means of very similar examples as the ones he used to introduce the distinction between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge. In place of arithmetic, he uses calculation (λογιστική; 259e1ff), in place of carpentry (τεκτονική), he uses the art of the master-builder (ἀρχιτεκτονική, cf. 259e9ff).

The Stranger says that λογιστική knows the differences among numbers (τὴν ἐν τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς διαφορὰν), but he asks young Socrates whether they should give it also as its ἔργον or work to judge what it knows (Statesman 259e5-7). The phrasing is significant: an ἔργον is normally the result of praxis, a “deed.” Furthermore, the

---

54 The word λογιστική is contrasted by Socrates in the Gorgias (451c1ff) with the word ἀριθμητική in a very similar context (see note 25). Socrates there distinguishes λογιστική from ἀριθμητική on the grounds that λογιστική judges the odd and the even in relation to each other, whereas ἀριθμητική judges them in relation to themselves. The contrast the Stranger draws here, however, seems to be different in that λογιστική appears to be a branch of ἀριθμητική. For a somewhat different view of this, see Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.79, who thinks λογιστική implies “contemplation” of what is judged (whereas master-carpentry does not). It should be noted that before drawing the critics/epitactics distinction, the Stranger first secures agreement from young Socrates regarding the theoretical status of both calculation and the art of the master-builder. This preliminary step makes sense for master-carpentry, but it is rather odd for calculation, which, as the Stranger describes it, seems indistinguishable from ἀριθμητική itself, the main example of a theoretical ἐπιστήμη. The Stranger seems to fear that young Socrates might associate calculation with some sort of physical performance – drawing in the sand, for instance – given his training with Theodorus, whose mathematical practice seems to have depended on the drawing of figures. He must make certain that young Socrates understands his own practice as theoretical rather than practical. See Holger Thesleff, "Theaitetos and Theodoros," Arctos 24 (1990), pp. 151-54.
Stranger makes it clear that this ἔργον is not the mere noticing of the differences, but an additional matter (τὸ πλέον ἔργον 259e6), namely the judging of the differences (e.g., subtraction, addition). This is contrasted with the knowledge of the master-carpenter (the “ruler of carpenters,” ἄρχιτέκτων), which does not stop at judgment, since its ἔργον is outside itself. The master-carpenter must therefore issue commands to other people to complete its ἔργον; it is the possessors of practical arts (the workers, in this case the carpenters) who complete the ἔργον or work of the master-carpenter (cf. ἀπεργάσωνται 260a7).

The point seems to be that all forms of theoretical knowledge have some ἔργον, some thing that results from them, but in some forms of knowledge this ἔργον is completed internally and without the need for the knowledge or activity of anyone else or even of any outward bodily activity (the ἔργον being the “judgment”) whereas in others this ἔργον is completed externally with the assistance of others, especially people whose arts are tied up with bodily performances. The contrast is thus one of internal versus external ἔργον, and of ἔργα that are completed independently of other τέχναι and ἔργα that are not.55 The κριτική/ἐπιτακτική distinction is thus a distinction between self-sufficient arts and non-self-sufficient arts, and the classification of statesmanship as a “commanding” art therefore ties it securely to a network of arts whose cooperation is

55 The criticism of the Stranger’s argument, articulated by Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman*, p. 32, and less pointedly by Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, pp. III.79-80, lacks merit. Both Scodel and Benardete point to the language of the Stranger here and at 292b9-10 (where πολιτική is said to be both κριτική and ἐπιτακτική), to argue that the faculty of judging belongs to the master-carpenter and in general to the commanding sciences as much as to the “critical” ones, and hence that the distinction between critical and epitactic sciences is not very satisfactory. But the distinction the Stranger is drawing is not between sciences that use the faculty of judging and sciences that do not, but between sciences whose ἔργον, effective result, is completed internally and without the assistance of other sciences and sciences whose ἔργον is completed externally and with the assistance of other sciences.
required, and whose integration with statesmanship is necessary, if the ἐργον of statesmanship is to be achieved.\textsuperscript{56}

The way in which the art of the statesman relates to all the other arts (as yet unidentified) that are necessary for the ἐργον of statesmanship to be accomplished is through \textit{commands}. A “command” is the judgment as to what is to be done that the statesman derives from his insight, put into the imperative mood and usually expressed in words or gestures; we might call it, by analogy with calculation, a judgment of the difference between what is and what must be. Here a certain ambiguity arises: for if it is true that the statesman must know \textit{what} to command (in every circumstance), and indeed the \textit{order} in which the commands must be issued if the thing the statesman is responsible for is to emerge (cf. 260a6-7, a prefiguration of the statesman’s knowledge of the καιρός, the right time – see 305d1-5), it is not entirely clear whether he must know also \textit{how} to command (including at what level of detail to command\textsuperscript{57}), i.e., what commands (sometimes disguised in other forms) will be most effective given that human obedience is not a given.\textsuperscript{58} If he knew \textit{how} to command, this would seem to make rhetoric a part of

\textsuperscript{56} Pace Lambros Coulobaritsis, "Le paradigme platonicien du tissage comme modèle politique d'une société complexe,” \textit{Revue de Philosophie Ancienne} 13, no. 2 (1995), pp. 155-62. Coulobaritsis thinks Aristotle correctly ties statesmanship architectonically to a network of arts, while Plato does not; I think this is incorrect. Both Plato and Aristotle tie statesmanship architectonically to the network of arts of care, if in somewhat different ways.

\textsuperscript{57} Does the master-carpenter, for instance, provide a general instruction which the carpenters implement pretty much autonomously? Or does he give more detailed instructions, down to the level of interference in the practice of their τέχναι? The question is not solvable in the abstract, through there is probably a “mean” level of detail at which commands are most effective, a mean between the complete autonomy of the subordinate arts and the takeover of the subordinate arts by the superordinate art.

\textsuperscript{58} This is as true of carpentry as it is of statesmanship, \textit{pace} Benardete, \textit{The Being of the Beautiful}, p. III.80. The workers in carpentry may accept their place more consistently than the “workers” in politics, but they need not; generally they obey commands because they are \textit{paid}, not because they accept their place in the building of the house. Benardete’s remarks on the problem of obedience in politics are otherwise quite useful, however.
his art; yet later on rhetoric is said to be a *distinct* art from statesmanship (304c10ff).

Whatever the case, it is clear that the completion of the statesman’s work through commands is not a given, but must again be mediated through the agency of other arts. The care of human beings – the ἐργὸν of the statesman’s knowledge, as we learn later in the dialogue (cf. 275c9-277a2) – is not the work of the statesman alone.

It should also be noted that the introduction of “command” restores the statesman to actual rule. The private advisor to kings can hardly issue commands to anybody. He may offer suggestions, teach, and lead, through noble sophistry, the official king to see things he would not otherwise see; but it is never said of him (unlike of the master-carpenter) that it is fitting for him to actually carry through the work to completion.59 The Stranger thus now abandons this model of the advisor, as the master builder does not give advice to his carpenters, but rather orders them to do things. The statesman is no longer without office, so to speak; henceforth we are to consider him as holding full power in the city.

Just at the point where the Stranger has made clear the distinction between self-sufficient sciences that terminate in judgment and non-self-sufficient sciences that terminate in commands, and young Socrates has asserted that, in his opinion, the distinction is correct (260b3-6), the Stranger makes what looks like a throwaway comment. He remarks, as if to praise young Socrates’ agreement, that for those that are doing (πράττοντοι) something in common,60 agreement in νοὸς, like-mindedness


60 Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman*, p. 33, seizes on this comment for evidence of the incoherence of the Stranger’s divisions, arguing that it suggests that not even philosophy is purely theoretical. I think Scodel misses the true dramatic purpose of the Stranger’s comment, even though he, unlike most commentators, sees that there is a real issue here.
(όμονοεῖν) is to be welcomed (260b7-8). As young Socrates agrees with this, the Stranger pushes the point even further: as long as they share in this agreement, they should bid farewell to the fancies of others. The Stranger and Socrates now form a community in which they do something together and where the Stranger’s commands have been perfectly effective thus far, since young Socrates and the Stranger are in perfect agreement.61 Furthermore, their community of inquiry, unlike the community of master-carpenter and carpenters or that of statesman and subjects, is in apparently the best possible form for a common endeavor; since the Stranger embodies as much knowledge as it is possible for a human being, whereas young Socrates accepts his need to be led. The Stranger stands to young Socrates almost as the divine shepherd of the myth stands to human beings in the myth, and he is poised to lead him just as meekly as a sheep into error.62

Under such conditions – where the knowledge of the leader is as great in relation to the knowledge of the ruled as the Stranger’s knowledge is in relation to the knowledge of young Socrates – it seems plausible that ὀμόνοια is to be welcomed in common praxis. Such ὀμόνοια must be based on correct opinion or knowledge, however. The house will not be built if the carpenters constantly quarrel with each other and with the master-carpenter, who ex hypothesi knows better than the carpenters what must be done if the house is to be built, but it will also be built incorrectly or not at all if the master carpenter is a sham, even if the carpenters obey him in every particular. Should the Stranger and young Socrates, therefore, go so far as to discount all the “fancies”


62 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 7 and passim.
(δοξάσματα) of others in every well-functioning community of *praxis*? Aren’t they being too *naive*?  
Surely such discounting only makes sense if the leader (the master-carpenter, the Stranger, the statesman) in that particular community of *praxis* has complete and unalterable knowledge of what is to be done, able to deal with every situation; but his followers cannot always be aware of this, and impostors may be able to pass themselves off as such leaders, i.e., as sophists. The drama of the dialogue shows this to be the case, as the Stranger leads Socrates into the erroneous definition of the statesman as the shepherd of human beings with his complete agreement.

The Stranger does not say any of these things, to be sure. His remarks merely illuminate their situation as a possible model for politics, and show the consequences of accepting the “commanding,” non-self-sufficient image of statesmanship. At any rate he now asks Socrates to place the Statesman within the division they have just made. His phrasing, as usual, is revealing of a new dimension of the critical/commanding distinction. He asks young Socrates whether they shall place the statesman in the critical branch of the division, as if he were some observer (θεατήν 260c2), or in the commanding branch, as master over others (δεσπόζοντα 260c4).

Note the stark contrast: either the statesman is a mere observer, or he is despotic master of slaves. Since he turns out to belong in the commanding branch of the division, we should assume that the Stranger wants young Socrates to think that his ἐπίταξις 

---

63 Cf. 276e1-2 for a similar excess of naïveté with the much worse consequence of confusing king and tyrant, as well as the discussion of this passage in chapter 4, section 4.1.3.

64 It is thus not entirely clear that ὑμόνοα is to be welcomed in every form of *praxis*. The drama of the *Statesman* in fact seems to point to the dangers of uncritical agreement in philosophical inquiry (which, to be sure, may not be properly described as *praxis*). See Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, p. 7, Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman*, p. 33.
(command) is despotic, without appeal to reason or conversation. The statesman here appears already to be either a tyrant or a god, something that will be confirmed by the myth. The idea of advice – a kind of ἐπίταξις that is not despotic, as in the doctor image (cf. above, section 3.2.2.1) – has fallen by the wayside, and the consequences of folding the city into the household become clearer. It is the δεσπότης who now becomes the model for the οἰκονόμος, the πολιτικός, and the βασιλεύς. And young Socrates, misled by his own mathematical training, does not catch this.65

5.4 Translation or mediation and origination

The Stranger introduces the distinction between what I will call the “translating” or “mediating” (but which he does not name) and the “originating” forms of knowledge by underlining their own (young Socrates’ and his own) status as mere observers: they must observe (θεατέον 260c6) whether the commanding τέχνη can be divided. Their own activity is contemplative or critical, not commanding, and it will be accomplished by knowing the statesman in its difference from sophist and philosopher and passing judgment on that difference (cf. Sophist 217a7-b4; Statesman 260a4-7); their own work does not require the assistance of other arts. The Stranger’s knowledge is thus a kind of λογιστική, a τέχνη of λόγων, by means of which the difference of statesman, sophist and philosopher is calculated, but not political science itself.66 On the other hand, the


66 Note that this implies that there is a real difference between the knowledge of the statesman and the knowledge the Stranger exhibits (presumably, philosophical knowledge). Skemp, Plato's Statesman, p.
Stranger has just issued young Socrates a command. The success of their joint endeavor thus depends on whether or not young Socrates is actually able to follow it. ὑμῶνοια may be necessary but is not sufficient; competent subordinates are also required for the statesman’s work to be achieved. In this respect we might say that the Stranger re-enacts in a small matter the situation of political science.

This is an unmediated command: no one needs to “translate” it for young Socrates. Yet the division the Stranger will introduce implies that in politics the rule is for commands to be mediated, not unmediated. He introduces the distinction between translating or mediating and originating forms of knowledge by suggesting that the question of whether the commanding arts can be divided is usefully approached by comparing all commanding τέχνα to the τέχνη of the retailers (260c7-d2), a τέχνη he had discussed with Theaetetus in the Sophist (223d2-4ff). Retailers buy ἔργα (products, works, opera) from others, and sell them back again to others; similarly, heralds (the main example of the “translating” forms of knowledge) receive commands from others and give them in turn to others (Statesman 260d4-9).

We might therefore think that the art of the herald is the ability to receive these commands, preserve them in his memory, and deliver them again, unchanged, to the appropriate recipients. Seen in this way, it is hard to say why this should count as an art at all, since it would seem that all that it requires is a minimally functional memory, not a form of knowledge. But the Stranger immediately gives us a clue as to the knowledge

127, note 1 ad loc., tries to rationalize this tension in order to save the idea, present in the Republic, that the philosopher as observer (θεατῆς) of the forms is the statesman, by saying that even though “there is a real shift in emphasis” in the Statesman towards talking about the statesman as a less “abstract” figure than in the Republic, there is no formal inconsistency since the philosopher as observer and the philosopher as statesman are two different aspects of the same thing. I do not believe this way out of the tension here is so readily available; as I have argued throughout, I think statesman and philosopher are two different forms of knowledge. See also Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.81.
required, when in a rather impassionate speech (260d11-e9) he mentions ἐρμηνευτική and μαντική among the arts that are similar to the art of the herald.

ἐρμηνευτική and μαντική, in particular, the arts of interpretation (of divine omens) and of divination, transmit the commands and wishes of the gods to mortals; and they do so because these commands are not immediately intelligible to us. To preserve them means, therefore, to change them, or, more precisely, to translate them. The best translation is such that the translated command is perfectly adapted to the nature of the recipients and yet makes them do exactly what the gods wanted them to do; it makes the command as effective as if the command had come from within the recipients themselves. Such an art would require a double knowledge of the ways of the gods and of the natures of human beings.

The art contrasted with that of the retailer in the Sophist is that of the συντοπωλικός (cf. 223d2), that is, the art of the seller of his own creations. While in the Sophist what is emphasized is not the creativity or productivity of the artisan but his effectiveness as a salesman, in the Statesman the emphasis is rather on the production or origination of commands. The comparison to the master-carpenter shows that the statesman’s insight into the regularity or order of things allows him to fashion commands adequate to the situation he might be dealing with, just as the master carpenter’s insight into the plans of the house that is to be built allows him to issue the necessary commands to the workers that must build it, though the plans themselves are not commands nor can commands be straightforwardly derived from them.67 The contrast between mediating

and originating arts is thus one of arts that have an internal source of order and arts that do not.

At the same time, the Stranger hints at the fact that unless the human king speaks intelligibly to all human beings under his command, he would remain utterly in need of heralds able to translate his orders into effective praxis in the community. He must, therefore, be dependent on a community of artisans of which “heralds” (“social communicators,” to use a modern term) are an essential part. If the analogy with the seller of his own creations holds in some respect, the true king must also be able to make the sale, to speak somewhat crudely. His ability to make the sale, however, is eventually shown not to be determined by his own knowledge but by that of the rhetorician (cf. chapter 9, section 9.1.2). The statesman’s insights are inevitably mediated.

Unlike the ἔρμηνευς or μαντικός, the statesman does not transmit the orders and wishes of the gods to human beings, though it should be noted that on the assumption of the existence of ἔρμηνευτική and μαντική the self-commanding knower (the autonomous agent) par excellence must be the god, not the king. The Stranger seems to be implying either that these arts – μαντική and ἔρμηνευτική – are not really arts, or at least that the gods do not rule human beings by means of commands in this age of the world: the god may fashion the order of the world, but the knowledge of the statesman is required to transform this order into specific commands. Young Socrates does not notice this, but the Stranger is already preparing the way to the myth, where the god either directly rules or is absent, allowing the human statesman to rule.68

---

68 As Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.81, puts it, “[t]rue statesmanship precludes revelation. Political science falls with the existence and stands with the nonexistence of commanding gods.” This is so, of course, only if the Stranger is giving us the genealogy of the human statesman; but the
3.5 The mode of the statesman’s knowledge: summary.

The translating/originating division concludes the argument about the mode of the statesman’s knowledge. The first division, between theoretical and practical forms of knowledge, highlighted the way his knowledge is articulated, as a contrast between praxis and λόγοι and body and soul; the second division, between critical or self-sufficient and commanding or non-self-sufficient for the purposes of bringing about ἔργα, pointed out the relation of this form of knowledge to other forms of knowledge; and the last division, between translating and originating forms of knowledge, clarified further this relation to other forms of knowledge as a contrast between an internal source of order and an external one. The same essential contrast is dimly visible in all three divisions, if under different aspects, namely, that of the internal and the external, soul and body, though in different ways. Despite all the efforts of the Stranger, however, the gap between theory and practice remains, for it is as wide (and as narrow) as the gap between soul and body.

The Stranger now turns to the material, so to speak, which the commands of the king are to shape, and it is not surprising that the first division he attempts is that between soul and body, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Stranger, we shall see, is really leading towards the god. On the other hand, the statesman does turn out to be actually self-commanding; he transforms his insight into the order of the cosmos in the age of Zeus into the commands that are necessary for the preservation and improvement of the polis.
CHAPTER 4

HUMAN BEINGS

In the previous chapter, we examined the knowledge of the statesman in isolation from the object of its concern. In this chapter, we will examine the knowledge of the statesman insofar as it is concerned with a specific object, namely, human beings. The Stranger and young Socrates define “human being” by means of a complicated, and sometimes amusing, “division” of all ensouled beings that is also riddled with mistakes. The oddities and apparent barrenness and irrelevance of this division (“human being” emerges as either a two-legged pig or as a featherless biped, neither of which appears to be a very illuminating characterization of its essence) have contributed to the neglect of this section among commentators.¹ The division of human being, I argue, makes

¹ The impression of barrenness and irrelevance was not uncommon in antiquity, judging by the story, reported by Diogenes Laertius (VI.40), of how Diogenes the cynic responded when he heard the academic definition of man as a bipes implume. Diogenes is said to have produced a plucked chicken to disprove it, as a consequence of which the qualification “having broad nails” (τὸ πλατύνωμεν) was added to the definition. This is evidently a joke about both Diogenes and the platonic definition of human being as a bipes implume. It is even set up as one, with the classic introductory line: “Diogenes heard that Plato once defined man as a featherless biped, and was much applauded [for that].” The detail about the applause is evidently intended to amuse us (who could applaud such a ridiculous definition, ridiculous even within the dialogue, as the Stranger notes?), not to report a fact. The punch line of the joke is that τὸ πλατύνωμεν “the quality of having broad nails” sounds in Greek much like τὸ πλατόνικον, “the platonic thing;” the “improved” academic definition is thus “man is a ζώον δίπουν ἄπτερον πλατύνωμεν/πλατόνικον,” a “‘platonic’ featherless biped.” The story thus seems to show that in antiquity the definition of human being in the Statesman was commonly ridiculed. For some more or less explicit modern statements on the barrenness of this part of the diairesis, see Annas
substantive, not merely methodological claims; but these substantive claims can only emerge by paying close attention to the dramatic context of the division.

Part of the difficulty of this section is that the division is not meant to define human beings but statesmanship. The whole business of this part of the diairesis is thus to point out the relevant characteristics of human being as the object of concern of statesmanship, i.e., as a political being, not to arrive at an abstract definition of human being independent of the form of knowledge that is concerned with it. After all, as we shall see, there is more than one way of defining human beings, each of which brings to light differing contrasts with all the other ensouled beings (see below, section 4.5). The central thesis of this chapter can thus be stated as follows: how human being appears in the diairesis depends in a significant way on how statesmanship is conceptualized. In particular, human beings appear as two-legged pigs or a featherless bipeds rather than as beings with φρόνησις only after statesmanship is understood as a form of nurture, the kind of care that is appropriate to the household rather than the polis.

The diairesis thus describes human beings as they would look given the conception of statesmanship as nurture to which young Socrates and the Stranger subscribe in this part of the dialogue, a conception which is later shown to be wrong (267c5ff, 275d4ff). Yet even after the Stranger corrects the genealogy on this point by substituting care for nurture (after the myth, at 276a3-7), he fails to make any changes to the definition of human beings in accordance with this correction. Human beings remain featherless bipeds or two-legged pigs for (apparently) the rest of the dialogue, even

and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, p. x, and more concretely Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, p. 44; both Annas and Waterfield and Lane see the early part of the dialogue as mostly methodological. Those scholars who think the division contains some serious insight into the nature of human beings tend to be scholars influenced by the work of Strauss, though their conclusions diverge widely. I thus rely on their work perhaps more heavily in this chapter than in the others.
though by this point the myth has substantially changed our understanding of their essence, since the myth shows that human beings are the animals who must develop the \( \tau \varepsilon \chi \nu \alpha i \), i.e. the “technological” animals (see chapter 5, section 5.6.3).\(^2\) Part of the reason for this is that from the point of view of political science the generic possession of \( \varphi \rho \omicron \nu \eta \sigma i \varsigma \) is not a relevant characteristic of human beings, since such possession does not ensure that they actually have the knowledge necessary to rule themselves, given that human \( \varphi \rho \omicron \nu \eta \sigma i \varsigma \) appears split into different “arts” (see section 4.3). Yet this is not the whole story. The Stranger’s apparent endorsement of the division of human being in all its ridiculous aspects shows that statesmanship must therefore have something to do with the featherlessness and the bipedality of human beings, or more generality with their animality as revealed in the features by which the Stranger defines them, and similarly the human use of \( \varphi \rho \omicron \nu \eta \sigma i \varsigma \) and the invention of the \( \tau \varepsilon \chi \nu \alpha i \) must somehow arise out of these features. But, I argue, this can be so only if the genealogy is, as we shall see in some detail, systematically ambiguous at crucial points: the portrayal of human beings in the genealogy must contain their essence in both what the myth will call the age of Cronos and in our age, as the Stranger suggests later (cf. 276a6-7). I shall thus argue that, properly understood, human beings emerge from the genealogy as the incomplete animals,\(^3\) an incompleteness that can only be remedied by means of their disciplined use

---


\(^3\) Some scholars have argued that the genealogy shows that human beings are the vulnerable animals (cf. Zuckert, "The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrates' Political Art," pp. 9-10). I prefer the term “incomplete” since some of the ways in which human beings are different from animals are not due to the greater vulnerability of human beings to the harshness of nature but rather to their lacking the wholeness of nature that animals have. Cf. also Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," passim, and Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," passim.
of φρόνησις under the supervision of statesmanship, though this argument will only be fully supported after we examine the myth in the next chapter.

The systematic ambiguity of the genealogy points also to the pedagogical drama of this part of the dialogue, as young Socrates shows himself unable to grasp this ambiguity qua mathematician. As we shall see, the definition of human being is implicitly used by the Stranger to show to young Socrates that his understanding of political matters is woefully inadequate, despite his training in mathematics, and in fact in some sense because of this training, which has not prepared him to properly grasp the ensouled nature of human being. This inadequate understanding, furthermore, is manifested in young Socrates as a kind of pride in τέχνη — a lack of knowledge of his own ignorance rooted in his own proven “technical” ability – that is just as dangerous for politics as the unbridled ambition of other characters in other Platonic dialogues, since it may lead one into meekly taking tyranny for statesmanship, as we hinted in the previous chapter (sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.3). I shall argue therefore that the definition of human being can be read as a (not entirely successful) attempt to make young Socrates aware of the limitations of his own budding expertise.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I examine the confusions of young Socrates about the soul, and I argue that these confusions lead the Stranger to propose the understanding of statesmanship as nurture in common (section 4.1). Then I show how this understanding of statesmanship is indeed substantively incompatible with

---

4 A similar argument to mine is found in Hemmenway, "Pedagogy in the Myth of Plato's "Statesman": Body and Soul in Relation to Philosophy and Politics," passim.

5 Similar arguments are put forward by Howland, The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosphic Trial, pp. 244ff, and Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 26ff.
young Socrates’ common-sense understanding of human beings as beings with φρόνησις, and hence how his famous error, pointed out by the Stranger in great detail, is not merely methodological but also substantive (section 4.2). Next, I examine the problematic character of the Stranger’s first substantive correction of this error, namely, the distinction between tame and wild animals (section 4.3), and argue that it maps onto the aborted distinction between animals with φρόνησις and animals without φρόνησις, opening the way for the subsequent divisions that present human beings as beings in need of nurture. I then show how the remaining distinctions before the bifurcation of the division are pushed by the Stranger in the face of young Socrates’ possible resistance to their irrelevance, and how they nevertheless ambiguously point to important aspects of the statesman’s practice (section 4.4). I further examine how the long and short ways conceal the true nature of human beings as animals with a potential for φρόνησις (section 4.5). In the final section of the chapter (section 4.6) I examine the nature of the mistake the Stranger and young Socrates discover they have made, and argue that they have arrived at a picture of statesmanship that involves all the necessary forms of knowledge, like the wise man imitated by the sophist (in the Sophist, cf. 232b11-233b2; see also chapter 2, section 2.3), and yet an impossible form of wisdom for a human being. They thus arrive (correctly) at an understanding of statesmanship as wisdom; but their understanding of human wisdom is still defective, still “sophistic.”
4.1 Young Socrates’ confusion about the soul

The first thing the Stranger establishes after placing statesmanship among the “originating” arts of the “commanding” branch of the “theoretical” forms of knowledge is to say that those who rule by means of commands, do so for the sake of some generation (261a10-b2). This is a rather unclear statement, though the Stranger does not pause to clarify it but quickly continues: the things that become (or are generated), he says, are either inanimate or ensouled. How, in light of this fact, he asks young Socrates, are they to divide the theoretical-commanding arts? Unaccountably, young Socrates is unable to do this rather simple task (261b12), and the Stranger has to lead him by the hand: they are to order or put in charge (τάττοντες 261b13-c1; note the plural) one part of the theoretical-commanding arts over (ἐπὶ 261b13, c1) the generation of things without soul, another over the generation of things with souls. Young Socrates, however, still has no idea of where the Stranger is leading him. Incredibly, despite all this guidance, he has to ask for which of the two branches of beings (the soul-less or the kind that has soul) statesmanship is to be ordered to care (cf. 261c4-6).

His mathematical training appears to be of no use to him in this task, since mathematics is not concerned with things that are generated. It apparently has also failed to help him see the constant contrast between soul and body on which the Stranger’s

---

6 On the problematic nature of this classification, see Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.82. Is the general’s concern with victory in war a concern with an inanimate or an animate thing, for instance?

7 There is a play on words here: they are to put the arts of command in charge of, to order them to be set over (ἐπὶ ...τάττοντες; they are to use ἐπὶ ταξις) the soul-less things and the things with soul. The Stranger is playing at being the statesman with Socrates, just as earlier he had formed a community of praxis with him (see chapter 2, section 2.3).
divisions have been based thus far (cf. chapter 3 above, section 3.5). Moreover, he seems to have forgotten that Theaetetus was confronted with a similar choice during the conversation depicted in the *Sophist* (226e1-227c9), in the course of discovering the “cathartic” sophist, a choice with which Theaetetus also had some trouble (226e3-4), but which led, just as it will here, to the choice of the “having soul” branch of the division.

To be sure, young Socrates’ inability to complete the very simple task the Stranger has set for him is partly the Stranger’s fault: the notion of “generation” he is using is radically unclear. The Stranger, furthermore, has led young Socrates to see the kinship of statesmanship with mathematics, which is unconcerned with generation (in the theoretical/practical division) and with master-building, which is concerned with the generation of inanimate things (in the critical/commanding division), without pointing out the greater kinship of statesmanship to matters of the soul. It is not entirely surprising that young Socrates cannot now decide whether the statesman is to be a kind of glorified housing secretary, a promoter of physical health and breeding, or a *directeur de l’âme*, or, more generally, whether he is simply to ensure the abundant production of material goods, and/or the enlargement and preservation of the city’s population (the “increase of his stock”) like a shepherd or a developmentalist leader of today, or whether he is to promoted the health of the souls of the citizens.

To help young Socrates see the proper task of the statesman, the Stranger introduces a criterion that he had earlier disparaged, or at least indicted as

---

8 See Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.82. I owe the formulation “increasing his stock” to Emma Cohen de Lara.


10 I owe this formulation to Emma Cohen de Lara.
methodologically incompatible with diairesis, namely, the criterion of worth or nobility
(Sophist 227a7-c6) and which he will again condemn (266d4-11), for reasons that will soon become evident. He thus says (Statesman 261c7-d2) that βασιλική ἐπιστήμη could not possibly be in charge of [producing] soul-less things, like a master carpenter,12 but is rather nobler (γενναίωτερον, of a nobler γένος or provenance than the family of the master carpenter’s art), and so holds its power (δύναμι) always among living beings and concerning these same things. His implicit argument is clear: the king (more precisely, the possessor of βασιλική ἐπιστήμη) is a noble being, nobler than the master-carpenter; beings that have soul are of higher value than bodily matters; therefore the possessor of the kingly knowledge must be concerned with ensouled beings. This still does not clarify whether statesmanship, in being for the sake of some generation of living beings, is merely a kind of eugenics or whether it is concerned with the soul as such,13 but it is sufficient to make young Socrates understand the basic point.

Young Socrates, however, might thus be forgiven for drawing the inference a bit later that things of high value go together with other things of high value, and that

11 Note that this disparagement occurred precisely during the discussion of the cathartic sophist, who, as we have seen, seems to have some connection to the statesman, and during a discussion of the soul/body distinction. Its re-introduction during a similar discussion of the soul/body distinction is thus significant.

12 οὐ γὰρ δὴ τὸ γε τῆς βασιλικῆς ἐπιστήμης ἐστὶ ποτὲ τῶν ἀνυχων ἐπιστατῶν, οίον ἀρχιτεκτονικῶν. “Producing” is my addition: literally, the Stranger merely says that the possessor of the master-builder’s art is “in charge” of soul-less things, as if he had no care for his workers (cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.82). The Stranger’s point is clear, however; qua art of master-building, it indeed has no care for the workers, but merely for the finished product, which it commands them to build according to its instructions. The possessor of the art may, in the process, care for them, or he may not, depending on what is most suitable to get the finished product built. The stranger’s dropping of γένεσις from the care of the master-builder prefigures what happens next, i.e., the characterization of the statesman’s art as one that is concerned with the nurture of living beings.

therefore the art of the highest value must rule over the herd of the highest value, i.e., that the herd over which the statesman rules is that of human beings. The Stranger’s use of the criterion of value seems to have the effect of emboldening Socrates and leading him to commit his first real mistake, by placing human beings above all other ensouled beings (see 262a3ff and section 4.2.3 below) without taking proper methodological care.\(^{14}\)

Indeed, we might suspect that the Stranger wanted to lead young Socrates in this direction, and thus encouraged his mistake by temporarily allowing the criterion of value to serve as a guide to the division.

But once young Socrates’ is led away from the perspective of mathematics by the awareness of the question of value, he has no recourse but to fall back on common opinion, which places human beings above all other living beings, without seeing the latter in their proper eidetic/genetic differentiation (section 4.2.3). He is not yet prepared, in other words, to apply the criterion of worth properly; hence the Stranger must later condemn it again (266d4-11) even though he uses it at this point to help young Socrates see where the statesman is to be found. Much of what follows young Socrates’ explicit mistake can therefore be understood as the Stranger’s attempt to prepare young Socrates for the proper use of the criterion of worth in the search for the statesman. In this process, the Stranger must therefore alienate young Socrates from common opinion, an opinion that, at bottom, arises from a certain kind of pride. As a step in this process the Stranger first introduces the notion of herd-tendance or herd-nurture.

\(^{14}\) Note that the word γενναίος, by means of which the Stranger introduced the criterion of value in the argument (γενναίοτέρον 261c9), is also used at the very end of the long way of the first genealogy, in an ironic form, to describe the γένος of pigs, 266c5, who are said to be the γενναίοτάτος γένος of all beings. In saying that pigs are the most valuable “herd” of all beings (ensouled or not!), and thus more valuable than the herd of human beings, the Stranger there will explicitly and comically contradict young Socrates’ intuition about the value of the human herd.
4.1.1 Genesis or nurture of the human herd?

The stranger introduces the notion of herd-tendance by remarking (261d4-6) that someone might see the generation and nurture of living beings as either a μονοτροφία, a nurture of single individual, or as the care (ἐπιμέλεια) in common of creatures (θρεμμάτων) in herds (ἐν ταῖς ἀγέλαισι). Note that the stranger silently switches from the γένεσις of ensouled beings (cf. 261b1, 13) to their nurture or care. This is not entirely surprising, since living beings generate themselves without the help of any particular art. Nevertheless the switch deserves to be noted, for it pushes us away from the idea that perhaps the statesman’s art is merely an art of breeding; and indeed, care or even nurture seem to be broader concepts than generation, at least as applied to living beings, for they imply a concern with the proper completeness of the thing generated, whereas generation remains generation even if the thing generated does not achieve its proper τέλος.

To be sure, one can understand nurture in terms of generation. To nurture sheep is not just to generate sheep at random (i.e., to let them mate and generate themselves, perhaps protecting them from predators), but to generate (to make) good sheep (i.e., sheep that are good for something), by, e.g., feeding and healing them. Nurture can thus be understood as the generation of living beings for the sake of some further end. This raises the question of the end for which these beings are generated. Is it their own or the

---

15 See Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.83-84. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 261d3-5, also notes the addition, arguing as well that this is the beginning of the error, since τροφὴ always implies feeding; what looks like a “harmless addition” in the case of animals turns out to be impossible in the case of human beings.
shepherd’s good? The Stranger does not raise this Socratic question, even though his silent switch from generation to nurture cannot but raise it. Only if the shepherd’s good coincided with the sheep’s good, or at least were unaffected by the sheep’s good, would the answer not matter; but it is not entirely clear that this is the case for sheep, much less for human beings. Sheep, after all, are nurtured by human beings only to be fleeced.17

4.1.2 The praxis of statesmanship: individual or common?

The Stranger now divides nurture into nurture of single individuals and common nurture in herds. The statesman’s art would be the former if it paid special attention to the nurture-needs of each particular individual; the latter if it paid attention to the needs of the herd as such, but not necessarily of any particular individual.

In order to make the point that the kind of nurture the statesman offers is communal, the Stranger tells young Socrates that the statesman will surely not be found to be an ἰδιοτρόφος, a private nurturer,18 like an ox-driver (βοηλάτην19) or a horse-groom (ἱπποκόμον), but is rather to be likened to a horse-feeder (ἱπποφορβῷ) or an

17 Cf. Republic 343b1ff.
18 LSJ gives “feeding individuals” for this word, citing only this instance (the other instance cited is for the sense “feeding on a peculiar diet,” which occurs in Aristotle, and is opposed to παμφάγος, omnivorous). While “feeding individuals” clearly fits the context, the ἰδιο- prefix suggests a restoration of the private/public which was collapsed by means of the doctor and city/household analogies (see chapter 3, sections 3.2.2.1-3.2.2.2), though in a new form. At any rate the word will bear both meanings: “feeding individuals” and “private feeder,” as we shall see.
19 Skemp’s “cowman” is too vague, and misses the point of the comparison, as we shall shortly see; Benardete’s “ox-driver” is much better, and literally correct (see LSJ s.v. βοηλάτης).
ox-feeder (βουφόρβως). Young Socrates is somewhat non-committal: now that it has been said, he replies, it does appear so, namely, that the statesman is like the horse- or ox-feeder. The Stranger has clearly led him to answer as he does; nevertheless, we should ask, even if young Socrates does not, whether the Stranger’s comparison is appropriate.

At first glance, the Stranger’s comparison seems misleading in a fairly fundamental respect. There is no reason, one might think, for the ox- or horse-feeder not to pay attention to an individual horse or ox, or, conversely, no reason for the ox-driver or horse-groom not to attend to more than one ox or horse. In fact, the ox-driver at least will often have occasion to supervise more than one ox yoked to his cart.

Note also that the comparison does not rest on horses or oxen being naturally gregarious or naturally solitary, only on the kind of activity that tends to them. After all, if the purpose of the comparison were to show that the charges of the statesman are naturally gregarious, the Stranger would not have used a comparison that refers to the same animal in both “sides” of the cut (horse-feeder versus horse-groom; the horse can hardly be a herd animal and a non-herd animal at the same time!). If this is so, the point of the comparison cannot be simply that human beings form “herds” whereas some other living beings do not. The Stranger keeps his focus, for the moment at least, on the kind of art the statesman is supposed to have, not on the characteristics of his charges. But how is “feeding” something that is done “in common,” whereas “grooming” is not?

---

20 Once again, Skemp’s “man in charge of a whole herd of cows or a stud of horses” misses the point of the comparison, as we shall see, by over-translation.

21 Scholars sometimes proceed as if the Stranger were making a point about the herd-nature of human beings, something he is not doing at this point. It is only later that – retrospectively – he takes the point as one about the nature of human beings as herd animals rather than about the nature of the activity of the statesman (cf. 264a1ff and section 7.3 below). For examples, see Stephen R. L. Clark, "Herds of Free Bipeds," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), p. 238, Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 47.
The ox-feeder or horse-feeder puts the feed in a trough or some other appropriate place and lets a number of horses or oxen feed themselves, without paying attention to any particular horse or ox. So long as the horses or oxen are in general well fed, the horse-feeder or ox-feeder has fulfilled his task. The horses or oxen are then free to do as they wish. The horse- or ox-feeder does not attend to sickness or individual problems or talents; for that, you need a horse-groom. More generally, his care of ensouled animals (horses) extends only to their bodies, not to their souls, a fact that minimizes the importance of the ensouled/lacking soul division. And insofar as he takes care of their bodies, the horse-feeder does not attend to the peculiar dietary needs of each horse, but provides a single sort of food for all. He does not transform his charges into ἰδιοτρόφοι (eaters of a personalized diet\(^{22}\), as the horse-groom may do, but keeps them as \(^{23}\) *κοινότρόφοι, eaters of a common diet, eaters in common out of a common trough or feeding-place. This is what makes his activity a care “in common,” insofar as he need not, and qua feeder does not, pay attention to the individual horse or ox but only to the stud of horses or the herd of cattle.

Both the horse-groom and the ox-driver, on the other hand, must pay attention to individual horses or oxen, though in different ways. The horse-groom grooms a particular horse to make him the best he can be, not in relation to any common endeavor with other horses, but merely for the sake of its individual potential. The ox-driver must also pay attention to each ox individually, even when more than one is yoked to a harness, but not for the sake of each ox’s particular potential, but rather for the cart to move in the right

---

\(^{22}\) See LSJ s.v. ἰδιοτρόφος, second meaning, as well as note 18.

\(^{23}\) This word does not occur in classical Greek, according to LSJ, though the Stranger coins κοινότροφική as one possible description of the art of the statesman at 261e2.
direction or the plow to plough correctly, i.e., for the sake of a common endeavor whose goal is set by the ox-driver. 24 Whereas the horse-groom attends to each horse individually for the sake of the horses’ individual good, the ox-driver attends to each ox individually in order to ensure the harmonious performance of a common task. Thus, while the horse-groom is purely “idiotrophic” – in that his activity is not essentially concerned with any group of horses or any common activity that any group of horses may accomplish on their own, the ox-driver must be both ἰδιοτρόφος and κοινοτρόφος; he is not a pure example of either side of the division.

We now begin to see that it is by no means obvious that the statesman should be likened more to the ox- or horse-feeder than to the ox-driver or the horse-groom. In fact, each image yields a perfectly plausible picture of the work of the statesman. If the statesman’s art were like that of a “feeder,” (as in fact the Stranger forcefully suggests it is, for reasons that are not entirely clear at this point) then he would be in charge of a relatively small part of the care of human beings; once they are fed, human beings may do as they wish. More importantly, however, his care would not extend to the souls of human beings, but only to their bodies. Though a nurturer of ensouled beings, he would not be a nurturer of their souls but only of their bodies, a partial nurturer. The stranger of

24 Ox-driving for plowing in fact requires choosing or training each individual ox with a view to their work together with the others in the team (e.g., making turns together, a difficult matter, since the “exterior” ox must start to turn before the “interior” ox). An ox-driver who does not pay attention to the “character” of each of his oxen will often find that they do not “work” together very well; that is why they must often be trained together from a very early age. Cf. Hesiod, Works and Days 436ff; there, the poet tells his brother Perses there to get “Two nine-year-old bull oxen. In their prime / They have full strength, and work the best, nor will / They quarrel in the furrows, break the plough, / And leave the work unfinished” (Dorothea Wender translation; these nine-year old oxen would have been trained together from an early age). Note that ox-drivers in English are often called “teamsters” because plowing and pulling carts are done with “teams” of oxen. For more on training oxen, see, e.g., Drew Conroy, Oxen: A Teamster's Guide (Rural Heritage, 1999). One could also note here, finally, the image of the chariot in the Phaedrus, drawn by the white and black horses, each of which has its own nature and each of which must be individually attended to for the sake of the common task of reaching the beautiful (cf. Phaedrus 253e7ff).
course takes quite literally the notion of a “feeder” (τρόφος) of human beings (cf. 267e7-268a4 and section 4.6 below), with quite comical results. Horse- or ox-feeding can also be seen as images of the rule of law, in that common feeding and the rule of law are both unable or unwilling to come to terms with particular needs or problems, a critical point in the Stranger’s argument against the latter (cf. Statesman 294a10ff). The statesman as horse-feeder, then, is purely “koinotrophic;” we may call this the “legislative” model of the statesman.

If, by contrast, the statesman’s art were like that of a horse-groom (which the Stranger suggests it is not), then he would be a kind of educator.25 His activity would consist in grooming each particular individual – developing their individual “potential” – without necessarily considering the good of any group to which the individual may belong. The question would then arise as to what the particular individual would be groomed for, and whether the good of the individual so groomed would be compatible with that of the herd or group or polis to which he may belong. We may call this the “Socratic” model of the statesman, as it is close to Socrates’ own practice of speaking to and caring for individuals.

25 The word ἵπποκόμος (horse-groom) brings to mind Laws 666e1ff (cf. 666e5 ἵπποκόμος), where the Athenian Stranger criticizes the Dorian regimes for treating their young as if they were young horses grazing (νεμομένους φορβάδας 666e3; compare with the term the Eleatic Stranger uses, the ἵππο-φορβάς or horse-feeder, the one who provides φορβάς, feed, to the horses) as a herd (ἐν ἄγελη 666e2-3), and not appointing private grooms to soften and educate the savage and harsh nature the youths acquire when so treated, i.e., to instill moderation alongside courage, or, to use the Eleatic Stranger’s categories, to moderate their courageous tendency and thus instill justice in them. The statesman’s art, for the Athenian Stranger, appears to consist in being able to provide just that kind of individual grooming alongside the laws, or at least not against them, which the Stranger more or less forces young Socrates to reject. We shall see that eventually the Eleatic Stranger arrives at a somewhat similar formulation, though his argument here appears to preclude just what the Athenian Stranger demands (this is not entirely surprising, given that the first genealogy will eventually be rejected as incorrect).
Finally, if the statesman’s art were like that of the ox-driver, then he would be a kind of captain supervising the completion of a common task, or leading the city to its appointed destination. In this case, the statesman would have to be both an ἰδιοτρόφος (giving private attention to particular individuals) and a κοινοτρόφος (coordinating their activities for the sake of a common task); if he were only one or the other, the common task could not be properly completed. This common task can be conceptualized as the common care of human beings as ensouled beings, as we shall see. This is the model of statesmanship that eventually emerges from the Stranger’s argument, in spite of the identification of the statesman with the horse-feeder at this point.26

The Stranger, we have seen, more or less forces young Socrates to say that the statesman is more like the horse-feeder than like an ox-driver (a much more promising image) or a horse-groom. The significance of his interest in having young Socrates agree to this will only become clear in what follows.

26 The image of the statesman as an ox-driver, though formally rejected here, appears “sublimated” in the image of the statesman as the driver of the chariot of the polis at the end of the first genealogy (266e8-11), and that the Stranger’s description of the statesman at the very end of the dialogue has both “idiotrophic” and “koinotrophic” features: he rules by means of laws (like the “legislative” statesman) but must be open to the particular time and place and individual nature, and adjust his actions accordingly (like the “Socratic” statesman). See chapter 9, section 9.2.
4.2 Young Socrates’ mistakes and their significance

4.2.1 Names and things

The Stranger now asks Socrates how they should call the nurture of living beings in common, offering him two choices: κοινοτροφική and ἁγελασιοτροφική (261e1-3). Young Socrates is indifferent: he suggests that whichever name comes up in the λόγος is fine by him. The Stranger praises him for this answer, with a great deal of irony, saying that if he guards against taking names too seriously, he will reach old age richer in φρόνησις (261e4-7). What he does not say is that inattention to names should be accompanied by attention to the implications of the concepts the names refer to, if the promised wealth is to materialize.

The irony is multiple. First of all, we should note that the Stranger will soon enough identify the cause of one of the problems with the first division as the fact that they did not pay sufficient attention to names, and thus described statesmanship incorrectly as a form of τροφή (275d1-e9) instead of as a form of ἔπιμελεια, a term that he in fact had used (261d6) but disregarded. Yet the error, of course, if it was one, was introduced by the Stranger himself, since the two choices he gave young Socrates both

had the –τροφ- suffix. Had he chosen either one, it appears, the same error would have cropped up.28

Young Socrates should have spoken up just a bit earlier, where the Stranger tried to force the comparison of the statesman to a “feeder” of horses, instead of to the (apparently much more promising) images of the horse-groom or the ox-driver. In fact, the Stranger’s “correction” later on will reintroduce “grooming,” as one of his suggested terms for the art from which the art of the statesman descends is ἀγελασιοκομική (275e6), which of course recalls the (rejected) alternative of the statesman as similar to the ἰπποκόμος (261d9). But, as we have already seen, it was the Stranger who forced the misleading comparison in the first place; he could just as easily have suggested that the statesman was like a horse-groom or an ox-driver. The Stranger clearly had an interest in leading young Socrates into error. Why?

Part of the answer, we may speculate, has to do with young Socrates’ inability to properly understand that the art of the statesman deals with the unity of soul and body.29 We have already noted his curious difficulties in seeing that statesmanship and the statesman deal with the soul rather than the body (261b10-261d2; see also the discussion above, section 7.1), and saw that these difficulties were at least in part related to his training in mathematics, which does not deal with the generation of anything. The Stranger cannot be certain that young Socrates understands what the implications of the

28 This is not noted by Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 96, or by Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, pp. 42-43, but it is noted by Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 130, note 43. Miller says “Young Socrates was not only above contention over names; he was uncritical about concepts.” I think this is perhaps a bit too harsh, though true as far as it goes. The Stranger essentially forced the comparison that led young Socrates into error, so he shares responsibility for it.

statesman’s care for the soul are, and must strongly suspect (given the evidence of young Socrates’ difficulties with the soul/body distinction) that he does not. He therefore proceeds to test him.

The test has two parts. We have already discussed the first part, where the Stranger more or less forces young Socrates to agree that the statesman is a horse-feeder, and then offers him the choice between κοινοτροφική and ἐγελασιοτροφική as possible names for the generic art from which the art of the statesman descends. When young Socrates expresses indifference, the Stranger sets up his trap: he chooses the term ἐγελασιοτροφική, and asks young Socrates to divide this art, which he rashly proceed to do, separating human beings from the beasts in one step. As we shall see, the choice is anything but innocent. If young Socrates had understood the implications of the fact that the statesman cares for ensouled beings, he would not have so readily agreed to the comparison of the statesman to the horse-feeder, whose care is solely for bodies; but if he had understood the implications of this latter image, and had he not been blinded by pride, he would not have so quickly separated human beings from the beasts, a distinction not based on the body but on the soul, as we shall see (section 4.2.3). Young Socrates is in danger of thinking, we might say, that beings with φρόνησις can be ruled or cared for as if all they needed was feeding and freedom.30

This is what, ultimately, the rest of the division (as well as the myth and much that comes later), sets out to correct, not just the merely methodological point about dividing into proper eidetic parts or the idea of the statesman as a shepherd of human

30 Young Socrates’ (dimly implied) idea is not silly. We can think of it as the “developmentalist” idea of statesmanship, which suggests that the statesman’s business is (mostly) to care for the material prosperity of the ruled, and otherwise leaves them alone to do as they wish as much as possible.
beings. The Stranger responds in the rest of the division by 1) re-emphasizing the mathematical aspects of the method, and thus pushing aside the (temporarily introduced) criterion of worth, for whose use young Socrates was not yet prepared due to his excessive θύμος; 2) depicting human beings as kin to pigs and birds, to lower young Socrates’ pride; and 3) eliminating all references to the soul/body contrast, and thereby showing that if we conceive of the statesman’s art as an art of herd-nurture (or, more precisely, of herd-feeding), then it must be conceived as an art of caring for the bodies of the herd. The Stranger thus shows that if statesmanship is a form of nurture, it cannot be much different than the care of pigs or chickens; the only important differences from the point of view of the expertise are the differences in the bodies of the creatures nurtured. Before we can examine this matter fully, however, we must understand better what is at stake in the stranger’s choice of the terms ἄγελη (“herd”) and ἄγελαιοτροφική (“herd-nurture”).

4.2.2 The choice of ἄγελαιοτροφική: an innocent choice?

The interpretation of τροφή as the kind of rearing they will later reject was not altogether inevitable in principle. The Stranger’s examples implied that the ἰπποκόμος and the βοηλάττης are forms of ἰδιοτροφία, and thus forms of τροφή, nurture, but they

31 The Stranger accomplishes this by emphasizing “division by the middle” (e.g., 262b6, 264e12-13), for example, or by means of the dubious joke about pigs and human beings (266a5ff), or even by introducing the notion of short and long ways (265a1ff). We will discuss the significance of these things in due time, e.g., section 4.4.

32 With one exception, the tame/wild distinction, which we will discuss in due time, section 4.3.
are clearly not forms of feeding or even merely bodily care. Furthermore, the division of the objects of care into ensouled and inanimate could have been used for a further (rather Socratic) division of nurture into nurture of the souls of ensouled beings and nurture of their bodies. But once the Stranger forced the choice of the ἰπποφορβός as the model for the statesman, human beings are inevitably conceived as horses or oxen that must be fed, i.e., the care of the statesman is defined in terms of his common care for the bodies of human beings, something that points to the myth, where the god takes care of all our bodily needs.

ἀγελασισστροφική further narrows the image: the statesman as shepherd takes over, and human beings are fully characterized as a herd that is “grazed” by the shepherd (cf. 267d7-9). Normally, of course, we do not say that human beings live “in herds,” but rather that they live in cities. To say that human beings live in herds seems to imply that they are mere animals.33 Had the Stranger chosen κοινοτροφική it is not clear that the implications would have been the same, since those who are nurtured in common do not

33 See here Laws 666e1ff for evidence that Greeks at the time thought that speaking of human beings as forming a “herd” was somewhat derogatory, “animalizing.” Cf. also note 25. Scodel, Diareresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 47, Kochin, "Plato's Eleatic and Athenian Sciences of Politics," pp. 72-73, and Annas and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, p. 10, note 12, all criticize the idea that human beings live in herds, though they draw somewhat different, and for the most part incorrect, implications from the Stranger’s argument. For a contrary, interesting view, see Clark, "Herds of Free Biped," p. 238; Clark argues that the “animalization” of human beings implicit in the idea of a herd of human beings distinguishes Plato from the Peripatetics and Stoics. While there is some truth in this view (and at any rate confirms my view that the terminology of ἀγελάσια is deliberately animalizing), it is ultimately incorrect; human beings form mere herds only in the age of Cronos. Clark cites Laws 680e as evidence that Plato endorsed the characterization of human beings as herd-animals, but the passage does not entirely support that view, and at any rate, as I have already argued, the division itself does not characterize human beings as herd animals (see note 21 and context), since it does not distinguish between activities appropriate only to animals who live in herds and activities appropriate to animals that do not live in herds, but only between activities that deal with living beings in common (e.g., feeding horses), and activities that deal with living beings in private or individually (e.g., grooming horses; clearly horses cannot be herd and non-herd animals at the same time!). For a less ambitious defense of the “herd” terminology, see Weiss, "Statesman as ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver," p. 217, note 17: Weiss thinks that there is no reason to think that the human herd “qua herd, must be unintelligent and homogeneous.”
necessarily form a herd, nor is their nurture necessarily defined as a kind of feeding. A “community” has some principle of unity beyond mere aggregation; a “herd” is an accidental aggregation of animals, an arbitrary part of a species.\(^{34}\)

Confirmatory evidence of this point is given by the pattern of usage of the word \(\alpha\gamma\varepsilon\lambda\eta\) by the Stranger. Most of the appearances of the word occur before the weaving paradigm, which is introduced to correct the original genealogy.\(^{35}\) If we compare the Eleatic Stranger’s usage of \(\textit{polis}\) with his usage of \(\alpha\gamma\varepsilon\lambda\eta\) we see a marked increase in the

---

\(^{34}\) The point is noted by Howland, \textit{The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosophic Trial}, p. 247, who adds, “[h]ad the stranger pursued statesmanship under the heading of common care rather than that of herd nurture, the Greek polis would have proved to be superior to barbarian empires.” For “herd” as a random part (but not a sub-\(\epsilon\iota\delta\omega\)) of a species, see 271d6-7 as well as the discussion in chapter 3, section 3.4.2.

\(^{35}\) \(\alpha\gamma\varepsilon\lambda\eta\) occurs in the following places in the \textit{Statesman}: 261d6 (the passage we are currently discussing), 265c8, 265d4, 265e4, 266c11, 266e6, 267d8, 267e5, 268a8, 268c2 (\(\pi\omicron\nu\mu\eta\), another word for herd, occurs at 268b5, 267e1; all these except the last, which occurs in the summary of the first division, are in the first discussion of their mistakes, previous to the myth), 271d7 (this is the only occurrence of the word in the myth, but a crucial one, since it establishes that human beings are ordered according to herds in the age of Cronos), 275a1, 275d8, 276c8 (all three in the discussion and correction of the mistakes of the first genealogy), 287b5 (in the resumption of the search for the statesman; the statesman has been separated from the other arts that take care of herds), 294e10 (establishing the similarity of the legislator to other mass trainers, who are concerned with the care of the body), 295e6 (establishing the similarity of the legislator to the doctor who writes down his prescriptions; the doctor, of course, is concerned with the care of the body). It should be noted that \(\alpha\gamma\varepsilon\lambda\eta\) is a relatively infrequent word in Plato: it occurs also at Minos 318a (twice), once in a non-political context at Theaetetus 197d (in the dovecote image, though the general image of the king as a shepherd also occurs, with some irony, in the digression, 174d3ff), twice in the \textit{Republic} (459d, 451c; \(\pi\omicron\nu\mu\eta\) occurs at 415d) and seven times in the \textit{Laws}, relatively few times for a dialogue of that size: 666e, 680d, 694e, 713c, 735b, 794a, 840c. As we can see, the characterization of human beings as living in herds, though marginally more common for the two Strangers, is rather unusual, and Socrates hardly uses it, especially if we except the \textit{Minos}, which may not be by Plato. The two times he uses it are clearly metaphorical usages, and his ironic use of the “shepherd of the people” image in the digression suggests that Socrates does not think human beings are merely a herd or should be treated as such. Skemp, \textit{Plato's Statesman}, pp. 55-61, discusses the notion of the ruler as a shepherd in Plato and in other Greek writers, and speculates that Plato abandons the notion of the king as shepherd which he claims was present in the \textit{Republic} (insofar as Socrates uses it); however, as Weiss, "Statesman as \(\epsilon\iota\nu\iota\iota\sigma\zeta\gamma\zeta\omicron\sigma\zeta\)N: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver," p. 215, points out, the shepherd analogy in the \textit{Republic} is not itself Socratic, but taken over from Thrasymachus. For further discussion of the shepherd paradigm in Greek thought and in Plato, see also Miller Jr., \textit{The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman}, pp. 40-48; Miller is especially good on the critique of the shepherd by the Stranger through the myth. By contrast, Kochin, "Plato's Eleatic and Athenian Sciences of Politics," p. 73, completely misunderstands the Stranger’s argument, thinking that the Stranger \textit{endorses} the characterization of the statesman as a herdsman when he clearly goes on to criticize it.
frequency of _polis_ after the correction of the first division.36 ἀγέλη dominates the discussion up to and including the myth, while the references to the _polis_ are designed to minimize its relevance. In the myth we have no πόλεις but we do find herds; accordingly, human beings are very similar to sheep and pigs both in the myth and in the first division. The _polis_ re-emerges in the discussion of the mistakes, implicitly pointing out another mistake made visible by the myth, and just before the discussion of weaving; it is only _after_ the paradigm of weaving, when the human herd becomes a web (and thus capable of structure) that the Stranger uses the word _polis_ again with abandon. The word ἀγέλη, by contrast, while never altogether rejected (the coinage ἀγελαίοκομική, for instance, retains it, and at a few points after the introduction of the weaver paradigm the Stranger still speaks of herds), is downgraded in importance, so to speak, and its meaning, as we shall see, is subtly altered, pointing less to the animality of human beings than to the contingency of the _polis_ as an arbitrary part of the human εἰδος. It is only in this second half of the dialogue that human beings are re-conceived as capable of divinity and φρόνησις, that is, as essentially different from the beasts.37

36 The word _polis_ appears in various grammatical forms in the following places: 259b10, 266e10 (thus only twice in the first division of the Statesman, the first time in the city/household analogy, which is designed to suggest the irrelevance of the _polis_ for the statesman, and the second at the very end of the division, capping the short way, which seems to point away from the division altogether, as we shall see, section 4.5.3); the word does not appear at all in the myth, but re-appears at 275a3, 275a9 (thus it re-emerges when the Stranger is trying to explain their mistakes in the first division), 278e10, 279a2 (connecting the discussion of paradigms with the discussion of weaving and the discussion of statesmanship), 287b6, 287d2, 287d3, 287e1, 289e7, 290b6, 291e1, 291e7, 292e1, 292e4, 293d5, 294d5, 295e6, 296a10, 296e2, 297b1, 297b9, 297e2, 301e1, 302a4, 304a2, 305d4, 305e3, 305e10, 307d8, 307e5, 308a1, 308a5, 308d3, 311a1 (all these in the search for the Statesman proper, with the last reference at the very end of the proper diairesis of the Statesman, before the final summary).

37 For a similar point (minus the philological evidence) see also Annas and Waterfield, _Plato: Statesman_, p. 10, note 13.
The terminology of “herds” also makes perfect sense in light of the analogy between city and household (see above, chapter 3, section 3.2.2.2). A herd has no externally visible structure; for the shepherd, a herd is a herd whether it has two members or a hundred thousand. It thus collapses the distinction between city and household: whether the herd consists of one family or many is of no importance to its being a herd. For the shepherd who rules the herd there is no private/public distinction in the herd, as well as (in principle) no limit to the size of the herd, since he is not of the herd. If this is correct, calling the polis a kind of herd is deeply misleading, though it paves the way to the myth. For a god really could rule human beings as if they belonged to a single herd, and only in the age of Cronos can there be a human herd properly speaking, i.e., a herd comprising all human beings.38

We should note, moreover, that the choice of ἀγελαστροφική over κοινοτροφική restricts the meaning of ἔζων, which up to now has been simply equivalent to “ensouled being” (cf. 261c1) to “animal.” Only animals, but not plants, form herds, even though plants can be cared for “in common” just as much as animals can. That this is accomplished without a formal division (nowhere does the Stranger distinguish plants from animals among ensouled beings) suggests that for the “nurturer in common” of the first division animals are no different from plants, or, equivalently, plants are no different from animals. Once again, this points to the myth, where human beings “grow” from the earth like plants, and are cared for by the god as both shepherd

38 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.84. Incidentally, if the terminology of “herds” is rejected in the second half of the dialogue, then the analogy between city and household must be implicitly rejected or otherwise modified.
and farmer. Young Socrates’ carelessness leads directly to the shepherd of plant-like human beings.

4.2.3 The question of φρόνησις

The Stranger now asks young Socrates (261e8-262a2) how to divide ἀγελαϊοτροφική, using a slight “mathematical” rhetorical flourish: how could someone make what is now in the double to be sought in the halves? Young Socrates, uncharacteristically, is eager to answer (προθυμήσομαι 262a3); he is full of θύμος. Encouraged in part, as we have seen, by the Stranger’s re-introduction of the criterion of worth or nobility (261c7-d2; see also section 4.1), young Socrates gives the obvious answer: on one side we find human beings (the noblest, we might say, of the animals), on another the beasts. The Stranger immediately reproaches him: you have made the division, he says, most courageously (ἐνδρειῶτατα) and eagerly (προθυμώτατα), but let us not let this happen to us again; what you have done is a mistake, separating one small part from many and large ones instead of keeping together part and εἴδος, form, i.e., instead of dividing into “eidetic parts” (262a5-b2).

Young Socrates’ mistake, we may say (though the Stranger does not), results from his lack of attention to names (and concepts) once again: if human beings form a herd, then they are indistinguishable from the beasts; and if their care is merely a form of feeding, a distinction based on φρόνησις is irrelevant to the search.39 The criterion of

39 Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.85, thinks the Stranger, on the contrary, “plays fair” with young Socrates. In his view, young Socrates is deceived by a name, namely “beast.” He does,
φρόνησις does not yield proper “looks” of human beings and beasts once we have
defined human beings as herd animals and the care of the statesman as a care for their
body, specifically as a feeding. But this time the mistake is compounded by his
eagerness, or rather, his θύμος, his pride.

This is so in two ways. The distinction of human beings from the beasts, as the
Stranger soon implies, is essentially based on the distinction between the possession of
the capacity for φρόνησις and the lack of this capacity (cf. 263d4). Young Socrates, to
be sure, only dimly perceives this, and the Stranger does not go out of his way to bring
the implications of his distinction into the open, for reasons we shall soon examine. The
capacity for φρόνησις, however, is connected to pride in that it seems to imply the
capacity for self-rule. More precisely, it is the combination of θύμος and the capacity for
φρόνησις (though not necessarily the actual exercise of this capacity) that makes human
beings think themselves able to rule themselves even if they are not. Thus young
Socrates’ distinction threatens, one the one hand, to render the statesman irrelevant or
even impossible, since human beings would appear to themselves to be able to rule
themselves without his help, something that perhaps would actually be true if they could
fully exercise the capacity for φρόνησις, or if φρόνησις were not actually subdivided
among all the different forms of human knowledge;⁴⁰ and on the other hand, to render

---

⁴⁰ More precisely, in this case the statesman’s knowledge would be simply equivalent to the
human capacity for φρόνησις, and thus not a specialized form of technical knowledge.
human beings intractable and disobedient, since an animal who believes that he can rule himself would not accept a shepherd-like ruler.

The Stranger, of course, does not say any of this explicitly, though, as I shall argue, all of this is implicit in his arguments. His response (aside from his purely methodological comments) consists in lowering human beings to the level of the pigs and chickens (see below, sections 4.5.2.2 and 4.5.3) and in replacing the “capable of φρόνησις/incapable of φρόνησις” distinction implicit in young Socrates’ division by the tame/wild distinction (see below, section 4.3). Human beings must be made into real herd-animals, requiring the supervision of a shepherd, and young Socrates must be given “training in moderation.”

I will not discuss here the Stranger’s methodological remarks per se, since they have no real bearing on the kind of knowledge that the statesman is supposed to have, and at any rate the topic has already generated a great deal of commentary, whereas the division up to this point and after the methodological remarks tends to be dismissed as a whimsical exercise. The basic methodological point, at any rate, is quite simple: division should distinguish among eidetic (look-yielding) parts of a whole rather than among mere

---


42 The commentary ranges from the banal to the sophisticated. I find the discussion in Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 20-22, fairly useful; Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 50-52, raises many interesting questions, though his interpretation is marred by hostility to the Stranger. For more mainstream views, one could consult C. Chiesa, "De quelques formes primitives de classification," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), Graciela Marcos de Pinotti, "Autour de la distinction entre eidos et meros dans le Politique de Platon (262a5-263e1)," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), Diès, Le Politique, pp. xviii-xx, and many others.
arbitrary parts (without an internal principle of unity),\textsuperscript{43} which is the same as to say that it should arrive at true families (γένη)\textsuperscript{44} that have members on both sides that bear family “looks.” I will thus use the phrase “eidetic part” to refer to those parts of a whole that have an internal principle of unity that gives them a look (an εἴδος), in contrast to mere parts, which do not have such an internal principle of unity and hence do not have a distinctive look.\textsuperscript{45}

Two substantive points about the Stranger’s correction of young Socrates need to be noted, however. The first concerns the ambiguous status of the γένος or γένη of human beings in the Stranger’s methodological examples. We shall see that the ambiguities evident in the Stranger’s treatment of the γένος of human beings point both to the rule of human beings by gods (in which “nations” are unimportant) and to the rule of human beings by other human beings (in which “nations” become contingently important). The second concerns the possibility of a correct division using young Socrates’ criterion of φρόνησις. We shall see that the Stranger’s decision not to use this criterion in any form illuminates some of the difficulties of correctly understanding human beings as “rational” animals from the perspective of political science. Let us examine each of these points in turn.

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. Annas and Waterfield, \textit{Plato: Statesman} p. 11, notes 14 and 15, though Annas and Waterfield go too far in thinking that the kinds in question must be “natural.”

\textsuperscript{44} It has been noted (by, e.g., Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 262e7) that εἴδος and γένος seem to be indistinguishable in the \textit{Statesman}. By γένος, however, it seems to me that the Stranger means the εἴδος in its \textit{genetic} connection to other εἴδη, i.e., in genealogy or division, whereas by εἴδος he means the form or whole by itself, aside from any connection it might have to other εἴδη.

\textsuperscript{45} A non-Platonic example may be useful to understand the difference. A book can be said to be composed of \textit{eidetic parts} (like pages, words, letters, paragraphs, etc.) that stand in some relation to each other to constitute the whole; or mere parts, as (e.g.) the parts that result when we chop it to pieces, and which stand in no particular structural relation to each other.
4.2.3.1 The ambiguous γένος of human beings

In order to explain to young Socrates the difference between an eidetic part and a non-eidetic part of something, the Stranger uses two examples that show two different possible divisions of the γένος of human beings (the human “race”), one of them resulting in eidetic parts and another in non-eidetic parts. The examples illustrate the same methodological point, yet point to two slightly contradictory understandings of the political importance of human γένη.

In the first example, the Stranger suggests that there are different γένη of human beings, peoples (cf. 262d1-6), each one potentially in need of a statesman, and each one displaying its own principle of unity (i.e., each one an eidetic part of the γένος of human beings). The Greeks form a γένος because they marry each other and speak the same languages, the Stranger says; the Barbarians, by contrast, do not form a single γένος (they are merely the “non-Greeks”), but rather a large number of γένη, each of which yields, for itself, just as much a true “look” as the Greeks do for themselves. All these γένη can be identified due to their lack of interbreeding and their inability to communicate with each other; they are, as it were, different animal species. In this view, each particular people would require a statesman whose knowledge is geared to its particular characteristics as a people, though no single people is more important than any other.

In the second example (262e6-263a1), the Stranger suggests by contrast that Lydians and Phrygians (two γένη of human beings, and two parts of the γένος of human beings) are not eidetic parts of the γένος of human beings. The division of this γένος
into Lydians and Phrygians can only be accomplished, according to the Stranger, once γένος and μέρος can no longer be found together; hence neither Lydians nor Phrygians constitute true eidetic parts of the human race, even though there is a look of the human herd, or rather, of the whole human species considered as the aggregate of its members, i.e., as a universal herd. The Stranger admits, after all, that young Socrates hit upon the proper “herd” of the statesman (262b5), i.e., the human herd, and they are evidently not looking for Greek or Lydian statesmen, but for the statesman as such. In this view, only the universal human herd – the entire human race (γένος) exists from the perspective of political science.

Thus we have two examples whose implications seem mildly contradictory: if we look at the Lydians and Phrygians, the despised “barbarians” from the Greek perspective, we find that there is only a single γένος of human beings, a universal human family, of which the particular peoples are mere parts (i.e., herds), though not eidetic (“look-yielding”) parts; but if we look at the Greeks and the Barbarians as a whole, we find that there are innumerable γένη of human beings, true eidetic parts, which neither mix nor communicate with each other, and which require particular rulers.

---

46 The point is made more generally by Chiesa, “De quelques formes primitives de classification,” p. 119. Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, p. 57, makes a similar point, noting that a division into male and female logically precludes a division into Lydian and Phrygian. I am not entirely sure of this, but the point is ultimately the same: Lydians and Phrygians are not “natural” ἐνδοι, they are not eidetic parts of the human γένος.

47 This last point is denied by Rosen, Plato’s Statesman: the Web of Politics, p. 31, who adds that this is the implication of the whole mistake, and that, if this is so, “then the distinction between Greek and barbarian assumes considerable importance. More generally stated, it becomes all the more difficult, and perhaps impossible, to regard politics as natural, that is, as regulated by a natural paradigm.”

48 Cf. Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note to 262e, and Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 262e6, for discussion and references.

Both examples imply that “barbarian” is not an eidetic γένος (there is no single “look” corresponding to the term “barbarian”) but for different reasons: in the first case, there is a universal human family, and thus no specifically Barbarian γένος (nor, for that matter, a Greek γένος); in the second, there are only particular peoples, and thus, again, no specifically Barbarian γένος, but there is a Greek γένος.

From the first point of view, the appearance of nations and peoples is deceptive; to put the matter somewhat bluntly, a political rule according to nature would have no use for them. From the second point of view, on the contrary, Greeks and the various peoples that form the (apparent, but not real) Barbarian γένος do exist, and a political rule according to nature would have to take them into account, though without raising one above the others merely qua nation. The first case points to the universal rule of the god in the age of Cronos as the only form of rule consonant with the nature of things; the second case points to the multiplicity of πόλεις of the age of Zeus.50 Political knowledge needs both perspectives, as the ambiguity of the treatment of the human γένος shows.

50 Christopher Rowe, "Introduction," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), p. 16, misses the point in thinking of the import of the Greeks/barbarians “pun” merely in methodological terms, while allowing that there “will still be contexts in which the ordinary, everyday distinction between Greeks and others is going to be useful and important.” I agree with Rowe that the point of the passage is not to recommend a “liberal, anti-racist stance,” as some commentators have suggested, sometimes with considerable astonishment (see Henri Joly, Etudes platoniciennes: la question des étrangers (Paris: J. Vrin, 1992), pp. 88-89), but its bearing is more than merely methodological: it legitimizes the fact that the diverse γένη of human beings do yield true and significant looks from the point of view of politics. In this sense the claim that Plato puts forth here is not entirely liberal, cosmopolitan stance is not too far from the truth, for the passage does imply that there are no chosen peoples. What should not be lost sight of is that the perspective of the citizen who believes that his own polis is more important than other πόλεις is not thereby de-legitimized, though it is so to speak put in context by being presented as it were from the perspective of the age of Cronos. Cronos (the Stranger’s perspective) and Zeus (the perspective of politics), we should always remember, are the two essential aspects of the cosmos.
4.2.3.2 The possibility of a correct division by the criterion of φρόνησις

The second point that must be noted about young Socrates’ mistake is that the criterion he used in making the distinction between human beings and beasts could in fact have served to make a proper distinction, the Stranger’s methodological protestations notwithstanding. The Stranger could have corrected young Socrates’ division of ἀγελαιοτροφική by saying that there is a form of κοινοτροφική that is concerned with creatures that are capable of φρόνησις, and another that is concerned with creatures that are not so capable, a division that yields two perfectly acceptable εἰδῆ if the division of the creatures into interbreeding and non-interbreeding, or horned and lacking horns, or winged and unwinged, does. One can easily imagine the rest: of creatures having φρόνησις, some are divine, some are not; of those that are not divine, some are winged (like, fancifully, the crane), some are unwinged; of those unwinged, some have four feet (like, fancifully, the centaur), some have two; and so on, until one reaches human beings.

There is no reason to drop the criterion of φρόνησις from the division, as the Stranger does in the sequel, unless one has an interest in showing either that human beings does not have φρόνησις (showing him to be, in other words, a mere herd animal, like the pig) or that his possession of φρόνησις is of no importance to his ruler (in which case the knowledge of the ruler of human beings is of the same order as that of the ruler

---

51 Of course, if these latter do not yield acceptable εἰδῆ, then the Stranger’s own corrected division is vulnerable to the same charge he throws at young Socrates’ spirited attempt at division. Note that it is not possible to say that these divisions only come after all eidetic divisions have been exhausted, for the two-footed/four-footed division is clearly eidetic, and yet is found at the end of the long way.
of pigs). The question, then, is, why was the Stranger so intent on disallowing the
criterion of φρόνησις as a useful differentia in the division? Why do young Socrates’
difficulties with the soul/body distinction, or his pride in the possession of φρόνησις,
require the apparently drastic remedy the Stranger devises, namely, the lowering of
human beings to the level of the pigs and the birds?

The answer is complex, but some basic elements are already visible at this point.
Young Socrates is unprepared for understanding the basic problems of politics; he is,
after all, nearly a child (cf. 268e5-6). His understanding of politics (from the point of
view of the Stranger) is yet childish, in that, though he can accept that politics concerns
ensouled beings, he cannot yet see how politics concerns the soul, and instead he dimly
conceives of the purpose of politics as the provision of the conditions for “commodious
living” (to borrow a phrase from a much later thinker) under the rule of law. In a similar
way, though he conceives of human beings as beings capable of φρόνησις, he is unable
to see the truly political implications of this fact, and in particular, as we shall see, he is
unable to see what we might call the problem of obedience (section 4.3 below), namely
the need for the statesman precisely on the assumption that beings have the capacity for
φρόνησις and thus for the discovery of the arts. Young Socrates cannot yet see the
trouble with his own conception of politics.

The elder Socrates, had he been young Socrates’ interlocutor, would have resorted
to elenctic refutation, just as he proceeded with Theaetetus: first drawing out young
Socrates’ baby, so to speak, and then testing it. But the Stranger resorts to a different
method, which we might call the method of vicarious experience. In the Sophist, the

Stranger suggests that young people are not sufficiently close to beings (Sophist 234d6); this can normally be overcome only through experience, παθήματα (cf. 234d5). To lead someone who is nearly a child to an understanding of the sophist or the statesman, the Stranger brings them as close as possible to “the beings” without having them suffer the experiences that normally might (but need not) bring people to that position (234e5-7). He has to provide them with a vicarious experience, leading the youths (Theaetetus as well as young Socrates) into error and aporia in his own person, not in theirs. Young Socrates must thus be “disillusioned,” so to speak, brought closer to the nature of things, by means of a vicarious experience, without ceasing to be a child. To that end, the Stranger will need all the resources of comedy and myth. He needs to get young Socrates to laugh at himself and at human beings more generally, and he needs young Socrates to be entranced by the gods. And yet young Socrates must not laugh at human beings so much that he learns to despise him, or be so entranced by the gods that he forgets that the statesman is only a man.

4.3 The problematic nature of the tame-wild distinction

The problem with young Socrates’ use of φρόνησις to separate human beings from beasts can also be characterized in a slightly different way. As the Stranger puts it, young Socrates acts like the cranes, who, believing themselves to be in possession of φρόνησις, raise themselves above all other creatures, or, more precisely, make themselves holy (σεμνόν αὐτὸ ἑαυτό, Statesman 263d7), like gods. Young Socrates’ division of living beings into human beings and beasts did not make space for the gods,
after all; he restricted all φρόνησις to human beings. But if human beings think of
themselves as gods, they become unruly and disobedient, hybristic even.\textsuperscript{53} Either, then, a
statesman is not needed and cannot exist (because human beings, possessing φρόνησις,
can rule themselves), or he is needed but is unable to make his rule effective (because
human beings who “make themselves holy” are unable to accept the rule of other human
beings).

The Stranger thus suggests (263e1-264a3) that the reason they fell into error is
that they attempted to divide the art of the statesman by looking at all animals, without
realizing that the art of the statesman could only apply to tame animals or at least animals
willing to be tamed. It is this willingness to be tamed, in other words, that is important
from the point of view of the art of the statesman (at least if this art is conceived as a
form of nurture), not the generic possession of φρόνησις. The reason for this, as we shall
see when we come to the myth (chapter 5, section 5.6.3), is that at least human φρόνησις
is always split into different forms of knowledge. Thus, the fact that human beings
possess φρόνησις would be irrelevant from the point of view of the statesman unless
they also possessed political science, i.e., unless each individual human being were to
have not just the generic capacity for φρόνησις (manifested in the generic ability to
acquire arts or expertises) but the specific phronetic capacity for self-rule (that is, the art
of the statesman). Yet human beings believe (erroneously) that because they have the
capacity for φρόνησις generically (i.e., have arts), they are therefore capable of self-rule.
This is the pride in expertise that young Socrates displays, and which would make the

\textsuperscript{53} The point could also be made in reference to the statesman. Cf. Benardete, \textit{The Being of the
Beautiful}, p. III.92, reflecting on the purpose of the long and the short ways: “The ruler of human beings
needs to be immunized from the contagion of human pride.”
work of the statesman impossible unless human beings were not just generically intelligent but also tamable.

If this is so, then the division of animals into tamable and not tamable (or tame and wild) takes priority, indeed substitutes for, the division of animals into those capable of φρόνησις and those incapable of it. The statesman must assume that he is needed only insofar the generic capacity for φρόνησις is not identical with the political art (hence the irrelevance of this fact about human beings from his point of view); but he can be effective only when this generic capacity for φρόνησις does not preclude the recognition that one does not have the art of rule, i.e., the recognition of one’s own ignorance. A “wild” animal is either one that does not have this capacity for the recognition of its need to be ruled by another or one that can rule itself.

This latter point is also clear from the way that the Stranger presents the tame/wild division: the animals having a nature that is willing to be (θέλοντα) “domesticated” are to be called tame (ἡμερα, soft), while the animals that have a nature that is not willing to be domesticated are to be called savage or wild (ἄγρια). The wild are therefore αὐτοκράτορες, self-rulers (not a word the Stranger uses in this context, however), whereas the tame are at least open to nurture by another. The wild are not willing subjects; in the Stranger’s (later) terms (276e6ff), the rule over the wild is a form of tyranny, whereas the tame are willing subjects, that is, open to the statesman’s rule.54

Note that the Stranger’s terminology indicates that animals (including human beings) are not already tame by nature, so to speak, but merely by nature willing (or not)

54 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.90: the tame are the “law-abiding,” whereas the wild are those whom “man cannot subjugate.” Benardete’s discussion of this passage is quite useful, though he arrives at somewhat different conclusions than I do.
to be tamed. To have a nature that is merely open to the possibility of being tame is not the same as actually being tame (i.e., obeying the statesman’s commands), as we also saw, indirectly, at a similar point in the *Sophist*. The fact that animals are not already tame, but must be tamed, raises the question of whether statesmanship is partly the science of taming human beings, i.e., of making them obedient, willing subjects to the king instead of unwilling, difficult ones. We could thus perhaps think of statesmanship as (partially) the knowledge that the statesman uses to make the (potentially) tame herd of human beings into a fully tame herd, i.e., as the science of taming human beings, presumably continuously, by means of λόγοι (such as laws, educational speeches, and arguments). This is a plausible idea, echoed by the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*.

On the other hand, the complete tameness of the human herd, were the statesman to achieve it, would threaten, just as much as its complete “wildness,” to make his task irrelevant; for just as complete wildness prevents obedience to a statesman, and thus makes the herd necessarily self-regulating, complete tameness seems to do the same by eliminating all “political” conflict within the herd. There would be no problems, apparently, for the statesman to solve. This intuition seems to be confirmed later in the

55 At *Sophist* 222b2-d2, during the first genealogy of the sophist, the Stranger introduced the tame/wild distinction. Theaetetus had a hard time imagining that there could be a hunting of tame animals, and the Stranger only said that, if human beings are tame, then there is such a hunting. Nevertheless, immediately afterwards he spoke of such human activities as piracy, slave-dealing, tyranny, and all the arts of war, which suggested that, if human beings are tame, they have to be made tame, i.e., their nature is merely open to domestication, but is not necessarily tame in actuality. Note that at this point in the *Statesman* the Stranger speaks (unusually, since the metaphor of hunting is nearly absent from the *Statesman*, in contrast to the *Sophist*, pace Skemp, *Plato’s Statesman*, p. 121, note 3) of “hunting” the ἐπιστήμη of the king, a not very tame activity: they are behaving like wild human beings with respect to the statesman, not like tame ones.

56 Cf. *Laws* 766a1-4, where the Athenian Stranger asserts that “man is the most tame [ἡμερώτατον] and divine of animals when educated properly [or rather, he loves to become such, γίνεσθαι φιλεῖ; he does not always do so, apparently, even when educated properly], but the most savage [ἀγριώτατον] when not.”

final division of the “long way”; the statesman, like the swineherd, is there said to be kin to the swineherd, who lives the easiest – most trouble-free – life and deals with the most trouble-free, easy-going γένος (cf. εὐχερεστάτω 266c6, τὸν εὐχερή βίον 266d1-2).

More importantly, even if there were a need for statesmanship in that case, it is not clear that one could then distinguish statesmanship from tyranny according to the criterion of force (276d8-e5), since a fully tame herd could be ruled by a tyrant without using force (i.e., for the tyrant’s own good), and a wild herd could conceivably be ruled by force by a true king (i.e., for the good of the herd). Things would be easier for the tyrant, of course, if his subjects were tame, i.e., soft and unable to rebel (just as things would be easier for the king if his subjects were not wild, i.e., resistant to rule), but the fundamental fact of tyranny (which, as the Stranger will later note, is simply the fact that the tyrant rules in his own private interest, 300a1-7) would not be affected by the tameness or wildness of the herd. The tameness or potential tameness of the human herd, in other words, seems to conceal the danger of absolute, willingly accepted tyranny. It would seem that human beings, therefore, need to be both tame and wild, both difficult and easy to rule, i.e., not mere “sheep,” for statesmanship to be distinguishable from tyranny. This is the reason why this latter distinction cannot be introduced until after the myth, since the first genealogy of the statesman in a way reflects only the divine ruler in the age of Cronos, where the distinction between tyranny and statesmanship makes no sense because human beings are mere sheep, tame and docile, and yet cannot but be ruled by the god for their own good.57

This points to the apparent congruence of the tame/wild distinction with the (later) distinction between the parts of virtue that is so crucial to the Stranger’s post-mythical political theory (306a8ff). The wild clearly can be represented as the sharp/courageous (and wildness, like courage, is a purely “Zeussian” characteristic, present only in the age of Zeus, as we shall see), whereas the tame can be represented as the moderate/gentle, even though the Stranger takes special pains not to call the courageous “wild” or the moderate “tame.” The full implications of this congruence will become clearer later; but it must be emphasized that in his (later) recognition of the dual nature of virtue, the Stranger essentially acknowledges that human beings are both tame and wild, and must be both if they are to survive. To be sure, the tame nature is ultimately more fundamental (for human beings are willing to be tamed, they are not by nature recalcitrant), but this “wildness” must never be entirely eradicated, since it is at the root of human courage.58

The examples the Stranger uses of “tame” animals (schools of fish and flocks of geese and cranes), however, suggest a narrowing of the notion of tameness that is not adequately represented as a sort of “moderation,” and thus point away from the later distinction between the sharp/courageous and the gentle/moderate.59 Schools of fish in the Nile are “tame” only in the sense that the fish in them are willing to be nurtured by us, i.e., to be fed by us;60 similarly cranes and geese in the Thessalian plain are considered tame due to the presence of χηνοβωτία and γερανοβωτία (264c6), i.e.,

58 See chapter 9, section 9.2.3.1. It should be noted that the Stranger’s pedagogical procedure consists in taming Young Socrates’ fundamental spiritedness (his “wildness,” one might say) by making him see human beings as fully “tame” beings.

59 Hence the Stranger’s reticence in identifying the sharp/courageous with the wild and the gentle/moderate with the tame makes sense as a way of heading off a potentially fatal confusion.

congregations of geese and cranes for the purpose of feeding. Their tameness does not extend to the doing of anything in particular, i.e., to the performance of any commands given by means of λόγοι. It is unclear that theoretical-commanding knowledge is of any use over such creatures. By this standard, even a caged pride of lions would qualify as tame. In the light of the example, the tameness of human beings seems to signify merely their willingness to be ruled, or rather fed, by a stronger being, which the myth will show us is the shepherd-god who provides feeding places for them, *ἀνθρωποβοτιάι (to coin a word).

4.4 The Stranger’s bullying and the inadequacy of the diairesis of human being

The Stranger moves quickly over the next two steps in the division, basically forcing young Socrates to accept certain points that are by no means clear to everyone. First (264d1-d9), he divides, on the basis of the examples he has just presented, tame herds into those who make their dwelling primarily in water (like fish) and those who make their dwelling primarily in land (like the cranes and the geese), which implies that

61 I am tempted to translate χινοβοτίας and γερανοβοτίας as “feeding places” for geese and cranes. LSJ gives “feeding of geese” and “feeding of cranes,” and a derivation from βόσκω, to feed.

62 This is noted by Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," pp. 195-96. A similar point is made by Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 62, though Scodel does not go as far as questioning the fundamental oddity of calling fish “tame.” Most commentators simply glide over this passage.

63 Note also, in this context, the re-introduction of the previously rejected term κοινοτροφική (264b7-8; 264d6; cf. 261e1-8 as well as discussion in section 7.2.2, p. 139). Since all sorts of fish may be placed in the same aquarium, the notion that they must first form herds to be called tame is pushed to the background. Howland, The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosophic Trial, p. 250, also makes the point that there is a distinction between the domesticable by means of λόγοι (i.e., human beings) and the tamable by force, a distinction that is collapsed in the Stranger’s examples.
there is a water-creature-nurturing and a land-creature-nurturing art. He then says, essentially, that they have no need of even looking for the branch of the division in which the statesman belongs, for it is obvious to everyone (264d10-e2). Young Socrates wholeheartedly agrees. And while it may, indeed, be the case that this fact is obvious to everyone, we should note that it is not obvious because of any features that land-walking animals have; it is obvious because they already know that statesmen care for human beings rather than fish. Cranes, even if they are intelligent, do not form πόλεις and do not need statesmen (or states-cranes!).

A similar sort of bullying is at work in the next division, that of the land-walking animals “by wing and by foot” (264e6-11). The basic distinction here is between those animals who use wings and those who use their feet as their primary means of locomotion. The Stranger quickly suggests to Socrates that even the person most devoid of φρόνησις (τῶν ἀφρονέστατων) will seek the statesman among those concerned with creatures that go “by foot.” Young Socrates would indeed be very dull not to see this (and thus, taking the hint, he “sees” it), but, once again, this is not because there is anything about wings and feet that has anything essential to do with statesmanship, but because he knows human beings do not have wings, and therefore the statesman cannot be found among the winged kind. It is also possible to detect a certain irony here: only when human beings have become indistinguishable from living beings without φρόνησις, in

64 Not, as some scholars have it, between merely having wings and having feet, which would produce a contradiction with the distinction in the short way between feathered and non-feathered (266e7). See below, section 4.5.3.
other words, when they themselves have become ἀφρονέστατοι, it is possible to think that statesmanship has anything essential to do with “footed” creatures qua footed.65

Note that this is not the case for the implicit division that young Socrates had proposed earlier, namely, that between those living beings possessing the capacity for φρόνησις and those that do not. The possession of φρόνησις already points to the kind of knowledge that the statesman has, since living beings that possess this capacity presumably also possess speech and can thus act in accordance with commands, which makes them susceptible to the theoretical-commanding knowledge of the statesman, whereas living beings that do not possess such a capacity must be dealt with in a different way, presumably by means of physical force.66 The φρόνησις/lacking φρόνησις distinction thus pointed to a relevant feature of ensouled animals given the need for the statesman’s knowledge to be exercised by means of commands.

Even the division of animals into the tame and the wild itself suggested, as we have seen, the proper branch in which the statesman should be placed. For if tame is interpreted as open to command and domestication, i.e., obedient, whereas wild is interpreted as disobedient, then the statesman’s knowledge, made effective as it is through commands, would be properly concerned with the tame branch of the division.

---

65 Other scholars have noted that this division in particular is so outrageous (and is repeated in the short way) the Plato must be indicating something by it that is not evident in the surface. Few, if any, scholars, however, have noticed the Stranger’s bullying tone here, however. See Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, p. 62.

66 In fact, it is arguable that all care of living beings without the capacity for φρόνησις is practical (not theoretical) knowledge. In order to get a horse to gallop or an ox to pull actual physical exertion is necessary; a mere command or exertion of the soul through λόγοι will not suffice, since these beings are (for the most part) impervious to λόγοι. Hence no theoretical-commanding form of knowledge, and certainly not the knowledge of the statesman, could ever serve to get them to do anything, unless (as in the myth) these creatures had the gift of λόγος. Dogs, perhaps, serve as intermediaries between the command of the shepherd and the rounding up of the sheep; but dogs are not ruled entirely by means of command or λόγοι, as any dog-owner knows.
To be sure, as we saw, there was an ambiguity in this division, which is that the statesman did not necessarily find his subjects already tamed, and that complete tameness seemed to render statesmanship irrelevant; but the basic point remains unchanged.

Both the (implicit) division in young Socrates’ erroneous proposal and the tame/wild division introduced in its stead by the Stranger, therefore, pointed to features of living beings that in turn determined the field of the statesman’s concern, whereas the new divisions of tame animals into land- and water-dwelling and feet- and wing-using do no such thing. The Stranger has to bully young Socrates into accepting the placement of the statesman over the land-walking (by telling him, essentially, that he would be very dumb indeed not to see it) in order to obscure this inconvenient fact. Since the Stranger eliminated the criterion of ἐπιγνώσις as a proper criterion for determining the statesman’s object of concern, there is no reason in the nature of the thing not to suppose that cranes and fish have no statesmen (or states-fish or states-cranes) of their own (in Greek, of course, all of these queer personages would be called πολιτικοί or βασιλεῖς).67

The Stranger’s bullying of young Socrates’ into accepting these two divisions without giving him time for reflection thus indicates that these two divisions are not to be taken seriously as indicating anything essential about statesmanship. They rather point to the brute fact that the statesman cares for human beings, and human beings happen to live on land and to use their feet as means of locomotion; but these two characteristics of human beings do not – indeed cannot – determine anything about statesmanship properly speaking. The statesman, on this conception at least, is concerned with human beings

67 Aristotle, History of Animals, I.i.11, recognized this by classing the crane as a πολιτικόν ζώον. I owe this reference to Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note to 264c.
rather than cranes or fish simply because he is concerned with human beings, not because human beings are more interesting or are more in need of his care.

4.5 Long and short ways

4.5.1 Measuring long and short ways

The Stranger, after all this bullying, now says that they must show πεζονομικῆ, the art of grazing land-dwelling and feet-using herds (which, incidentally, suggests grazing in a fairly direct way, and thus the image of the shepherd) to be double when cut, just like an even number (264e12-13). Immediately afterwards, however (265a1-6), he suggests that this doubleness is itself twofold: there is a long way and a short way to the ultimate goal of the division, and they can choose.68

The Stranger now offers young Socrates a choice: which one should they choose? Young Socrates wants to see both: he is a glutton for λόγοι, like his namesake. The Stranger is in turn taken aback: he calls him θαυμαστῷ (265a8), somebody who has just induced a state of wonder (θαυμά) in him, but tells him that it is possible to see both ways “in turn” (ἐν μέρει). Young Socrates then re-iterates his desire to traverse both ways, and the Stranger replies by making a very curious comment about the possibility of satisfying his request (265b2-6). He says that, had young Socrates given this order

68 One can compare the long way to dividing the number four in order to reach the number one into the numbers two and two, and the number two into the numbers one and one; and the short way to dividing the number four into the numbers three and one. The final goal (the number one) is the same, but the number of divisions is different.
young Socrates is behaving like a statesman again, cf. 261e7-8) at the beginning or while they where in the middle of the division it would have been difficult for them [to obey it]. But now they can choose to travel the longer way first, since they are “fresher,” and (presumably) they can traverse the shorter way later.

The comment is curious for two reasons. First of all, it seems to suggest that the bifurcation of the path into two ways was possible earlier, or else the Stranger could not say that Young Socrates’ command could have been issued “at the beginning” or “while they were in the middle of it” (μεσοζυος 265b3). The beginning of the genealogy was the division of knowledge into theoretical and practical sciences; the middle of it was precisely the point at which young Socrates separated off human beings from the beasts (262a4). As we saw, a minimal correction by the Stranger at that point (re-casting the human being/beast distinction as the “capable of φρόνησις”/“incapable of φρόνησις” distinction) could have salvaged young Socrates’ attempted division, and led to a “shorter” division. Furthermore, the Stranger himself indicated that young Socrates’ division was “shorter” and “most beautiful” but that it was not yet safe to proceed in that way (262b2-8); young Socrates had in fact hit upon a true bifurcation of the genealogy into long and short ways.

69 The genealogy starts at 258b2, and, counting to the end of the short way, goes to 266e11. 262b2 is pretty exactly in the middle of that block of text, with four Stephanus pages before and four after. (In the Oxford text, I count 201 lines between 258b2 and 262b2, and 247 lines between 262b3 and 266e11; if one counts from 263a1, the end of the Stranger’s rebuke of young Socrates, there are 207 lines up to 266e11, making the symmetry nearly perfect). It also happens to be the middle “step” in the “long way:” there are five steps before (theoretical/practical sciences, critical/commanding sciences, translating or mediating/self-commanding sciences, over inanimate/ensouled beings, individual nurture/common nurture) and five after (water-bound/land-walking, winged/footed, horned/un-horned, interbreeding/non-interbreeding = split/single-hoofed, four-footed/two-footed). The tame/wild distinction, as we have already seen, substitutes for the capable of φρόνησις/incapable of φρόνησις distinction implicit in young Socrates’ human being/beast distinction.
But this means that they seem to have, in fact, already taken the long way, if young Socrates’ faulty division pointed in the direction of the “real” short way: had the choice presented itself at that stage, the short way would have led to human beings as beings capable of φρόνησις, while the long way would lead, as it in fact does here in both its short and long versions, to human beings as indistinguishable from the beasts (related to swine and to birds). If this is so, we will only see the short way “in part” (ἐκ μέρους), rather than just “in turn” (ἐν μέρει).70

Furthermore, if the division into a long way and a short way was not only possible in the middle of the discussion, but at its very beginning (κατ’ ἀρχὰς 265b2), we must ask whether a different division of knowledge, different from both the one in the Sophist (into acquisitive/productive knowledge) and the one actually followed in the Statesman (into theoretical/practical knowledge), would have led to the statesman (rather than to human beings, his charges) in a shorter way. One such possible division comes to mind: that of “syncritics” and “diacritics” which is at the basis of the genealogy of weaving and thus, ultimately, of the last genealogy of the statesman (chapter 6, section 6.3). Whether such a division would have resulted in a “shorter” way to the statesman we cannot evaluate, however; let us note only that in that case the statesman would have probably turned out to be a close cousin of the cathartic or noble sophist, i.e., Socrates, taking its descent from the “syncritic” rather than the diacritic branch of the division. At any rate statesmanship does turn out to be a “syncritic” form of knowledge (chapter 9, section 9.2.3).

70 Greek idiom, according to LSJ, has ἐκ μέρους as “in part,” ἐν μέρει [with a genitive] as “in part of [something],” and ἐν μέρει by itself as “in turn.” To be sure, usage of ἐκ μέρους as “in part” is attested in LSJ only in St. Paul; at any rate μέρος τι (the noun used adverbially) means “in part” in Plato.
We should also note that there are pedagogical reasons for the Stranger’s choice to take the longest possible road to the statesman. Here he accepts young Socrates’ suggestion that they travel both the long and the short ways (both are “shown” to young Socrates and the spectators, including us), since Socrates is prepared to hear the conclusions of both, namely, that human beings are low creatures. In the middle of the genealogy he suggested that Socrates had hit upon a shorter way, but that he was not yet prepared to follow it (262b2-8); it was “safer” (ἀσφαλέστερον), at the time, to follow a longer way, which methodologically could be characterized as “cutting by the middle.” At the beginning he hinted that there might be other ways of dividing knowledge, but perhaps he did not think young Socrates was intellectually prepared for them (258b7-c2; see also chapter 4, section 5.2.1). In both cases, the Stranger took the “long” way without consulting young Socrates due to the latter’s educational needs; now, however, young Socrates is prepared to see both the long and the short ways.

Finally, if both the long and short ways of defining human beings are true, as the Stranger suggests even at the time of young Socrates’ mistake (262b-8), this means that they must be woven together or synthesized in order to grasp their full meaning. Thus, human beings must be both tame beasts and animals capable of φρόνησις, just as they are shown to be both two-legged pigs and featherless birds, and the statesman must somehow take into account both of these aspects in his care for them. Diairesis, however, is unable to perform the work of synthesis; for that, the myth will be necessary (see chapter 5, section 5.1). The myth puts together the short way that young Socrates had suggested with the longer way that the Stranger took, showing how human φρόνησις emerges out of human incompleteness vis à vis all other animals.
4.5.2 The long way

The long way is about seven times longer than the short way in physical length, but only one and a half times longer than the short way in terms of the number of steps it involves. The first step seems to present no complications: the Stranger says that tame footed animals are divided by nature into horn-bearing and lacking horns. Human beings are defined here by what they lack, in this case a ready means of defense. The statesman, the Stranger and young Socrates quickly agree, is to be assigned to the herd without horns. To some degree, this assignment is rather arbitrary, like the previous two steps; horns, or the lack thereof, cannot indicate whether a living being is receptive to the particular kind of theoretical-commanding knowledge of the statesman or not. But the mention of horns does suggest something like the “protective” function of the statesman. We might think that since human beings have no horns, they have no ready means of defense, and statesmanship is necessary to correct this, though, as we shall see, this is too simple: the lack of horns as means of defense is corrected by the general or the soldier, not the statesman.

4.5.2.1 The question of interbreeding

The second step, however, is much more confusing. The Stranger begins by saying that they are to break up into small pieces this herd and give the result to the king. However, he seems to be dubious about what cut to attempt, and asks young

[71 It goes from 265b6 to 266d11, or about 84 lines in the Oxford text; the short way goes from 266d12 to 266e11, or about 12 lines in the Oxford text.]
Socrates whether he wishes to divide the herd by “split hoof”/“single hoof” or by κοινογονία (interbreeding)/ ἰδιογονία (non-interbreeding). He does not, however, let him answer, but explains that horses and asses, when mating with each other, generate offspring (meaning sterile mules). This suggests that the split hoof/single hoof distinction and the non-interbreeding/interbreeding distinctions are congruent with each other, i.e., they both split the herd in the same way: all remaining interbreeding animals are single-hoofed and vice-versa, and similarly all remaining non-interbreeding animals are split-hoofed and vice-versa. But do they yield the same “look” of human being? After all, having single hooves seems to have nothing to do with being able to interbreed.

The first distinction further suggests that human beings have hooves, which is quite odd. To be sure, one can interpret σχιστός as referring merely to the fact that human beings, like many other animals, have toes, which would justify the epithet “split-hoofed.” But this is a strange way of referring to this fact, in Greek as much as in English. At any rate, the use of this word seems to point to a fairly animalistic conception of human beings. Having split hooves or not, moreover, does not seem to have any bearing on why the statesman would care for human beings. Both split hooves and single-hooves seem perfectly adequate for the purposes of locomotion, and the single-hoofed animal does not seem to have any advantages or disadvantages with respect

72 Cf. Skemp, Plato's Statesman, p. 138, note ad loc.

73 The Stranger uses a compound with the word ὄφωξ to signify hooves. ὄφωξ normally means “claw” and is nowhere, as far as I can tell, used of human feet or hands; cf. LSJ s.v.

74 LSJ does not give any instance of σχιστός as referring to human toes, though the word can mean simply “split,” said of things as diverse as roads or wings.
to the split-hoofed animal.\textsuperscript{75} The statesman’s care, it would seem, does not differ at all depending on whether the being he cares for has whole or split hooves. This seems to be tacitly recognized by the Stranger insofar as the split-hoofed/single-hoofed distinction is silently dropped in favor of the non-interbreeding/interbreeding distinction.

This distinction – and the terminology the Stranger uses – recalls the earlier distinction (261d4-e4) between κοινοτροφία (nurture in common) and ἰδιοτροφία (nurture in private). As we may remember, the art of the statesman was a form of κοινοτροφία at the time (though interpreted as ἄγελαιοτροφία). κοινογονία, however, does not mean here the art of generation in common (e.g., from two people), but the art of generation from two different γένη. This introduces an ambiguity in the position of human beings, an ambiguity that young Socrates, as is to be expected, does not notice. As we saw earlier, (section 4.2.3.1), it is somewhat unclear in what sense human beings constitute a single γένος, since each people considers itself to be a sub-γένος of the γένος of human beings.

Are human beings, then, ἰδιογένος? At the technical level at which young Socrates, abetted by the Stranger, answers the question, human beings are ἰδιογένος since they constitute a single species vis à vis all other species of animals, with whom they cannot mate. Young Socrates, with his answer, is prefiguring again the rule of the god over the whole γένος of human beings. At a political level, however, it is not clear that human beings are ἰδιογένος. Human beings can mate across γένη, i.e., peoples, and across families (γένη), which would make them susceptible to

\textsuperscript{75} Pace Zuckert, "The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrates' Political Art," p. 10, I do not think that having split hooves shows any kind of human vulnerability. Horses may be faster runners than human beings, but that is not because they have single hooves; deer are even faster runners, but have split hooves.
κοινογονία. Such an internal differentiation of γένη (families, peoples) within a single γένος (species) of human beings would seem to indicate that while divine statesmen might need the art of ἰδιογένεσις, human statesmen, who rule not over the entire γένος of human beings but over one of its sub-γένη, need the art of κοινογένεσις. This will eventually be confirmed by the notion of the statesman as a weaver of the two γένη of virtue (cf. γένη 310d3, 310e7, referring to the two kinds of virtue as embodied in two sorts of people) and in particular a weaver of these natures by the judicious use of marriage both within and among πόλεις.

At any rate, the point is that the question of whether or not human beings are ἰδιογένος or κοινογένος, unlike the question of whether or not human beings are split-hoofed or single-hoofed animals, actually matters in determining the kind of knowledge required of the statesman. The two divisions are not equivalent in their power to reveal the statesman and his charges, even if they are empirically (and mathematically) equivalent. They yield two different “looks” of human being, two different sets of eidetic parts of the γένος of tame herd animals lacking horns. Mentioning them together points out the limitations of the purely mathematical method of division by the middle, since the resulting sets of γένη are mathematically equivalent, but unequally revealing of the statesman. Only the myth will be able to show how the two distinctions are thus not really congruent from the point of view of the statesman; one applies to the age of

76 Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, p. 65, makes this point in a less precise way, contrasting this division with the split-hoofed/whole-hoofed division: “[w]hile the division in terms of hoofs conceals the erotic aspect of man latent in the κοινογονία-ἰδιογονία distinction, it is also in a sense more accurate, or at least less tendentious than the latter, since the human species can interbreed with itself.” The human species “interbreeds with itself,” however, only if we consider it as internally divided into many γένη, many peoples or families, which the Stranger has consistently refused to do.
Cronos, another to the age of Zeus (see chapter 5, section 5.5.2). As usual, however, young Socrates does not quite get it.

4.5.2.2 Human being, pig, and mathematics

The Stranger suggests that the γένος of tame herd animals has now been fully broken into pieces, except for two γένη. The Stranger’s division of the remaining species (266a5-b9) takes the form of a laborious joke, ably explained by various commentators. The basic result of the joke is that the nature of human beings (cf. φύσις 266b2), being like the square root of two, is incommensurable with the nature of pigs, which is like the square root of four. It is only the mathematical procedure of “squaring” these natures — by looking not at the natures of human beings and pigs by themselves, as it were, but at the number of their feet — that makes human beings and pigs commensurable: one kind of animal has two feet, the other four, or twice the number of feet as the first. Mathematics, in this instance, thus produces a kind of optical illusion: human being and pig are made commensurable, and the statesman is given the same rank as the swineherd (266c10-d2), even though human beings and pigs are not, in their nature,

______________________________

77 See, e.g., Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note ad loc, Skemp, Plato's Statesman, note ad loc.

78 Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, pp. 65-66, is wrong to suggest that this division is not correct since it excludes insects, who have more than one foot; in order for insects to be improperly excluded they would have to be considered tame, which they are not, or at least the Stranger gives no signs of encouraging young Socrates to think so. Bees, which can be considered tame herd animals, were excluded earlier, along with the other winged animals. To be sure, ants, for instance, seem to be herd-animals, and might be considered tame, just as fishes were; but the case is dubious. This (seemingly frivolous) point hints at a more fundamental problem, namely the dependence of the Stranger’s method on the senses. Cf. Strauss, "Plato," p. 220.
commensurable.\textsuperscript{79} The Stranger thus draws the moral of the story (266d7-10): by this method (the quasi-mathematical method of the long way) they have no care for whether some of the λόγοι are “more sacred” (σεμνοτέρου 266d7-8, in an echo of the cranes who made themselves holy by overestimating the significance of their capability for φρόνησις, 263d7) than others. Young Socrates, and human beings, have now been completely humbled.

Yet not everything is illusory here. That human beings are kin to pig is an idea that Socrates once presented to Glaucon with his famous “city of pigs” or “healthy city” (\textit{Republic} 372dff), a city that, arising out of the spontaneous organization of crafts into a division of labor adequate to the satisfaction of human need, did not require a human statesman. And the γένος of the pig is said to be “most noble” (γενεσιοτάτω) and most full of ease (266c4-6),\textsuperscript{80} which points to the tension in the human situation evident in the age of Cronos. For human beings to be like the pig they must be placed in a situation which is in some sense nobler – and fuller of ease – than their current situation, as we shall see. But young Socrates is here invited to laugh at himself. This is a joke, after all; and laughter deflates pride. Yet young Socrates does not get the joke.\textsuperscript{81} A childish story will be needed to get him to see the point.

\textsuperscript{79} Some commentators have noted that two-footedness is elsewhere associated with φρόνησις, something the Stranger does not emphasize. See Dorter, \textit{Form and good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues}, p. 189, citing \textit{Cratylus} 399c and Aristotle, \textit{Parts of Animals} IV.x.686a27-32. This supports my interpretation of the passage, since it is not two-footedness itself that is important, but the nature whose power of locomotion is two-footedness, and thus the divinity of human nature.

\textsuperscript{80} Clark, “Herds of Free Bipeds,” pp. 242-44, points out, rightly, that pigs were not necessarily seen as disgusting animals, but as curious, intelligent domestic beings.

\textsuperscript{81} As Benardete, \textit{The Being of the Beautiful}, p. III.93, notes.
4.5.3 The short way and the unwinged nature of human beings

The Stranger gives the short way to young Socrates before the latter asks for it and without his participation (266d12-e11). This makes it physically much shorter. It also comprises only two steps, which would make it shorter than the long way in this respect too, since the long way comprises three steps. The division is simple: the γένος of animals that use their feet as means of locomotion on land is divided into those animals that use four of these feet and those that use two; these are in turn divided into animals that grow feathers (like chicken, who have wings but do not fly\(^2\)) and those who do not.

The word πτεροφυής, growing feathers, is very uncommon. Plato uses the word in only two other places in the corpus, Phaedrus 251c4 (in verbal form) and 255d2 (again in verbal form). In that mythical context, to grow feathers (and thus wings) is to become fully human, to move towards the divine. That the Stranger places human beings among those who are unable to grow feathers thus seems to point to their complete animality in the short way and yet to the necessity for them to grow the mythical feathers of the Phaedrus, i.e., to strive towards the divine.\(^3\) The proper task of the statesman would seem to be to make human beings into feather-growing animals, animals capable of rising towards the divine.

---

\(^2\) No special problem should be seen here; the Stranger is not separating winged animals twice, pace Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note ad loc., Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 28 and 127, note 25, Dorter, Form and good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues, pp. 181-87, Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, pp. 67-68, and Skemp, Plato's Statesman, in his translation. 264e3-11 separates animals that use their wings for locomotion from those that do not (cf. ξηροβατικόν 264d2); 266e6-7 separates animals that use their feet as means of locomotion into those that have feathers and those that do not.

\(^3\) Cf. Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 67, who also notices the reference to the Phaedrus, but thinks of it in a different way.
In the summary of the genealogy, at any rate, (267a8-c3), the Stranger simply forgets about the short way; he proceeds as if they had only pursued the long way, for reasons that are not entirely clear, but perhaps have something to do with the fact that the division points to the age of Cronos, and thus to human beings as pigs, not to anything like the myth of the *Phaedrus*. He also omits any mention of the tame/wild distinction, which, as we saw, takes the place of the capable of φρόνησις/incapable of φρόνησις distinction, perhaps because, as we indicated earlier, it is not a division of the knowledge of the statesman but of animals. The omission of the shorter way from the summary nevertheless suggests the need for a synthesis: the Stranger has yet to indicate in any substantive way how the understanding of human being as a two-legged pig can incorporate the (thus far rejected) undersanding of human being as a being capable of φρόνησις, which seems to be essential for any real understanding of politics. But this is the task of the myth; and before the myth, the Stranger needs to make young Socrates understand that they have made a mistake.

4.6 A preliminary diagnosis of the mistake in the first genealogy

Young Socrates shows himself satisfied by the genealogy of the statesman (267a4-7, c4), but the Stranger does not (267c5-d2). The Stranger thinks the λόγος of the statesman has been said somehow, but has not yet been completed (τελέως ἀπειργάσθαι 267d1-2). The Stranger will repeatedly insist on the lack of completeness of the λόγος in the face of young Socrates’ complaisant belief in its completeness (cf. 275a9, 276c10, 277a5), but he never disavows it completely. Nothing
they have done, in particular the whole genealogy of the statesman up to this point, is to be simply rejected, only corrected, clarified and expanded.

In order to show young Socrates in what way the λόγος of the statesman has not been completed, the Stranger first summarizes the result of the genealogy: the statesman has emerged for them as a kind of shepherd, namely the shepherd of human beings (267d7-9). However, in the course of the genealogy, they interpreted the specific form of his care (ἐπιμέλεια; cf. 267d9) for the human herd as “nurture” (267d11-13). Such nurture, however, is not acknowledged to be the exclusive province of the statesman; other τέχναι, and thus in effect other people, claim or pretend to be joint nurturers of the human herd (267e4-5), disputing the claim of πολιτική to the care of the nurture of human beings (267d12-13). But one may have thought that the statesman could have defended himself against the claim of the pretenders by saying that all of these “pretenders” are subordinated to him, mere “heralds” to his commands. Yet given the way nurture has been defined thus far in the dialogue (as the physical preservation of human beings; see above, section 4.1), such a counterclaim could not have been supported.

This is because the knowledge necessary for satisfying the variety of human bodily needs cannot be integrated into one task directed by the statesman (at least not by a human statesman, as we shall learn in the myth) so long as such integration remains at the level of the body. To put the matter in a slightly different way, if we said that the task of the statesman is to ensure the health of the citizens, then we would have to say that he is a kind of doctor; if we supposed that his task is to ensure that they have strong bodies, then we would have to say that he is a kind of gymnastics teacher; if we thought that his
task is to ensure that they have a lot of food available to them, then we would have to suppose that he is a kind of farmer or grain merchant; and if we said that the task of the statesman is “all of the above” then we would have to suppose that he is either a sophist (falsely claiming to have knowledge that he cannot have; cf. *Sophist* 233a3-b7 and chapter 2, section 2.3) or a god (as indeed the myth will show). But the statesman is not, *ex hypothesi*, a doctor or a gymnastics teacher or the like; he is a shepherd (cf. 268b9-c3).

Young Socrates seems impressed by this result (268a5), and the Stranger does not say that those disputing for the care (ἐπιμέλεια) of the nurture of human beings are wrong. He points out, however, that this is not the case with any other shepherds (268a6-b7), among whom they had classed the statesman (cf. 268b9-c3). Other shepherds/cowherds⁸⁴ care for the whole of the needs of their herd all by themselves, both bodily and non-bodily (they feed, heal, and soothe and encourage the herd by means of music); no rivals arise to dispute their care. There is thus a difference between the shepherd of human beings (the statesman as he emerged in the genealogy) and the paradigmatic shepherd (described at 268a6-b7). In particular, while the shepherd of the genealogy seemed to have a single expertise, the paradigmatic shepherd has all the expertises that, in the case of human beings, are the province of a variety of specialists. A “shepherd” is thus merely the name for the agglomeration of all arts of nurture, unified

---

⁸⁴ As Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*, p. 186, notes to 268b4-5 and to 268d8, the stranger switches in the middle of the passage from describing a cowherd (βουκόλος, cf. 268a7) to describing a shepherd (cf. ποιμήν 268b5, a word associated with sheep). Rowe thinks this is because “ancient cowherds seem to have been no more known for their musical talents their modern counterparts (in England, at least).” He speculates that shepherds, however, “are a different matter.” This, he admits, does not explain why the Stranger did not start with shepherds originally, though he claims that this is perhaps less of a puzzle than it might seem because “the argument should not be developed in terms of one species of herdsman.” While this is probably part of the answer, one could add that starting with cowherds allows the Stranger to use the term βουφορβίς (268a8), which echoes 261b10, where the statesman was said to be like an ox-feeder.
into a single ἐπιστήμη (268a6-b7); the shepherd is no “specialist.” If the statesman is really like all other shepherds, in other words, he is much like the – impossible – ideal of the wise man that the sophist imitates (Sophist 232e6-233a7). Once again, the Stranger and young Socrates have hit upon the statesman as the wise man, but have not yet managed to define wisdom properly.

Other shepherds, however, do not have rivals simply because cows/sheep do not have any arts, and thus cannot present themselves as potential claimants to their arts. All knowledge is on the side of the cowherd/shepherd, while the cows/sheep are (of course) wholly ignorant of the arts. In the political community, on the other hand, knowledge is not only divided among a variety of arts, but is also embodied in a variety of human beings, and not only contingently, as it would be if it were possible for a single person to have all the τέχναι (the – impossible – supposition of the sophist), but necessarily.

One could perhaps object at this point that the arts of the cowherd/shepherd can in fact be embodied among different human beings, such as the cow-feeder, the veterinarian (or even the more specialized cow-veterinarian or sheep-veterinarian), the breeding specialist, and the ox-driver. In other words, one might argue that the cowherd/shepherd escapes the fate of the statesman only because the division of labor in late 5th century Greece was insufficiently advanced to allow different human beings to be consistently employed as merely veterinarians, or cow-feeding specialists, or ox-drivers and the like.

85 Contra Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, p. 40, who argues that the cowherd/shepherd’s art is “without internal differentiation.”

86 While he is not said to know astronomy and theology (cf. Sophist 232c1-2, 232c4-5), he is said to know pretty much everything else: medicine, gymnastics, farming, even music.

87 The ox-driver might be said to alternatively “encourage” and “tame” the skittish oxen (with the appropriate “music”), leading them to places they would not otherwise have gone.
One could perhaps go further and argue that it is this fact that makes the cowherd/shepherd image unsuitable as a paradigm of the statesman, since by the late 5th century society had become complex enough that the knowledge necessary for managing it could not possibly be embodied in a single person.88

There is some truth in this claim, since the complexity of society does prevent the concentration of knowledge, or more precisely its embodiment, in a single person, and the division of labor89 (something which is absent from the Stranger’s image of the cowherd/shepherd) is in fact a good indicator of this complexity. But what this interpretation misses is that the skills of the shepherd/cowherd cannot be divided among the sheep or cows, who are ex hypothesi unable to do any of the things the cowherd/shepherd does for them. The myth will show that, contrary to the situation holding in the case of the shepherd, the skills of the shepherd of human beings are in fact divided in the age of Zeus among the erstwhile “cattle,” i.e., human beings, and that it would be only if the difference in knowledge between human beings and their rulers were as large as that between cattle and their herders that the ruler of human beings could be called a “shepherd.” In other words, it is only in the age of Cronos that the shepherd of human beings “fits” the paradigm of the shepherd.

Moreover, the fact that the knowledge of the cowherd/shepherd is abstractly “divisible” does not imply that it is therefore merely the side-by-side possession of distinct τέχναι that can be simply separated and given to different people, as if tending

88 This is (as I understand it) the argument of Coulobaritis, "Le paradigme platonicien du tissage comme modèle politique d'une société complexe," passim.
89 More precisely, perhaps one should say here the distribution of τέχναι among different people, which results in a division of labor.
to a herd were simply the random application of the different τέχναι of the shepherd. The τέχναι of the shepherd, on the contrary, must somehow be integrated in the task of caring for the sheep, and it is this integrative knowledge (at which the Stranger hints through his choice of examples, which include music and the telling of stories) that must remain for the statesman after he has been “purified” of his associations with the shepherd of human beings and thus with tyranny. The shepherd of human beings remains the model of the statesman, in other words, only insofar as his knowledge allows him to integrate all other necessary τέχναι in the task of caring for his herd, but no further. The correction that the Stranger will propose after the myth will thus accordingly show that statesmanship is a form of integrative knowledge rather than an integrated agglomerate of arts of nurture.

The Stranger even hints at the shape such integrative care takes. Shepherds, according to the statesman, use music and play (as much as the nature of the shepherd’s charges, θρέμματα, will take) to enchant and make them tame (πραονεω). This is the only suggestion in the dialogue that the statesman’s task is to tame the human herd, a

---

90 Associations explored by Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 35-48.

91 It is only to this extent, but no further, that the statesman can be said to be a herder even after the paradigm of the herder has been rejected, as Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 41-52, and Rowe, Plato: Statesman, p. 14, argue.

92 A contrasting, but philosophically productive and influential, view of the difference between the statesman and the shepherd is proposed by Foucault in a short discussion of the Statesman in Michel Foucault, "Omnis et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of "Political Reason"," in The Tamer Lectures on Human Value (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1981 [1979]). Foucault argues that shepherding takes care of the life of each individual sheep, whereas political knowledge properly speaking takes care of the preservation of the community, not of any individual being in it. “Pastoral power” thus prefigures Foucault’s own idea of “biopower,” as the key form of power in the modern age. I think Foucault misreads slightly the import of the distinction (shepherding in the Statesman is not about individual sheep, though as he shows the Jewish and Christian tradition did understand it in that way), but his general point is very useful. I return to it in the final chapter of this study.

93 The verb πραονω is often used of taming wild animals. See LSJ s.v.
possibility we had already pointed to when we discussed the tame/wild distinction (section 4.3, p. 156).

But the cowherd/shepherd does not only “tame” the herd; he also “encourages” or “exhorts” it (παραμυθεῖσθαι). If we may prefigure the Stranger’s later political theory (306a1ff), “encouragement,” if properly done, induces courage; “taming” or “domestication” does more or less the opposite (though whether it induces moderation is something we cannot explore at this point). Since these activities are in tension with one another, to say that the cowherd/shepherd both encourages and tames his herd seems to indicate that he measures the amount of courage and the amount of moderation required for the herd to function properly, i.e., he “weaves” courage and moderation in due measure in the herd, just like the statesman will weave the courage and moderation of his charges (θρέμμα 289b2) by means, partly, of play (cf. 308d4, 309a8ff). The paradigmatic shepherd thus points to the necessarily integrative character of the statesman’s knowledge.

Furthermore, the shepherd is said to be a practitioner of μαιευτική (“midwifery”) and a νυμφευτής (“arranger of marriages”). Someone with the true art of matchmaking, i.e., someone who practiced it justly, and who was placed in a supervisory position (i.e., in public), like a cowherd/shepherd, would be able to arrange marriages, just like the statesman is said to do at the end of the dialogue (310a7ff). The paradigmatic shepherd thus points to the necessarily integrative character of the statesman’s knowledge.

94 The main sense of the word is to encourage or exhort, but it resounds with echoes of μυθος (story/myth) and persuasion by means of gentle advice (cf. Sophist 229e4-230a3, especially παραμυθεύομενοι 230a2).

95 The English words “encourage” and “discourage” express this point nicely.

96 These arts have strongly Socratic overtones. Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.95.
shepherd thus partially foreshadows the Stranger’s later description of the statesman’s task as one having to do with marriages for the sake of properly mixing the souls of human beings (310a7ff; see chapter 9, section 9.2.3.2.3), though he does not appear to be also a midwife of souls, unlike the elder Socrates.

Before the Stranger can show that the knowledge of the statesman is a sort of integrative knowledge, however, he must show young Socrates how and why human beings are different from sheep and cows. He must, in other words, reconcile the “short” and the “long” ways (cf. above, section 4.5.1), human beings as beings with φρόνησις and human beings as incomplete animals, to get young Socrates to see how statesmanship differs from all other forms of shepherding. This is the task of the myth and the next chapter.
In the previous chapter, we saw how the attempt to describe statesmanship as a form of nurture led to all sorts of strange consequences: statesmanship appeared as a form of sheep- or swine- herding, and human beings appeared to be either two-legged pigs or featherless chickens. These consequences, however, were not merely strange but indicated that they had gone astray, since they suggested that the statesman should not have had any rivals for the care of human beings even though he did have such rivals: others did claim, with some justification, that they were also responsible for human nurture. In this chapter, we shall see how the great and puzzling myth that the Stranger now proceeds to tell gives us the tools to correct this error.

First, the myth situates the care of the statesman for a human herd within a broad network of forms of care in the cosmos, ranging from the care of the god for the whole to the care of animals for themselves. It thus allows us to understand the alternatives to conceiving of the care of the statesman as a form of nurture. It does so by presenting five “models” of care and hinting at a sixth. The five “models” are the following: 1) the care of the god for the whole universe (see sections 5.3, 5.4.1, and 5.6); 2) the care of the shepherd-gods for all animals, and in particular for human beings, in the age of “Cronos”
(see section 5.4.2); 3) the care of the universe for itself as a whole in the age of “Zeus” (see section 5.6.1); 4) the care of all animals for themselves in that age (see section 5.6.2); and 5) the care of human beings, as a special kind of animal in this age, for themselves (see section 5.6.3). The sixth form of care is merely “hinted” at, namely the care of the statesman for the polis (see sections 5.6.3 and 5.7). Throughout, all these forms of care are connected with the form of generation prevailing in the universe and its effects on the eidetic structure of the whole, as we shall see (see sections 5.4.1 and 5.6.2). “Care” emerges from the myth as the way in which living beings – including, in some sense, the universe as a whole – preserve eidetic order in a bodily medium which has a tendency to disorder.

More specifically, I argue that once we understand the myth as a story about the meaning of care (ἐπιμέλεια), then the care of the statesman for the entire polis emerges as a form of imitation of the care of the god\(^1\) for the whole cosmos, and hence statesmanship emerges as a form of knowledge that is firmly tied to awareness of cosmic order.\(^2\) The myth, I claim, explains “care” as the preservation, against the entropic tendencies of bodily nature, of order and structure, or, in Platonic terms, of eidetic structure. More precisely, care is the way in which soul makes body achieve and preserve its form in a cosmos that tends to the dissolution of form-in-body. The myth further

\(^1\) Cropsey, Plato's world: Man's Place in the Cosmos, p. 119, argues that the statesman is indeed a defective imitation of the god; but he mistakes the true reference of “god” as the daimon that grazes human beings in the age of Cronos, a view that will be refuted below.

\(^2\) A number of commentators have argued that the myth shows that statesmanship is unmoored from any notion of cosmic or divine order, a view which I will refute in what follows. See, for example, Cropsey, Plato's world: Man's Place in the Cosmos, especially pp. 117-21, Griswold Jr., "Politikē Epistēmē in Plato's Statesman," pp. 151-53, Rosen, Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics, especially p. viii and 45. Cropsey in particular depicts the god as not merely abandoning the cosmos but as indifferent to and neglectful of it, a view that I disagree with, as will become clear later.
situates the specifically *political* form of care, i.e., the care of the statesman for the *polis*, in the context of all care as that form of it that deals with (a part of) the human εἴδος in imitation of the care of the god for the whole cosmos.

Second, the myth also “reconciles” the account of human beings as two-legged pigs (what I have called the “long way”) with the (rejected, but not altogether incorrect) account of human beings as beings with φρόνησις (what I have called the “short way”) by showing us how the use of φρόνησις and the development of the τέχναι emerge out of the human effort to provide for their incompleteness as animals. It thus shows us that human beings are different from mere sheep in always being able to possess at least *part* of the knowledge required for their own care. Statesmanship, on this account, must deal with human beings insofar as their incompleteness makes them capable of art and self-care. This means that statesmanship cannot be a form of nurture, but must be a capacity to order the generic human capacity for art or “technology” so as to ensure the preservation of (a part of) the human species (εἴδος).

In order to see this, we must be able to see that there is an explicit literary parallel in the myth between the god’s rule of the cosmos and the statesman’s rule of the *polis* in at least two respects. First, as the god orders the parts of the cosmos in their proper relations before letting go of the cosmos, so does the statesman order the parts of the city, which is the minimal unit of the care of human beings, before letting go of it. The parts of the city, we shall see, are all the other forms of knowledge that share in this care. The order in which the statesman puts them is not arbitrary but is guided, like the order in which the god puts the cosmos, by an awareness of the due measure that preserves human beings in their best state, i.e., that state in which order rather than disorder predominates.
in their constitution. Understood in this way, the care of the statesman for the *polis* is ultimately a form of regulation of technology, broadly conceived.

Second, as the god has to let go of the cosmos at the appropriate moment so as not to destroy it, so the statesman has to let go of the *polis* when it has achieved its best condition, and as the god takes control of the cosmos again only when the cosmos is in direst straits, so the statesman returns to the *polis* only under conditions of grave disorder. The statesman’s care is a form of emergency care, though not one which simply tends to the body, but rather one that “injects” order into the city so that it may be preserved for some further time. The myth intimates this view of the statesman, though it does not explicitly present it; for this, we need to wait until the very end of the dialogue (see chapter 9, section 9.2.3.2)

I should stress at the outset that my argument does not rest on taking the myth literally. It does not matter for any philosophically significant purpose whether the Stranger, or Plato, actually “believes” the literal truth of the myth, and as a matter of fact its presentation as a *playful* story militates against this possibility. If there is any truth to the myth, it is presented in symbols rather than literal propositions and it thus underlies the story: it is the insight into the structure of the cosmos that shapes the narrative and its conceptual framework. I am claiming, however, that the myth serves as an aid to understanding the nature of statesmanship insofar as it presents us with several images of

---


5 On symbols and myth, see Voegelin, *Order and History*, volume 5.
other possible (not necessarily actual) forms of care and forces us to think of their parallels with statesmanship. It thus serves to clarify what is elsewhere in the dialogue the subject of analysis and argument, though there are reasons, both pedagogical (internal to the drama of the dialogue and dependent on young Socrates’ character and preparation) and philosophical (independent of young Socrates’ character and preparation) why the Stranger chooses to proceed by means of myth rather than argument. At any rate, we should beware of making too much of the opposition between μῦθος and λόγος, for the Stranger does not do so, and fills his μῦθος with a great deal of argument.\(^6\)

5.1 The need for the myth

The Stranger does not justify his recourse to myth in order to correct their error. He does not explain why a myth, rather than a λόγος, is required at this point; or why a story that he calls “playful” (268d8) and hence not something that should be taken “literally,”\(^7\) should nevertheless be useful in their inquiry. He also fails to explain why they will use only a part of the myth he will tell, a part which nevertheless later proves to be too large for their purposes (cf. 277a4ff), making much of the myth seem superfluous. There are philosophical reasons why the Stranger must resort to myth at this point, but it


would take us too far afield to explore them here.\textsuperscript{8} I will focus instead in this section on
the connection between young Socrates’ youth and the playfulness of the myth, as I
believe that it points to the reason why the myth is dramatically (though not necessarily
philosophically) necessary.

As has been occasionally noted, παιδιή or παιδιά (play) and παιδεία (education) echo each other; in Greek and in Plato;\textsuperscript{9} and the Stranger connects the
playfulness of the myth (παιδιά) with young Socrates’ youth (παιδίας \textsuperscript{268e5}, following
Robinson, from παιδία, which is occasionally used for παιδεία, according to LSJ)
which is, in a way, indistinguishable from the years of playfulness (παιδίας, following
Burnet).\textsuperscript{10} As a young man (but still nearly a παιζ), young Socrates is in need of
education, παιδεία, and education, we are instructed much later in the dialogue, partially
accomplished by means of play (308d4). The myth, to be sure, is not entirely playful, just
as young Socrates is not just a child; rather, it is near playfulness, just as young Socrates
is near the years of play. Nevertheless, the Stranger insists that young Socrates pay
attention to the myth just like a child (καθάπερ οἱ παιδεῖς \textsuperscript{268e5}), i.e., we might

\textsuperscript{8} For useful discussions of the philosophical value of, and need for, myth, see Horn, "Warum Zwei
Epochen der Menschheitsgeschichte?," pp. 139-44, Jean-François Mattéi, \textit{Platon et le miroir du mythe}
Selbstbeherrschung: Der Mythos des Politikos," in \textit{Platon als Mythologe: Neue Interpretationen zu den

\textsuperscript{9} See, for example, Schäfer, "Herrschen und Selbstbeherrschung," p. 117. See also LSJ s.v. παιδία.

\textsuperscript{10} See Robinson’s note to \textsuperscript{268e5} in the Oxford text: the manuscript families B and T have παιδίας
without an accent, and Robinson remarks that “lusum verborum voluit Plato,” that Plato wanted a play of
words. See also Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 268e5, to the same effect: “The original text, as Plato
wrote it, would have had no accents marked in any case” and “whichever we read, there will be a pun on
the other.”
surmise, with the openness of children playing. Perhaps it is only in taking up the myth “like children,” at least initially, that we can hope to be open to its truth, if any.11

The playfulness of the myth is thus directly related to its being suited to children rather than grown human beings, unlike the seriousness of diairesis, which is especially suited to mathematicians.12 But this makes it peculiarly well suited to young Socrates qua youth, whereas the diairesis (particularly the diairesis before the myth but after young Socrates’ “mistake” at 262a3ff) was especially well suited to him qua mathematician.13

---

11 See Hemmenway, "Pedagogy in the Myth of Plato's "Statesman": Body and Soul in Relation to Philosophy and Politics," p. 253: “if one listens to the story as the Stranger urges young Socrates to, that is “as children would” ... and if one keeps in mind certain facts about young Socrates, one can see that aspects of the tale are ingeniously designed to help the youth start to appreciate his own ignorance of the nature of man and thus of political matters.” Though I agree in principle with this statement, I disagree with Hemmenway in many small matters of detail. Furthermore, I think that the playfulness of the myth is more than merely pedagogical, at least in the sense that I do not think myths are appropriate only to children. In cosmic matters, we might say, all human beings are children.

12 See Hemmenway, "Pedagogy in the Myth of Plato's "Statesman": Body and Soul in Relation to Philosophy and Politics," p. 256. It is worth noting that one of the first scholars to attempt a “serious” interpretation of the myths of Plato was a mathematician, Couturat. He argued that the myths of Plato were “lies,” not to be taken seriously at all. See Perceval Frutiger, Les mythes de Platon: étude philosophique et littéraire (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930), pp. 12-19, commenting on Couturat’s 1896 work, De Platonici Mythis (Frutiger is especially severe in his condemnation, though he also tends to see the myths through a similar prism, if with a little more literary sensibility).

13 It is worth noting in this respect that while, in the Sophist, the Stranger criticized the ontological myths of his predecessors for being suited to children (cf. Sophist 242c8-9) rather than grown human beings, in the Statesman, as we have seen, he seizes on the “childishness” of the myth as particularly appropriate to young Socrates (268e4-6). In the Sophist, the Stranger’s criticisms of his predecessors centered on their attempts to number being; such attempts inevitable ended in contradiction (242c9ff). They were “mathematical” myths, but the attempt to use “number” inevitably obscured rather than clarified the issues at stake. The Stranger thus had recourse to argument (λόγος) in order to refute the misguided use of number and mathematics. In the Statesman, by contrast, the Stranger has recourse to myth in order to clarify what a “mathematized” use of diairesis had left obscure. In both cases, mathematics (or some part of what we call mathematics) obscures the important issues; but in the Sophist the Stranger resorts to λόγος, whereas in the Statesman he resorts to myth, to correct the problem. As Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.95, puts it, it seems that myths hinder the understanding of being but help the understanding of politics, while, we may add, mathematical training can help or hinder either the understanding of being or the understanding of politics depending on the person concerned. On the other hand, we might argue that the Stranger’s differing treatment of myth in the Sophist and the Statesman reflects his attempt to encourage Theaetetus (making him more of a grown man) and to moderate young Socrates (making him more of child). For a different account of the differing treatment of myth in these two dialogues, see Marlis Colloud-Streit, "Warum gibt es keinen Mythos im Sophistes?," Journal of the International Plato Society 4 (2004).
The diairesis was not devoid of humor, as we saw (chapter 4, section 4.5.2.2),\textsuperscript{14} including a number of jokes that we might have expected a mathematician to “get.” Yet young Socrates, in taking it all “straight,” missed the point of the jokes, i.e., that human beings were not merely pigs.\textsuperscript{15} The point of the jokes is part of the teaching of the myth, since it shows that political rule cannot be a form of shepherding.

Young Socrates’ lack of \textit{playfulness} is, thus, partly to blame for the partial failure of diairesis as a pedagogical method. He is not enough of a child, we might say, in his earnest acceptance of the Stranger’s comical divisions without understanding their deeper meaning. We might even say that, like many current interpreters, as a mathematician he cannot even conceive of the possibility that the Stranger is not being entirely serious, since mathematics necessarily searches for univocal, unambiguous meaning, whereas (most of) the Stranger’s “mathematical” references and jokes have a double, equivocal meaning: thus, for example, the family is and is not simply the city’s limit (chapter 3, section 3.2.2.2), and human beings are and are not simply commensurable with pigs (chpater 4, section 4.5.2.2).

To be sure, once a joke has been explained (i.e., when it is no longer funny), one can easily distinguish between the various senses on which it “plays”: the family is the city’s “limit” not with respect to rulership (ἀρχή) but merely with respect to its beginning or origin (ἀρχή); human beings are commensurable with pigs \textit{qua} land-walking animals, though not in their nature as beings capable of possessing φρόνησις. The ambiguity of the joke, however, has a synthetic function that is usually lost at this

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Friedländer, \textit{Platon}, p. III.264: “Man wird sich manchmal fragen müssen, ob nicht mehr Spiel in der Dialektik und mehr Ernst in Mythos ist.”
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{15} See Benardete, \textit{The Being of the Beautiful}, p. III.93.
\end{flushright}
point. *Because* the sense of the joke is ambiguous, one cannot choose between one meaning and the other; both meanings must be available to us at the same time and – in some respect – be both *true* for the joke to “work.” To explain the joke is in a certain sense to propose a diairetic choice, i.e., to analyze a synthetic unity of meaning by means of division: are human beings commensurable with pigs or not in this or that respect, for instance? But in choosing one alternative (e.g., human beings are commensurable with pigs *qua* land-walking animals, and thus must be classed with them), we normally “forget” the other true alternative. The playfulness of the joke, when used properly, is thus a form of “recollection.”

The joke, to be sure, does not *tell* us how to put together the two alternatives, that is, it does not tell us the principle behind their synthetic unity, much as the Stranger failed to tell young Socrates how to put together the long and short ways leading to human beings as two sorts of land-walking animal ([265a1ff](#); cf. also chapter 4, section 4.5.2.2). It simply holds them together, one partially obscured by the other. In this respect, the myth the Stranger is about to present is a much more powerful “synthetic” instrument which puts together not just the two aspects of the man/pig joke, but the whole disjunction within the nature of human beings hinted at in the diairesis. The point here, however, is that its *synthetic* ability lies (partially) in its playfulness. The diairesis, to be sure, especially in its second half, was also playful; but because it was also “mathematical,” young Socrates did not get the jokes, and its playfulness was wasted on him. With the myth, the Stranger explicitly warns young Socrates that he is to take the story as explicitly playful.
The myth is thus playful because it asks young Socrates (and us) to *play* with it, i.e., to hold its double meaning (the “two ages”) “in play.” We are not to forget about the age of Cronos when thinking about the age of Zeus or vice-versa. In playing *with* the myth, one does not, however, put aside all seriousness; in fact, one important feature of play is that while we are really playing, we are *serious* about playing. In the case of the myth, this means that we are open its truth, without taking it “literally.” Literalness is the death of play: though we pretend *seriously* (in that, e.g., we *commit* ourselves to play Hamlet and stay in character, or to engage in a deadly serious battle for the ball in a soccer game), to simply *believe* ourselves to be what we pretend to be is not a sign of playfulness: the person who *is* Hamlet is not playing at being Hamlet, and the person who is literally willing to give his life to score a goal in a soccer game is simply mad.

To *play* with the myth *seriously* we must be willing to *pretend* that the world is really as the Stranger describes; we must pay attention to the details, and figure out how they work together, i.e., how the various elements that the diairesis put apart are gathered together in the story and placed in relation to new elements. We must not simply cast aside those elements of the myth that we do not know at first glance how to “fit” in the

---

16 This does *not* imply that we are to think of the two ages as occurring simultaneously, as Proclus did in his interpretation of the myth (see John Dillon, "The Neoplatonic Exegesis of the Statesman Myth," in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), especially p. 367).


18 It goes without saying that in this respect I set myself consciously *against* the predominant interpretive tendencies in the scholarly literature on Plato’s myths, though I do not thereby imply that the myths are merely “badinage.”

whole, as it is sometimes done, but must endeavor, as far as possible, to make *every*
element of the myth “work” within the whole. Yet it should be emphasized again that the
truth of the myth is *not* identical with the description of the world in the myth, i.e., that
the myth is not a literal description of anybody’s beliefs, whether the Plato’s or the
Stranger’s. The myth, after all, is only an image of the world, and as all images of large
things (cf. *Sophist 235e5ff*), it is necessarily subject to certain distortions that render it
appropriate to our situation. It is merely a visible *approximation* to the eidetic pattern of
the whole,20 distorted for pedagogical purposes. Let us now turn to the Stranger’s
creation of the myth.

5.2 The sources of the myth and their treatment by the Stranger

The Stranger uses three “sources” to construct his myth. These are (in the order in
which he introduces them) the story of how the quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes was
resolved in favor of Atreus (268e8-269a6); the story of the golden age or the age of
Cronos (269a7-8); and the story of the earthborn human beings (269b2-4). All of these
can be loosely understood as “origin” myths of political order,21 though they all work
somewhat differently: the story of Atreus and Thyestes’ quarrel explains how the branch
of the house of Pelops headed by Atreus got to be dominant; the story of the golden age
describes a standard from which the present time has fallen away; and the story of the

20 On the myth as a visible approximation of an eidetic reality, see Mattéi, *Platon et le miroir du
mythe*, pp. 13-16. Mattéi notes appositely that this interpretation of Plato’s myths is at least as old as
Plotinus (citing *Ennead* III.5.9.24-29, a particularly concise and elegant statement of the idea).

earthborn is both a story about the origin of human beings in general and a way of legitimating the possession of land on the part of some ethnic group, such as the Athenians (cf. Menexenus 237b-c). All of these stories combine a “before” and an “after,” suggesting a division of time into two periods, the latter of which is continuous with our own age.22

22 There are commentators, however, (primarily Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note ad loc.) who would interpret the Atreus and Thyestes story to suggest three periods. The basic claim here is that the reversal of the sun and the heavens in the story is a very short, temporary event (in which Zeus changes the course of the sun for a day and then restores it to its normal path), which does not constitute an era properly speaking. While this claim cannot be refuted here in any detail, one can point out that 1) none of the sources of this story, including the text of the passage in question, are unambiguously clear about the length of the reversal of the sun and sky, and whether it was a one-day event or a permanent change; and 2) symbolic evidence – the association, in particular, of Thyestes with Cronos and of Atreus with Zeus – suggest two periods anyway when the story is considered in connection with the reversal of generation. For more evidence against the Rowe interpretation of the Atreus/Thyestes story, see also Mattei, Platon et le miroir du mythe, p. 76, note 2. I emphasize this point because much of my argument in what follows depends on the refutation of recent interpretations of the myth that have suggested that it describes three rather than two different ages; a running argument with this interpretation can be found in the notes. The primary exponents of this “three period” interpretation are Christopher Rowe and Luc Brisson (the latter most recently in Brisson, "Interprétation du mythe du Politique," passim), though they differ in some points of detail. Their interpretation has not gained much support so far, and has few precedents. Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935; reprint, Octagon Books, New York, 1973), pp. 156-59, the only supporting authority cited by both Brisson and Rowe, suggest that the myth describes three ages, but their interpretation is rather careless and they do not seem absolutely certain of it. Despite this, both Rowe and Brisson are eminent scholars, and their analyses are often insightful, which demands that their thesis be taken seriously. In general, both Rowe and Brisson start from what one might call a “teleological anxiety,” the fear that the myth as traditionally interpreted does not square with Platonic teaching on teleology and the gods, and find support for a “three age” reading that is more in keeping with what they take to be the orthodox Platonic position on teleology and the gods in various obscure details of the text; but this fear is, as I shall seek to show, misplaced, both substantively and methodologically (since the teaching of the myth, such as it is, is a perfectly Platonic one, if we do not come to the table with preconceived notions of what Platonism is about). For extensive recent critiques of both Rowe and Brisson (critiques which do not always agree in every detail, however), see Michael Erler, "Kommentar zu Brisson und Dillon," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), (an overly deferential critique of Brisson, in my opinion), Ferrari, "Myth and Conservatism in Plato's Statesman," p. 394, note 17 (a short but devastating critique of Brisson), Horn, "Warum Zwei Epochen der Menschheitsgeschichte?" (perhaps the most extensive critique of both Brisson and Rowe, if not necessarily the most imaginative one), Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, pp. 103-05 (Lane is a student of Rowe), McCabe, "Chaos and Control," (a very nuanced and subtly argued position), and Nightingale, "Plato on the Origins of Evil: The 'Statesman' Myth Reconsidered," especially p. 85 (Nightingale gives an interesting reading attentive to dramatic elements, which nevertheless accepts some of Brisson’s and Rowe’s “teleological anxiety”). Rowe amplifies and refines his position (without seeming to win many new converts) in the introduction to the Hackett edition of his translation (Christopher Rowe, Plato: Statesman (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999)) and in Christopher Rowe, "Zwei oder Drei Phasen? Der Mythos im Politikos," in Platon als Mythologe: Neue Interpretationen zu den Mythen in Platons Dialogen,
The Stranger proposes to explain all these stories on the basis of a single πάθος, a single experience. He claims that these stories are dispersed and so to speak “misremembered,” but that they can in fact be unified in the story the Stranger is about to tell (269b5-c2, cf. also 271a6-b4); he thus implicitly claims to “re-collect” them (to collect them together parts of a single whole) better than the people of his age, or at least to understand their truth better.23 The Stranger, of course, can hardly be said to be “remembering” anything in the normal sense of the world; the myth is very clearly of his own invention. This capacity for invention/remembrance is, however, like the remembrance by the universe of the god’s instruction to it (273b2), identical to insight into the eidetic structure of the cosmos or its order (its κόσμος in Greek); it is not a form of simple “memory,” but something similar (though not necessarily identical) to what Socrates in other Platonic dialogues calls “recollection.”

The Stranger treats the old stories as containing traces of the true order of the whole, i.e., as “reminders” of it; but this is not to say that the story that he concocts out of them is something that should be believed literally. On the contrary, the new story is just as much an image of the order of the whole as the old ones; and its claim to superiority over the old stories is merely that, as an image, it is a more faithful and more complete

---

23 The point concerning the truth of the stories should be emphasized. We should keep this in mind as the Stranger also “rationalizes” later a second set of stories about the gods, namely those concerning the gifts of arts (274e5ff). Rationalization, however, does not imply the wholesale rejection of the story as false but its linkage to some deeper structure. See section 5.6.3 for more on this. The Stranger’s procedure also has parallels in the way the god puts together the parts of the universe when it has “forgotten” its instruction (273b1-e4). He thus plays the part of the god in the myth who puts together what has been separated by time, the “fibers” that are loosened up by the unwinding of the cosmos (cf. 273d5-e4). Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman*, p. 114, makes the related point that the Stranger plays the part of the autonomous man of the age of Zeus, and thus of the statesman, in rejecting the authority of tradition; he is αὐτοκράτωρ. But his rejection of authority has to be understood in the context of his appeal to eidetic insight.
approximation to that order; it puts the pieces together better. The Stranger thus “remembers” better because he has better insight into that order than the people of his age; and we may in turn consider that proper remembrance of the story the Stranger tells involves re-membering or re-collecting it better than young Socrates does, i.e., putting it together actively rather than passively and thinking it more deeply to its source.

The myth that the Stranger now weaves from these three stories divides into four parts. The first part (269c4-270b2, section 5.3 below) presents the general “mechanism” of the myth, namely, the alternating motion of the universe, as well as the basic reasons behind it: how the god first directs the motion of the cosmos, but has to then release it, and finally must eternally repeat the cycle by taking control of it and letting it go again. The second part (270b3-272b2, section 5.4 below), accordingly, discusses what happens while the god is in control of the universe, first with respect to animal life in general (270b10-271c1, section 5.4.1 below), then with respect to human beings in particular (271c1-272b2, section 5.4.2 below). The third part (272b2-272d4, section 5.5 below) is transitional, and raises the question (without answering it) of whether it was better to live in the age when the god controls the whole or in the age when he does not. The fourth part, finally (272d6-274d8, section 5.6 below), discusses the time during which the god does not direct the motion of the cosmos but lets it move under its own power. This last section is divided into a section on what happens to the universe as whole while under its own power (272d6-273e5; section 5.6.1 below); a section on what happens to animal life in general at that time (273e5-274b4; section 5.6.2 below); and a section on what happens to human beings in particular at that time (274b4-d8; section 5.6.3 below).
5.3 The alternating motion of the universe. Its philosophical significance

The basic πάθος of all things (which is the cause of all the events described in the old stories, according to the Stranger, 269b9) is described as follows (269c4-d3): sometimes the god himself helps along (συμποδηγεῖ 269c5) the moving whole (the πᾶν, 269c4) in its circular movement (presumably by itself moving in circles, συγκυκλεῖ, 269c5); but whenever the revolutions of the all reach the measure of their fitting time (cf. τοῦ προσήκοντος ... μέτρου ... χρόνου 269c6-7), the god lets go of the whole, and the whole turns in the opposite direction under its own power (αὐτόματον 269c7), since it is an animal, i.e., an ensouled being (cf. 261b7-d6) with a share in φρόνησις,24 which it got from he who harmonized its parts together (τοῦ συναρμόσαντος 269d1) at the beginning. The fact that the whole happens to move in the other direction is something that the Stranger emphasizes became embedded in the nature of the whole by necessity, due to its partaking in body (269d5-e1).

That the universe is a living being with φρόνησις should be understood as an image of the fact that the movement of the visible whole around us is ordered, i.e., that we experience the world as a cosmos (cf. οὐρανόν καὶ κόσμον, 269d7) that moves in an ordered fashion (in particular, it rotates), and that this movement does not evidently come from anywhere outside the κόσμος, i.e., outside “all things.” Like the movement of an

---

24 I agree with Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note ad loc., that this must qualify αὐτόματον (i.e., that what is being explained is the fact that the universe rotates under its own power, the explanation being that it has φρόνησις, not the fact that it moves backwards, which is attributed in what follows to its partaking of body). However, I disagree with the use Rowe makes of this insight, as we shall see.
animal, the movement of the cosmos is self-initiated and at the same time (partially) ordered.25

It should be stressed that the πάθος of the visible whole described by the Stranger does not come at arbitrary times. There is a time for the reversal of motion, for the “unraveling” of the world, a time that has a measure that is fitting for the nature of the visible whole to be released. The Stranger foreshadows his later discussion of the double measure (283d4ff) by using words like τὸ προσήκον χρόνον (cf. 269c6-7), the time that belongs/is appropriate for the world to turn back. But this measure can only exist if something is accomplished before the time comes, if, in other words, there is something that the god achieves for the world in helping it turn in one direction before leaving it to its own devices, or if there is a standard that determines the right circumstances.26

The argument the Stranger offers in justification of the reverse circular motion of the world after the god lets go of it does not help us much here (269d5-270a9). To summarize, the Stranger argues that that which has body cannot move always according to the same and in the same way, remaining always the same. There must thus be a

25 This is a fact, not necessarily disproved by science today: the cosmos as a whole requires no evident external impulse to move, and yet its movement is ordered. That the “panpsychism” implied by the image of the myth is not a ridiculous position, but is in fact a serious philosophical position today is amply shown by the work of Hans Jonas, which is in turn indebted to Whitehead’s monumental Process and Reality. See Hans Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001 [1966]), first, second, and third essays, as well as Hans Jonas, The Principle of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age, trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984 [1979]), especially chapter 3, pp. 65-75. To be sure, neither Jonas nor Whitehead share the supposed “dualism” of Plato; but that is not, thus far, at issue in the myth.

26 A great – in my opinion, fatal – problem of the “three ages” interpretation of the myth in all its variants is that it basically makes nonsense of this claim. Why would the god let go of the world when it is clearly unprepared to make a go of it by itself, only to have to intervene again soon afterwards, as if its original letting-go had occurred at an inappropriate time, to let it move again mostly on its own? My own interpretation explains why the god lets go of the world at the moment it does as well as why the world cannot go on indefinitely.
change in its motion, by which he means a change in the direction of its motion. The Stranger briefly considers two other alternatives, rejecting them in turn: a god could turn the universe first in one direction, then in another; but this is not ἔμις, not in accordance with the divine nature (269e5-7); or two gods could turn the universe in turn, one in one direction, one in another, as it were with opposed φρονήσεις (270a1-2), but this is also not in accord with the nature of divinity. Hence, the Stranger concludes, the universe must sometimes rotate with the help of the god, but sometimes the god must release it at the appropriate moment (270a2-9; cf. κατὰ καρὸν 270a6), at which point the universe, which has been given an additional lease on life by the god during the time in which it is under its control, goes on to rotate on its own for many myriads of revolutions, like a well-balanced spindle, until the god has to take care of it again. This argument, at best, tells us that the world must change its direction of motion at some point, but it does not tell us what the appropriate moment is.

---

27 The Stranger does not seem to consider the possibility that the world, upon being let go by the god, simply slows down until it stops, as has been occasionally remarked, by Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 269e3-4, and A. E. Taylor, Plato: the Sophist and the Statesman, ed. Raymond Klibansky and Elizabeth Anscombe (Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961; reprint, 1971, Barnes and Noble, New York), p. 214. Rowe simply attributes the oversight to the playfulness of the myth; Taylor, however, is (uncharacteristically) far more unkind to Plato, remarking that “it may be interesting to note the complete ignorance of true dynamical principles applied in the whole story. Plato writes as though he supposed that a wheel made to revolve about its centre, if suddenly released from control, would begin by revolving in the contrary sense with its old velocity and in its old orbit, much as a forcibly coiled watch-spring would unwind itself; it has not occurred to him that this is a physical impossibility and that what would really happen is that the wheel would continue to spin in the old sense, but with steadily diminishing velocity.” Taylor is nevertheless completely wrong in his assessment; already Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, La fabulation platonicienne, 2nd revised and updated ed. (Paris: J. Vrin, 1968), pp. 83-92, writing just a few years after Taylor (in 1947; Taylor died in 1945 without having published his translation of the Sophist and the Statesman) showed (rightly, in my view) that the model at work here is not that of simple wheel, but that of a spinner twisting a thread, which, when released by the spinner, unwinds in the opposite direction.

28 Or acquires life again, as most translators more or less have it, though ἐπικτῶμενον at 270a4 means primarily to acquire in addition.
Note that while the φρόνησις of the world is strong enough to rotate it in the
divine direction with the help of the god, it is not strong enough to overcome the
resistance of the body to that movement when the world is on its own, like a spindle that
is no longer turned by the help of the god and thus “unwinds” due to the resistance of the
fibers. 29 φρόνησις, in its worldly and divine incarnations, thus emerges in this argument
as a principle of order, capable of imposing a regular movement on the world even when
it is on its own, but incapable, without divine assistance, of maintaining the divinely-
appointed direction of the motion of the cosmos. The bodily component in the mixture
that is the world is responsible for the loss of order, as we learn also at 273b4ff; but it is
an ineradicable part of the mixture, and so the god has to let go of the cosmos. Otherwise,
the implication seems to be, the universe would be harmed.

Note also that the Stranger stresses that the god always releases the cosmos at the
right moment, the καιρός (270a6; cf. also 269c6). The release of the cosmos is thus
governed by due measure (cf. 283b1ff, especially 284e7), and there is also a
foreshadowing of the task of the statesman, who also must know the καιρός (cf. 305d4),
the right moment for doing anything. The measure in question, I shall argue, is of the
most appropriate ratio of soul to body in the universe so that the universe can rotate on its
own for as long as possible, i.e., so that it can remember the god’s instruction (273b2ff),30
and thus preserve its eidetic order for as long as possible in the face of the disordering

is found at 270a9 (the universe is the most well-balanced being on a single foot, like a spindle), 273e2-3
(the god saves the cosmos from sinking into the sea of dissimilarity by “twisting” or “spinning” it
(στρέψας), and 273e6-7 (the world is “wound up” by the god, “spun”).

30 The Stranger will later associate the “spinning” and “twisting” imagery with education (cf.
309a8-b7), something which fits very well with the imagery of the god as “twisting” the universe and then
letting it unwind. This is something Schuhl, La fabulation platonicienne, pp. 83-92, misses, though it would
have strengthened his point.
pressure of the body. The god “measures” the right time by looking at the ratio of soul to body, i.e., of the ordering principle to the disordering principle, and determining what is the highest ratio of order to disorder that the universe can bear due to the fact that it has body. The “fitting” time for release would then be the time at which further ordering by the god would not be compatible with the bodily nature of the cosmos. To see this, we have to look at what the Stranger says about the reversal of the cycle of generation when the universe is under the control of the god.

5.4 The universe under the direction of the god

5.4.1 The reversal of the direction of generation.

When the god takes control of the cosmos (something the Stranger has not said at this point in his narration, but is confirmed at 271d2-3), and thus reverses the rotation of the cosmos, the most wonder-inducing thing that happens is that the cycle of generation, which is one of the τροπαί or cyclical forms of motion in the universe (cf. 271c5), is reversed as well as all the other ones. First, all animals (including, presumably, the universe itself; cf. 269d1) stop aging, and then they grow (ἐφύετο 270e1; they really do become naturally younger) in reverse, ceasing to look older, becoming younger and softer, going towards the nature (φύσιν 270e7) of a new-born child in both body and soul, and their bodies ultimately vanish entirely. The Stranger then adds that the bodies of those who die violently during the reversal quickly vanish too, becoming invisible in a few days. The description of this reversal of the life-cycle of human beings (and
presumably animals) is enough to tickle young Socrates’ curiosity (271a3-4): if things were as the Stranger describes, how would animals reproduce?

This presents an opportunity for the Stranger to tie in the third source of the myth, the story of the earth-born, into his invented story as the second element of the whole, postponing the centerpiece of the myth, namely, the account of the rule of Cronos (the second source of the myth), to third place but its physical center. The Stranger says that it is clear that “in the nature of the age” (ἐν τῷ τῷτε φύσει 271a6) there was no generation from each other, but from the earth, a form of generation that he describes, significantly, using “twisting” terminology: it is a “turning up” or “revolving again” (ἀναστρεφόμενον 271a8) from the earth.\(^{31}\) Nature thus produces full-grown human beings who emerge from the earth and return to it by becoming younger and younger until they disappear, in a kind of circular motion that repeats itself a number of times in this age. In fact, the Stranger speaks of the cycle of generation in this period as rotating along with the world in a circular motion in the opposite direction as the “normal” direction of the cycle of generation in our age (συνανακυκλωμένης εἰς τάναντια τῆς γενέσεως 271b8).

\(^{31}\) This is a problem for the three-age interpretation of the myth. Three-age proponents either have to deny that the cycle of generation and the rotation of the universe are coordinated (as Brisson, "Interprétation du mythe du Politique," p. 351, does), in flat contradiction with this passage and the usual Greek practice of associating the movement of the heavens with the cycle of generation; or they have to argue that, contrary to all indications, we have three cycles of generation in the myth, two of which share the same direction but a different mode: one in which animals come up from the earth “newborn,” one in which they come up from the earth “old,” and one in which they reproduce normally. But this contradicts the clear implication of the myth that the entire cycle of generation, and not merely its direction, is associated with the movement of the universe: earthborn in one direction, reproductive in another. This also begs the question of why in the age of Cronos human beings would grow from the earth as newborns (in most earthborn myths human beings emerge fully grown), something the Stranger never says, whereas his only discussion of earth-birth explicitly argues that animals and human beings rise from the earth fully grown. What would be about motion in the age of Cronos or about the nature of the age that demanded earth-birth? No satisfactory answer has been given by the proponents of the three-age interpretation.
Out of the dead of the previous age (not those whose bodies just vanished in the transition to this age, since nothing is left of these bodies\textsuperscript{32}), who are lying in the earth, human beings are constantly “put together” and come back to life by necessity (271b6-c1). They then age backwards, towards the “nature” (φύσις 271b6) of children, until their bodies vanish. The dead are thus resurrected only to go through their life-cycle in reverse, though they do not necessarily live their lives “backwards;” the Stranger emphasizes that they go to the “stage” (the φύσις) of childhood, i.e., that they go through the normal stages of a human life in reverse order, not that they relive their childhood or that they live as in a film strip that has been run backwards. At the end of the process, the soul falls to the earth as a seed (272e1-2), “giving back” that particular γένεσις, i.e., that particular body with which it was once associated (which has become “invisible”), and “sprouts” again in another body (with which it was also formerly associated in the previous age).

This process presumably continues until all the bodies of human beings (and probably all animals) have vanished, and have thus been “cleared away,” so to speak. The process should thus stop – and the god should release the world – when there are no more bodies left over in the ground from the previous age, i.e., when all the bodies that had died in the previous age have resuscitated, lived their lives in reverse, and vanished, except for those who must not vanish if the cycle is to recommence (cf. 271a6-b4, 272d7-e1), i.e., when the souls have all gone through the reverse generation with all the bodies with which they were formerly associated. Otherwise, once those who are alive at that point regress to the nature of children and then vanish, no more bodies would be left on

\textsuperscript{32} As Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 271b6-7, rightly notes, though he misinterprets the implications of this fact.
the ground to continue the process of reverse generation, and the connection between body and soul in the universe would be broken.

The process of “disappearance” of animal bodies (or, to put it in other words, their transformation into something invisible, ἔδηλον; cf. 271a1) leaves the minimal possible quantity of visible animal bodies, living or dead, at the beginning of the present age. These are the bodies which will then multiply and fill the earth once the god releases the cosmos again. The same process of reverse aging is accompanied by the “giving back” by souls of all the comings into being (and thus all the bodies) they were once associated with (272e1-2). Going through the life cycle “backwards” disconnects, so to speak, the soul from the particular body or bodies it was once associated with; it separates the mixture of body and soul by dissolving the body into the invisible world, if we may use a chemical metaphor. Hence the process may be seen as a way of making the souls of the world as free as possible of any admixture of body.

This point thus marks the καιρὸς, the right time, for the god to let go of the world. As we have already seen, and as the Stranger will emphasize later (269d8-e1, 273b4-5 and context), body is, to put it bluntly, the cause of the world’s troubles, and yet it is inseparable from it. The generation in reverse that the Stranger has described minimizes the amount of body and maximizes the amount of “pure” soul available in the world without fatally severing the link between body and soul that is a structural constituent of the whole. Thus, the process puts the world in the best possible condition for it to move on its own, without the god’s guidance. This is the καιρὸς for the god to release the world because earlier there would still have been bodies in the earth that could
have been resuscitated, and souls that would not have been thoroughly purified, whereas later all animal bodies would have vanished.

The importance of this story is emphasized by the Stranger in a passage where he comically scolds their contemporaries for not believing the old λόγοι (271b1-4), something that, of course, every right-thinking person would be inclined to do if these λόγοι concerned human beings aging backwards. The implicit point of this comical reprimand is that the story does have an important moral, since it shows exactly at what point the god must let go of the cosmos, and thus exemplifies how a statesman might deal with a similar soul-body whole, namely the city: he should purify the unity of soul and body by increasing the dominance of soul in it without destroying the constitutive link between the two. How precisely this is accomplished is something that we will learn only at the very end of the dialogue (310a7ff).

5.4.2 The age of Cronos

Prompted by Young Socrates (271c3-7), the Stranger identifies the age of Cronos – the mythical golden age of abundance – with the period in which generation moved in reverse (271c8-d4): the time when everything came up automatically (αὐτόματα) for human beings, the time of Cronos, when there was no material scarcity, was least of all the one that moved with the established movement (φοράς 271d2, echoing 269e3) of

33 This is the part of the myth that most commentators tend to regard as most playful, even absurd, and generally most often discount in their discussions of the serious “teaching” of it, which is all the more curious since this is the only part of the myth that the Stranger warns young Socrates not to distrust. See, for instance, Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, Introduction to the Statesman, p. xxxvi, Skemp, Plato's Statesman, p. 110.
today, but was rather the one that happened before this one, namely, the time when the world and all the τροπαί or cyclical motions in it moved in the opposite direction than the one in which they do now. This lack of scarcity for human beings (described in more detail shortly) – the fact that things came up spontaneously, presumably out of the ground, for them – has something to do, we are given to understand, with the fact that all the τροπαί in the world were then “least of all” like the present one, including the τροπή, the cycle, of γένεσις or coming-to-being. One can understand this quite simply: if trees came up from the ground already laden with fruit, grasses full of grain, and so on, there would be no need to wait for them to grow or cultivate them: their emergence in full maturity (and eventual disappearance into nothingness, to be replaced quickly with new plants) would dispense with the need for agriculture, and hence with the need to work for one’s daily bread. In fact, one can understand the reversal of the cycle of generation as the ultimate cause of every significant feature in the age of Cronos, since such a reversal, by doing away with the need for sexual generation and by providing sustenance

34 ἥκιστα τῆς νῦν ἐστὶ καθεστηκώιας φοράς, 271d2, echoing ἥ τῆς νῦν καθεστηκώιας ἐναντία γίγνεται τροπή, 270d4, which was the phrase used to introduce the age when the world rotates in reverse. The time when the world and all its τροπαί rotated in reverse was clearly “least of all” like the present one, since it was “opposite” or “contrary” (ἐναντία) to it. This is another indication of the problems with the Rowe/Brisson thesis.

35 The Greek (271d2-3) emphasizes the point that the age of Cronos also happened in the period just described, when genesis proceeded in reverse: άλλ’ ἤ καὶ τοῦτο [but also this, namely, the life under the power of Cronos, as well as the reversed cycle of generation] τῆς ἐμπροσθεν [belonged to the previous φορά, the previous movement, namely, the one just described, rather than to the current movement; ἐμπροσθεν refers both to the mythical temporal sequence and the order of the Stranger’s storytelling]. Once again, this shows the untenability of the Rowe/Brisson position, which completely misinterprets this passage.

36 Again contra Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 270b7-8, who claims that 272a2-5 shows that plants grow in the “normal” direction in the age of Cronos. But 272a2-5 shows no such thing; if anything, it reinforces my contention that plants are also subject to the reverse cycle of generation here, since they come up from the earth already laden with fruit, i.e., in their maturity, the last phase of the plant life-cycle.
automatically to all animals, would make every species and every individual in them independent of each other, which is precisely the situation the Stranger goes on to describe.

At that time (271d4-272b2), the Stranger continues, the god used to rule over the entire rotation (κυκλήσεως) of the whole, caring for it, just as in turn every part of the ordered whole (the κόσμος, cf. 271d5) was under the care of a ruling (subordinate) god. Animals represent a set of such parts. They are eidetic parts of the whole or γένη (the objects of diairesis), each species of animal a part of the ordered whole, each γένος itself apparently divided into herds (ἀγέλας 271d7), and each herd supervised by a divine shepherd (cf. νομῆς 271d7). Each of these herds, the Stranger emphasizes, was self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης 271d7) with respect to everything which it grazed on (ἐνέμεν 271d8). He expands on this curious mention of grazing – for, surely, the animal kinds include carnivorous species – by saying that the self-sufficiency of the herds (and, more generally, of the γένη) had as a result that no species was wild (ἄγριον 271e1), which (in turn) meant that no animals were carnivorous. He also adds, seemingly unnecessarily for most animals except human beings, that the self-sufficiency of each herd meant there was no war or στάσις at all within any species.

37 Following Robinson’s emendation (ὡς δ’ αὐτή) for the corrupt ὡς νῦν of the manuscripts.

38 Since herds cannot themselves be eidetic parts of the whole (they are only parts, but not ἔδη), and yet each herd is said to be supervised by a single shepherd-daimon, reasons of logical economy might suggest that no γένος in the age of Cronos would comprise more than one herd, i.e., that γένος and herd would be coextensive in all cases in that age, unlike in the present age, when herders never control the entire γένος of the animals they herd and anyway supervise herds of widely varying sizes. (That herds are not eidetic parts can be seen clearly from the examples given by the Stranger at 262e5-263a1; Lydians and Phrygians are basically herds of human beings, not true eidetic parts of the γένος of human beings, unlike male and female, which are true eidetic parts of it). One suspects, therefore, that the expressions “by herd” and “by γένος” are “equivalent” in the age of Cronos, as Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.99, says, i.e., that each animal species forms a single herd under the supervision of a single shepherd-daimon.
A number of things about this passage deserve to be commented on before we move further. The Stranger says that the god “takes care” of the whole rotation of the whole. He practices ἐπιμελεῖα, the more general term for care that was earlier confused with herding and that will later be rehabilitated (275c9-e9). It is only the subordinate daimons or gods (both terms are used) who are likened to shepherds (νομίζει 271d7) and said to nurture a herd (cf. τρόφιμοι 272b8). The general task of the god (who is left nameless) thus includes the management of the shepherd-gods; but the god is no shepherd himself. He cares for the whole rather than the parts (something emphasized in the opposition of ὅλη, whole, to μέρη, parts), whereas the shepherd-gods care only for their assigned parts. His knowledge is integrative (like the statesman’s), and he is not a specialist in the nurture of any single species (just as the statesman is not a specialist in any given form of nurture).

This care for the whole, as we have seen, consists in part in the separation of soul from body, i.e., in its “purification;” it is thus a care for the soul as well as for the body, or rather, as we shall see in more detail later, for the εἴδος of a species in preventing the disorder of the body from overwhelming the order embedded and preserved in the soul. It also consists in the proper ordering of the parts of the cosmos, i.e., in the making of the whole into a κόσμος, (cf. 273b6-7, 273e3), an ordered whole, and the keeping of each part in its own place, unmixed with each other, for good or ill (each γένος is self-sufficient; cf. αὐτάρκης 271d7), as if the god had performed a complete diairesis of being (cf. κατακοσμημένος 271e3, emphasizing the distributive [κατά-] aspect of this ordering of the whole). The god thus emerges as a possible object of imitation for the statesman, unlike the shepherd-daimons. The statesman’s art, like the god’s, turns out to
be the art of ordering the parts of the city into a proper whole, and it also, like the god’s (but less so), rests on a proper ability to distinguish these parts and keep them from interfering with each other. The difference in this latter respect has to do with the fact that the Statesman has to deal with sexual reproduction and the necessary mixing of γένη, bodily and non-bodily.

By contrast, the subordinate daimons deal not with the unity of soul and body throughout the whole, but with the body of each species they shepherd. In particular, they “graze” their herds, i.e., feed them; given the condition of the world at this time, they hardly have to do anything else. A god (Cronos; cf. 272b2)\(^{39}\) is specifically assigned to human beings (271e5-7) to care for their bodies. But only the god who cares for the whole cares for the unity of soul and body (in human beings as in the universe as a whole) by means of the reversal of the cycle of generation, as we have seen.

5.5 Transition: Evaluating the age of Cronos

5.5.1 The question of philosophy in the age of Cronos

The Stranger concludes his presentation of the time when the world is under the control of the god by telling young Socrates that such was the life under Cronos, but that

\(^{39}\) Cronos is thus not the name of the god that orders the whole (that god always remains nameless) but simply the name of the shepherd-god that rules over that eidetic part of the whole comprised by human beings.
the life that the λόγος says is under Zeus,\textsuperscript{40} the one now, he can perceive for himself, since he is present in it (\textsuperscript{272b1-3}). These are the two possible lives: there are no other alternatives to consider. But young Socrates has not yet considered them in their full significance, and the Stranger has to prompt him: would he be able and willing to decide which one is the happiest (\textsuperscript{272b3-4})? Young Socrates is unable and unwilling, and for good reason: after all, the expectation that the “golden age” would be unproblematically happiest has been confounded by the association of that age with the reversal of the cycle of generation.\textsuperscript{41} The Stranger offers to show him in what way to judge between them, but not to actually answer the question. The judgment, he indicates, turns on the presence or absence of philosophy in the age of Cronos, something the gods apparently cannot force human beings to practice, even after granting them the power of conversing with animals; it all depends on whether human beings have a desire for knowledge and argument.\textsuperscript{42} We shall follow the Stranger’s lead in declining to answer the question of the comparative happiness of the two ages for ourselves, as the answer does not bear on the question of this study directly, and has been well explored elsewhere.\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{40}] The Stranger refuses to commit himself to the view that life now is under Zeus, in accordance with the fact that the god does not rule over us.
\item[\textsuperscript{41}] Young Socrates is more cautious in this respect than some modern scholars, who simply assume that the “golden age” just has to be happier than this age of “Zeus.” See for an example Horn, “Warum Zwei Epochen der Menschheitsgeschichte?,” p. 159.
\item[\textsuperscript{42}] Hence a fortiori a statesman could not ensure the happiness of his people even under conditions of the most perfect abundance.
\item[\textsuperscript{43}] Most scholars seem to think that we can answer the question, or at least that what the Stranger has told us so far amounts to a “sufficient witness” of the age of Cronos. The consensus opinion seems to be that philosophy is not possible in that age, and hence that this age is in some sense happier, or at least as happy as, the age of Cronos. Even Brisson, "Interprétation du mythe du Politique," p. 358, asserts this, something which he takes as grounds for denying that the traditional interpretation of the myth is correct, for it seems to put in question the idea that the age of Cronos is a “golden age.” But the Stranger has never asserted that the age of Cronos is a golden age; otherwise his question about which age is happiest would be pointless. Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 272c5-6, dissents from this more or less general consensus to
\end{itemize}
5.5.2 The applicability of the first genealogy to the age of Cronos

If we decline to answer the question of which age is happier for human beings, we may still evaluate the age of Cronos on the basis of how well it retrospectively illuminates the diairesis that led to the myth. How is the first genealogy of the statesman reflected in the myth? How does the myth depict the conditions under which the statesman-shepherd of the genealogy is possible? How do the gods fit or fail to fit the paradigm of the shepherd described earlier? Most importantly, what does the age of Cronos tell us about the kind of knowledge that the statesman has?

In the first genealogy of the statesman, human beings were characterized in terms of purely physical characteristics: they have two feet (unlike pigs), which they use as their normal means of locomotion (unlike most birds); do not have horns (unlike most cattle) or wings (unlike flightless birds), have split “hooves” (unlike horses and asses) and live on dry land (unlike fish). In our everyday understanding, none of these argue that at least some people in the age of Cronos practiced philosophy (something that is not clear from the text, contrary to what he says). He also makes the certainly reasonable claim that the Stranger’s point is simply that philosophy is essential for happiness, the practice of philosophy depends on our own choices, and that most people, in this age as in that of Cronos, choose badly and are therefore unhappy. But if this were the case (only a few people choose philosophy in this age as well as in that of Cronos), then the balance would tip towards the age of Cronos. That age would clearly be superior to this age, since it joins material advantages to the possibility of practicing philosophy, a possibility that (ex hypothesi) would be present in both ages, according to Rowe; but the Stranger is not willing to assert that even a few people practice philosophy in the age of Cronos. Most scholars thus argue that philosophy is not possible in the age of Cronos, commonly citing the lack of memory in that age, though alternative explanations have been proposed. See Criswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 151, McCabe, "Chaos and Control," p. 107, Stanley Rosen, "Plato's Myth of the Reversed Cosmos," Review of Metaphysics 33, no. 1 (1979), p. 78, Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 81 note 9. Of course, if one denies that memory is impossible in this period, as Rowe does, linking the lack of memory of generations merely to the lack of family structures (cf. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 272a1-2), none of these arguments would be convincing.

The fruitful idea of figuring out precisely how the age of Cronos exemplifies the conditions under which the earlier genealogy of the statesman makes sense can be traced to Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," and it is also pursued, explicitly and more or less systematically, by Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," cf. p. 143, and Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, especially pp. 85-86.
distinctions seem important for understanding the kind of knowledge that the statesman has, for the simple reason that whatever vulnerabilities they may imply are remedied by all the other τέχναι, as the Stranger suggests later (274b4ff), not by statesmanship: lack of speed in locomotion by the arts concerned with “vehicles” (288aff) lack of protective physical features by the arts of armor and arms-making (288b1ff); even lack of wings and the inability to survive underwater by in modern times the arts of aviation and submarine-making, in ancient times by the arts of Daedalus and the ship-makers. In the age of “Zeus,” in other words, human beings are not the vulnerable animals these characteristics may imply simply because, as animals with φρόνησις, the capacity for reason, they are able to develop all the forms of knowledge necessary to supply the deficiency, forms of knowledge that are different from statesmanship. Whatever vulnerabilities statesmanship protects against must arise out of this very use of φρόνησις and τέχνη, but these vulnerabilities are not the purely physical defects of human beings (see, for more on this, section 5.6.3 below).

Since, however, in the age of Cronos the arts are unnecessary, as the shepherd gods supply the entire nurture of human beings (making “protection” unnecessary), the distinction between animals with φρόνησις and animals without φρόνησις collapses. If a god takes care of the entire “nurture” of animals, then the only criteria that matter for picking out human beings from among the other animals are purely physical ones: that they are land-walking animals, without wings or horns, with split “hooves,” and so on. The Stranger, in other words, was right to reject young Socrates’ division between animals with and without φρόνησις at 262a3ff after the care of the statesman for human beings had been deemed to be a form of nurture (261e1ff), since, once the task of the
statesman comprises their entire *nurture*, then human beings might as well be beings without φρόνησις. They would then be, after all, no better than cattle, ignorant of all the arts, in the hands of a shepherd who knows all of them (cf. also 268a6-b7).

Three specific distinctions the Stranger makes in the genealogy, however, in order to characterize the kind of animal over which the statesman exercises his knowledge seem to lose their point in the age of Cronos. These are the distinction between interbreeding and non-interbreeding animals, the distinction between tame and wild animals, and the distinction between herd and non-herd animals. These distinctions lose meaning because in the age of Cronos all animals are non-interbreeding, tame, and form herds due to the action of the god, which makes species and individuals independent of each other. Hence they cannot be *differentiae* of the kind of animal over which statesmanship (or shepherding) is exercised in that age.

The fact that the myth draws our attention to these specific distinctions in turn “problematicizes” them in the age of “Zeus,” i.e., in our age. Thus, in our age it is not clear that human beings are non-interbreeding in a politically significant sense, since the term γένος means not only species but also “people” and even “family,” and human beings clearly interbreed across peoples and families in politically significant ways, even if they normally choose not to (cf. 262d3-5 and 310c4ff). Furthermore, it is not clear that human beings are fully tame in our age, given their propensity to war and στάσις (cf. Sophist 222b7-c8); and it is also not clear that human beings can be properly ruled perfectly

---

45 Cf. Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.114: “The deficiency in young Socrates’ answer [at 262a3-4] did not lie in its brevity but in the assumption that man as a rational animal was relevant to political science if the model of ruling was the divine shepherd.”

46 Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.99, makes this point with respect to the last two distinctions, that between tame and wild and that between herd and non-herd animals.
merely by means of collective care, i.e., as a herd (cf. 295a10-b3 and context), given the dissimilarity of their characters and circumstances.

The myth suggests, in other words, that only a god could ensure that human beings would be perfectly non-interbreeding, tame, and herd-like. In the age of “Zeus,” by contrast, the human species interbreeds in politically complicated ways that the statesman must control, as it emerges at the end of the dialogue (cf. 310d3-6, where γένη mean the character traits that must interbreed); its tameness is never assured, due to the conditions prevailing in the age, but must rather be achieved by the statesman; and though the species is taken care of collectively, in cities, the dissimilarity of characters and circumstances prevailing in our age makes it impossible for a human statesman to perfectly care for each member of the herd while caring for the whole (cf. 294b2-3). The myth therefore prepares us for the discussions of the statesman as the weaver of souls (who interbreeds different γένη of human beings), of the difficulty for the polis in accepting the true statesman (since human beings are not perfectly tame, i.e., not perfectly obedient), and of the rule of law (which cannot be as perfect as one-on-one care and is yet necessary; cf. also chapter 8, section 8.2). In all three cases what the god achieves by means of separation – making each species and individual independent of each other – has to be achieved by the statesman by other means, primarily proper combination: of γένη, arts, and law.

Two other claims (not precisely distinctions) made in the first genealogy of the statesman are also interestingly illustrated in the age of Cronos, and problematized by contrast in the age of Zeus. These are the claims that the knowledge of the statesman is the same as that of the slave master, the king, and the household manager (259a1-c4) and
the claim that the statesman rules by means of commands. The first claim is literally true in the age of Cronos, since there are neither families nor political regimes (and, moreover, the shepherd-daimon erases the distinction between household manager and slave master) at that time, while it is clearly disputable in our own age. The fact that it is disputable in our own age has to do with the fact that we are free in this age in a way that we are not in the age of Cronos. Only when human beings are not utterly dependent on their rulers can the question of political (rather than metaphysical) freedom arise, as the Stranger goes on to implicitly acknowledge in his discussion of the mistakes uncovered by the myth (276e6-14).

The second claim is problematic in a different way in the age of Cronos, as there can hardly be any gap between the god’s knowledge and the performance of any action in the world, unlike in the case of the statesman of the age of “Zeus.” A command implies the possibility of disobedience, something that the god does not face; he does not need to cajole, persuade, or threaten anybody. In the age of “Zeus” the question of the


48 See Nightingale, "Plato on the Origins of Evil: The 'Statesman' Myth Reconsidered," p. 85. As she puts it, “[i]t is noteworthy that there is no indication in the myth that the divine shepherds’ tendance is forced, violent, or against the people’s will. The point is rather that, because these shepherds do not deal with ‘free bipeds’ (276e), the issue of violent compulsion does not enter in. The rulership of divine shepherds cannot be divided into ‘tendance by violent control’ and ‘tendance freely accepted by free bipeds’ (276e) because both of these categories presuppose the presence of free will in the subjects. A god has no need to coerce unwilling victims since he is at the very helm of human will.” I am not sure I would go as far as to say that the god is “at the very helm of human will;” as we have seen, the god seems unable to implant the desire for knowledge in human beings at that time (cf. also Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.99), but she cites, appositely, an interesting passage from the Critias (109e) where Critias speaks of the gods directing the souls of human beings as if at their helm.

49 This is illustrated in the relationship between the god at the helm of the whole and the subordinate shepherd-gods or shepherd-daimons. This relation is not, strictly speaking, a hierarchical one, where the god at the helm of the whole issues the commands and the shepherd-daimons act like heralds, transmitting them to their charges. In fact, the Stranger takes great care not to suggest that the shepherd daimons are anything less than fully self-commanding rulers, since they must “fit” the result of the diairesis, which had characterized the shepherd of human beings as a self-commanding ruler. Thus, he calls
effectiveness of commands (and thus the relationship of statesmanship to the τέχνη of rhetoric, cf. 304a1-2), by contrast, becomes a pressing issue, as we have seen (chapter 3, sections 3.2-3.3). In particular, the forms of knowledge represented by the τέχνας, which supply the lack of divine shepherding, are no longer automatically in accord with the knowledge of the statesman or ruler of the whole; and a relationship which in the age of Cronos is devoid of dispute now becomes the subject of contestation. The τέχνας dispute the claim of the statesman to rule, even after statesmanship has been separated from nurture, as the sequel to the myth shows. They may agree that statesmanship has the “largest” part of the care of the polis, as the great god is the “greatest” δαίμων (cf. 281b7-d3, 287a7ff); but they claim a share in this care too. In fact, this is the ultimate reason why the myth does not manage to produce a complete and clear picture of the statesman, since there is no divine analogue in the relationship between the greatest god and the other daimons to the contentious relationship between the statesman and all the other artisans. The statesman, after the myth, is merely the greatest “caregiver” among them, like the god among the δαίμονες, but this, as the Stranger will implicitly point out (281c7-d2), is insufficient for the full determination of statesmanship. Let us now turn our attention to the age of “Zeus” in order to flesh out these claims.

them the “co-rulers” (συνάρχοντες 272e7) of the god, and refers to them interchangeably as δαίμονες and θεοί (cf. 271d7 δαίμονες, ε5 θεός, 272e7 θεοί), just as the god at the helm of the whole is occasionally called a δαίμων, even if he is the greatest of them (τῷ μεγίστῳ δαίμων 272e7). The greatest god does not have to tell them to do anything; once he lets go of the whole, for example, they let go of the parts of the whole assigned to them, “already knowing” (272e8) what had happened, unlike workers employed in building a house, who have to be told what to do, not knowing the purposes or plans of the architect. The tasks of both of these gods can be seen as two aspects of a single form of divine care, as the interchangeability of the appellations θεός and δαίμων suggest. See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 128, note 5: “the key distinction is not that between god and demi-god, theos and daimon, but, rather, that between the god as such and the shepherd form he assumes in the age of Cronus. This is the difference between the god seen theo-logically, as in 269b-270b, and the god seen mythically, as in 270b-274e.”
5.6 The universe under its own power

5.6.1 The effects on the cosmos as a whole of its release by the god

The Stranger now proceeds to describe (272d6-e3) the moment in which the god releases the universe, which we have already discussed in some detail (see above, section 5.4.1). This is the time when the earth γένος is exhausted, i.e., when the maximum number of bodies, deposited there in the previous age of “Zeus” by the normal pattern of generation, have come up from the earth and vanished, and thus there are no longer any left there. It is also the time, as we indicated, when each soul has given back all of its generations, i.e., when it has lived backwards in all the bodies with which it was previously associated in the age of “Zeus,” and thus the time when it as fallen into the earth as seed (for each successive backwards reincarnation) for the appointed number of times (272e1-3). It is at this time that the helmsman of the whole lets go of the handle of the rudder and retires to his observation post (περιώπτην).

The god thus ceases to guide the whole, but remains present as an observer, at the prow of the ship looking ahead for the dangers to come rather than at the stern guiding its course.50 Similarly, the subordinate gods let go of the parts of the whole which they used to supervise, ceasing to care (ἐπιμελείας 273a1) over them. Someone else is at the stern, hand to the tiller, namely, the fated (εἴμαρμένη) and co-natural (σύμφυτος) desire

50 This is a point that Brisson, "Interprétation du mythe du Politique," p. 357, rightly makes, emphasizing the sense of περιώπτη as a kind of lookout in the context of the nautical metaphors of this passage; cf. also Skemp, Plato's Statesman, p. 97, who nevertheless fails to realize the implications of this fact (preferring to blame Plato for his inconsistent use of the ship metaphor). The god never completely abandons the whole, contrary to what is sometimes too glibly asserted.
(ἐπιθυμία) of the universe itself and its parts. This is the desire of the cosmos for its
former state, i.e., its previous order under the god.51

After an initial disruption caused by the change in direction as the god lets go of
the cosmos (273a1-3), the “phronetic” element in its constitution reasserts itself, and the
cosmos now goes on arranging/ordering its own course (κατακοσμούμενος 273a7,
echoing what the god himself did earlier, κατακοσμήσεως 271e3, i.e., making itself
into a κόσμος), since it has power and care (ἐπιμέλειαν 273a7) over itself and its parts,
like the gods used to have over it and its parts (cf. 273a1). This ability to arrange its own
course, to make itself into a κόσμος, an ordered whole, depends, the Stranger now says
(273b1-3), on the cosmos’ ability to remember the god’s instruction, i.e., the order
granted to it by the god, which it desires.

The cosmos’ ability to remember the god’s instructions (and hence to hang on to
its order) is affected by the passage of time (273b3-4). At first, the cosmos is close to the
god, and thus remembers those instructions clearly, or rather, fulfills them clearly
(ἀπετέλει 273b3). Remembrance, in the case of the universe at least, is equivalent to
completion. At first, therefore, the order granted to it by the god is also easily preserved.
At the end, however, the god’s instruction is only fulfilled in a blurred sort of way,
though it never, the Stranger implies, ceases to be fulfilled in some way.

51 Contra Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 272e5-6, who too easily identifies desire with that
which thwarts “the purposes of reason” and thus with the body. To Rowe’s citations from the Phaedo
(64eff) and the Timaeus (69aff) supporting his view, one could adduce in contrast the Philebus, where
desire is associated with the soul, including, eventually, reason (34c6ff). It is worth noting that the only
other occurrence of the word ἐπιθυμία in the myth is at 272d3, where it denotes the desire of human beings
for knowledge and λόγος.
The reason for this forgetfulness or inability to hang on to its god-given order (273b4-7) is that the σωματοειδές, the bodily εἶδος (a wonderful oxymoron of Platonic metaphysics) in the mixture that is the cosmos – i.e., a mixture of the bodily εἶδος and the soul, as a living being – does not allow it. The σωματοειδές is the ordered form (the εἶδος) of body, σῶμα, which is the original nature or condition (273b5, b8) of the whole before the god orders it; but the latter, as the principle of disorder in the universe, ultimately reasserts itself, giving birth to all the things that are harsh and unjust in the universe.

Remembrance is always of things that have an εἶδος, a form, never of chaos. For the cosmos to remember the god’s instructions thus means for it to preserve the εἶδη that make indeterminate body into ordered body, into the σωματοειδές. But the nature of body is entropic, to use a modern term: it tends to lose structure, not to gain it, to cease to have looks (εἶδη), and thus to look “blurred,” eventually sinking into the sea of dissimilarity (273d6): the place, in other words, of what is unlimited (ἀπειρον 273d6), to which reason or form does not belong, in which likeness, which makes bodily things categorizable into εἶδη (by giving them distinct looks), has ceased to subdue the chaotic nature of body. Only soul (or life, as modern science would say) struggles, though ultimately (in the very long run) in a futile way, against the creeping disorder, preserving the structure of parts of the whole while that which is without soul simply runs its course and decays into disorder, slowly or quickly. This struggle is for the most part unconscious, so to speak; it is the struggle to reproduce and survive, to recreate, in the mythical eternity of the species, the look of a particular part of the whole, as the Stranger goes on to suggest in his discussion of the mimetic activity of living beings (274a1ff; see
also section 5.6.2 below). What the Stranger describes here is thus the final stage of the universe in which we live, the “end of the world” (τέλος ἀπάντων 273e4-5), as he goes on to say, a picture not entirely dissimilar from that predicted by modern physics: losing organization or complexity (eidetic structure), expanding ad infinitum, the whole eventually dissolves into the chaos of random motion and atomic decay.\(^{52}\) Care, we begin to understand, is the process by which soul makes body achieve and preserve form (εἰδός).

It is at this point that the god, who cares for the whole, having put it into order (κοσμήσας 273d4, having made it into a cosmos), and who does not want to see it sink into the boundless sea of dissimilarity, again resumes his position at the tiller, restarting the whole cycle all over again. At the end of the world, to summarize matters somewhat bluntly, the god saves the disintegrating whole and redeems it by making it immortal once again, i.e., by renovating its order and thus preparing it for a further journey on its own (cf. 273e5-6).\(^{53}\)

What the Stranger’s story means, in other words, is that the present world is “in between.” It has not, and will not for a long (indeed, mythically long) time reach the “end

\(^{52}\) For more on these parallels, as well as some minimal bibliographical references, see Thomas M. Robinson, "Forms, Demiurge and World Soul in the Politicus," Revue de Philosophie Ancienne 13 (1995), pp. 28-30, though his interpretation of the myth is rather different from mine.

\(^{53}\) To be sure, this is not the end of the world in the sense that it is merely the start of another cycle; but it is the end of this world, the world that we know, and which we perceive (cf. 272b3). As he puts it, what he has described is “this end” of all things (τούτο ... τέλος 273e4-5), namely one end of all things in an endless cycle in which things are again renewed by the action of the god and once again meet their end. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 273e3-5, sees this, though he takes it, incorrectly, to mean that what the Stranger has described as “ending” is not the age of Zeus but some other age, i.e., that “the end of all things” means “the end of the cycle.” But for the Stranger to speak of the “end of the world” makes much more sense if he means the end of this age, the one we live in, which indeed represents all things to us. I agree with him, however, that the Stranger cannot be referring to the end of the story he is telling, since he goes on to add to it; hence Skemp’s translation of τούτο ... τέλος ἀπάντων εἰρήται as “this is the tale full told,” seems to me to miss the point completely.
of all things” that the Stranger has just described; but it is not, either, close to the moment when the god let go of it, and in fact it is separated from that moment by a mythically long time. Present human life is thus located in between an original condition of order and similarity, full of goods, and a final, not yet reached (nor strictly speaking “reachable” in historical time) condition of disorder dissimilarity, full of evils. This is a condition of only partial dissimilarity and disorder, and thus partial intelligibility and order, where bodies can, for the most part, be categorized according to εἴδη. The flux of γένεσις, in other words, is not entirely without patterns and regularities; the universe hangs on to its order with decreasing effectiveness, but with some effectiveness nonetheless.

5.6.2 The mimetic character of the care of the parts of the cosmos

Once the world has been twisted or wound up again (στρεφθέντος ... αὖ 273e6-7), so that it is now ready to unwind, that is, to move in the direction of the present cycle of generation, the “age” of all creatures stops again, and “new” contrary things are given back to them, to wit: they start to age, to die, and their bodies fall to the earth in the end, i.e., they start new lives and hence acquire new experiences. In doing so, the Stranger emphasizes that all things imitate and follow (ἀπομιμοῦμενα καὶ συνακολούθοντα 274a1) the πάθος of the whole.

54 Cf. Theaetetus 176a5-8, where Socrates tells Theodorus that there must always be something contrary to the good in human life: the world is full of evils and goods, not one or the other.
This means, first of all, that just as the whole gets old – i.e., experiences the cycle of generation as a form of aging, going inexorably towards its death, as I pointed out earlier (above, section 5.6.1) – living beings do so too. Both the whole and the parts of the whole experience the cycle of generation in the same way. The Stranger goes on to emphasize the concomitant aspects of the process of aging (274a1-3): conception, generation, and nurture. The “imitation” represented by these three things began to accompany/attend at this time (συνείπετο) all the parts of the whole “by necessity.” It is not, however, entirely clear what this means, since the cosmos is neither conceived nor generated nor nurtured, and hence living beings would seem to be unable to imitate it by conceiving, generating, and nurturing themselves.

The Stranger clarifies this somewhat in the next sentence (274a3-b1). Just as the cosmos is now αὐτόκράτορ, i.e., responsible on its own for its self-care (which, as we have seen, consists in the preservation of its god-given eidetic order) so now each part of the whole is also responsible for its own care “as far as possible,” which consists principally in its own (ultimately futile) attempt to preserve itself as a distinct εἴδος, or, more precisely, to preserve its constitutive unity of body and form. Care in both cases (the universe and each living being) is what we might call εἴδος-preserving behavior. This is why the parts of the cosmos can be said to imitate the cosmos, even though the cosmos does not reproduce or nurture itself, since conception, generation and nurture are precisely those processes in the life-cycle of living beings that ensure the minimal continuity of the species (the εἴδος) in space and time.

The god’s injunction to each part of the universe to take care of itself by itself, i.e., to be αὐτοκράτορ, like the cosmos, is qualified: they are to do so as far as
Their ability to tend to themselves on their own is limited in two basic ways: first, each individual animal must preserve itself by feeding on other living beings which are not necessarily at its immediate disposal; and second, (most) species depend for their preservation over time on sexual reproduction, i.e., on the contingent cooperation of pairs of its members. By way of contrast, in the age of Cronos nourishment was always at the disposal of all animals, which meant that each animal was independent of every other animal in this respect; and no sexual reproduction existed, which meant that each species preserved itself over time automatically, independently of the actions of its members and without “mixing” among them.

These two sorts of dependence of each living being on other living beings for its care imply that nurture and reproduction in the age of “Zeus” can only imperfectly preserve the unity of ἐνδος and body that constitutes each species, since their normal operation disturbs the balance of the ἐνδη in the universe. This is so because as the numbers of each species fluctuate wildly, and some die off, in the “struggle for existence,” and because offspring vary, unpredictably, from their parents, each species comes to “look” different, and thus eventually comes to embody – with the passage of time – a different ἐνδος, or rather, falls away from its original ἐνδος. What was a static equilibrium among all species in the age of Cronos is now dynamic due to the operation of nurture; what was perfectly regular in the self-perpetuation of the unity of ἐνδος and

---

55 Among commentators few attach much importance to this qualification or even discuss it, though, as I shall argue, it is quite important. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 274a6-7, at least notes that in the matter of generation, most individual members of a species cannot do the job “by themselves” but require others for the task, hence the Stranger’s qualifier that they are to do so “as far as possible.”
body in a species by means of earth-birth is now unpredictable, slowly effacing the εἴδος of the species.\footnote{Modern evolutionary biology would, of course, argue, that some εἴδη vanish but new ones emerge. Yet in the myth the process accords with the general decay of the whole into dissimilarity.}

More precisely, the regular operation of the processes of nurture and reproduction slowly destroys the unity of εἴδος and body that constitutes each species and the whole, a unity that the god put together in the age of Cronos. This leads eventually to the condition of “dissimilarity” that the Stranger noted was characteristic of the end of the world: each individual body becomes unlike all others, losing its connection to the εἴδη. To put the point in slightly different terms: generation and its associated processes (conception and nurture) are both preservative and destructive of eidetic order in the cosmos, and thus (presumably) also in the city, since they are both the way in which each living being reproduces the bodily manifestation of its εἴδος and the way in which they efface it from the world, i.e., the way in which they sever the connection between εἴδος and body. This is something that the statesman will have to take into account, as indeed he is shown to do at the very end of the dialogue (310a7ff): he must take care to preserve the delicate balance between the εἴδος of courage and that of moderation, both of which can be effaced from the city through the normal process of reproduction (chapter 9, section 9.2.3.1).
5.6.3 The harshness of nature and the development of the τέχναι.

Let us now turn to the final and most important sections of the myth. The Stranger once again says that we are now at the point towards which and for the sake of which the entire λόγος has rushed (274b1-2). What follows is a description not of what happens in general to living beings in the cosmos with the turn and the coming of the age of Zeus, which is what we have just discussed, but of what happens to human beings in particular. The Stranger declines to go into details as to what in particular happens to any other species (274b2-4), as this would take too long.

Yet what happens to human beings has something to do with what happens to other species generally (274b5-d2). While human beings were deprived (they are left alone, as the Stranger says: ἀπερημωθέντες 274b6) of the care of the δαίμων who possessed and grazed them in the age of Cronos (we may call this δαίμων Cronos, as we have seen), a care which, we have seen, tended to their every bodily need, the other beasts, at the same time, and in particular those whose nature was harsh to begin with but was suppressed under the rule of the gods, became wild, losing their earlier tameness (ἀπαιριωθέντων 274b8). Human beings, at the time, were weak and unguarded, and thus an easy prey for the beasts; in particular, they were without contrivances or machines (ἀμήχανοι) and without the τέχναι (274c1), and thus did not know yet how to provide for (ποριζεσθαί 274c3) or to protect themselves, since need (χρείαν 274c4) had never before compelled them to do so; their nurture was “automatic” before. They were thus in great ἄπορία (cf. 274c5), like the cosmos at the end of time (273d5),
without resource or way out, a πόρος, i.e., something that would allow them to provide for themselves/make their way in the world.

The Stranger now says that it is from this situation that we get the old legends (τὰ πάλαι λεξέντα 274c5-6) concerning the gifts that were given by the gods, gifts that were accompanied, he adds, seemingly irrelevantly, by a necessary teaching (διδαξώ) and education (παιδεψω; 274c7). He does not say that the gods simply gave these gifts to human beings;\(^\text{57}\) that would be a too blatant contradiction with what he has just said, namely, that human beings had just been left alone by the gods, or rather, that they have just been bereft of their care (274b5). The gifts are the τέχναι and a few μηχαναί, contrivances, “machines” or ready-made technologies (274c7-d2) such as fire or seeds. These are not granted to human beings “ready to use,” so to speak, but require much of that “necessary teaching and education” that the Stranger suggested accompanied them in order to become truly useful. If, however, the gods no longer exercise their care over us, why does the Stranger go out of his way to introduce the stories about the gods’ gift of the τέχναι to human beings, however qualified his

\(^{57}\) Contra Brisson, "Interprétation du mythe du Politique," p. 350, who takes this wrongly as evidence that the gods rule human beings in that age. Ferrari, "Myth and Conservatism in Plato's Statesman," p. 394, note 17, and Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 274c6, rightly see that the Stranger does not endorse these ancient reports, though they explain the significance of this fact differently. Rowe simply thinks the claim is a little bit surprising, but does not make much of it, while Ferrari suggests that the Stranger “needs to avoid the suggestion that the arts are something we learn from our encounter with the environment and so could be said to owe to the natural world ... He needs to avoid this in order to maintain consistency with his larger claim that we are not simply a part of the natural world but rather imitators of it ... capable of taking care of ourselves in our own way as it takes care of itself in its way.” I will explore Ferrari’s suggestion in some detail in what follows. Many other commentators simply assert that the story means that human beings are on their own, and that the τέχναι are their own invention and achievement: see, e.g., Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 85, Voegelin, Order and History, p. III.153. While this is in some sense true, I shall argue that it is also the case that the τέχναι are gifts of the gods.
endorsement of them may be? Isn’t the granting of the τέχναι to human beings a form of ἐπιμέλεια on the part of the gods? Is the Stranger, therefore, either contradicting himself or flat-out denying the truth of these reports about the gifts of the gods? The answer to both of these latter questions is negative.

The τέχναι allow human beings to exercise care over themselves (cf. 274d6), and in particular over their nurture; they therefore cannot be said to constitute a direct form of care on the part of the gods, even if the Stranger were to endorse the truth of the reports. The τέχναι make the shepherding care of the god unnecessary; they distribute some of the knowledge which before was the province of the gods (cf. the multiple τέχναι of the shepherd, 268a6-b7) to human beings; but the immediate cause of their discovery is certainly necessity, not the gods, otherwise human beings would not survive (more specifically, the human εἴδος would vanish from the world, destroyed by predation).

The Stranger nevertheless associates the τέχναι with the gods (despite coming very close to saying, essentially, that necessity is the mother of invention, 274c4) simply because the “initial” moment of inspiration in any τέχνη is always connected to the divine. This initial moment is always a certain kind of insight into the eidetic order of being, an insight of the same kind as the “remembrance” of the divine instruction by the universe. To put the matter in different terms, the origin of τέχνη lies in insight, and insight is always insight into the eidetic order dimly “visible” in the bodily flux of the

---

58 As Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 274c6, notes without comment, the Athenian Stranger in the Laws (677cff) attributes the origins of the τέχναι to particularly gifted human beings (who are not called “divine,” though). It is thus not the case that “Plato” simply thought that the τέχναι were gifts from the gods. At Philebus 18b6ff Socrates attributes the origin of the τέχνη of γραμματική to “some god or divine man” and cites Teuth specifically as one such man (or so the sentence reads, though one could well read it as suggesting that Teuth was either a god or a divine man; at Phaedrus 274c7 the same Teuth is said to be a δαιμόνιον).
world. Such insight is the work of φρόνησις, which is the “gift” of the god to the whole, and thus, indirectly, to human beings (cf. 269d1-2), and which, as we have seen, has been identified throughout with the principle of order in the realm of becoming. It is in this limited sense that the Stranger endorses the deep truth of the reports he cites concerning the gifts of the gods, not in any literal sense.

The τέχναι thus are and are not the gifts of the gods: they are in the sense that their discovery is only possible by means of the φρόνησις which derives ultimately from the divine, and in fact is nothing other than the divine in us (the result of the providential ordering of the whole by the god), and to that extent the stories preserve a truth; but they are not in the sense that no Olympian gods ever came down from heaven to grant them to us, and to that extent the stories, like the stories from which the myth itself is woven, distort matters. Only the situation of human need forces human beings to exercise that gift, and thus to discover (some of) the τέχναι. Without such need it is unclear whether human beings do exercise φρόνησις, as the picture of life in the age of Cronos, and the Stranger’s doubt as to the happiness of human beings in that age, sufficiently showed.

At any rate, and more importantly for our purposes at this point, need makes human beings exercise this gift in specific ways: the τέχναι that are discovered are those that make life “livable,” as young Socrates will unwittingly imply later on (299e8-10), i.e., comfortable enough for the human εἴδος to be preserved into the indefinite future and to free human beings for other things. In other words, need does not make human beings exercise φρόνησις so as to find all the τέχναι, but only some particular ones, as

59 One could cite here Philebus 18b6ff to clarify this idea of insight into the order of becoming.
we can gather from the Stranger’s choice of examples and names of the gods.\textsuperscript{60} Let us look at this more closely.

The first \(\mu\eta\chi\alpha\nu\eta\) (let us think for the moment of \(\mu\eta\chi\alpha\nu\alpha\iota\) as \(\omega\tau-\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\), originators of \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\)) the Stranger mentions is fire, proverbially stolen from heaven by Prometheus (‘foresight’). Fire, and the \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\) that depend on the use of fire, are all related to the care and preservation of the species (the human \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\) in its bodily manifestation). The fire-arts warm human beings during the inclement winters of the age of Zeus (contrast with the age of Cronos, \textsuperscript{272a5-7}), keep away the beasts, and provide energy for cooking and the making of metal implements, an art that is associated with Hephaistos, god of the forge, who is named next. Fire indeed promises to preserve the \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\) of human beings in its bodily manifestation into the future, as befits an art said to come from ‘foresight.’ Fire, furthermore, is associated in Plato with the primeval illumination of the understanding (cf. \textit{Philebus 16c5-7}), i.e., with the very origin of all the \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\).\textsuperscript{61} It illuminates the night of the world, just as \(\varphi\rho\omicron\nu\nu\omicron\sigma\iota\sigma\iota\) – the ‘fire’ given by the gods to human beings – illuminate the place of increasing dissimilarity that is the bodily world, and thus stave off the vanishing of the \(\varepsilon\iota\delta\omicron\omicron\) from the age.

The mention of Hephaistos and his ‘fellow-artisan’ Athena immediately after the mention of Prometheus signals a clear allusion to the story of Prometheus and its

\textsuperscript{60} Most commentators simply glide over this fact, speaking of the \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\) and the \(\varepsilon\pi\omicron\sigma\tau\eta\omicron\mu\iota\alpha\iota\) indiscriminately as gifts of the gods. Only Miller Jr., \textit{The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman}, p. 52, comes close to suggesting that the \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\) granted to human beings are somehow incomplete.

\textsuperscript{61} As the passage in the \textit{Philebus} makes clear, Prometheus brings fire \textit{and} the method that Socrates recommends to Protarchos, and that is further described in \textit{18b7ff}, for the discovery of eidetic structure in the unlimited and multiplicity in what is a unity; the method is furthermore characteristic of all the \(\tau\epsilon\chi\nu\alpha\iota\). Fire is characterized by Socrates as that which illuminates the most (\(\varphi\alpha\nu\omicron\tau\alpha\tau\omicron\ \textit{16c7}\), just as the method he is about to recommend illuminates the world more than everything.
consequences for human beings as told in Hesiod, for it is only in that story that Athena appears as the “co-artisan” to Hephaistos, helping him build Pandora. According to Hesiod, who tells two versions of these “old tales” (cf. 274c5-6; see Theogony 536ff), Zeus wanted to punish human beings for the trick that Prometheus had played upon him once. This trick is described in the Theogony as follows: there was once a “test,” which consisted in the division of an ox between gods and human beings.

For reasons that are not clear, Prometheus – human foresight – got to perform the division, daring “to match his wits against the almighty Zeus” (Dorothea Wender’s translation). Instead of dividing the ox honestly, Prometheus attempted to trick Zeus by presenting him with the worthless bones wrapped in fat, and giving the valuable “marbled inner parts,” wrapped in the worthless stomach, to human beings. Symbolically, Hesiod seems to be suggesting that human foresight “got ahead of itself” and failed to honor the gods properly by keeping from Zeus what was Zeus’ due.

In the Works and Days the narrator does not describe the particular trick that Prometheus played on Zeus, but prefaces the entire narrative by saying that the gods “desire to keep the stuff of life (βίον; cf. βίον at Statesman 274d3) hidden from us;” otherwise human beings would have a careless existence, without labor, much as in the age of Cronos in the myth of the Statesman. Prometheus, or human foresight, therefore, wanted to alleviate the cares of human beings, indeed, to abolish labor, and at first succeeded in part by stealing fire, which Zeus had hidden as punishment to human beings for the trick that they (i.e., their foresight) had tried to play on him.

But Zeus then came up with a different idea. He ordered Hephaistos and Athena (Hephaistos’ fellow artisan in this enterprise) to make a lovely woman, Pandora. In the
Works and Days, which contains the more detailed version of what follows, Pandora brings a gift—a lovely box—to Epimetheus (“hindsight”). Epimetheus, thoughtlessly (i.e., without foresight) opens the box, which contains all the evils that beset human beings in this life, and which thus fly away, instead of being safely contained. Only “hope” is left in the box. In the shorter version of the story told in the Theogony, Pandora is given to human beings in general, who are seduced by her erotic charms; from her comes the “race of womankind” who, the narrator says in very bitter tones, bring harm to human beings and are no help to them in poverty. Pandora, the product of Hephaistos and her fellow artisan Athena, is thus associated both with the evils of the human condition and with the erotic necessity of human life.

In the myth, the Stranger associates Hephaistos and his fellow-artisan with the τέχναι. Implicitly, therefore, he is suggesting that the τέχναι are, colloquially, a “Pandora’s Box.” They are seductive, indeed truly beautiful, but dangerous. The gifts of Hephaistos and Athena are thus in no way unambiguously good. When used without foresight, they unleash a myriad of evils on the world, though the hope always remains that they can be used for good.

This point is strengthened when we look at the association of Hephaistos and Athena with the arts of the making of weapons and the arts of generalship and rhetoric. Hephaistos presides over the arts of making metal implements, which allow human beings to wage savage war on one another. Athena, on the other hand, the armed goddess, who is said to have sprung from the head of Zeus in full armor and who counsels Zeus “in both good and evil plans” (Hesiod Theogony 886-900; the quotation is from line 900), stands for the arts of generalship, judgment, and rhetoric (cf. 303d4-305d1), which
counsel the statesman but can themselves be used for both good and evil purposes.

Neither the arts of war nor those of peace, however, are identical with statesmanship, as the Stranger will show later (303d4ff; see also chapter 9, sections 9.1.2-9.1.4).

The arts that Hephaistos and Athena provide to human beings thus allow them to become “wild” rather than “tame.” To be sure, this wildness protects them against the natural wildness of many other animals (274b7-c1) in the age of Zeus: with metal weapons no animal is a match for a human being, and in fact many of them become his prey. But this presents a problem, since human wildness can and is normally turned against members of his own species. Neither Athena nor Hephaistos provide human beings with a τέχνη for taming themselves in their relations with their fellows; neither, in other words, stands for the art of ruling. Athena, it is true, in standing for the noblest “political” arts, makes the polis in some sense possible, but it is a diseased polis, a polis without statesmanship.

In fact, the Stranger conspicuously fails to mention Zeus, the god who stands for the art of statesmanship itself, among the gods that grant human beings gifts of τέχναι. The implication seems to be that human beings are not compelled by need to discover the τέχνη of statesmanship. This point should be stressed, for it is the source of much

62 This has been noted, among others, by Michel Narcy, "La critique de Socrate par l'Etranger dans le Politique," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), p. 230, and Schäfer, "Herrschen und Selbstherrschung," pp. 127-28, though Schäfer believes (incorrectly, I think) that the omission is not intentional, and that Zeus grants human beings the art of statesmanship, just as in the myth of the Protagoras. For a contrasting view, see Howland, The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates’ Philosphic Trial, p. 265, who finds the omission “striking” in comparison with the myth of the Protagoras. Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 52, does not note this explicitly but says that the myth leaves “unspoken ... just how the newly differentiated host of human beings is to recover the community it knew in the age of Cronus.” Miller, I think, incorrectly asserts that there was a “community” properly speaking in the age of Cronos, since the age of Cronos seems to be characterized by separation and a lack of community; but he is correct to say that the art that allows human beings to create a community is not among those mentioned in the myth.
misunderstanding of the lessons of the myth: statesmanship is not among the τέχναι said to be discovered by necessity; it is rather associated with “hope,” what was left in Pandora’s box. But how can this be so?

As I remarked earlier, the situation of need is what compels human beings to use the gift of the god (φρόνησις) to find a solution to the problem of their own preservation, i.e., of the preservation of the human εἴδος in its bodily manifestation in the age of Zeus. But the τέχνη or ἐπιστήμη of statesmanship seems to be unnecessary for this task, as the Stranger implies later with some amazement (302a3-6): the polis is strong by nature (not by τέχνη). The polis is a self-organizing being, that is, one that usually preserves its εἴδος without the operation of a supervisory τέχνη, merely on the strength of its laws, which are decidedly second best in comparison with the knowledge of the statesman.

This is reflected too in the general scarcity of statesmanship. While farmers, smiths, rhetoricians, generals, weavers, and judges of varying but undoubtedly real knowledge can be readily found in all times and places, true statesmen are exceedingly rare (cf. 292e4-293a4, where the Stranger and young Socrates agree on this point); indeed, our normal “political” experience tells us that this is so. We are apt to bestow the title of “true statesman” only on few, very select individuals, whom we think of as saviors, if not so much of the whole human race, at least of the polis: Solon, Lycurgus, Washington, Lincoln, Churchill, FDR. Only extremely acute need, in other words, caused more often by human beings rather than by nature, seems to be able to compel human beings to discover the τέχνη of statesmanship; otherwise, the human εἴδος seems to muddle along just fine, if in a decaying fashion.
There is a parallel here with the way the god rules the cosmos, too. The god, after all, “saves” the cosmos only at the time of its direst need; only then does the god return to the tiller again. Similarly, we might think, the statesman can only emerge at the time of direst need; at any other time he would not be accepted (see chapter 8, section 8.3.4). He will appear like a god among human beings (303b4) not just due to his superior knowledge, but insofar as he can only be awaited, not produced on demand. The statesman is like “hope” – the hope of salvation, like the mythical hope that the god will save the universe again from falling into dissimilarity.

Furthermore, just as the god’s taking control of the cosmos to save it involves a certain amount of death and destruction, so does the arrival of the statesman in the city (cf. 308e4-309a7); people must be killed, others made into slaves. The providential return of the statesman is not without some (necessary perhaps) disruption. And as the god leaves the cosmos to its own devices after ordering it properly, the statesman leaves the city to its own devices after ordering it properly (311a1-2; chapter 9, section 9.3), i.e., after giving it laws or creating the imperfect order to which the city must always hold, despite its increasing inappropriateness to conditions dissimilar to those for which it was created (cf. 294a10ff, 295c7ff), like the universe holds on, with increasing difficulty, to the instruction of its creator before nearly sinking into the sea of dissimilarity. The statesman cannot ensure his permanence in the city, just as the god cannot always turn the cosmos; in both cases, the reason has to do with the body, as we shall learn (chapter 8).

Moreover, just as the god regulates the universe in part by regulating its mode of “generation,” the statesman does a similar thing in the city, as we have already indicated. He regulates marriages in order to counteract the destructive tendencies of natural
generation by “reversing,” through proper education, the natural tendency of human beings to seek partners similar in character to themselves, just as the god reverses the normal cycle of generation, suppressing sexuality and entirely eliminating the destructive tendencies of generation.63

Finally, the fact that it is only in the age “which the λόγος says is under Zeus” (272b2) that statesmanship is supposed to emerge points to the fundamental absence of statesmanship. Just as “Zeus,” the absent god (for our age is devoid of gods, they have in fact left us alone, ἀπερημωθέντες 274b6), the god that (unlike Athena and Hephaistos) truly does stand for statesmanship, is the god conspicuous for its absence in the story about the gifts of the gods, and in fact absent by necessity, away at his lookout – for Zeus is always the name of the highest god, which does not direct the whole in this age; so statesmen are always conspicuous for their absence, hoped for in our need but more often than not absent, like the “Zeus” of the age. One might say that “Zeus” stands for the need to cope with the absence of the statesman.

But if statesmanship is not among the τέχναι, does this mean that its purpose is not to protect human beings? The answer to this question is negative. Statesmanship is a protective art just as the τέχναι are, and as the rest of the dialogue clearly implies; but its protection is required not against the hostility of nature (for that, the arts under the aegis of Prometheus, Hephaistos, Athena, and Demeter suffice) but against the ravages of the

63 Pace Catherine Zuckert, "The Stranger's Political Science v. Socrates' Political Art" (paper presented at the Conference on Plato's Statesman of the Notre Dame Workshop on Ancient Philosophy, University of Notre Dame, September 17 2004), pp. 52-53, I do not think that the Stranger is any less sensitive than, say, Timaeus or Socrates, to the problems that generation causes for the order of the city. He sees generation, as I have already argued, as a force both preservative and destructive of order. That the “human bond” (controlling generation properly, and in the form of law, we may presume) is said to be “easy” in comparison to the divine (controlling opinion by means of a certain kind of education) does not contradict this assertion (cf. 310a7ff), since the “ease” of the human bond means simply that the control of generation is achieved mostly by means of education, not law.
τέχναι themselves, the evils (or dubious benefits) of Pandora’s box. This is never stated explicitly by the Stranger, but it is implicit in much of the argument of the rest of the dialogue; at any rate, the unnamed τέχνη that decides whether music and all the other χειρότέχναι are to be learned is surely no other than statesmanship itself (cf. 304b1-c6, chapter 9, section 9.1.1). Statesmanship, the Stranger hints, serves to preserve the εἴδος of human beings in its bodily manifestation through the regulation of “technology,” preventing human knowledge – technological development – from running amok by its lack of insight into the eidetic order of the universe. How such regulation occurs will be seen only later, after the example of weaving is introduced (see chapter 6, section 6.3).

5.7 The mimetic character of care

The Stranger concludes the myth (274d4-e3) by repeating that human beings are no longer under the care (ἐπιμελείας) of the gods, and thus that they started to take care of themselves by means of all these τέχναι and μηχαναί; in particular, it became necessary for them to take charge of their care (ἐπιμέλειας) and the course of their lives (διαγωγή), just as the entire cosmos does. Human beings jointly imitate and follow the

64 This identification of kingship as regulator of the τέχναι, determining what are their real benefits and harms and thus deciding if they are worth learning, is also found in the short myth about writing that Socrates tells Phaedrus in the Phaedrus (274c5-275b2; see especially 274e7-9).

65 I am thus in some disagreement with the claims of Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 152. Statesmanship is not, to use Griswold’s formulation, simply “the art of defending the citizens from a fundamentally hostile nature;” in fact, the myth suggests that if political science is necessary to human beings, it is not necessary for protecting them against a fundamentally hostile nature but to protect them from the unbridled consequences of the τέχναι. Similar claims to Griswold’s are also put forth by Rosen, Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics, in particular pp. 68fE., though in a more nuanced way.
cosmos all the time, now in this way (the way just described), then (in the age of Cronos) in that other way (namely, by growing younger and letting themselves be taken care of by the gods).\textsuperscript{66} Statesmanship must also be, therefore, a form of imitation of the kind of care the god provides for the cosmos in the age of Cronos, but the Stranger has not yet fully described it as an art; right now it appears to be, like the god who directs the whole among the shepherd-daimons, only the biggest of the arts, imitating the activity of the highest god as the other arts jointly imitate the divine shepherd of human beings. In order to determine its exact place among the arts, we will require a new paradigm, that of weaving. This is the subject of the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{66} Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 274d7, in his interpretation of this passage attempts to suggest that the Stranger is not denying the existence of three periods but simply ignoring the short interlude ("tens of thousands of revolutions") that came in between. This is utterly unconvincing. The Stranger’s point, on the contrary, is to emphasize one more time the symmetry between the two periods (as Scodel, \textit{Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman}, p. 89 and passim, emphasizes [though for different purposes than I do], there is an “isopathology” between the human condition and that of the cosmos): in one period the cosmos is rejuvenated under the control of the cosmos and its parts separated; similarly human beings; in another period the cosmos is left to its own devices, and its parts “mixed;” similarly human beings.
CHAPTER 6

CORRECTIONS AND METHODS

The immediate sequel to the myth is taken up with a number of corrections to the original genealogy of the statesman (274e1-277a2). These corrections fail to fulfill their purpose, as young Socrates continues to consider the genealogy of the statesman to be complete when it is in fact incomplete (277a1-c8), as we shall see in section 6.1. Yet the new but incomplete account of statesmanship firmly identifies it as a form of the care of human beings by human beings, an identification that no longer needs to be corrected but merely refined.

In order to show young Socrates that his understanding of statesmanship is still incomplete and that he is therefore still partially ignorant of its nature, the Stranger needs to pursue a new methodological tack (section 6.2). He does so by means of a discussion of paradigms (277d1-283b1). Paradigms, he argues, are used to show “large” beings by means of structural comparisons with smaller things placed side by side (παρα-) with them, in implicit contrast to their previous (and thus far unsuccessful) method, ἀπόδειξις (cf. 277a2), which works by attempting to show beings directly from (ἀπό-) a more
After discussing in general terms the nature of paradigms and the ways in which they serve to alleviate ignorance, the Stranger picks one such paradigm, weaving, (279a7-283b1), not only in order to illuminate the structure of statesmanship, but also, and more immediately, in order to show young Socrates the way in which his earlier understanding of statesmanship was incomplete. The discussion of weaving (and not merely the account of weaving) is thus made paradigmatic for the discussion of statesmanship (and not merely the account of statesmanship), as we shall see in some detail below (section 6.3, especially 6.3.3); it illuminates the steps that still need to be taken in order to be able to see the exact nature of statesmanship.

The apparently excessive length of this whole methodological interlude on paradigm is the ostensible occasion for a further methodological reflection on measure and measurement (283b1-287a7), the central section of the dialogue in more than one way (see section 6.4). The concept of measure is the key to understanding the relationship of eidetic insight to the flux of bodily reality, i.e. of “general” to “particular.” Hence the determination of whether the dialogue itself is achieving its objectives demands the proper deployment of “measurement.” In fact, as we shall see, the entire “methodological” section coming after the myth can be read as the search for the proper measure – the proper measure of human beings vis à vis the gods and beasts, the proper measure of the statesman vis à vis the god and the other artisans, the proper measure of

---

1 The contrast between ἀπόδειξις and παράδειγμα is fruitfully noted, though with his usual reserve, by Klein, Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman, pp. 165-66 and elsewhere; Klein speaks of ἀπόδειξις as the “vertical” attempt and of παράδειγμα as the “horizontal” attempt.

2 The centrality of the section of measure has been widely noted; a particularly exhaustive examination of the literary and substantive centrality of this section is given by Kenneth Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," Plato: The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society 5 (2005). Sayre notes the many literary clues that Plato provides placing the discussion of measure precisely at the center of the dialogue, and connects the discussion there with the so-called “unwritten teachings.”
παραδείγματα so that they may be pedagogically effective, the proper measure of a discussion on statesmanship itself, and, ultimately, the measure of statesmanship and its difficulty.

6.1 The corrections and justifications of the myth and the diairesis

6.1.1 The myth as an instrument of measurement

It was not entirely clear why the Stranger decided to use a myth in order to introduce the corrections to the diairesis, as we noted in the previous chapter (section 5.1). He merely said that they were to use (προσχρήσασθαι 268d9) a large part of a large myth, implicitly admitting that some part of the myth would be of no use for their immediate purpose. The myth is not only large, but is in some sense too large already from the beginning, since only a part of it was envisioned to be useful for the immediate purposes of correcting the genealogy of the statesman. This implies that the Stranger knew already that the excessive size of the myth was unnecessary for this purpose, and hence that the full usefulness of the myth is to be measured in other terms. The myth, in this interpretation, was introduced to establish the full meaning of care as order- or εἰδοσ- preserving ability, and for that purpose it was just appropriate in size.

Yet this does not mean, of course, that the myth is entirely useless for the purpose of correcting the genealogy; after all, some part of it is indeed envisioned to be useful for this task at the very outset. The myth evidently shows that the statesman cannot be a god under current circumstances, and that his care cannot be a form of nurture (indeed, that,
due to the conditions of this age of the cosmos, human care is divided into a variety of
different arts, of which statesmanship is only one). The way in which the Stranger uses
the myth, however, in order to make clear this relatively simple point, is worth exploring
in some further detail. Insofar as it allows them to discover how large their error was, the
myth turns out to be (or is rather made to be for their present purposes) what we might
call an “instrument of measurement.”

The myth allows them to measure their error in two different ways (274e6-
275a6). In one way, the myth showed that the statesman they described in the genealogy
(the nurturer of human beings) was “smaller” (274e6, 275a3-6) in this age than “then”
(i.e., in the age of Cronos),3 for it showed that, in the age of Zeus, the care and nurture of
human beings is the collective achievement of all the arts, not of statesmanship alone,
which appeared to be as small as any other art of nurture. In another way, however, the
myth showed that the “nurturer of human beings” was very noble and much bigger than
he is “now,” since it showed that in the age of Cronos the nurture and care of human
beings is the achievement of a god. “Their” statesman thus appeared “small” in one age
(our age) and “large” in another age (the age of Cronos); but he should have appeared

3 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.101-02. I take it that βραχύτερον, γενεσίον,
μείζον and πλέον all refer to ἡμάρτομεν ἀποφημάμενοι τῶν βασιλικῶν τε καὶ πολιτικῶν at 274e2-3;
I thus depart slightly from Benardete’s translation, though the effect is the same. What the Stranger is
saying at 274e6-7 is that in the division in one way they erred in showing the statesman [continuing the
Stranger’s ἡμάρτομεν ἀποφημάμενοι] as smaller, in another way as very noble and much larger and
greater than “then” (i.e., than in the other age; cf. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 274e7-8). The extended
form of the Stranger’s response to young Socrates at 274e6-7 would thus be, in Greek,
[ἡμάρτομεν ἀποφημάμενοι τῶν βασιλικῶν τε καὶ πολιτικῶν]
tῇ μὲν βραχύτερον, τῇ δὲ μάλα γενεσίον καὶ πολλῷ μείζον
καὶ πλέον ἴ τότε. He is not saying, contra all translations I know of, that the “error” was in one
way shorter, in another very noble and much larger and more extensive, except by implication. Indeed,
most translators resort to paraphrase at this point due to the awkwardness of taking the antecedent of
βραχύτερον, γενεσίον, μείζον and πλέον to be ἡμάρτημα at 274e4 rather than πολιτικῶν at 274e3,
and the difficulties in understanding the τότε (which, in my view, refers to each “age” of the myth) in
reference to the mistakes, paraphrases which are easily avoided by my proposed reading.
“large” in our age and “small” in the age of Cronos. The first mistake was, however, “smaller” than the second in terms of “truth;” for in saying that the statesman cared for human beings they said something true but incomplete, whereas in implying that he was a god (by saying that he was the sole nurturer of human beings) they said something not merely incomplete but false. The statesman, we might say, is in some ways closer to the grain merchant and the farmer than to the god.

By showing young Socrates, in effect, that the statesman they described was “too small” in this age and “too large” in another, the myth points in the direction of the measure of the mean, which the stranger has yet to introduce (283b1ff, section 6.4 below). The myth allows them, in other words, to do what they could not do with the method of diairesis (cf. 266d7-d10), since it allows them to distinguish the high from the low and the better from the worse, and thus it allows them to measure the king or statesman as he emerges via the division against the proper place of the king in the ranking of knowledge, honor, and power. From a purely pedagogical standpoint, therefore, the use of the myth by the Stranger is a way to train young Socrates in judgment of due measure (and thus, implicitly, of worth), something at which he has not proved to be very adept (see chapter 4, section 4.1).

4 This does not imply that the “smaller” mistake was not the more significant one, insofar as the confusion of care and nurture led to the complete confusion of statesman and god. We need not say that the Stranger is being disingenuous or faulty here, as Klein, Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman, p. 160, argues: though the smaller mistake is in a way at the root of both mistakes, by the measure of “truth” it is indeed smaller.

5 The Stranger, to be sure, does not explicitly say this; in fact, he is willfully obscure at this point as to the standard against which he is measuring the king as he emerged in the division. But language of worth and value is quite visible nevertheless in his discussion, contrary to our previous expectation: cf. γενναίον 274a6, ἀξίωθηναι 275b6; and careful analysis of the myth would show that worth, knowledge, and power are the three interrelated standards against which the king is measured.
The Stranger, however, does not immediately introduce the right measure (of honor, power, and knowledge) that would allow them to properly place the statesman between grain merchant and god, since young Socrates is not yet prepared to measure things against the due measure. Rather, the Stranger shows him how the quasi-mathematical procedure of the diairesis has essentially produced a mathematical contradiction, or, in other words, he presents him with a failure of mere mathematics: the statesman they described is both “big” and “small.” The humbling of young Socrates’ mathematical competence in this way thus suggests that mere mathematics is inadequate to the task of learning about the statesman.\(^6\) As the Stranger puts it, if part of the myth’s purpose was to make young Socrates see “that being whom alone is worthy of being seen wholly by the paradigm of shepherds and cowherds” (275b4-5) – a being to which they had not previously paid much attention\(^7\) – then part of the point of the myth is also to make him see the faultiness of merely human knowledge – including mathematical knowledge – in relation to ideal knowledge, and thus the difficulty and responsibility of statesmanship. It puts their earlier mistakes, we might say, in perspective, as the inevitable consequences of the partiality and incompleteness of all human knowledge.

\(^6\) See Annas and Waterfield, *Plato: Statesman*, p. 8, note 10, on other grounds. Annas sees a shift in Plato’s attitude towards mathematics, pointing out that in the *Republic* mathematics was held to be a necessary part of the training for kingship, while in the *Statesman* such training in mathematics is apparently pushed aside. I do not really see a contradiction: if we think of the *Republic* as directed to high-spirited but not mathematically inclined individuals like Glaucon and the *Statesman* as directed to competent and mathematically inclined individuals like young Socrates, we see that the issue is not so much whether mathematics is important for the knowledge of rulers in some direct sense but the effects of mathematical competence on one’s whole character. Thus, in the case of the *Republic* mathematical competence is supposed to turn ambitious but not theoretically inclined individuals away from the body and its limitations, whereas in the *Statesman* the problem is the opposite, namely, how to make theoretically-inclined individuals understand that there is much of difficulty and worth in caring for bodies.

\(^7\) The word “god” does not appear in the genealogy, and young Socrates’ division of living beings into human beings and beasts on the basis of their possession of φρόνησις does not take into account the gods.
and turns young Socrates away from the vanity bred in him out of his mathematical competence.  

6.1.2 First corrections

The Stranger, having pinpointed the errors of the genealogy, now proceeds to offer some corrections. The main point in the correction is the substitution of the more general term “care” for the specific term “nurture” (275d4-276b6); nurture is a form of care, but care is not exhausted in nurture. Once this substitution is made, the original diairesis encompasses the god, the divine shepherd and the statesman, insofar as all of them care for the human herd (276a6-7); the term care “cloaks” (περικαλύπτειν 275e8) the statesman and all other shepherds, just as the ἱμάτιον made by the weaver cloaks the human body and the statesman’s web will cloak the polis at the end of the dialogue.  

This substitution is sufficient to prevent others from encroaching on the statesman’s turf based on the possession of arts of nurture (276a9-b6). In other words, the claim raised before the myth (267e7-268a4) by merchants, farmers, grain traders, doctors and gymnastics teachers that the statesman cannot be the nurturer of the human herd can no longer be sustained on that basis, since the statesman no longer claims to nurture the

---

8 See Klein, *Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman*, p. 161: “Why is there so much stress on faultiness and inaccuracy in the drama of the dialogue? Is it not because the theme of statesmanship requires it? There is nothing that imposes a greater burden on human lives than faulty statesmanship, and no greater fault than that which occurs in governing states. The marked faultiness in speech seems to correspond to the weighty faultiness in deed” (italics in the original).

9 The verb περικαλύπτω is normally used of physical cloaks. Contra Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman*, p. 94, the Stranger does not imply that ἐπιμέλεια is the correlative of τροφή; on the contrary, τροφή is subordinate to ἐπιμέλεια as a differentia of the latter.
human herd and the various rivals of the statesman never claimed to care for the whole of the *polis*, only for its nurture.\(^{10}\) We will learn later, however, that the basis of the dispute simply shifts from nurture to care, and new disputants emerge (cf. 279a1-4).\(^{11}\) The statesman, like the god who rules the whole (see chapter 5, section 5.6.3), may have the “biggest” part of the care of the whole *polis*, but this is not sufficient to distinguish him from competitors who also claim to have a share of the care of the whole *polis* (cf. 281c7-d3, 289c4-8, as well as below, section 6.3.3). The statesman, in other words, has been determined to be “bigger” than his competitors and “smaller” than the gods, but his *precise* “size” has not been yet established, and hence disputation is still possible. The true measure of the statesman *vis à vis* the rest of the arts has not yet been taken.

The division then proceeds as before, going on to define human beings as two-legged pigs: the myth’s understanding of human beings as beings that can develop φρόνησις does not change the fact that from the point of view of statesmanship human φρόνησις is always tied to the incompleteness of human bodily nature and its vulnerability to its social and natural environment, and hence “split” among the many forms of knowledge that supply these defects. At this point, however, two other divisions are deemed necessary by the Stranger: first, the division between the care of the god for human beings and the care of human beings for human beings (276c4-d7),\(^{12}\) which

---

\(^{10}\) Or almost all of them: ἐμπόροι or merchants reappear among those who care for the whole *polis* and thus continue to dispute with the statesman (cf. 290a3 and context). For more on the nature of this claim, see below, chapter 6, section 6.4.2.

\(^{11}\) As Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.102, intimates: the rivals of the statesman, at least, “cannot deny that “caring” envelops the art of ruling as well as their own arts. The statesman now has at least the semblance of being the peer of the doctor and the gymnast.”

\(^{12}\) Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.102, argues that since the division into godly and human care follows the specification of the knowledge of the statesman as a form of care, the disputants
explicitly corrects the second ("bigger") mistake identified by the myth, and a division between the care of willing and that of unwilling subjects. This latter division deserves to be scrutinized in some detail, since it does not seem to explicitly correct any mistake identified by the myth.

6.1.3 The problem with the willing/unwilling correction

That the Stranger feels the need to introduce this correction at this point suggests that the genealogy of the statesman they produced looks like a tyrant, even if they did not explicitly identify him as such either before or after the myth. This is not altogether puzzling: as we saw, the Stranger did identify the statesman with the slave-master (cf. 259b7ff), and eventually with a "shepherd," i.e., someone whose power over his charges is absolute. Yet the Stranger’s way of separating statesman from tyrant at this point is intensely problematic, since he appears to take this distinction back later (291e1-292d1) on the grounds that the statesman rules over human beings on the basis of knowledge, which is indifferent to whether or not it is exercised over willing or unwilling subjects. What is more, at that point the Stranger does not refer back to this earlier distinction between rule over willing subjects and rule over unwilling subjects as an error that they

with the statesman cease to dispute with him only because “they cannot dispute with the god,” and thus that the reason why they should not continue to dispute with the statesman on the basis of care is obscure. This is partly true: indeed, as practitioners of nurture, rather than care, they cannot dispute with the god. But since the statesman no longer claims to be the nurturer of the human herd, the earlier disputants no longer raise this claim: they cannot deny that the statesman exercises some kind of care over the human herd, as they did earlier, when they denied that the statesman exercised any sort of nurture (276a9-b6). In fact, they have to admit that the statesman exercises some care for them, even if they have a share in it too; they grant that the statesman cares for the whole polis, i.e., that it has the largest form of care. The basis of the dispute does indeed shift, but the argument no longer rests on denying that the statesman exercises care, but on disputing the “size” of this care and its dependence on other forms of it.

will now correct;\textsuperscript{14} he simply abandons the distinction, though, to be sure, he does not thereby simply collapse statesman and tyrant but distinguishes them on the basis of the possession or lack of knowledge.\textsuperscript{15} The reason why this distinction between rule over willing and rule over unwilling subjects must nevertheless be introduced at this point holds the key to the solution to these problems. As we shall see, the way in which the Stranger presents this distinction makes it clear that its purpose is primarily \textit{pedagogical}.

The Stranger says (276e1-3) that by not paying attention to the criterion of force and willingness they erred “more naively” (εὐθείαστερα) than necessary (τοῦ δεόντος) in putting together into the same [γένος] the king and the tyrant. This is an odd way to describe their mistake, for it suggests that there is a properly naive way of erring in the separation of king and tyrant, a proper \textit{measure} of εὐθεία concerning their difference.\textsuperscript{16} The properly naive way of separating king and tyrant, it would seem, focuses on the difference between willingness and unwillingness; but it is precisely this distinction as a criterion for the separation of king and tyrant that will be rejected by the Stranger in favor of the distinction between the true knowledge of the statesman and the ignorance of the tyrant (cf. 300a4-7).

\textsuperscript{14} This apparent inconsistency has given rise to some amount of speculation regarding the composition of the \textit{Statesman}. Skemp, \textit{Plato's Statesman}, pp. 16-17, for instance, argues, with only slight plausibility, that this “contradiction” shows that the dialogue could hardly have been written before 360BC; yet Skemp’s argument seems to imply, curiously, that the second part of the dialogue was written before the first.

\textsuperscript{15} As Rowe, \textit{ Plato: Statesman}, note to 276e1-2, perceptively notes, the Stranger distinguishes tyrant from king by a \textit{different} criterion from the one he claims distinguishes them here, but he does distinguish them. What is abandoned, in other words, is the “willing/unwilling subjects” criterion, not the distinction itself.

\textsuperscript{16} Once again, note the presence of terms having to do with due measure: what is δέον is what is necessary. For a different view, see Weiss, "Statesman as ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver," p. 220, who does not think there can be a properly naive error here.
At the same time, the Stranger suggests that they (meaning, primarily, young Socrates) have not even been properly naive; they have been too willing to credit the claims of would-be shepherds of human beings without even reflecting on the difference between king and tyrant in the most everyday of terms. The extreme naiveté of young Socrates – a naiveté greater than that of his untutored fellow-citizens, apparently – is responsible for this mistake; and this extreme naiveté, like that of the philosopher of the digression of the *Theaetetus*, is ultimately caused by a misunderstanding of the complex unity of soul and body that is a human being and a too great confidence in the power of human phronēsis alone. Young Socrates is not suspicious enough of claims to knowledge of the total care of human beings, as he was not suspicious enough of the Stranger’s studied ambiguity and strange distinctions. He is, like the primitive and naive inhabitants of the world described by the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*, willing to believe any sort of false story about shepherds of human beings (*Laws* 679c2-8), despite, or perhaps because, his fundamentally courageous nature; and this makes him susceptible to the temptation of tyranny under the guise of knowledgeable rule.

The naive separation of king from tyrant by the criterion of willingness and unwillingness, on the other hand, though not altogether correct, is at least properly suspicious of claims to knowledge of the care of the human community. A person who believes that tyrant is to be separated from king by this criterion is not so easily taken in

17 See Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 54-55.

18 As Hemmenway, "Pedagogy in the Myth of Plato's "Statesman": Body and Soul in Relation to Philosophy and Politics," p. 255, notes, in the *Theaetetus* the “philosopher” the elder Socrates portrays thinks of statesmanship as a simple form of herding, distinguished from shepherding only by the fact that human beings are more “troublesome” (i.e., less obedient, or less tame) than sheep and other herd-animals.
by would-be tyrants. This is indicative of good natural habits (εὕ-ρηκα); it signals a
person or a people not easily taken advantage of by unscrupulous saviors claiming to
know the way and the truth. Furthermore, the naive distinction between the rule over
willing and the rule over unwilling subjects, like the distinction between rule with and
without law, does retain its importance in distinguishing among what the Stranger calls
the “imitative” regimes, and in particular in deciding the worth of a common life in each
of these, even though it is of no use in distinguishing the best regime from the imitations,
as the Stranger says more or less explicitly later on (cf. 302e4-8; see also chapter 8,
section 8.3.6). Young Socrates’ extreme naïveté concerning tyrant and king thus
prevents him from even choosing well in which sort of regime he would best live, and
perhaps renders him vulnerable to participation in nefarious plots to overthrow well-
established governments, as Plato confesses himself to have felt vulnerable as a young
man (Seventh Letter 324b8-325a5).20

The proper degree of naïveté, nevertheless, is not without its problems. In general,
by preventing one from being too easily taken in by would-be tyrants, it also prevents one
from recognizing the true statesman, since it produces a certain kind of δυσχέρεια,
repugnance, and distrust, ἀπιστία, of the possibility of statesmanship (cf. 301c9-d3).
The healthy distrust of tyrants is thus at the same time an obstacle to the recognition of
the true statesman, as we shall see when we examine in more detail young Socrates’

19 Cf. Laws 679b7-c2, where the εὕρηκα of the primitive inhabitants of the world is explicitly
connected to most noble customs.

20 Cf. also Taylor, Plato: the Sophist and the Statesman, p. 232. Taylor notes that Plato there says
that it would be “impious” to use force to impose the statesman’s will, not that it would be unjust, in
accordance with the argument of 296b1ff; but impiety is precisely young Socrates’ deeper fault, in refusing
to recognize the authority of anything higher than human φρόνησις, and which the Stranger must point out
by emphasizing the faultiness of human φρόνησις and the perfection of divine rule.
repugnance (cf. δυσχεραίνεις 294a2) at the Stranger’s suggestion that the true statesman rules without laws (chapter 8, section 8.1.3).21

6.1.4 Measuring the myth: too much, too little, or just right?

Young Socrates nevertheless easily accepts the naive view of the distinction between king and tyrant once the Stranger puts it to him; and he thinks for a second time that the search for the statesman is complete (the first time occurred at 267a1-3). But the Stranger is not satisfied. He does not give young Socrates a good reason for his dissatisfaction, in contrast to the first time in which young Socrates declared the genealogy of the statesman to be complete; he simply says that he is dissatisfied, but presents no new rivals to the statesman. The problem, he says, is methodological (277a6-b8): the myth was too large, i.e., adequate to depicting the god in all his magnificence (cf. 275b4-7), but not the human statesman, the depiction of whose limitations require a humbler sort of portrait. They have not yet hit upon the proper measure of the statesman, partly because their methods have consistently led them astray in this respect.

It is important to note that the true measure of the shepherd as a paradigm of the king was discovered only by means of the myth, since the figure of the shepherd at first appeared to be as humble as that of the swineherd Eumaeus (cf. 266c11-d2). The shepherd, in other words, appeared to be small, smaller even than the king should be. One can imagine the Stranger starting from a humble figure, the shepherd, as a paradigm of

21 Lane, Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 154-63, argues in a similar vein that it is the “squeamishness” (δυσχέρεια) of the citizens what prevents them from recognizing the statesman; but her solution to this problem is rather problematic, as it depends on the assumption that Plato must think that there is a solution to it.
the king, just as he started from the angler to get at the sophist and will begin from the weaver to get at the statesman; but the humbleness of the shepherd proved to be deceptive. It humbled human beings as the cattle of the shepherd, but exalted the shepherd itself with divine knowledge, granting him all the arts (which the sheep, by definition, lacked) rather than a supervisory knowledge that is one among all the other forms of knowledge. The myth was able to show this by depicting the conditions under which a true shepherding of human beings is possible. It was nevertheless too large, since the myth mostly focused on the god rather than on human beings, and did not explicitly show how the god could serve as a model for the king, if at all. What young Socrates and the Stranger (and we) thus need as a paradigm of the king is a figure that does not simply collect together all the forms of knowledge for the care of human beings, as if human beings were brutes without arts, but that coordinates or supervises them; and this figure turns out to be the weaver.22

22 It should be emphasized, once again, that the Stranger does not discard the divisions they have made; as he proceeds to say, not only have they said something true but not quite complete (275a5-6) but they have managed to complete the outline, the exterior περιγραφή (cf. 277c1) of the living being they are looking for. What the σχήμα, the two-dimensional figure of the king, is missing is the ἐνάργεια (the brilliant clarity or the vividness) that a painting gets from the φάρμακα, the dyes, and the mixture of colors, and that makes it, we may add, come “alive.” In other words, accepting the (properly naive) view of the statesman as the ruler over willing subjects, who cares for them with the right sort of theoretical-commanding knowledge, does not yet tell us what sort of φάρμακα (drugs; cf. φάρμακον 310a3, referring to the “divine bond” the statesman uses to tame courage and make moderation intelligent) and mixtures (of colors, χρωμάτων, which I believe contains a pun on χρημάτων, things, which the statesman will indeed properly “mix”) make the statesman “come alive,” so to speak, like a proper ζων, a living being, and make him, in turn, able to inject life into the polis. The λόγος, thus far, is ἀτεχνως, without τέχνη (277b8) in that it does not really show us the statesman’s τέχνη. But this does not mean that, as partially corrected, it is to be discarded. The emphasis of the Stranger, once again, is on the incompleteness of the λόγος. It needs to be completed, not put aside. Cf. Rowe, "Introduction," p. 14.
Young Socrates brings about the discussion of paradigm by asking the Stranger, in a somewhat impatient tone, to show him in what way the statesman has not yet been fully described (277c7-8). The Stranger, however, refuses to simply tell young Socrates what exactly is wrong with the corrected genealogy of the statesman they have thus far created. Instead, he says that it is difficult to show sufficiently any “large” being without using a paradigm. This implies that the statesman is a large being. Such a being, however, was not properly shown to young Socrates by a “large” paradigm (277b4); in fact the size of the paradigm they chose to bring the statesman to light was part of their error, for, though the statesman itself was a large being, the shepherd paradigm indicated an even larger being.

A paradigm that is useful for bringing to light a large being must thus be much smaller than the being that is shown through it. The size of the paradigm, however, has nothing to do with its “worth” – the shepherd or swineherd appeared humble enough in the beginning – but with the complexity of its structure. To be sure, a “small” paradigm is likely to be a humble art, but the converse is not true; a large paradigm may also give the appearance of being a humble art, as the shepherd did.

The Stranger begins to explain the fact that it is difficult to bring to light any large being without using a paradigm by saying that each of us apparently knows/has seen “everything” as if in a dream vision, and yet we ignore all things once again when we try to know them as if awake. “Everything” here means the eidetic structure of the whole, the
universe of eidetic “words,” the meaning of being. This dreamlike awareness of eidetic structure is such that when we try to examine it under the cool gaze of reason, what we seemed to know appears indistinct and unknowable; being recedes into indeterminate formlessness, into the “unlimited;” what seemed vivid in a dream can often no longer be described or named when awake. The wakeful knowledge of being thus involves being able to perceive the eidetic elements in the indeterminate-seeming manifold of a given whole.

The Stranger concedes that this is a very strange way of speaking; it seems out of place (άτόπως 277d6) to have stirred up at this point our πάθος concerning ἐπιστήμη. This experience – the experience, or perhaps more precisely the happening of knowledge – is another “large” being, we soon discover; for it requires a παράδειγμα itself. The Stranger puts the point in somewhat paradoxical language: they now need a παράδειγμα in order to show what παράδειγμα means, i.e., what the use of παραδείγματα accomplishes for our knowledge.

---

23 The dim – dream-like – awareness of this eidetic structure can be fruitfully compared to what modern philosophy has discussed as the “hermeneutical circle of the understanding.” The “hermeneutical circle” refers to the circular structure of all understanding: we understand particular things in light of the whole to which they belong; hence we must have some pre-understanding of the whole to which a thing belongs in order to understand them; and this, in turn means that we must have some pre-understanding of all of being, or rather, of being as such, in order to understand anything at all, as Heidegger argued. Being in Plato, however, is always (at least partially) eidetic structure or form; thus our understanding of anything is always informed by a dim and dreamlike pre-understanding of eidetic structure.

24 We can speak of this pre-understanding of eidetic structure as “mythical.” Like dream-visions, myths like the one the Stranger has just finished telling young Socrates offer synthetic glimpses of the eidetic structure of the whole; yet such insight as the myth offers has to be made useful by other means, i.e., the eidetic elements depicted in it have to be picked out and shown to correspond to the eidetic elements in the being under examination (e.g., the statesman).

25 Examples of this abound in the Platonic dialogues: thus, the knowledge of grammar involves recognizing the eidetic elements – letters, in their individuality and in their kinds – in the indeterminate manifold of voice, as Socrates explained in the Philebus (18b6ff). The use of paradigms helps bring this mythical or dream-knowledge into focus; it is a way of awakening us to the eidetic structure of a larger whole by focusing our attention on the eidetic structure of a well-known smaller whole that contains the same eidetic elements or exemplifies the same relationships among eidetic elements (cf. 278e9-11).
What, then, is the paradigmatic experience of knowledge? How does knowledge happen to us? He starts by saying: “we know” (ἰσμεν 277e3). A paradigm is only useful when we start from the known, and yet it is necessary when we do not know. The known is small (277e6-7): there must be an immediate awareness of the eidetic elements of some things, else there could not be knowledge of anything, as the Stranger emphasizes later (278d8-e2). What young Socrates knows, according to the Stranger, is a small thing: children. Young Socrates, in other words, knows something of himself; for, as we might remember, when it comes to the bigger things, young Socrates is still a child (268e5-6), and has at any rate not long left that age. These children are becoming, but are not yet, experienced with letters – spelling, in fact. Again, this is something within young Socrates’ range of experience: he knows that he himself is not yet fully experienced with letters, though he is becoming such, as Theaetetus had the previous day acknowledged with some vehemence (Theaetetus 207e5-6).

These children are familiar with the various eidetic elements of the words they are to spell, i.e., with the letters in isolation. They are familiar, or, as the Stranger puts it, they perceive (are passively aware of) each of these elements distinctly in small combinations; they fail to perceive distinctly the same elements in larger combinations, however. Furthermore, they can identify these eidetic elements when they appear in simple and

---

26 The use of words for “perception” in this passage recalls the arguments of the Theaetetus to the effect that perception is not knowledge. Familiarity with the eidetic elements of things does not therefore imply knowledge of such elements in the full sense of the word. Knowledge comes with the recognition of arbitrary combinations of these eidetic elements.

27 That the individual letters stand for “eidetic” elements generally is a somewhat controversial assertion in some circles (since the word στοιχεῖον is used by Socrates in the Theaetetus [201d8ff] to mean something like what Wittgenstein means by object in the Tractatus [2.02ff., i.e., a simple thing of which there is no knowledge outside of its relations to other things). Yet individual letters, however, as the discussion in the Philebus shows (18b6ff), are themselves ἔδη that “pick out” form out of the unlimited
short syllables or combinations. What they lack is practice and experience with letters, and what they are to achieve is proficiency in recognizing these eidetic elements in all possible combinations, not just in the simple ones. It is such proficiency in identifying these eidetic elements in all sorts of combinations, not the mere familiarity with particular eidetic elements in particular combinations, that truly counts as knowledge.

The children’s mistakes are much like those described by Socrates in the *Theaetetus* (207a9ff, especially 207d8-208a8) in trying to elucidate the second meaning of λόγος. There a student is able to correctly spell “Theaetetus” but unable to spell “Theodorus” (thinking it starts with tau instead of theta). The mistake is pardonable: theta (the letter with which both Theodorus and Theaetetus start) sounds very much like tau at the beginning of a word. Yet if someone is able to spell correctly the first syllable of Theaetetus’ name but not the first syllable of Theodorus’ name, even though both start with the same two letters, he cannot yet be said to know “letters” properly (he does not have the know-how of spelling). He does not yet have the ability to identify the eidetic elements of the whole with which he is concerned (namely, the Greek language) whenever and wherever they occur. This argument is used by Socrates to suggest that the second meaning of λόγος they had proposed could not be right. Knowledge of a being cannot be a mere list of its elements, even if such a list were correct; one must be able to recognize these same elements when they turn up in other combinations. In other words, knowledge must be a *skill* concerned with a given *class* of beings (in this case, words) rather than with a single being (in this case, the name “Theaetetus”). The recognition of manifold of voice. To be aware of letters “in simple combinations” is thus not to be aware of pure individuals (in the Wittgensteinian sense of the *Tractatus*, for instance), but already to be aware of *types* of things, even if imperfectly.
the elements in a single being is at best true opinion, but not knowledge properly speaking.

The Stranger now describes the “easiest” and “most beautiful” way to bring the known elements to those combinations not yet known, i.e., to “apply” the knowledge of the elements in the smaller syllables to the attempt to know the larger or more complex syllables or combinations. The procedure is as follows: first, the child must be shown the combinations in which he has the correct opinion about the elements; then these combinations must be set next to the combinations not yet known, so that the “similarity and nature,” i.e., the eidetic elements in both combinations, can be shown (presumably, but not necessarily, by the teacher) to be the same (278a8-b5).  

Note that the success of the procedure depends not only on finding “words” that contain the same eidetic elements (such as, e.g., Socrates and Theaetetus, both of which contain the element alpha), but that contain the same elements in the same order or eidetic relationship (such as Theaetetus and Theodorus, both of which contain the syllable “The”). It is the earlier perception of elements in easier combinations that is leveraged for learning the more difficult combinations or syllables, not the bare true opinion of letters. True opinion of a complex whole like statesmanship, we should emphasize, is true opinion of structure, and thus of order, not just of isolated elements.  

Note also what this implies for the proper size of a paradigm: a paradigm of something

28 Note that what is the same in both instances is εἰδὴ, looks or aspects. Thus, the element of “carding” in weaving and part of the element of “education” in statesmanship are the same in that they both belong to the same εἰδὴ, i.e., insofar as both are arts of separation; but carding is not education, just as the theta of Theaetetus is not physically the same as the theta of Theodorus but merely a different instance of the εἰδῶς of theta. Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.105-06.

29 Cf. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 278e10-11: “[t]he claim seems to be that – if a model of a suitable sort is available – they do in fact know what statesmanship is, insofar as they understand the same configuration in the other simpler (‘smaller’) case.”
should be small enough so that all its elements are distinctly perceived by the learner, but large enough to contain the eidetic structure of the larger whole. There is a tension here, for the paradigm in some sense cannot have a structure as complex as that of the thing it is a paradigm of (it is a “smaller word”). We shall see how the paradigm of weaving indeed does not contain the fullness of the structure of statesmanship. The Stranger must instead leverage the discussion of weaving into a way to gain insight into the (more complex) structure of statesmanship, but statesmanship itself is never fully modeled by weaving.

What results from the side to side comparison of beings is true opinion (not ἐπιστήμη) about eidetic structure (278c3-6). Knowledge (ἐπιστήμη or τέχνη) is involved not in the true opinion about this or that particular being – just as knowledge of letters is not involved simply because the pupil learns to spell a few more complex words – but in the skill, that comes with much practice, of distinctly perceiving these elemental components of reality in all combinations, and thus allows one to reach true opinion about all beings. This general knowledge cannot be other than dialectics (cf. 285d7), a skill which in the Sophist was identified with the science of the philosopher (Sophist 253c6ff and context).

We should emphasize once again that the paradigm of letters, as used by the Stranger, is a paradigm not only of paradigm in general, but also of young Socrates’ own situation. This double-reference – to the thing modeled and to the situation of the

---

30 As Scodel, Dieresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, p. 106, notes.

31 Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.102, notes this emphasis on self-reference in the Statesman in contrast to the Sophist: “In the Statesman ... the stranger almost obsessively harps on their own doing ... The need for self-knowledge is never far from the surface of the Statesman.” The paradigm of the angler, for instance, had no clear reference to Theaetetus, but the paradigm of letters in the Statesman
learner – is also present in the paradigm of the weaver. Not only is weaving paradigmatic of statesmanship to some unspecified, but presumably large, degree (which we shall investigate in some detail in the next section), but the presentation of the example of weaving is itself paradigmatic of the way out of their difficulties with statesmanship. The Stranger will re-enact in a “small” case their own difficulties with the first account of statesmanship, producing a first genealogy of weaving (279c7-280e7) that suffers from the same problem as their first genealogy of statesmanship, namely, that it says something true but incomplete. He will then show why the genealogy of weaving was an incomplete account of it and exactly what they achieved (280e8-281d4). Finally, he will introduce the tools (the categories of αἰτία and συναίτία, direct and indirect causes of a thing) that will allow them to surmount the difficulty, modeling their use until he finally produces a complete genealogy of weaving (281d5-283a9). By introducing specific errors in his discussion of weaving and then offering young Socrates the tools to cope with those errors, he thus models the process of discovery of statesmanship as much as weaving models statesmanship itself.

6.3 Weaving

6.3.1 The significance of weaving

The introduction of weaving as a paradigm is somewhat abrupt (279a7-b6). The Stranger asks – somewhat rhetorically, for he does not really expect young Socrates to does have specific reference to young Socrates’ situation, and so does the paradigm of weaving, as we shall see.
answer – what “smallest” paradigm, having the same πραγματεία, the same “business” as πολιτική, is such that, when placed next to statesmanship, would sufficiently reveal the nature of the latter. Then, swearing by Zeus (the god who represents statesmanship), he asks (again rhetorically) whether they should use, in default of having anything else at hand, “weaving,” though not all of it but only that part concerned with the making of webs out of wool. He further suggests that this part of weaving will perhaps bear witness, once it has been put forward, to the thing they are looking for. But he does not explain to young Socrates why weaving is the appropriate paradigm of the statesman.

The Stranger says that weaving has the same business, the same πραγματεία, as πολιτική. The exact business of weaving is detailed in what I will call the first genealogy of weaving (279c7-280a6), and summarized as “caring for cloaks” (cf. 32 This is the only oath by the Stranger in the entire dialogue. Cf. Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 152, note 22.

33 We should note the symbolic import of the restriction the Stranger places on the part of weaving they are to examine. Sheep produce wool; and we know that the statesman earlier appeared as the shepherd of human beings. This image was eventually discarded, or at least highly modified; but the connection is suggestive, since the Stranger could just as well have chosen the weaving of garments made out of vegetable fibers (cf. 271e1-2). The connection of weaving to wool, and hence indirectly to shepherding, thus again evokes the myth and the transition from divine to human care, divine shepherding to human weaving. Human beings are no longer sheep but users of sheep, shepherds themselves (and thus discoverers of all the arts, gathered in the city as they were earlier gathered in the figure of the divine shepherd), who need to use wool to weave cloaks for themselves and can no longer go naked as they did in the age of Cronos (cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.107). Similarly, the statesman is no longer a shepherd but a user of things that human beings produce, taking something from them and transforming it. One could also point out that while linen (vegetable fiber) clothing is suitable for mild weather (like the weather of the age of Cronos), wool is suitable for the harshness of winter (which only occurs in the age of Zeus; cf. Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 152). The world traverses stormy times (cf. 273d5 χειμασθῆσιν in the myth); strong, functional protection, rather than ornamental display, seems required in this age of both clothing and political webs.

34 Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 279a8-9, puzzles over this fact; for it would seem that the Stranger should say that weaving and statesmanship have a similar rather than the same business. He understands it to mean that both activities belong to the same γένος of “combining.” I think the claim is a little more extensive, as we shall see.
Since statesmanship cannot be said to care for cloaks, the identity of the business of statesmanship and that of weaving must lie in the eidetic or structural identity of (some) apparently diverse elements of the first genealogy of weaving and those eidetic elements of statesmanship that define its business. In other words, the first genealogy of weaving must be paradigmatic of statesmanship, even though the Stranger does not explicitly apply its lessons to it. How this is so we shall see in some detail in the next section; however, we may anticipate that just as weaving “cares for” cloaks, which protect individual human beings from the harshness of winter (a symbol of the disorder and harshness of nature in the age of “Zeus”), statesmanship “cares for” the web of politics, the protective “clothing” of the polis (a protective clothing made from the citizens themselves), which protects the city and (indirectly) human beings in general from the encroaching disorder of the age of Zeus.

One important implication of this understanding of the business of statesmanship is that, like weaving, statesmanship brings into being things that must be able to stand on their own in his absence, and in fact are designed with his absence in mind, like the things produced by any craftsman. Unlike shepherding, which, as a nurturing activity, requires the constant presence of the shepherd for it to be successful, weaving brings into

---

35 Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.107, notes that, applied to weaving, this is an “expression that stretches the ordinary meaning of care to an unwarranted extent.” But as we saw in the myth, “care” encompasses “production.”

36 Note that just as the weaving of woolen cloaks does not protect human beings from the cold directly, neither does statesmanship protect the city or human beings directly from the disorder of nature, contra Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," p. 152. Both weaving and statesmanship produce things that protect human beings, but they do not themselves protect human beings directly.

37 See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, chapter IV, for a philosophical discussion of the independence of the things produced from the producer. To be sure, the talk of “care” (which suggests the presence rather than the absence of the statesman, and the dependence rather than the independence of its product) introduces a tension with the idea of “producing” something that is self-standing; but the point is that the care of the statesman is mediated by a self-standing artifact.
being something that is ultimately and radically independent of the weaver for the duration of its existence: for as long as it maintains its ἐἴδος, the web need not be re-woven, and thus the activity of the weaver is unnecessary. The sameness of the business of weaving and statesmanship thus points to the necessary absence of the statesman from the city once his work is accomplished, as well as to the identity of the statesman’s web with the law, which endures after he is no longer present. Let us now examine this business in more detail.

6.3.2 The first genealogy of weaving: the business of weaving

6.3.2.1 Abstract version of the first genealogy of weaving

The first genealogy of weaving has ten steps, just like the genealogy of the angler in the *Sophist* (219a4-221c3) and the first genealogy of the statesman, before the correction. Just what steps of this genealogy are paradigmatic for the genealogy of the statesman (i.e., which steps represent the same eidetic elements in both statesman and weaver) and which ones are not is a delicate question, as the Stranger never explicitly addresses it. Nevertheless, the first genealogy of weaving is presented in a way that seems to invite reflection about the business of statesmanship, and in particular about the character of the things statesmanship produces. As we shall see, statesmanship emerges from a comparison to weaving as a form of knowledge that produces “immaterial” things (such as opinions), by theoretical means, that protect us from potential human harm. We

---

can see this by examining in some detail some of the steps in this first genealogy of weaving, especially the first, second, third, and fourth steps in it.

In the first step of the genealogy of weaving (279c7-9), the Stranger divides the things that we make by means of τέχνη (δημιουργοῦμεν; also the thing that a member of the δῆμος makes) or possess (κτῶμεθα), i.e., all the things in the city (cf. 288a3), into those that we make/possess for the sake of doing something and those that we make/possess for the sake of not suffering something, and are called “defenses” or “protections.” Weaving belongs to the latter, among the defenses.

This grouping of all things into the things we “make or possess” recalls the original division of knowledge in the Sophist into productive and acquisitive knowledge (Sophist 219a8ff). The Stranger thus calls attention to the original starting point of both the Sophist and the Statesman in the division of all the forms of knowledge, implicitly suggesting yet a third possible division of them. Such a division would distinguish between those forms of knowledge that create or acquire things that protect us from other things (protections) and those that create or acquire things that enable us to do other things (enabling devices).

As we have seen (chapter 3, section 3.2.1), the division of knowledge in the Sophist rested on the distinction between things that owe their existence to the exercise of knowledge (such as chairs or tables) and things whose existence predates the exercise of knowledge (such as the fish that the angler catches or the theorems that the mathematician discovers), while the division of knowledge in the Statesman rested on the

39 The things that we make and possess are, we shall soon learn, simply the things of the city qua society, its possessions (κτημάτων 288a3). Craft and possession are possible only in society (where there is a δῆμος, and consequently δημιουργοῖ), i.e., in a place of economic exchange, division of labor, and consequently of the separation of the τέχναι.
distinction between those forms of knowledge whose exercise is inseparable from bodily activity (such as carpentry) and those forms of knowledge whose exercise is separable from any possible bodily activity (such as mathematics). The implicit division of knowledge the Stranger is proposing here, by contrast, concerns the function of the things that knowledge either brings into being or acquires theoretically or practically: one kind produces or acquires things that help us in our aspect as “passive” beings that can be threatened in our being by the agency of other beings; another kind produces or acquires things that help us in our aspect as “active” beings capable of doing things.\footnote{The distinction the Stranger draws among these forms of knowledge refers, ultimately, to the basic division present in all of being, namely, the division between the active and passive aspects of being (\textit{Sophist} 247d8-e4). Note that the Stranger does not consider the possibility of forms of knowledge that help us experience things (e.g., cookery).}

All knowledge (including statesmanship) can thus be categorized along three dimensions: the dimension of \textit{embodiment} (tied to specific physical performances or not); the dimension of the \textit{being} of its object (created or pre-existing); and the dimension of the \textit{function} of this object in relation to us (protective or enabling).\footnote{This yields eight basic forms of knowledge according to whether a given form of knowledge is theoretical or practical (whether it is exercised more with the soul or with the body), productive or acquisitive (whether its objects are mostly brought into being by it or are mostly pre-existing), and whether the objects it produces or acquires are protective or enabling. The divisions all define a “dimension” since it is possible for any \textit{given} form of knowledge to be \textit{more} theoretical than practical or \textit{more} productive than acquisitive, or even to produce objects that are \textit{more} enabling than protective; the more and the less are operative in the three-dimensional manifold that the Stranger’s distinctions delimit.}

The argument of the dialogue has thus far explicitly indicated that the statesman’s form of knowledge is \textit{theoretical} (exercised more by means of the soul rather than the body) and implicitly that it is also a form of \textit{production} (i.e., that its object is not pre-existing but has to be created cf. 260a4ff and chapter 3, sections 3.2.1 and 3.3). Supposing the genealogy of weaving to be paradigmatic of statesmanship, we see therefore that the statesman must be fully
characterized as a theoretical producer of *protections*, \(^{42}\) i.e., that his care for human beings consists in the production, by means of the use of his *soul* rather than his hands, of protective artifacts.

In the second step of the first genealogy of weaving (279c9-d1), the Stranger divides the defenses into ἀλεξιφάρμακα ("protective drugs"), which are in turn divided into divine and human "drugs" (including the art of "magic," as he specifies later 280d5-e2), and προβλήματα, obstacles or barriers put or thrown "before" one; it is the business of weaving to produce the latter rather than the former. This division rests on the distinction between protection by means of *outward* bodies and protection by means of *inner* devices, including, one presumes, opinions (cf. 310a3, where certain opinions are characterized as φάρμακα), and thus specifies the *site* of the web.

The inner location of ἀλεξιφάρμακα suggests that this is a good point at which a genealogy of statesmanship may diverge from a genealogy of weaving, presenting statesmanship as using or producing certain kinds of ἀλεξιφάρμακα, i.e., *inner* protections such as opinions. The Stranger’s later description (310a3) of the divine "bond" that the statesman uses to reconcile the two sorts of virtue in the souls of human beings as a φάρμακον provides further evidence that statesmanship is among the arts concerned with ἀλεξιφάρμακα, and in fact with the *divine* protective "drugs," i.e., those

---

\(^{42}\) The cloak of the *polis* is thus a defense, not something that enables its activity in the world (by making it possible for it, for example, to engage in imperial crusades). It also does not seem to enable the pursuit of extra-political activities like philosophy. The cloak of the *polis* is not apparently for the sake of doing philosophy.
drugs concerned with the divine part of human beings, though one may conceivably think of the “human” bond as a kind of human φάρμακα too.\footnote{It is worth noting that this is the only step in the division of weaving where the Stranger proceeds to further divide the “rejected” step; and furthermore that this is the step at which the seventh genealogy of the sophist ultimately deviated from that of the angler in the \textit{Sophist}, leading to the final (and correct) categorization of the sophist as a \textit{producer} rather than as a mere \textit{acquirer}.}

Other steps in this first genealogy of weaving also raise important questions concerning the business of statesmanship as reflected in the business of weaving. The third step (279d1-3) divides προβλήματα, protective barriers for the body by their purpose: some are used in war, and called “armor,” and some are used in peacetime or in peaceful situations, and are called “fences.” It is the business of weaving to produce “fences.” This division thus turns on the distinction between war and peace, which points to the \textit{political} context of protection and forces the reader to ask the question of whether the protective artifacts (the “protective drugs”) created by the statesman are to be used in war or peace or both.

The Stranger does not, of course, ask this question; but we might think, judging from what he says later in the dialogue (307e1ff) that the protective “drug” adequate for wartime would be courage, whereas the protective “drug” adequate for peacetime would be moderation. Were the statesman’s business to be \textit{solely} the production of courage (the “protective drug” useful in war), then he would appear to be a kind of general. But, as we learn later, the statesman’s πράγματεία, his business, is not the production of courage at the expense of moderation or vice-versa; he must produce \textit{both} forms of protection and weave them together, or rather, he must \textit{weave} together and shape existing tendencies that on their own are only useful in either war or peace. We learn later that in fact the statesman is \textit{not} a general (304e3-305a7); yet the general is in fact often a φάντασμα, a
distorted appearance, of the statesman, just as the merchant of soul-possessions, which
diverged from the angler at the third step of the division, is a distorted appearance of the
sophist.

In the fourth step (279d3-4) the Stranger divided the “peacetime” protective
barriers of the body into those screens or barriers that protect the body against human
intrusion or violence, including prying eyes\textsuperscript{44} and theft (παραπτάσματα, “curtains;”
cf. 280d2-3) and barriers that protect the body against natural violence in the form of
extremes of cold and hot (ἀλεξητήρια, “defenses”). It is the business of weaving to
produce barriers that protect the body against the hostility of nature; we might imagine
that in this case statesmanship might diverge from weaving in producing barriers in part
against the harshness of human nature even in peacetime, just as the sophist diverged
from the angler at precisely this point in his third appearance, emerging as an
ἀντιλογικός rather than as a hunter. If this were the case, the statesman would emerge
as a kind of legislator.

Yet just as the third appearance of the sophist was a φάντασμα, a distorted (but
still in some sense correct) appearance of the sophist, so the appearance of the statesman
as a kind of legislator, though in some sense correct (cf. 294a6-8; just as the appearance
of the sophist as ἀντιλογικός, contradictor, was), would also distort the statesman’s
essence in a significant ways. Not only is the statesman’s protection directed at wartime
as much as at peacetime, but it is also a protection that operates, ideally, without law.

\textsuperscript{44} Benardete, \textit{The Being of the Beautiful}, p. III.108, notes that “screens” are omitted in the
summary of this genealogy that the Stranger provides afterwards, and that this calls attention to the other
function of clothing, namely, concealment, especially in sexual contexts, and thus points to the function of
the statesman as regulator of sexuality by means of the proper marriage bonds.
Furthermore, and more importantly, in its coordination of all the τέχναι, the statesman indirectly protects human beings against the entirety of the hostility of nature, not merely of human nature.\footnote{Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.108, notes that the “weather,” with its “mixture of seasonal regularity and daily randomness ... would seem to be the proper model for bringing out the mixture of order and contingency in political things, which the stranger expresses as the tension between the legislator and the statesman.”}

The fifth, sixth, seventh, eight and tenth steps in the genealogy (delimiting the business of weaving as the production of permeable rather than impermeable coverings, which are put around one rather than under one, are put together from separate pieces rather than constructed made in a single piece, held together without seams and with themselves rather than by the action of earth and water) also suggest interesting comparisons between the business of weaving and the business of statesmanship; but the textual basis for such comparisons is slim and the results too meager for our purposes.\footnote{One could argue, for instance, that the “web of politics” must be “permeable” to outside influences, just like a woolen cloak; that it is a production made out of separate elements, and put \textit{around} the \textit{polis} rather than as its foundation; and that just as the woolen cloak is not held together by the elemental agency of earth and water but by the interaction of the fibers themselves, so is the web of politics.}

Let us only note that the genealogy ends in a note that recalls the myth: the ninth step, which indicates that the business of weaving is the production of cloaks made from \textit{animal} fibers rather than vegetable fibers (which grow directly from the earth), evokes the fact that in the age of Zeus the statesman must deal with human beings who do not grow from the earth.\footnote{Cf. also \textit{Laws} (644d7-645c6). There, the Athenian Stranger says that the law works with the fibers of the soul, i.e., the fibers that pull human beings in various directions as puppets of the gods, including the golden cord of \textit{λογισμός} (cf. νεῦρος, \textit{Statesman 280c2} [where it just means fibers], \textit{Laws 644e2}, νεῦρος 644e6, of which the golden cord of \textit{λογισμός} is one).}
The Stranger (279e5-280a6) concludes the genealogy by identifying the garments produced by the sort of weaving he has described as ιμάτια, cloaks. He then says that the art of making woolen garments (ιματιουργική) is to weaving in general as πολιτική is to βασιλική, the art of managing the polis to the kingly art. Though the Stranger says that the making of woolen cloaks –ιμάτια – hardly differs from weaving except in name, he is not willing to say that they are simply identical: weaving proper (φαντική) is, at best, “the biggest part” of ιματιουργική (280a4; cf. 281c9-d1); presumably this means, by implication, that βασιλική is “the biggest part” of πολιτική, but is ultimately not identical with it.48

This means that πολιτική, the art of creating the web of the polis, is strictly speaking not a single art but something “shared,” a gathering of arts coordinated by βασιλική. Thus, though other arts are yet to be separated off from statesmanship, their claim to a part of the care of human beings in the polis cannot be denied any longer. The statesman (and in particular the king, the true βασιλεύς or possessor of βασιλική) is not

48 There is some confusion in the translations of this passage; Benardete translates as if ιματιουργική were the biggest part of φαντική rather than the other way around, though in his commentary (Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.109) he seems to understand the passage in the opposite way. Similarly Skemp’s translation, though closer to my own view of the passage, can be read ambiguously. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, in a confusing note ad loc., seems to argue the contrary, namely that we should take ιματιουργική as the biggest part of weaving, for reasons I used to think were decisive, namely that clothes need not be woven but can also be made by different procedures; but I am not certain of this. That φαντική must be the biggest part of ιματιουργική, however, is not only commonsensical but shown by the argument the Stranger undertakes after 280e7ff, and in particular by his remarks at 281c7-d3, as we shall see. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.109, raises the question of whether, if βασιλική is the biggest part while πολιτική designates the whole art, βασιλική is then insufficiently “political,” and is perhaps to be identified with philosophy. I think this identification is too quick, though βασιλική does appear to be adequate for rule beyond the confines of the polis. βασιλική seems indifferent to the particular political community it is concerned with, and could presumably be brought to bear on other forms of community, such as empires, modern national states, and the like, becoming the biggest part of the art of managing such communities, just as weaving proper can be brought to bear on the making of things other than woolen cloaks.
the sole craftsman of the *polis* but merely the one who finishes it with the knowledge of βασιλική. As the art that supervises and coordinates the whole, however, he alone deserves the title of πολιτικός, for without statesmanship there is no unified care of human beings in the *polis*, only partial forms of care, just as without ύπατική there can be no weaving of woolen cloaks, though ἱματιουργική will always be constituted by more than mere weaving, as we shall soon see. The search for the πολιτικός will thus become now, more than ever, the search for the true βασιλεύς who directs all the arts that care for human beings.

6.3.2.2 Concrete version of the first genealogy

The Stranger gave this first genealogy of weaving very quickly, all by himself, without young Socrates’ input or participation (279c7-280a6), trying to get to what was useful for them (279c2-3). Young Socrates, for his part, appeared to follow the Stranger’s genealogy, and the Stranger thus suggests that they move on (280a8-9). They are to “reckon” with the possibility, he says, that someone might think that this way of describing the weaving of cloaks is sufficient, not being able to see that weaving has only been separated from many (though not all) arts in its own line of descent (συγγενῶν 280b3; i.e., those arts that are separated off as branches of the same family “tree”) but not

49 ἱματιουργική depends on the existence of all the arts the Stranger has yet to separate, such as carding, washing, spinning, and the like: these are not ύπατική, but can plausibly be said to be necessary (but not sufficient) parts of ἱματιουργική.
from those arts (presumably also συγγενή of weaving, i.e., in its same line of descent) that are its closer co-workers and co-producers of its ἐργον (συνεργῶν 280b3).

Note that the Stranger does not ask young Socrates to reckon with the possibility that someone might doubt that their genealogy is complete, but with the possibility that someone might think that it is complete, just as young Socrates thought (twice: 267a1-3, 277a1-2) that the genealogy of the statesman was complete. The Stranger is asking him to consider the kind of ignorance that he displayed earlier, only with reference to a different subject; yet he presumes (rather generously) that young Socrates can quite clearly see that the genealogy of weaving is not complete. Weaving, the Stranger suggests, is so much simpler than statesmanship that young Socrates cannot but see that the genealogy he has given of it is simply incomplete.

Furthermore, the Stranger points out in a more precise way than he ever did for the genealogy of the statesman the reason why the genealogy of weaving is not complete: weaving has only been separated from those arts that lie in its same line of descent as separate branches (the things that emerge from the same γένος, the same family, the συγγενή) but are not actually parts of the process of producing the ἴματια (they are “kin” to it insofar as they share a common descent, but are not actually involved in its own business, i.e., do not have the same business). It has not been separated from those arts that are parts of the process of making ἴματια, and are thus co-workers and co-producers (συνεργά) of the thing with which weaving is concerned. These parts of ἴματιουργική are not only related by way of descent to weaving but also by way of co-production. We can thus say that they have found ἴματιουργική, not ὑφαντική proper, “except in name” (cf. 280a4); similarly, the corrected genealogy of statesmanship found
πολιτική rather than βασιλική, i.e., it pointed them towards the general process of caring for the polis, not towards the essential core of this process, except in name. The Stranger presumes that young Socrates understands all of this.

His presumption is, alas, too generous, as young Socrates immediately shows himself to be clueless. Instead of being ready to discuss the ignorance of the person who is not able to see what the Stranger has just pointed out, he shows himself a prey to it, mirroring his own earlier ignorance of the incompleteness of the genealogy of the statesman. He asks, “what sort of συγγενή are you talking about?” (280b5). The Stranger, visibly frustrated, rebukes him sharply for the first and only time in the entire dialogue: “it appears you did not follow what I said” (280b6). Once again he has misjudged the pedagogical measure of young Socrates, and, in going over the genealogy of weaving too quickly he is once again slowed down by the need for repetition. The drama of the dialogue thus points again to the difficulty of bringing into being the due measure of anything, and in particular the difficulty that statesmanship would have in bringing about the due measure of anything.

Why does young Socrates not follow? It appears that the paradigm of weaving, though “simple” and “small” was just too practical for the mathematically minded young Socrates; and yet at the same time it was too abstract, without enough “pictures” and concrete examples. It did not have the proper measure of young Socrates yet. His lack of experience in practical matters, combined with the “abstractness” of the speech, made him think that he understood, though he in fact did not fully understand what was going
on. The Stranger thus has to go over the genealogy of weaving again, this time giving examples of each art that he separates off from weaving. The repeated genealogy is now made more concrete with the help of examples, παράδειγμα within the παράδειγμα.51

6.3.3 The problems with this genealogy

But this is still not enough. After repeating the genealogy, the Stranger has to explain to young Socrates that there are still arts that have to be separated off from weaving (280e7), and were not mentioned among those separated off in the first genealogy. The “concrete” second version of the genealogy, by providing young Socrates with a variety of examples of the arts that have been separated from weaving, helps him see this, whereas the purely abstract version of it, which is devoid of examples, when joined to his practical inexperience of weaving, might have led him to think that some of the arts the Stranger will mention as συνεργά or co-workers of weaving had in fact been separated off from it when they had not.

50 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.109: “[s]ince the stranger has to go over again what he has just done, his attempt at brevity has once more slowed him down. But in fact he never expected to get away with it ... for he gave the summary before he gave the account. Young Socrates can no more follow the summary without the examples in the account than Theaetetus could follow Socrates’ list of all cases of true and false opinion ... Even the example of political science is not known at first with clarity; young Socrates is truly a beginner.” Benardete adds that since the Stranger never went beyond separating the συγγεγραμμένη when discussing statesmanship, one could hardly expect young Socrates to understand that the division of weaving was incomplete; but the point is that the example was supposed to be simple enough to make young Socrates see this, and at any rate he had been told that the division of statesmanship was incomplete.

51 It is also inverted, and there are some other changes to the order in which the Stranger repeats the steps of the genealogy, for reasons that remain unclear to me.
The Stranger now says that the reason for the incompleteness (it is not τέλεον, 280e7) of the genealogy of weaving they have produced has to do with the fact that if someone were to take hold of the beginning of the process of making woolen cloaks, he would find that the artisan would seem to be doing the opposite of weaving: instead of putting things together, he would be taking things apart (280e8-281a11). By pointing to the contradictory nature of the arts that participate in the process of making cloaks, i.e., the arts that constitute ἱματισοφυργική, the Stranger gets young Socrates to see the incompleteness of the genealogy of weaving.

The Stranger thus points out that ἱματισοφυργική, considered from the point of view of the process of making cloaks, is not a unified art. It has an internal structure, something shown by the fact that the activities of the maker of cloaks seem to be at first sight contradictory. Their task is to find a way to separate the eidetic parts of ἱματισοφυργική in order to reach weaving as such, the art at the very core of the process of making cloaks.

This task is no longer easily done by means of bifurcatory division (though it is not impossible), and the Stranger accordingly does not emphasize it in his further division of ἱματισοφυργική. The reason for this is that eidetic parts of ἱματισοφυργική are “organically” related to each other in that they are all oriented towards the production of the cloak, unlike the arts that have been separated thus far from weaving, which are all oriented to different tasks (ἔργα). The arts that have been separated thus far from weaving merely stand side by side with it, in isolation from each other, without sharing a guiding task. So, for example, the weaver does not meddle with the tanner, nor needs anything from him, or with the rug-maker or the makers of armor, nor sets standards for
their work, but is self-sufficient in relation to these other arts, at least from the point of
view of the making of cloaks. Dichotomy was thus able to cope with such divisions
easily, since it did not need to keep in mind a single whole to which all the separated arts
belonged in order to disclose the sought-for art. The separated arts could be simply
discarded without prejudice to our understanding of the sought-for art: we do not need to
understand the art of the tanner to understand the art of the weaver. But dichotomy is no
longer very appropriate when the art to be discovered is the guiding core of a process of
making that involves other arts. Since the weaver is not independent of the carder and the
fuller and warp-maker, but must keep them in mind and set standards for their work so
that they all accomplish together the task of weaving the web, we must understand the
arts of the carder and the fuller and the warp-maker in order to understand the art of the
weaver. Hence we cannot “discard” them by splitting them off from weaving through
some general dichotomic division (e.g., the division of diacritic and synthetic arts), but
must list them along with all the other arts that contribute to the creation of the web. Only
then can we understand the art of the weaver.

Note the paradigmatic value of this analysis for statesmanship. πολιτική, considered from the point of view of the process of making the web of politics, is not
unified, but has an internal structure, all of whose eidetic parts are oriented towards the
goal of producing the protective web of politics, and guided by the core knowledge of
βασιλική. Such parts, and in particular βασιλική, can only be discovered by a process of
division that does not emphasize dichotomy, for dichotomy is inattentive to organic

52 I think something like this is what Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.109, means by
saying that “the same and the other no longer suffice; part and whole must supplement them as tools of
analysis.”
relations of interdependence. The Stranger will, accordingly, abandon dichotomic division in his search for the statesman (287b10ff) as it becomes clear that they are looking not for an art in isolation from all other arts but for an art in a specific relation to other arts, and in particular an art whose work can only be achieved with the help of other arts.

The Stranger now lists a further number of arts that are parts of the process of making cloaks, i.e., eidetic parts of the art of ἴματιουργική. These are warp-making (281a12-b2), washing, mending, and fulling (281b3-6) and the arts that provide tools (281c2-5). Of these, only the first two sets of arts plus the arts of carding seem to dispute with weaving for the care (θεραπεία) and generation of the garment proper (cf. 281b7-10), though they grant that weaving is the biggest part of this care (cf. also 280a3-4), since the arts of toolmaking merely claim to be co-responsible for the garment, and thus claim a share in the ἐπιμέλεια of the garment but not in its generation. The dispute of the toolmaking arts with weaving thus seems more tractable, as they do not claim to be a part of the process of making the garment itself, i.e. of giving it form, only to provide the tools that help the other arts do so.

These arts, the Stranger repeats, are willing to grant that weaving is the “biggest” part of the process that concerns the care and generation of the garment, even if they assign themselves big parts in this process (281c7-d3; cf. 280a3-4). No such admission was made on the part of the arts that disputed with statesmanship for the care of the polis (see again 279a1-5), but the implication is clear: kingship has at most been found to be
the biggest part of the care of the polis, something that is neither a complete (τελευν
281d2) nor a clear account of it.53

That the arts of care that now dispute with statesmanship did not even make this admission means that the arts in general do not “see” that their work in the polis is part of a larger work, unlike carding and the rest of the arts subordinated to weaving, which do see that their specific work is only part of a larger work, i.e. the making of a woolen cloak. These latter arts immediately see that their point is given by weaving and that they stand in a subordinate, though mutual, relationship with it: carding and the like produce the things that weaving uses (and without which it could not produce cloaks), but that without weaving their own tasks would become unnecessary and “pointless,” so to speak. They are thus willing to grant that weaving has the biggest part of the process of making a woolen garment. By contrast, the arts of care in the city do not necessarily see themselves as standing in this sort of relationship to statesmanship; they think of their work as inherently “apolitical,” so to speak, and hence self-sufficient, without need for further direction at the level of the whole polis. Hence they are unwilling to grant that statesmanship has the biggest part of the care of the ἔθνος of human beings; at best they are willing to grant that it has a part of it, though not necessarily the biggest.

The Stranger has led young Socrates to the point in the search for the weaver that paradigmatically mirrors the point at which their earlier search for the statesman had

53 Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note to 281e, notes nicely how the characterization of weaving as the “biggest art” but not the sole art among those making the web, and thus by implication of statesmanship as the biggest form of care, but not the sole one, recalls Theaetetus 207dff, where Socrates’ third hypothesis concerning knowledge is put to the test and found wanting, namely, that to have knowledge of something is to have a distinguishing sign, a superlative characteristic. The Stranger is reinforcing the lesson of the Theaetetus: an “account” of something cannot provide real knowledge if it is merely an indication of a distinguishing characteristic, for in that case it would not be distinguishable from true opinion.
founded, i.e., the point at which statesmanship had emerged as the care of human beings by other human beings (277a and context). But he has also shown him the way forward by introducing the relationship between weaving properly and the arts subordinated to it. Let us see now how he shows young Socrates how to extricate himself from the difficulties in the case of weaving, and thus presumably also in the case of statesmanship.

6.3.4 Direct and Indirect Causes

The Stranger now undertakes a more formal division of the arts he has just named. As we shall see, these fall into four classes. First, there are those arts whose work is in some broad sense the contrary as that of weaving (such as carding); then those whose work is in some sense the same (such as warp-making); then those arts that preserve or prepare the materials of the cloak (such as mending or fulling); and finally the arts that supply the tools which the weaver uses.

The arts of toolmaking are considered first. They are distinguished from the other arts by means of a division between the arts that are directly responsible for the generation and care of a thing, i.e., for its (original or continuing) achievement of έδωσ.

54 Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.111-12, notes that the arts that prepare or repair the garment are grouped under the heading of therapeutics, which used to be “the comprehensive name of the class to which political science belongs,” and that the distinction between generation and care re-emerges here. He draws from this the implication that “[p]olitical science still seems to hover between therapeutics and demiurgics. It is both a corrective and a productive art.” I am not sure this is right. It seems to me that θεραπεία has become the name for what we normally call care, i.e., corrective activity or purification of what has become impure; but that ἐπιμέλεια remains the general term for both mere care and production, a term that encompasses both restoration of form or έδωσ (θεραπεία) and original imposition of form (γένεσις). Political science is to be found, to paraphrase the Stranger, more with the activities that originally impose form than with those that merely restore it.
or form, and the arts that are only indirectly responsible for this (281d8-12). These arts, the last that he named as causing difficulties for their definition of weaving (cf. 281c2-5), are nevertheless the first in the chronological order of the production of the cloak: without the loom, in particular, weaving cannot get started.

This set of arts produces independent things to the specifications of the weaver, since, after all, the fitness of tools is judged by the user, not by the maker, and similarly with any being that is incorporated into any process of making (cf. Euthydemus 288e-289c). But weaving does not itself interfere in the processes of making of these things, which may be quite complex. Thus, if making a spindle requires arts of gathering wood, selecting the appropriate sort and polishing it with the right tools, this is all for the spindle-maker to coordinate, not for the weaver. The arts of spindle-making and so on, in other words, are much more autonomous from weaving than the arts of warp and woof making (to use an example), since their business is not the production of a web but the production of spindles and the like.

This is why these arts are συναίτια, indirectly responsible for, rather than αίτια, directly responsible for, the web; their business is not essentially the production of the web, but only incidentally and after their own work is complete. It is thus possible for these arts to exist even if weaving does not, unlike the arts that are designated as the αίτια of weaving, whose business is necessarily the production of the web, however partially. Carding would lose its point without weaving, but the art of metal-working, which produces various tools involved in weaving, can very well go on without there being any weaving, actual or potential, so long as other arts have need of its products.
This fact becomes important when we consider how weaving becomes
d paradigmatic for statesmanship. As we shall see (chapter 7, section 7.2) the arts that
are indirectly responsible for the web of the *polis* predate statesmanship and can in fact
exist without it, since they are fundamentally related to the preservation of the human
species (cf. also chapter 5, section 5.6.3), not to the preservation of the true regime. The
farmer does not need the statesman to produce food, and the τέχνη of farming can
achieve a great degree of perfection even in the absence of statesmanship.

At any rate, the distinction between αἳτιαί (arts that have as their business the
production of the thing under consideration, in this case a web) and συναἵτιαί (arts that
have as their business the production of things other than the thing under consideration,
but whose productions can then be drawn into the production of the thing under
consideration) is used by the Stranger (281e1-5) to effect a separation: the συναἵτιαί of
weaving are not themselves weaving; the real claimants to weaving are the αἳτιαί of
weaving, those arts whose business is explicitly the production and care of the web, just
like weaving.

6.3.5 Preparatory, diacritic, and synthetic arts

The arts that are directly responsible for the generation and care of the garment
(throughout the terms are ambiguously used together as shorthand for all the activities
involved in giving *form* – εἶδος – to unformed materials), and which thus have the same
ultimate business as weaving, are considered next. These arts are separated from weaving
in three groups: the arts of fulling, the arts of diacritical wool-spinning, and the arts of
sincritic wool-spinning. The Stranger nevertheless does not explicitly point now to the abandonment of dichotomous division, since we can understand the three groups as a double division of the arts that are directly responsible for the web first into the arts of fulling and wool-spinning (weaving is to be found among the latter), and then as a division of wool-spinning into diacritical and sincritic wool-spinning (weaving properly is to be found among the latter arts after further division).

The arts of “fulling” (282a1-4) consist of those arts that primarily care for the garment or its materials in the usual sense of the word care: washing, mending and the like, which the Stranger suggests are a part of κοσμετική, putting in order/ornamenting, but calls by the name of “fulling” (not the first name that we would use to talk about washing or mending). It should be emphasized that washing, mending, and the like are arts neither of separation nor of combination, as their designation as the arts of “fulling” indicates. They are arts that prepare or order the material of the garment so that it can be made into a proper cloak, washing away the dirt, compressing the wool properly, and the like, and thus stand in second place, chronologically, in the process of making the garment.

55 “Fulling” is accomplished by beating or pressing the wool. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.112, identifies the arts of fulling or κοσμετική with cathartics (the purificatory arts of Sophist 226c10ff), and thus places them under the diacritical arts as arts of separation. This would seem to indicate that these arts do work that is contrary to that of weaving proper (whose work is synthetic). I think this is incorrect. Mending and repairing, for instance, cannot be said to separate, nor can fulling; at best washing can be understood as an art of separation, though the Stranger makes no effort to do so here. Yet even if this were the case, one could still say that there is a distinction between the arts that separate the wool from impurities in the wool (taking the wool as a whole to be good, or rather, being indifferent to its ultimate suitability for the garment) and the arts that separate the good wool from the bad wool. Only the first sort of activity is in the province of κοσμετική, according to the Stranger; one could even say that the first sort is a separation of like from like, the second of better from worse.

56 Some of these arts also remain to care for the garment after it has been produced, by washing it and mending it; and in that sense they are also last in the process. They preserve the ιδεῖς of the garment once it has been produced as well as prepare the materials of the garment for its production. Rowe, Plato:
The arts of wool-spinning, considered in third place, consist of spinning properly speaking ("twisting"), carding, and other such arts. They are divided into two parts (282c5ff), one consisting of those arts of *separation* among the arts whose business is the same as the business of weaving, such as carding and one half of the art of "combing," another consisting of those arts of *combination* among the arts whose business is the same as the business of weaving, such as spinning properly understood (i.e., the art of actually using the spindle) or the art of "twisting" (τὸ στρεπτικόν 282d5) and the second part of the art of "combing," which turns out to be weaving itself (the putting together of warp and woof, τὸ συμπλεκτικόν 282d5). The arts of *separation* (carding and the like), whose work is opposite to that of weaving, stand third in the process of production of the cloak, whereas the arts of combination, whose work, we shall soon learn, is the same as that of weaving, stand fourth in that process, chronologically speaking.

In order to get to weaving itself, and thus distinguish it from the other arts whose work is the same as its own, the art of "twisting," and thus the arts of combination, has itself to be divided into the art of making the warp and the art of making the woof, a passage of some significance due to the fact that the Stranger draws our attention to the fact that young Socrates forgets about the woof, the "softer" thread that composes the web (282d6-283a2) and which will later be identified with the moderate nature in the web of politics (cf. 309a8-b7). As has been pointed out, this suggests that young Socrates, Statesman, ad loc., translates κοσμητική as arts of preparation, acknowledging in his note to 282a2 that some of these arts are not preparatory in the full sense of the word, but merely forms of care that are "not identical with weaving."
whose character tends to the courageous, needs to be reminded of the other part of the nature of human beings, the “soft” part that tends to be “moderate” or “orderly.”57

Both the arts of separation and those of combination turn out in statesmanship as arts of education; it is adequate, as we have seen in our interpretation of the myth, that these arts are collectively referred to as arts of wool—“spinning” (ταλασσομεργική), since the education of the world by the god is, as we have seen, a form of spinning (see chapter 5, sections 5.3 and 5.6.1), though it is otherwise strange to refer to weaving as a form of spinning. Having separated weaving from that arts that do “syncritical” work, like itself, the genealogy of weaving is now complete: it is the part of wool-spinning (that is, the part of the “syncritical” or combinatory arts) that puts together warp and woof. Weaving has now been separated not only from those arts that descend from the same γένος, but also from those arts that do the same work as itself, i.e., have the same ultimate business.

We can now give a complete genealogy of weaving, even though the Stranger does not do so. Of all the things that we make or possess, 1) some enable our activity, others prevent the activity of other beings from impinging on us, and are called protections; of protections, 2) some are “inner,” some are “outer” protections; of outer protections, 3) some are for war, some are for peacetime; of peacetime protections, 4) some protect us from the violence of human beings, others protect us from the hostility of nature; of these protections against the hostility of nature, 5) some are impermeable, others permeable; of these permeable protections, 6) some are spread under us, some are spread around us; of these “enveloping” protections, 7) some are in one piece, some are put together from separate parts; of these protections that are put together, 8) some have

seams and holes, others do not; of these seamless protections, 9) some are made out of vegetable fibers, others out of animal fibers, such as wool; of the ones made out of animal fibers, 10) some are put together by earth and water, others by themselves; the arts in charge of the latter collectively form a coordinated technical process called ἰματιουργία, the making of woolen cloaks. Of the arts that produce and care for such garments, 11) some do so indirectly, others do so directly; of the arts that do so directly, using the tools produced by the arts that produce and care for wool garments indirectly 12) one part prepares the materials for the garment (the fulling arts), the other part produces the garment (wool-spinning arts); of the arts that produce the garment from the materials prepared by the fulling arts, 13) one part effects a proper separation of the materials, another effects the proper recombination of what has been separated; of the arts that combine the materials for the production of woolen cloaks, 14) one part produces the threads (the warp and the woof) by putting together individual strands, and another puts the threads together to produce the cloak; this last one is weaving. A similar genealogy of statesmanship can be produced at the end of the dialogue, though the Stranger does not do so; my own attempt to produce one is summarized graphically in the conclusion to this study (see chapter 10, figure 1 and figure 2).

Note that this compound genealogy has fourteen steps, or twice seven, another example of the heptads that populate this work; the final genealogy of statesmanship will have fifteen steps, but twenty-eight or twice fourteen if one counts the corrected first genealogy as part of it, as I believe one should, making the account of statesmanship twice as large (in a playful way) as that of weaving. Note also that all four “Aristotelian” causes are represented in it: final causality in the function of the web (steps 1, 3, and 4), formal causality (steps 5, 6, 7, 8), material causality (step 9), and efficient causality (steps 10-14). There are some steps that do not quite fit any of these categories (like step 2), and others that could be re-interpreted (step 6, for instance, can be re-interpreted in functional terms, as a division between coverings for the sake of rest and those for the sake of daily activity), but in general the genealogy of weaving the Stranger gives contains all the essential components of a description of a productive activity; it is complete in a way that just the last four steps are not.
Now that an account of weaving has finally been satisfactorily and completely produced, the Stranger raises a simple question: why didn’t they simply say that weaving was the intertwining of warp and woof, instead of going around in circles, defining all sorts of things in vain? (283b1-3). The question has been asked by generations of students of the Statesman, and the Stranger’s response in the section which follows has sometimes been interpreted in biographical terms as Plato’s own response to his critics.59 Could not the Stranger have moved faster, especially as he appears to make no explicit use of many of the things he discussed about weaving either to clarify the nature of statesmanship or for methodological purposes? 

Young Socrates, at any rate, sees nothing wrong with what they have done: every word seems to him to have been necessary (283b4-5). This is not surprising, as the Stranger says.60 Given young Socrates’ character, it would have been surprising if he had shown any signs of boredom or restlessness. He is fearless and patient, following the Stranger through thickets of seemingly irrelevant discussion on weaving, trusting him at every turn to lead the way properly. Furthermore, young Socrates may have recognized that the exercise has had some pedagogical value in showing him how they faced difficulties in the genealogy of weaving that mirror those they still face in the larger


60 Restoring the καὶ θαυμάστων γε οὐδέν of the manuscripts at 283b6, which Robinson excises. Among translators, both Benardete and Waterfield keep it.
account of the statesman, and how the tools the Stranger developed to surmount these
difficulties in the case of weaving may help them in the larger case of statesmanship.

However, the Stranger recognizes that, as the experience of learning becomes a
memory, and all that is left behind is the simple account of weaving, which is practically
all that the Stranger explicitly uses in defining the statesman at the end of the dialogue,
young Socrates may also come to have doubts about the length of the discussion (283b6-
c1). He may wonder why there were so many apparently preventable errors in their
discussion, not only of weaving but of statesmanship itself, and why the Stranger failed to
“come to the point” earlier. In short, he may wonder whether the whole thing could not
have been accomplished much faster.

In fact, it would not be surprising if this happened, the Stranger says, despite
young Socrates’ apparent satisfaction with the λόγος now. So the Stranger proposes to
tell a λόγος about all these things; this is the famous section on measure. This section,
situated in the physical middle of the dialogue, has given rise to a vast and sometimes
bizarre literature,61 connecting various pronouncements of the Stranger with various
supposed unwritten doctrines of Plato and expending great amounts of energy over the
sometimes difficult language of this passage in order to discern connections between the
Stranger’s ideas and those of Socrates, especially the doctrine of the good.

61 See, for a critical account of some of the more bizarre interpretations of the section on measure,
Yvon Lafrance, "Métrétique, mathématiques et dialectique en Politique 283c-285c," in Reading the
Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin:
Academia Verlag, 1995). A very careful reading of this section, from which I nevertheless sometimes
differ, is Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," passim.
6.4.1 The two measures

Yet the basic insight on which the Stranger draws is actually quite simple, though surprisingly misunderstood by many interpreters (283c3-284a5). To “measure” anything, in the Stranger’s presentation, is to find a measure for it that allows us to place the thing in relation to the ideas of “excess and deficiency,” or more and less; and this can be done in two ways.

In one way we measure “excess and deficiency” by relating the “greater” exclusively to the “smaller” and vice-versa (283d11-e1). This means that given two objects A and B of some kind (such as two pieces of woolen cloth, for example) we can find some respect (such as length, breadth, or area, all “numerable” dimensions; cf. 284e4-5) such that we can say that A is either greater or smaller than (or equal to) B. B is here the measure of A in that A appears great (or small) in relation to B, and vice-versa: hence A and B are measured against each other only (283e11), regardless of whether the greatness (or smallness) of either is sufficient for anything else. That there is an art to this sort of measurement is evident in this example since it is not always immediately clear, given two pieces of woolen cloth of similar dimensions, which one has the bigger surface area. A certain know-how is here necessary to ascertain excess and deficiency, a know-how that may involve (but does not always do so) the use of a common measure in the narrow sense (such as the square meter) and the performance of arithmetical calculations that render the two pieces of cloth measurable in the respect of interest (in this case,
At any rate, the specific procedure which we might use to accomplish this measurement may vary, but the point is clear: such measurement can only tell us that A is bigger (or smaller) than B, never that A is “too small” or “too big” for some X.

In the second way in which we measure excess and deficiency, by contrast, we say that a thing A (such as a piece of cloth) is “too long” or “too short” (or just right) in some respect (such as length, breadth, or area, again), for the production or acquisition of whatever thing or state of affairs X (such as a cloak that can protect a given person in winter), insofar as A falls short or is bigger than the quantity or number C (or range of quantities C) of A’s material in the respect in question (length, breadth, or area, in this instance) that makes X actual. Here A is not measured against any arbitrary thing B, but against that quantity C of something (which may not in fact exist) that actually (and necessarily) produces X. This quantity or number C of G can thus be called the necessary quantity or number for the generation of X, and hence this sort of measurement can be said to be “according to the necessary being of the generation [of something]” (283d8-9). Furthermore, this quantity C (of length, breadth, or area, in this case) is such that we can say that it is “in the middle”: more or less than C means that X fails to be produced or is produced incompletely. C can thus be called the “mean,” τὸ μέτριον (283e11), and this

---

62 Cf. Rosen, *Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics*, p. 120. Oddly, Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," p. 9, argues that the first sort of measurement cannot be of specific quantities (as when we say that Socrates is a foot shorter than Theaetetus), and goes as far as to suggest that these arts of measurements are not really arts at all, but mere guesswork (p. 22). Sayre’s argument relies on a peculiar interpretation of ἔριμωσις as measure, but seems to be internally contradictory, since it would demand that the art of measurement according to more and less not be an art at all (contrary to the explicit statements of the Stranger), whereas the art of measuring with actual numbers (by correctly judging, for instance, that Socrates is a foot shorter than Theaetetus) must always be an art of measuring according to the mean, even though such “mean” measurement cannot be found in the example. Sayre relies on a specific reading of the *Philebus* for this, but the passages he cites do not support the conclusion that the kind of measurement the Stranger is speaking of here can never be numerically precise, only that it sometimes may not be. To use one of Sayre’s examples, two armies can indeed be compared to each other “roughly” – without counting the exact number of soldiers – but they can also be compared “precisely” without for that reason involving the measurement according to the mean.
sort of measurement can thus be said to be in respect of $C$ or the mean, πρὸς τὸ μέτριον.  

Later, in his formal division of the art of measurement (284e2-8) – an art which would seem to be implicit in all arts, as we shall see below – the Stranger extends his conception of this second sort of measure beyond the mean. He thus speaks not only of τὸ μέτριον, the mean, but also of τὸ πρέπον, the fitting; τὸν καιρόν, the opportune; τὸ δέον, the necessary; and finally of “everything that is settled away from the extremes into the middle.”

These characterizations of the measure in question are all related, but they nevertheless refer to different things. The mean points to the dimension of quantity (the quantity $C$ of something necessary for producing or acquiring $X$), the fitting and the necessary to the idea of things that belong together (the thing $C$ without which $X$ cannot be produced or acquired perfectly or even at all), and the opportune to the dimension of time (the time $T$ at which some specific action must be done so as to produce or acquire

---

63 As Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's Statesman," pp. 154-55, notes, the mean is not an idea or form, though he is less than fully clear on why this is the case. In my opinion, the mean is a specific instance or range of instances of a class $G$ against which a thing at hand is measured. Thus the “mean” against which temperature for human beings is to be measured is not a class like “the hot” or “the cold” but a specific range of temperatures (the seasons). In this respect there is thus a connection between forms and the mean, as Mitchell Miller Jr. argues in a forthcoming work; for “the seasons” are mixtures of the limited and the unlimited, and are thus form in the formless. In other words, forms determine which instances of the continuum of temperatures are in fact productive of a thing $X$. See also Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," who connects the idea of measure to the discussion of limit and the unlimited in the Philebus.

64 Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," pp. 21-22, notes that the forms of measure constitute arts separate from the arts that actually produce good things (p. 22), though he does not specify their relation exactly. While I am willing to admit that the arts of measure are analytically different from the productive arts, I would suggest that they are like carding and spinning to weaving, i.e., subordinate parts of other arts. (Though in some circumstances they may be developed independently: the critic may be able to measure the beauty of a work of art better than the artist, for example).
The final description, everything that is settled away from the extremes and towards the center (a description that is the very center of the dialogue, incidentally) describes a general characteristic of all these measures, namely, that they define what the “center” and the “extremes” are. To measure against these “means” thus means to evaluate the length or quantity, completeness, timing, and causal power of a thing against that length or quantity (τὸ μέτριον), completeness (τὸ πρέπον), timing (τὸν καιρόν), and causal power (τὸ δέον) that would in fact produce or acquire X.

Note that these are not measures of quality, a common misconception, and in fact they are not even necessarily non-mathematical measures. The weaver (to take the example that motivates the digression on measure) does not measure the amount of wool he has against any random amount of woolen cloth, but against that amount of wool that would be required to create a ἴμματιον that actually protects a man from the harshness of the weather; and such an amount can often be quantitatively determined. In order to create a good cloak for somebody, the weaver must know how much wool he needs, i.e., how much wool is neither too much nor too little if the cloak is to fulfill its function in a particular case; and in actually carrying out this sort of measurement, he must determine whether any particular piece of wool is bigger or smaller than the “standard,” i.e., he must carry out a measurement of the first kind as well. The second kind of measurement may thus (but need not) include the first kind.

---


66 See, e.g., Diès, Le Politique, p. xi, for this error. Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," p. 23, notes also that the second sort of measurement cannot correspond merely to quality, though it may.
Note also that these measures are not *purposes* (or ways of determining a purpose): the quantity of cloth that actually produces a good cloak is not the purpose of the weaver, nor does it help the weaver decide whether or not to produce a good cloak; it is not even a definition of a good cloak. Nevertheless, such measures are nevertheless involved in *all* purposive activity insofar as they allow us to calibrate means to ends, and hence in all *moral* activity, as the Stranger makes clear (283e6). Insofar as the good is an *end*, therefore, being a good or a bad person involves a measurement of one’s activity against that activity that would bring about good things in one’s circumstances. It is thus correct to understand this sort of measure as involved in purposive activity, but incorrect to understand it as a way of *determining* the good except insofar as it determines what actions or things bring about states of affairs that can be said to be good, or, in shorthand, insofar as it helps bring about the good in concrete instances. The mean is not itself the good, but that particular thing C that is required to bring about a concrete good thing in concrete circumstances. More generally stated, the point is that the measure of the mean “mediates” between the general knowledge of the good and the particular demands of a situation – as the argument of the dialogue demands of the statesman (cf. 294a4-b6, 295b1-5).

---

67 I thus take it that the “mean” as the Stranger describes it is *not* the Aristotelian mean, *pace* the majority of scholarly opinion (see, e.g., Taylor, *Plato: the Sophist and the Statesman* p. 221), though they are related concepts. The Aristotelian mean *defines* a virtue, whereas the Stranger’s mean merely determines that thing necessary to produce a state of affairs X. This means that if X is good then the mean is a virtue, but it does not *define* it antecedently. To be sure, the Stranger does say that “the good and the bad” differ most of all in the bringing about of the nature of the mean (283e3-6), but this means only that the good are those who are most able to find out the right measure of things that bring about the good in concrete circumstances: the good measure correctly, the bad incorrectly, to put the point briefly. Rosen, *Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics*, p. 127, thus goes too far in thinking that the Stranger is confusing technical efficacy and moral virtue.
Note that this sort of measure does not determine or help us know the purpose or activity X which gives it meaning (such purpose must be already posited in order for this sort of measurement to take place), but it is nevertheless involved in all purposive activity as the measurement of means to ends, and hence in all moral activity, as the Stranger makes clear (283e6). Insofar as the good is an end, therefore, being a good or a bad person involves a measurement of one’s activity against that (“ideal”) activity that brings about good things. It is thus correct to understand this sort of measure as involved in purposive activity, but incorrect to understand it as a way of determining the good except insofar as it determines what actions or things bring about states of affairs that can be said to be good, or, in shorthand, insofar as it helps bring about the good in concrete instances. More generally, it is only by means of measurement that any know-how finds purchase in the flux of bodily reality as a way of connecting form and particular judgment, and can thus exist as a know-how properly speaking, as the Stranger goes on to explain.

6.4.2 The measure of the mean and the τέχναι

The arts and their works, including statesmanship and weaving, he says, depend on the existence of this sort of measurement; and they preserve it as something hard, but not impossible, and thus preserve and bring into being all good and beautiful things.

68 I thus take it that the “mean” as the Stranger describes it is not the Aristotelian mean, pace the majority of scholarly opinion, though they are related concepts. See, e.g., Taylor, Plato: the Sophist and the Statesman, p. 221. The Aristotelian mean defines a virtue, whereas the Stranger’s mean merely determines that thing necessary to produce a state of affairs X. This means that if X is the good then the mean does determine a virtue, but it does not define it.
Their inquiry itself would be fruitless should this sort of measurement not exist (284b4-5), and so they must compel the existence of a measure in relation to the generation of the mean (yet a third formulation of the sort of measure of which he is speaking), or else no one could ever be indisputably knowledgeable about anything concerning praxis (284b7-c4). The testimonia of the τέχναι themselves, however, is at this point and for their purposes sufficient to guarantee that such a form of measurement exist (284d2-d9), i.e., the dependence of τέχναι and this sort of measurement is mutual: if one exists, the other does, and vice versa.

Why is this sort of measurement connected to the τέχναι? Since the τέχναι are the forms of human know-how, to have a τέχνη is to know how to reliably produce or acquire some X in some restricted field of human endeavor, and this implies being able to determine what quantity or number or kind of a certain thing A reliably produces or acquires X under any given circumstances. Thus the doctor must know the proper dosage of a drug to cure a disease for a given person of a certain size and age, and the shoemaker must know how much leather he needs to use to create shoes that are comfortable and durable for a given person of a certain age, among other things. Should this sort of

69 This is perhaps the most controversial formulation. The problem centers on what is meant by saying “the genesis of the mean,” i.e., whether it means that the mean itself is brought into being or a thing that embodies the mean, and what measuring against such a standard would mean. See Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," pp. 6, 19, for some useful discussion. I do not think this formulation substantially modifies my interpretation of the sort of measure the Stranger is talking about; in fact, if we take that quantity C of G that makes X possible to be the mean, then to measure A or B against C is to measure them against that quantity of G that must be generated or brought into being if X is also to be brought into being. Hence A or B are measured not against C “abstractly” but against the coming into being of C, which would ensure the desired effect X.

70 For a different account of the mutual dependence of the arts and the mean, see Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," pp. 21-22.
measurement not exist, all the τέχναί would be no more than experienced guesswork, precisely the situation of cookery (cf. Gorgias 463a6ff).

The cook cannot know in advance, for example, given a person of some size or age, how much sugar will be necessary to give that person pleasure. Experience can make cooks learn to please particular people, and even large classes of people, but they cannot reliably produce pleasure by their art. To say that this sort of measurement does not exist in any given area, in other words, is thus to say that there is no reliable way of determining what quantity or number of C of G produces or acquires X in any given situation, and thus whether or not quantity or number A of G, which is at hand, is in fact too much or too little for producing or acquiring X.

To admit the possibility of this form of measurement is to admit that nature is regular in its causal relations. The τέχναί are only possible if nature is reliably regular in its productive aspect. But to the extent that the picture of the cosmos the Stranger presented in the myth is true, the world only imperfectly holds on to its order; and this would seem to imply that in its productive aspect, nature is also only imperfectly regular. This conflict is only implicitly acknowledged by the Stranger in saying (284a8-b1) that the τέχναί preserve the mean only with difficulty, though they do preserve it, i.e., that the determination of the more and the less than the mean is not something impossible (as it would be if nature were completely irregular) but only difficult (as it is given the “intermediate” condition of the universe). The existence of the τέχναί is thus not a complete proof of the regularity of nature in general and of the existence of this sort of measurement in particular; for that, a consideration of “the precise itself” (and thus of the
limits of measurement and art) would need to be required, and such a demonstration would be longer even than the demonstration of non-being in the *Sophist* (284c7-d2).  

The Stranger’s account of the τέχναι does not depend on a teleological conception of nature. The sort of measurement that makes the τέχναι possible remains possible even if all possible human goals are arbitrary, so long as in its productive aspect nature remains regular and thus technically measurable. His conception of a measure of the mean thus opens the way to the modern conception of technology insofar as it conceives of nature as measurable in its productive aspect. On the other hand, the Stranger does not deny the possibility of such teleology, at least in an attenuated form. The myth, we should recall, provided implicitly one such teleology in which the good pursued by all living things, including the universe, was the preservation of eidetic order against the entropic tendencies of body; and should something like this teleology be

---

71 I thus do not believe that “the precise itself” should be identified with the good, though of course they may be related. Klein, *Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman*, pp. 174-75, argues that the good and the precise itself are the same thing, and he provides a way of seeing this; but I think one need not identify the precise itself with the good to see the Stranger’s point. At any rate the mean is not to be identified with the good, as Dorter, *Form and good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues*, p. 204, observes, since it is dependent on the τέχναι, i.e., on production in the broadest sense.

72 As Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 129-30, notes, the Stranger applies a form of “meta-measurement” here, contrasting the sufficient with the precise itself, and thus the τέχναι as they really are (ultimately devoid of full precision) with philosophy. For a contrary view, see Tordesillas, "Le point culminant de la mététrique," who believes that all of these measures must be independent of chance and the disorder of the cosmos. But that is precisely what the myth shows cannot be the case entirely. Howland, *The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosphic Trial*, p. 271, seems to go too far in the other direction claiming that the mean is restricted to τέχνη rather than ἐπιστήμη, and can never be known scientifically but only by way of familiarity. I do not think this is necessarily the case, since I think knowledge of the mean is bound up with knowledge of the productive regularity of nature in some field of human endeavor, though it is not necessarily a matter of knowing rules. It is true that the mean in any given circumstance is not known “scientifically, after the manner of unchanging beings,” but it is also not known by mere experience. There is a distinction between the cook and the shoemaker or the farmer.

73 Thus Rosen, *Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics*, p. 4: “The Stranger is a man of τέχνη in an extended sense as Socrates is not.” The Stranger nowhere appears to countenance the kind of teleology of all being in relation to the idea of the good that Socrates considers in the *Republic*. 

293
admitted, then the order of the τέχνα would follow from it just as surely as it follows from the postulation of the Socratic idea of the good.

At any rate, the difficulty of the sort of measurement the Stranger has described, shown in the drama of the dialogue by the errors that they committed throughout their discussion, makes it clear that all τέχνη is a fragile achievement, statesmanship perhaps more so than any other art. If young Socrates can see this, he will indeed have understood something about statesmanship and about art in general, and will be less willing to believe that his own art, which seems more precise than all other arts, gives him any sort of immunity from this human predicament.

The Stranger now proceeds to formally divide the art of measurement,\(^7^4\) which would seem to be implicit in all arts, into the art of measurement that measures things against each other, and the art of measurement that measures them against the mean (284e2-8). Young Socrates solemnizes this point by saying that each of these cuts is extremely large; and the Stranger considers the point important enough to engage in a short diatribe against certain unnamed κομψοί, subtle thinkers,\(^7^5\) who assert that on the one hand there is an art of measurement about everything (a position he himself seems to share) but deny that there are two sorts of measure (284e9-285c3); the Stranger concludes with a warning to divide properly according to εἰδή, i.e., to follow the proper measure of the εἰδή themselves and not put everything together into the same on account of a single

\(^{74}\) Sayre, "Excess and Deficiency at Statesman 283C-285C," pp. 21-22, notes that the forms of measure constitute arts separate from the arts that actually produce good things (p. 22), though he does not specify their relation exactly. While I am willing to admit that the arts of measure are analytically different from the productive arts, I would suggest that they are like carding and spinning to weaving, i.e., a subordinate parts of other arts. (Though in some circumstances they may be developed independently: the critic may be able to measure the beauty of a work of art better than the artist, for example).

\(^{75}\) Identified with the Pythagoreans by Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note ad loc. and by Skemp, Plato's Statesman, note ad loc., p. 173.
similarity or separate everything on account of dissimilarity. The failure of the subtle thinkers to properly divide the art of measure thus translates into a more general failure of their art; they go too quickly in one or the other direction, rather than at that speed that would allow them to see the eidetic parts of things, i.e., do not measure properly according to the mean, and hence are unable to acquire the truth about things.

6.4.3 The goals against which the speech about weaving is to be measured

But the Stranger is not yet done with his methodological remarks. He has described the necessary art of measurement for the production or acquisition of things, but he has not said anything about whether or not such things are worth pursuing. He has not said, in other words, in relation to the production or acquisition of what state of affairs should the art of measurement be employed. In particular, from what he has said it would be possible to apply the art of measurement to the Stranger’s speeches and find out that they have been too long for the production of pleasure or the presentation of the account of the weaver. The “means” (pun intended) have been discussed; now the ends against which the measurement is to be carried out must be discussed, if briefly. This is what he proceeds to do (285c4ff).

In order to present the ends against which measurement is to be carried out, the Stranger asks young Socrates (285c8-d3) whether those learning about letters are supposed to consider a problem about the letters of a specific word (ἐνομα) more in order to learn the letters of that specific word or in order to become more expert about
letters in general, and thus to be able to spell all sorts of words.\textsuperscript{76} Young Socrates of course answers that learners tackle such problems for the sake of learning about letters generally; learning about one thing is not yet knowledge, as we saw already in the section on paradigm (section 6.2), but merely a part of a practice that leads eventually, and after much effort, to τέχνη or ἐπιστήμη, i.e., to \textit{know-how} rather than to mere \textit{knowledge-that}, as I have stressed throughout (see especially section 6.2 above).

Tackling a particular spelling problem thus makes sense mostly in the context of a \textit{practice} in spelling that will allow one eventually to read and thus to learn about other things, not just about words. The Stranger thus poses the question more generally. Is the search for the statesman \textit{more}\textsuperscript{77} for its own sake or \textit{[more]} for the sake of becoming more expert about the eidetic structure of all things, i.e., becoming περὶ πάντα διαλεκτικωτέροις (285d5-7)? Clearly, young Socrates answers, it is for the sake of learning about the eidetic structure of all things. Hence, \textit{a fortiori}, the Stranger points out, learning about weaving is not for its own sake (285d9-10).

This does not mean, however, that learning about the statesman is valueless. The argument of the Stranger clearly implies a hierarchy of things to be learned, at the bottom of which are those things that are perceptible or have perceptible likenesses, and at the top of which stand the things of which there are no such likenesses, and thus require to be shown by means of λόγοι alone. The former are “smaller,” the latter “bigger,” not only

\textsuperscript{76} Note the Stranger’s use of the comparative μᾶλλον, more (285d1); even if understanding a specific word is not the \textit{whole} point of learning to spell, it is \textit{part} of the point, however small.

\textsuperscript{77} Note again the comparative μᾶλλον at 285d6. See note 76.
in mere size but also in honor (285d10-286b1). The Stranger does not tell young Socrates to what category the statesman belongs. It is not entirely clear whether the statesman has a clear perceptible likeness (as the facts that he can be shown in part by means of the weaver, and that the statesman has a body, suggest) or not (as the facts that a long argument is necessary to bring him to light, and cannot be simply pointed out, unlike the weaver, and that statesmanship is a bodiless thing, suggest); but it seems plausible to consider the statesman one of the greatest beings. After all, though it has perceptible likenesses, they are not sufficiently clear to bring him to light (cf. ἐναργῶς 286a2), as the drama of the dialogue has amply demonstrated.

Whatever the case, it is clear that the Stranger considers that the discussion of the statesman, though important in its own right, is subordinated to the task of becoming expert in understanding those things that have no bodies. Abstract knowledge about statesmanship must always constitute a lower form of knowledge than this other expertise, though it is unclear whether this implies that the expertise of the statesman is also lower than it, especially since it is likely to involve knowledge of such bodiless beings as justice and the good. I have argued that it is not – indeed, that statesmanship is the highest form of human wisdom; but it must be acknowledged that the Stranger is not unambiguous about its worth here.

78 This passage has been extensively discussed, sometimes in bizarre ways, as has the passage on the mean. The locus classicus of the discussion is to be found in G. E. L. Owen, "Plato on the Undepictable," Phronesis Supplementary Volume 1 (1973).

79 Contrary to what Klein, Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman, pp. 176-77, seems to imply by suggesting that weaving is the sensible resemblance of statesmanship. But the Stranger speaks of sufficiently clear perceptible resemblances, and weaving can hardly be said to be a sufficiently clear resemblance of the statesman.
The Stranger and young Socrates are now ready to understand in which way they should measure the speech about weaving: not so much insofar as it gives an account of weaving, or insofar as it gives one pleasure, or even (except secondarily) insofar as it helps them understand the statesman, but insofar as it helps them (primarily young Socrates and us, the listeners) more able to find out (εὐρετικῶτερον 286ε2), more able to “read” the eidetic structure of the whole (286β3-287α7), more “philosophical” (a word the Stranger does not use). The speech is a training in philosophy, not in politics, and its length should be measured accordingly. The Stranger, however, leaves the question of whether he has succeeded at this open, challenging us to find a shorter way of training young Socrates in philosophy (286ε4-287α7); he does not actually carry out the measurement of the speech in terms of how well its length, parts, timing, and causal power (the things measured against the μέτριον, πρέπον, καιρόν, and δέον) do accomplish young Socrates’ (or our own) training in philosophy; that is left for us to do.

Before we return to the search for the statesman, it is useful to summarize what we have learned from this section specifically about the knowledge of the statesman. The knowledge of the statesman, which we found in the previous chapter was a knowledge that attempts to preserve the eidetic order of the parts of the city so that the εἰδος of human beings is thereby preserved, must use this art of measure to understand how the things at hand – human beings and their arts in their quantity, their fittingness, their timing, and their necessity – can be arranged so as to achieve the greatest amount of order in the city, and thus the longest possible preservation of the εἰδος of human beings in the particular herd over which he is responsible. This is the theme of the second part of the dialogue.
CHAPTER 7

THE POLIS

The search for the statesman now resumes, having been interrupted by the long methodological excursus on paradigm and measure. As we may remember, the search was earlier put on hiatus when the Stranger suggested that their corrected genealogy of statesmanship, which defined it as the human (rather than divine) art of caring for willing human beings, was incomplete, though not entirely wrong (277a4-c3). The reason for the incompleteness of the genealogy was not entirely clear at the time, but (as we saw in the previous chapter, section 6.3), the discussion of weaving implicitly showed that the problem was that arts other than statesmanship were also implicated, if in a subordinate role or to a smaller degree, in the care of human beings. The Stranger will thus now show how statesmanship emerges as the supervising art in the network of arts that care for human beings in the polis, just as weaving emerged as the supervising art in the network of arts necessary to make (and thus “care for” in an extended sense; cf. 279e6) woolen cloaks. These arts of the care of human beings, in turn, can be characterized as the arts that bring about the polis, the site where such care takes place. This network thus constitutes πολιτική in the widest sense of the word, as we shall see, just as the network
of arts of carding, spinning, and the like, supervised by weaving properly, constituted cloak-making in the widest sense of the word (cf. 279e5-280a6).

The Stranger’s procedure here consists of an enumeration of these arts alongside vague hints regarding their proper order and the principle of their separation from statesmanship. A lot of work is thus left for us, the readers, to do. We must understand, first, the order in which these arts appear, which involves understanding the particular continua on which they are ranged, and thus the similarity of these arts among themselves. These continua all turn out to be previously mentioned characteristics of statesmanship itself, and thus understanding them involves understanding better these very dimensions of statesmanship. Second, we must understand the principle of their separation from each other and from statesmanship, i.e., we must understand the eidetic structure of the continua on which these arts are arranged by understanding the dissimilarities among those arts. These two tasks correspond to the procedure that the Stranger recommended to those who are to become skilled in dialectic (285a4-b6), and thus conform to due measure.

The arts that we are about to discuss, we should note, bring about the polis, but not necessarily the well-ordered polis.\(^1\) All of them do have a share in the care of human beings, but without the supervising presence of the art of the statesman they need not achieve the best possible order for the polis, just as the arts of carding, spinning, and the like could not create the best possible woolen cloak if they were not directed by the true

\(^1\) A point noted by Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*, note to 289c8-d1, though he seems to me to be mistaken in the implications he draws from it. The distinction here is between a web produced by true artisans coordinated by a true weaver and a web produced by true artisans coordinated by a bad weaver (i.e., someone who does not have the knowledge of weaving, though he may pretend to have it). The web may get woven, but it won’t be any good.
knowledge of weaving, even though they do have a share in the process of cloak-making (in fact are indispensable to it).

The order of the *polis* is called its πολιτεία, which we shall discuss in the next chapter. Only if the art of the statesman is present in the *polis* can the *polis* be said to be well-ordered, i.e., can it be said to have a true πολιτεία. We can thus anticipate that the task of the statesman is the production of the true πολιτεία by the coordination of the other arts in the city. On the other hand, cities that do not have a true regime do enjoy a partial sort of order (they are στασιωτείαι, regimes for the sake of *parts* of the whole; cf. 303c2 and *Laws* 712e9ff). The city, in other words, can exist without the statesman, a point that we have been emphasizing for a while now, and human beings can care for themselves (to whatever small degree) without the assistance of the art of the statesman. The reason for this lies, once again, in the fact that all the other arts do have a true share in the care of human beings, and thus provide the *polis* with a *partial* order, as we shall see.

7.1 The resumption of the search for the statesman

The Stranger returns to the search for the πολιτικός at 287a6. What they are to do, he declares, is to use the paradigm of weaving to bring the πολιτικός to light; we must thus be attentive to the ways in which the discussion of weaving, with all its peculiarities, will now inform the discussion of the statesman.

The Stranger points out (287b4-6) that they have already separated the king many σύννομοι (co-grazers), and in particular from all others who are concerned with herds.
The σύννομοι, in the case of the statesman, are the equivalents of the many συγγενή in the first genealogy of weaving (280b3-4). These are the divine and human shepherds of all other animals (including the divine shepherd of the age of Cronos), at least insofar as their activity cannot be said to be either directly or indirectly responsible for the making of the polis (and thus for the care of human beings), something that is not entirely out of the question for those shepherds of animals useful to the polis.² But there still remain to be separated from the statesman those arts and thus those people that are either indirectly or directly responsible for the web of politics, i.e., those arts that share in the care of human beings. These are the equivalents of the “closer co-workers” that still remained to be separated from weaving at the equivalent point in its genealogy (280b4).³

This does not imply that the Stranger thinks the statesman is simply a shepherd of human beings. Just as ὑφαντική (weaving) was found to be at the core of Ἰματιουργική, ² Indeed, one could argue that only the divine shepherd of human beings has been fully separated from the statesman at this point, as all other human shepherds of animals are, to a greater or lesser extent, indirectly responsible, along with all the other arts of nurture, for the polis, as the Stranger acknowledges later (cf. 289b7-c2). Insofar as the knowledge of these other shepherds, however, concerns the care of their herds alone rather than the care of their herds as part of caring for human beings, they have indeed been separated from the statesman. Their involvement in the city, however, transforms the understanding of their τέχνη from the mere care of their assigned herds to their care for the benefit of human beings. Thus the shepherd as such cares for sheep only, and this should preclude his using them for their meat or wool; his task is only to preserve the ἐίδος of sheep in his particular herd (we might think of these shepherds as having sheep as “pets,” though perhaps only gods could shepherd other animals without requiring anything from them in return, i.e., without “using” them for their benefit). But insofar as the shepherd forms part of the polis, the τέχνη of shepherding, and hence the preservation of the ἐίδος of sheep, becomes subordinated to the preservation of the ἐίδος of human beings (i.e., to their care); caring for sheep then becomes preparing them for their use by human beings.

³ Note the parallels in language: the Stranger spoke there of the separation of weaving from many of its συγγενή but not from the closer co-workers or co-producers of the web (280b2-3); now he speaks of the separation of the king (who is analogous to the practitioner of ὑφαντική in contrast to the πολιτικός, who is analogous to the practitioner of Ἰματιουργική) already from many of its σύννομοι, leaving only those arts that are both indirectly and directly responsible for the polis. As Rowe, “Introduction,” p. 14, and elsewhere, sees, and as I have noted throughout, this provides additional evidence that the (much corrected) genealogy of the statesman as the one who cares for the human herd by means of his gnostic-auto-epitactic form of knowledge is allowed to stand.
the making of woolen cloaks (cf. 279c5-280a6), but did not actually perform all aspects of this process, so βασιλική will now be found to be at the core of the care for a human herd (πολιτική), but will not actually provide all aspects of this care, as a shepherd would (cf. 268a6-b7). Moreover, the analogy between πολιτική and ἰματιουργική suggests that, just as ἰματιουργική is the coordinated network of arts, at whose core is ύφαντική, that makes disordered wool into a garment, so πολιτική is, strictly speaking, the coordinated network of arts that makes a bare, structureless herd – that part of the embodied εἶδος of human beings that falls by chance or design to the care of a given statesman – into a polis, a network of arts crowned and coordinated by βασιλική.5

4 I say “a human herd” rather than “the human herd” since a herd is always a part of the εἶδος or species, in this case of the εἶδος of human beings.

5 To be sure, the Stranger in what follows sometimes uses the terms πολιτική and βασιλική interchangeably, as he indicated he would (cf. 280a4; for examples, see 288a8-10, b6-8). But the basic distinction between the entire process of making the polis or the web of politics and the art at the core of this process does not therefore cease to be operative, just as the interchangeability of the names ἰματιουργική and ύφαντική does not mean that there is no distinction between the entire process of making a cloak and the act of weaving itself. To call the art of the statesman πολιτική is simply to acknowledge the fact that without it there is no true polis, just as without the art of weaving there is no making of cloaks worth the name. Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.109, as well as Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 78, for somewhat different views on this point. Coulobaritis, "Le paradigme platonicien du tissage comme modèle politique d'une société complexe," pp. 141ff, especially p. 57, pp. 61-62, has argued that the Stranger’s insistence on separating the πολιτικός and the βασιλεύς from all the other arts, an insistence reflected in his unwillingness to say that the arts they are about to discuss are in a fundamental way parts of πολιτική – which is only the reverse side of his insistence of the identity of πολιτική and βασιλική – is indicative of an understanding of statesmanship that is not “architectonic,” unlike Aristotle’s, and is thus ultimately inferior to it since it does not fully “integrate” politics and τέχνη; the τέχναι are never given genuine responsibility for the polis. I believe this is incorrect, as we have seen already in some detail, though Coulobaritis’ argument is quite subtle and deserving of fuller attention than it has received.
7.1.1 The abandonment of bifurcatory division

Methodologically, the resumption of the discussion of the statesman marks the apparent abandonment of bifurcatory division, on which the Stranger had seemed to put so much stock earlier (262b5-c1). But now he starts out by pointing to the difficulty of dividing the arts directly and indirectly responsible for the polis in halves (287b10-c1), though he does not explain why it is in fact difficult to divide them thus. He merely says, somewhat cryptically, that as they go along this reason won’t become any less clear, i.e., it won’t become any more obscure than it already is to young Socrates.

As we saw in our discussion of weaving, however (chapter 6, section 6.3.3), the reason for the difficulty of using bifurcatory diairesis seems to have to do with whether or not there is a relationship of mutual dependence between the arts separated and the art sought for the production or acquisition of something. In the “dichotomous” divisions (those that separated statesmanship from its σύννομοι and weaving from its συγγενῆ) the arts separated from statesmanship and weaving had nothing further to do with them since they contributed nothing to the production of either the web of politics or of cloaks. The divine art of caring for cranes contributes nothing to the human art of caring for human beings, and the art of the armor maker has nothing to offer to the art of making cloaks. These arts did not form an “organic” unity with the arts sought, and were thus cast aside and forgotten. The non-dichotomous divisions, however, are all of arts that belong together with the art sought in a single “organic” whole. Thus, the arts that have to do, either directly or indirectly, with the making of cloaks belong together in ἰματιουργική and are coordinated and directed by weaving properly; similarly, the arts that have to do,
either directly or indirectly, with the polis also belong together in πολιτική (broadly conceived) and coordinated by πολιτική (statesmanship properly). They form an “organic” unity, as the Stranger goes on to acknowledge with his suggestion that they divide the arts now κατά μέλη, i.e., according to the “natural limbs” of the whole that is to be divided (in this case, ultimately, πολιτική and thus the polis). 6

The point here does not concern whether or not the results of the division can be presented using dichotomous division (they can), 7 but whether dichotomous division is a safe method of discovery (cf. 262a9ff) at this point in the search. “Safe” methods are those likely to hit upon the real eidetic parts of the thing being divided (in this case, knowledge). Earlier in the dialogue, their task was to separate statesmanship from arts with which it did not form a structured whole. To have attempted to do “detail work” (λεπτουργεῖν 262b6) at that point would thus have been unsafe, for there would have been no guiding structure to seize on in trying to distinguish statesmanship from all the other arts, and at any rate statesmanship had not yet been fully separated from those arts “independent” of it. It was, therefore, safer, both from the point of view of young Socrates’ tendencies and education thus far and from the point of view of the search itself, to divide by “halves.” Indeed, if no structure is clearly seen in the thing to be divided, one can normally assume that there is some sort of division of it into eidetic parts.

6 Cf. Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, p. 76.

7 We saw this to be the case for weaving (cf. chapter 10, section 11.3.5), and scholars have shown the same for the case of statesmanship: see Dorter, Form and good in Plato’s Eleatic Dialogues, pp. 211-12, Victor Goldschmidt, Le paradigme dans la dialectique platonicienne (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947), pp. 266-67, 70-71, Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 75-76.
having symmetrically exclusive characteristics;⁸ hence, at least at the beginning of the process of division, bifurcation can in fact help one hit upon true eidetic parts of the thing divided.

If, however, the eidetic parts of the thing to be divided are not independent of one another, to attempt to divide by halves would mean obscuring their interdependence and thus, in the worst case, to cut at the wrong joints. Since here the thing sought (statesmanship) is nothing other than the eidetic part that regulates the relations among the other parts (the arts of the polis) of the thing divided (the general knowledge of caring for human beings),⁹ to cut this latter in “halves” at this point and hence to discard the “left-hand” side of the division would mean to obscure an essential feature of the thing sought (i.e., its functional connection with all the other parts of the knowledge of caring for human beings), and indeed possibly to miss it altogether (by continuing to divide human beings into male and female, for example, as the Stranger seemed to suggest earlier, 262e⁵-⁶, and thus mistakenly thinking that there is one sort of statesmanship for men and another for women, each independent of the other).¹⁰

---

⁸ Some degree of formal precision is necessary here. For dichotomous symmetry what is necessary is that the characteristics of the eidetic parts of the thing divided be mutually and symmetrically exclusive, and yet be proper eidetic parts: thus, to be an even number necessarily implies not being odd and vice-versa, and yet both even and odd represent real characteristics (i.e., to be even is not simply not to be odd).

⁹ Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, p. 142, notes, rightly, that it is unclear at first sight what is being divided. He nevertheless understands (rightly, in my view) that ultimately what is being divided is “the ruling art,” i.e., πολιτική or the general human knowledge of caring for human beings, though he seems to misunderstand the consequences of this fact. Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, p. 76, says that what is being divided is “the totality of the arts,” though at p. 77 he seems to narrow this to “all the arts concerned with the polis,” a more precise formulation. Some arts are not, in fact, concerned with the city, in particular the forms of knowledge that the gods have (cf. 271e⁶, 276d⁵-⁶) and which they use for the care of human beings in the age of Cronos.

¹⁰ Except in the trivial case where the thing divided has only two interdependent parts. Hence, as Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 76-77, sees, another reason for not resorting to bifurcatory diairesis is that such bifurcation would leave the structure of πολιτική (as opposed to βασιλική) unclear by isolating statesmanship while concealing “its form” (p. 77). I do not agree, however,
We can see this more clearly by thinking about the image the Stranger uses about a sacrificial animal. An animal body cannot be cut in “halves” that represent eidetic parts merely by looking at “symmetrical” differences. Most animals, for instance, are “bilaterally symmetric.” To cut along the axis that separates right from left (an obvious cut) would be to destroy the unity of the head and hence to miss it as an eidetic part of the body. But to cut along the non-symmetrical axis (the axis that separates up from down or front from back) would be unwarranted, for no particular distinction clearly distinguishes each part. Only functional cuts serve to point the eidetic unity of the parts, i.e., cuts κατὰ μέλη. Detail work is thus required when the thing to be divided is composed of interdependent eidetic parts (like an organism).  

7.1.2 The city as an animal with an organic unity

The Stranger thus proposes to divide the knowledge of caring for human beings κατὰ μέλη, by its natural “limbs,” as if it were a sacrificial victim, a ἱερεῖον. This knowledge, as I have pointed out, is πολιτική in the broadest sense of the term, just as

---

11 Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman, p. 139, by contrast, believes that the reason the Stranger abandons dichotomy is perplexingly unclear and demonstrates, once more, the incoherence of the Stranger’s positions. It seems to me that the Stranger has in fact pointed to a reasonable explanation by indicating the difference between arts that directly and indirectly contribute to the being of a thing and arts that do not. Only the later should be separated off by means of bifurcatory division, being independent of the art sought. Scodel rightly notes, however, that the Stranger, unlike Socrates in the Philebus, makes no particular attempt to justify his choice of the number of divisions (why seven rather than three or two, for example?); his procedure seems to contrast with that of Socrates in the Philebus.

12 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 76-77, for some thoughts on the connection between the order of the city and the divine order of the cosmos suggested by the use of the term ἱερεῖον.
the knowledge that had to be divided in order to reach ὑφαντική or weaving was ἰματιούργική in the broadest sense of the term. Nevertheless, the division that follows does not appear to be straightforwardly a division of forms of knowledge. The Stranger, instead, mentions first the possessions of the city (cf. 287e1-2, 288a3) and then the servants of the city (cf. 289c4); only the last “servants” of the city – rhetorician, judge, general and of course statesman – are explicitly singled out by the forms of knowledge they embody. This is not to say that the arts that produce possessions or that serve the city are never mentioned, but the Stranger chooses to divide the arts by looking first at the possessions of the city, then at the servants of the city, and only finally by looking at forms of knowledge that order the city. The reasons for this curious procedure illuminate the connection of these arts with statesmanship, and are therefore worth exploring.

As the Stranger notes at 289c4-d2, the possessions of the city are indirectly responsible for the polis (cf. συναίτιοι 289c9), and do not dispute with the king about the web itself. The arts that produce such possessions are only indirectly, rather than directly, responsible for the city because their contribution is always a thing that has a certain function, and which needs to be used by a different set of arts (those directly responsible for the city) in order to produce the city itself (or indeed in order to contribute to the care of human beings). The business of these arts is thus not the production of the

---

13 This is noted by Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, p. 143, who sees in it an attempt to hide the problems with the distinction between directly responsible and indirectly responsible arts.

14 For an example see 288b7, and see 289c8-9 for a reference to the artisans who produce these possessions.

15 One may think that the arts of nurture are an exception, since they include such arts as medicine (289a1-5). The doctor, for instance, directly cares for human beings; he does not merely produce things that are then used to care for them. Nevertheless the Stranger maintains that the arts of nurture in general
city itself (or even the direct care of human beings) but the production of the things that they are supposed to produce (and which can then be used to care for human beings), just as the business of the loom-maker is not the production of a cloak but of a loom, which is a self-standing thing that may or may not be used by the weaver to create a cloak.16

Furthermore, from the point of view of the arts directly responsible for the city, it does not really matter whether the thing they are using in the care of human beings (say, a sword) is produced by one or twenty arts or whether the arts that produce the things they use share any common characteristics other than the production of things that have a certain function, just as it does not matter to the weaver if one or twenty arts are behind the production of a loom or whether the arts that produce a loom are all theoretical or practical. To the arts directly responsible for the city (and indeed to the citizens) all that matters is that things of such and such function are produced.17 To put the point in somewhat more technical language, the principle of division, and thus of unity, of the arts indirectly responsible for the city is the function of the things they produce. Hence the Stranger is undoubtedly correct to focus on the possessions produced by these arts rather than on any characteristics of the arts themselves.

An important implication of this understanding of the arts that are only indirectly responsible for the city follows: these arts all produce things that may or may not give

---

16 To be sure, the point of making looms is provided by the existence of weavers; without weavers the activity of making looms would seem to be absurd. But the activity of the loom-maker is complete with the production of the loom; for the weaver, it does not matter whether the instrument was produced by art or nature.

17 See Cooper, "Plato's "Statesman" and Politics," p. 84, for the same point in somewhat less precise form.
rise to a city, things that are necessary, but not sufficient, for the existence of a city properly speaking. If we wish, we could say that these arts create society but not the polis, to use a modern distinction (more in section 7.3 below). To use a more Platonic metaphor, these arts are responsible for the “body” of the city (as the emphasis on the physical things they produce, as well as the names the Stranger gives them, indicate) rather than its soul. Let us now examine what these possessions are, and how the arts that produce them create society.

7.2 The limbs of the city: the arts indirectly responsible for the city.

The Stranger now proceeds to describe seven possessions of the city (287c7-289a5), and to distinguish the arts that produce them from statesmanship. The possessions are discussed in the following order: tools, vessels, supports, defenses, playthings, raw materials, and nurture. In his summary afterwards, however, the Stranger suggests that the proper order of the possessions of the city is raw materials, tools, vessels, supports, defenses, playthings, and nurture (289b7). We must thus consider 1) what is the reason tools are discussed first, 2) what is the proper order of the possessions of the city, and 3) what does this order tell us about statesmanship.

The reason the Stranger starts the discussion by considering tools is because the arts of toolmaking are paradigmatic for all arts that produce things that are then used in the process of making something else, as we saw during the discussion of weaving; as the

18 For this, see Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," pp. 212-13. The Stranger uses names for the possessions of the city that recall (and in some cases are identical to) the names that Timaeus uses to describe the various parts of the human body.
Stranger suggests, anything that can be used in this way can be thought of as an ὑγαγόνιον, a tool (287d7-e1), including things we do not normally think of as tools. But these are the arts that are only indirectly, rather than directly, responsible for bringing about the city (and are thus indirectly responsible for the care of human beings), the συνατησίαι. The toolmaking arts are the paradigmatic case of such arts, but (in contrast to the situation in the case of weaving), they are not the only ones.19

By contrast, when the Stranger summarizes the possessions of the city, he no longer needs to start with that possession whose role in the bringing into being of the city (and thus for the care of human beings) is paradigmatic for all the rest. He can now order them according to the order of generation of the city, starting with raw materials, the indispensable possession that needs to be produced first (it is the πρωτογενὴς κτήμα, as the Stranger notes, 288e5-6) if all the other possessions are to do their work, and continuing with tools, vessels, supports, defenses, playthings, and nurture or nurslings.20 Raw materials must be procured first, worked over by means of tools, and the products of that work put into appropriate vessels; these things must then be protected against natural and human disorder, and whatever time is left after this may be dedicated to playfulness. The human beings who do all these things are in turn preserved bodily by the arts of

19 Note that the Stranger does not refer here merely to the tools of the statesman, in contrast to his way of proceeding when speaking about tools in the context of weaving. “Tools” here mean any physical thing that any other art in the city needs to do its own work (and thus, presumably, nothing that the statesman would directly use, since his own art is theoretical rather than practical).

20 It is not entirely clear why the πρωτογενὴς εἶδος was named sixth in the original series rather than second or third, though its position now as first in the series makes much more sense.
nurture. The network of these seven sorts of arts thus produce human beings considered as θήματα, nurslings, as the Stranger says (289b2).  

This process thus also describes the increasing growth of pre-political society. Tools extend the range of productive capacities of the human body; vessels free human beings from the need for immediate consumption; vehicles make trade and travel possible; defenses preserve human works against regular and accidental natural and human violence; playthings extend the imaginative horizon of human beings; and of course the arts of nurture preserve and reproduce the beings who do all of these things. Without these arts, human life would be quite restricted in its physical and imaginative range, and the polis – political life – could not emerge at all.  

From this perspective, the arts that are only indirectly responsible for the city (and thus for the care of human beings) appear in a continuum from those whose work is not at all the work of βασιλική, namely, the arts that produce raw materials, tools, and vessels, to those whose work is more the work of other arts than of πολιτική, namely seats, defenses, and the arts of nurture. The clearest break in this series occurs with the

---

21 See Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, p. 84, on the citizens as θήματα. Voegelin, *Order and History*, p. III.143, has a much more negative take on the characterization of the citizens as θήμα, which he takes to mean beasts; without statesmanship and the arts that are directly responsible for the polis, the souls of the citizens, he implies, are “lost.” But it is not entirely clear that the city at this point in its development – as pure society – is really meant to be devalued any more than the famous “city of pigs” in the Republic is meant to be bad.

22 A small dramatization of this point is given by the Athenian Stranger at Laws 678c5ff. Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," pp. 214-15, notes the connection between the seven possessions of the city and the seven divisions of the subject-matter of statesmanship in the first genealogy of the statesman: the seven arts supply whatever deficiencies these divisions identified (so, e.g., defenses supply the lack of horns or other bodily features of the sort).

23 Each of the (kinds of) arts that produces the possessions of the city (except for the arts that produce playthings) is separated from statesmanship with a phrase expressing the lack of involvement of πολιτική (in the narrow sense of the word) or βασιλική in their work: thus, raw materials are said to be “in no wise” (the categorical οὐδέμιως) the province of βασιλική (288e7), tools are separated from
fourth possession (the middle one in the order of generation), where the Stranger uses a comparative rather than a straightforward denial to separate the arts of making supports from statesmanship. The problem here has to do with the fact that supports always become some kind of seat (288a6), and seats, as the Stranger says, can be both τίμιον and ἄτιμον, honorable and dishonorable. This sudden irruption of honor means that the support-making arts are not entirely exempt from the need for political knowledge in order to achieve their work well; the throne of the king, we might say, cannot be made by the carpenter entirely independently of the instructions of the king, for the king is a direct user of his productions rather than an indirect one.

The point can be more generally stated. The first three kinds of arts produce physical things which are used by other arts for making or preserving other physical things. The standards they must meet in their work – the “due measure” of this work – are thus set by the arts that use their products, not by statesmanship, at least not in the first instance (cf. Euthydemus 288e-289c): the toolmaker determines how much iron (produced by the miner) is needed to create the hammers he produces, as well as the

statesmanship with the decisive “not at all” οὐδὲν ποιοῦ (287d4-5), vessels with the slightly less decisive οὐδὲν ἀτεχνῶς (288a1), vehicles with the even less decisive but still quite categorical οὐ πάνυ... ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ποιό (288a8-10), defenses with the softer πολλῷ μᾶλλον (288b6), playthings are not separated explicitly, and the forms of nurture are separated from statesmanship with the mild expression that it is “more correct,” ὑπόθεσις for the arts of nurture to deal with them than for statesmanship (289a5). Note also that in the first three cases the Stranger distinguishes the art in question from βασιλική, whereas in the last four (except for playthings, which is not distinguished) he distinguishes it from πολιτική, suggesting a closer connection between the last four arts and the entire process of making the polis, namely πολιτική by analogy with ἰματισμοῦργική.

24 Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 83, mistakenly says that the Stranger completely separates statesmanship from vessel-making, though he does note how statesmanship is incompletely separated from other arts in the series of arts that are only indirectly responsible from the polis. Though this mistake does not undermine Miller’s argument that the distinction between the first three and the last three arts of the series is that the first group produce “things for the sake of things” (p. 84) and the products of the second group “are for the sake of the producers themselves,” it does qualify it a bit, for the issue is not only how like statesmanship these arts are but to what extent statesmanship must regulate their activity as parts of πολιτική.
quality of that iron, not the statesman, and similarly it is the carpenter who determines what sort of hammer he requires (the “due measure” of a hammer), not the statesman.

The products of the last four kinds of arts, however, can be used directly by human beings for their own care (though the arts that produce them do not themselves directly care for human beings). But if political knowledge is the supervisory art that integrates all the partial forms of care for human beings into the genuine care of human beings, then it is clear that these last four kinds of arts may require the intervention of political knowledge in order to achieve their work properly or prevent it from interfering with the total care of human beings. Thus, just as the seat-making arts require the input of political knowledge proper in order to make seats that reflect the proper distribution of honor in the city, the arts of defense and nurture also require the contribution of political knowledge proper in order to produce the right sort of defenses for the city (e.g., those defenses that will not damage the moral character of the citizens, including the kind of houses that the carpenter may build) and the right sort of nurture for the citizens (e.g., that form of nurture that will not turn the citizens into immoderate and luxury-loving weaklings).

In this continuum, the arts of nurture mark the transition to the arts that are

25 The art of making seats or supports stands at the very middle, producing things that are used in both ways: both as things that are used in the production of other things and directly by human beings. This is a point nicely noted by Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman*, p. 84. Miller does not see, however, the way in which seats straddle both sides of this division: some are for the sake of things (as the columns in a house or the cart that carries grain), some are for the sake of people (as a seat at a theater).

26 We might of course argue that all the arts named by the Stranger have political implications and require political regulation, though this is not the Stranger’s point: the arts that produce raw materials or tools, for instance, are regulated only by the arts that use these raw materials or tools. The management of the extractive arts, for instance, has “environmental” consequences for the stability of the *polis*, and to that extent we might say that political knowledge should be involved in their regulation: they too impact indirectly the care of human beings even if they do their work well (i.e., even if they extract the materials the other arts require). Though the Stranger does not go in this direction, the fact that he mentions gold and silver first among raw materials (288d7) suggests that statesman must at least indirectly regulate these extractive activities. More generally, the myth provides grounds for extending the argument of the Stranger
directly responsible for the city (and thus for the care of human beings) in that they can be thought of as producing things that are then used to care for human beings directly (such as food) or as caring for human beings directly, if only in some incomplete way (as medicine does in caring for human bodies).

The case of the arts that make playthings, which are not explicitly separated from statesmanship (something that the Stranger does not forget to do in any other case, however obvious the fact may appear to the reader), is worth examining in some additional detail. These sorts of possessions (288c1-d1) are concerned with the κόσμος (περὶ τῶν κόσμων 288c1), a choice of words that recalls the myth (and thus the ordering activity of the god; cf. 273b6-7), as well as with the orderly ornamentation and painting (γραφικῆ 288c2; also means writing) of things in the city, and also the imitative arts, including music. These are all called “playthings” by the Stranger, because they are for the sake of play (παίδιας 288c10) rather than serious things. As we will eventually learn, however, “play” is one of the essential components of education (cf. 308d4), and as any reader of Plato knows, the imitative arts play a large role in any form of education towards a role for statesmanship in the regulation of extractive arts insofar as these disrupt the order of the whole, though such a role is clearly not envisioned by the Stranger or Plato.

27 A point noted by Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.120, and Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, p. 83. Benardete notes, appositely, that the Stranger has “thought proper to indulge in the childishness of a myth” to explain political science, and cites also Laws 804b3-c1, where the Athenian Stranger expresses doubts regarding the seriousness of politics; Miller Jr. points additionally to the diairetic jokes in the first genealogy of the statesman. Note also that παιδιά, play, enters into the process of education (308d4), as well as music and other forms of imitation and writing. These are all arts that are proper parts of statesmanship itself, as we shall later learn, and they all belong in this category. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note ad loc., argues that the arts meant here are only those meant to give pleasure only, rather than moral instruction, as the Stranger indeed suggests at 288c3; this would explain perhaps why these arts should be separated from statesmanship and yet why the Stranger does not explain their connection to the forms of music and the like that are actually used by statesmanship. Such an explanation would take them too far afield, and the Stranger is content to leave matters as they stand without introducing any premature complications. It is worth noting that young Socrates appears to sense that something is amiss here: he says that he “nearly” understands what the Stranger is saying (288d1; the implication being that something small escapes him).
The statesman must thus necessarily use such arts in order to accomplish his own proper task, which is eventually described as a form of education. Hence the arts that produce playthings cannot be properly distinguished from statesmanship at this point in the dialogue. Furthermore, since these are all mimetic arts, i.e., potentially sophistic arts, they cannot be distinguished fully from the arts of the statesman until sophistry has been separated from statesmanship, something which they have not done yet.

Finally, we must note that the arts of nurture (288e9-289a6), which produce the seventh possession of the city, and among which they had earlier mistakenly located the statesman, are said to produce not so much nurture for human beings (though they do that, too) but human beings as nurslings (θρέμμα). This curious choice of words emphasizes that the arts of nurture do not care for human beings as human beings as they do for their body, i.e., for human beings as animals. The task of caring for human beings as human beings belongs to the statesman. The nursling has to be taken by the statesman and transformed into a human being and citizen; naked society produces human beings as pigs, as in the age of Cronos and the first genealogy.

7.3 The articulation of society and the transition to the polis

These seven possessions thus articulate a self-regulating and “organic” productive process that preserves both the τέχναι and the products of the τέχναι within

28 Cf. Voegelin, Order and History p. III.143. Voegelin translates θρέμμα as “beast.”

29 “Organic,” that is, composed of ὀργανα, tools, the general category under which these seven possessions are arrayed (see above, section 7.2).
a society, though not yet within a *polis*. If there were no other arts, the perfection of these seven kinds of arts would take human beings to a life like that in the age of Cronos, content to pass the time telling stories and singing songs, and statesmanship would not be required. But as the Stranger sums up his division of the possessions of the city, he mentions, almost as an afterthought, that there are some possessions that they might have left behind, though they are not large, and can be forcibly harmonized with the rest (289b2-c2). Among these he cites currency, seals, and all sorts of stamps, which he says is a γένος that has no great kinship within itself, and that, he claims, can be forced to fit in part in the γένος of ornaments/order (κόσμον, which was earlier called the εἴδος of playthings; cf. 288c6), and in part in the γένος of tools.

Though the Stranger does not mention this, the art that produces money or currency is the art of “moneymaking,” whose work is conspicuously not excluded from the purview of statesmanship. The Stranger’s emphasis on the fact that only force keeps the possessions created by this art within the network of the seven arts that culminate in the production of human being as a creature – a θρέμμα, a being that has been nurtured – suggests that the introduction of currency as a possession of the city is responsible for the

---

30 Note the claim of *exhaustiveness* implicit here: all the arts that produce the possessions of the city (and thus that help the nurture of human beings) are contained among the seven kinds described. Any additional arts that help this process, therefore, can only add complexity to it, strengthening one or another aspect of it, but they cannot add any new dimensions.

31 The Stranger says that currency has no great σύννομον, no great common νόμος or law, within itself.

32 There is perhaps more to this double “fitting” of seals and currency into ὁργανόν and κόσμος than meets the eye. Benardete, "Eidos and Dieraesis in Plato's Statesman," p. 212, notes that seals are used by the Stranger to talk about εἴδη at the beginning of the Statesman (258c5; note also the repeated use of the uncommon term *idea* both there and here at 289b4) and in general by Plato in other dialogues. He further argues that money, as a universal means of exchange, and seals, as specific ways of labeling, serve together to model the εἴδος. Indeed, the very division into ὁργανόν and κόσμος seems to point to the arrangement of all the εἴδη in its teleological and non-teleological aspects, as Benardete suggests.
disruption of the self-contained order of pre-political society, an order that is restored only by the force of statesmanship. Today we might also say that the statesman needs to know “economics.”

The exact way in which money disrupts the order of the city, however, is left unmentioned by the Stranger; but it is clear that desire, and in particular the desire for material possessions, is at the root of the disruptive power of money. With it the city thus expands beyond the framework of the arts of nurture, all of which satisfy natural needs, into the realm of luxury. The city will not stay put, for the artisans will practice their respective arts alongside the universal art of moneymaking, i.e., the art concerned with the production of that peculiar possession, money ($\nu\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\sigma\mu\alpha$); it is thus necessarily expansionist unless limited by other means and (ultimately) regulated by statesmanship.

The Stranger also says that the possession of tame animals was separated off from statesmanship earlier; these arts were separated from statesmanship not as co-workers within the city but as caring for different beings. Their re-appearance now suggests that their purpose within the city is transformed: from the care of the animals over which they

---

33 The transformation hinted at here is similar to that described in the Republic from the so-called “city of pigs” to the sick or luxurious city, with the difference that the Stranger does not mention desire as the motor of this transformation, but merely hints at it. As the Stranger says at the end of this section, the craftsmen who produce the possessions of the city and are thus indirectly responsible for the web of the statesman, together with their works, have now been “spent” and separated from the praxis of πολιτική and βασιλική. The mention of “spending” (συνηλλαγομεν 289d1) suggests that the city proper only emerges when the possessions of society are spent in the ceaseless process of nurture, i.e., when expansion becomes necessary.

34 For this suggestion, see Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.121. The point implies that statesmanship is to be found to some extent among the arts concerned with money, as we should have expected given the fact that the Stranger failed to exclude statesmanship from the ἰδέα of νόμισμα.
are set up *simpliciter* to the care of these animals for the sake of the care of human beings.\(^3^5\)

The mention of the possession of tame animals, including the possible possession of human beings, provides a link to the first servants in the series of arts directly responsible for the newly expansionist *polis* (and thus for the care of “desiring” human beings), namely slaves (289c4f).\(^3^6\) Slaves, like tame animals, seem to be animate possessions; unlike animals, however, their status as *tame* animals, as well as their status as tools, is always in doubt.\(^3^7\)

Whatever the status of slaves may be, the expansion of society in space, time, and “spirit” requires a large workforce, since the artisan is no longer able to do by himself all the work he wants to do in order to generate money (hence slavery, or, in more modern times, unskilled wage labor); and this expansion of society, and its transformation into a *polis* properly speaking, requires all the further arts that directly contribute to the making of the statesman’s web (and thus to the care of human beings properly speaking).\(^3^8\) This is what we shall explore now.

---

\(^3^5\) See note 2.

\(^3^6\) Cf. Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 84-85.

\(^3^7\) It is perhaps to Plato’s credit that slaves are not classed simply as animate tools with the other tame animals. See also Skemp, *Plato's Statesman*, note 2, p. 184-85, who rightly cites *Laws* 777c1, a passage that indicates that slaves are not always “tame.”

\(^3^8\) See Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, p. 85.
7.4 The soul of the city: the arts directly responsible for the city

The Stranger “divines” that he will find those who dispute with the statesman over the web itself among slaves and the rest of the servants. Servants, like spinners and carders, are the αἰτιαί, the direct causes, of the web of politics (and thus of the care of human beings), even though the Stranger does not explicitly characterize them as such.

They are those who have the arts that are directly (though only partially) responsible for the making of the polis itself insofar as they perform an essential service, not insofar as they produce things.

---

39 It should be noted, however, that the Stranger does not say that the statesman is a kind of servant, the “servant of the people.” The implication is sometimes carelessly drawn that the statesman is a kind of servant. See Skemp, Plato's Statesman, p. 185-86, note 1, for an example.

40 See Cooper, "Plato's Statesman and Politics," p. 86, Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, p. 59; this point was disputed, unconvincingly, in the reply to Cooper by Phillip Mitsis, "Commentary on Cooper," in Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy, ed. John J. Cleary and Gary M. Gurtler (1997). Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 289c8-d1, argues, more subtly, that the introduction of a notion of “subordinates” makes the Stranger deviate from strict parallelism with the paradigm of the weaver, since some of the people that are now mentioned (slaves and merchants) should not be counted as direct causes of the city at all. This is because, according to Rowe, only those who are causes of the “ideal state” should be counted as such (he thinks this is due to the gulf between actual and ideal cities, which he does not see in the case of weaving, I believe wrongly), and he does not think that slaves and merchants can be said to be causes of the ideal state. This seems to me to be mistaken in that slaves and merchants are causes of the city as such (and thus directly care for human beings) for reasons that we shall soon discuss (just as twisting and carding are causes of the cloak and thus “care” for it even if the results of their work are used by an inexpert weaver), but Rowe (and, to a lesser extent, Mitsis) is right to see that the notion of “servants” or “subordinates” overlays the earlier distinction between συναιτιαί and αἰτιαί in the case of weaving. The αἰτιαί are now referred to as ἰππηρηςαί, i.e., the arts to come are causes of the city insofar as they are forms of service rather than of production or of tools. After all, all the συναιτιαί could just as well have been said to be tools for the arts that are now to be enumerated, as the Stranger implied at 281e1-5, 287d7ff; so the Stranger’s lack of mention of αἰτιαί should not be taken to mean that this category has simply been pushed aside.

41 One could say that the division between arts that are indirectly responsible and arts that are directly responsible for the city mirrors the Aristotelian distinction between ποιησις and πρᾶξις (though the Stranger does not make this distinction). While the first set of arts produce things in the narrow sense of the word, the second set does things. Note that the Stranger, in keeping with all of this, will now emphasize the agents rather than the products of the arts he speaks about, though it should be emphasized that in both cases the underlying division is of arts, not of things or people, as we stressed earlier (section 7.1). If this is so, then Rosen, Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics, p. 4, incorrectly argues that the distinction is not to be found in any form in Plato.
The first five among these arts, however, are merely responsible for the *polis*, not for the *rightly-ordered polis*. They are able to bring about a full-blown *polis* with the wrong sort of πολιτεία, but only statesmanship can produce the right order of the *polis*, its true πολιτεία, and thus the real web of politics. Only statesmanship, in other words, is capable of steering the work of these arts towards the true care of human beings. These arts can thus be partially compared to the soul of the city. With them, the *polis* comes alive, but not necessarily in a well-ordered way. Hence the Stranger’s emphasis on the practitioners of the arts rather than on the things produced or the forms of knowledge they have: they “animate” the *polis*, but do not provide it with mind yet.

It should be noted also that the first five (and perhaps eight) servant arts have no corresponding analogue in the paradigm of weaving, i.e., there is no part of weaving, and in particular no part of the αἰτία of weaving, that does something akin to what these first five servant arts do.42 Their work is neither preparatory, nor contrary, nor the same, as the work of statesmanship (see chapter 6, section 6.3.5), but is merely *necessary* for it. In this respect these arts are closer to the συναίτια, to the arts only indirectly responsible for the *polis*, than to the arts *directly* responsible for the web of politics. This does not mean that they are not directly responsible for the *polis*, only that they are not directly responsible for the right order of the city or the πολιτεία. Their work orders human life in other ways, however, as we shall see.

42 To that extent, perhaps, Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*, note to 289c8-d1, is right to think that the category of αἰτία has been abandoned in favor of the broader category of “servants;” but if this is so, even generalship, rhetoric, and judging fail to be real αἰτία of the *polis*, as they also fail to have analogues in the paradigm of weaving, a conclusion that Rowe does not draw. See also note 40.
7.4.1 Slaves

Slaves are first among the servants, i.e., among those directly, rather than indirectly responsible for the polis. Their mention in first place parallels also the mention of tools in first place in the earlier series of arts concerned with the production of possessions, since slaves are pre-eminently living tools, as Aristotle later explicitly remarked (Politics 1253b28ff). Slaves point doubly to the expansionist roots of the city: on the one hand, as booty captured in war or traded in international markets; on the other, as pure labor force, necessary only when the individual artisan is unable to meet the demand for his products. As labor force, furthermore, it should be noted that what is at stake in this division is not so much the slave’s legal status, but his being a tool (either permanently or temporarily) to somebody’s purpose.

The introduction of slaves, however, poses a question. What is the art associated with the slave? Three candidates present themselves. If the slave is considered only as a possession, as the Stranger seems to imply at 289b7-8, then the art in question would be the art that provided slaves to the city, i.e., the art of the slave-trader. But the slave-trader is a kind of merchant, and merchants will be named later (289e4ff); and slaves are not considered mere possessions but explicitly placed among the servants of the city. If the slave is instead considered as a kind of herd-animal who must be tamed and properly

---

43 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 84-85, for some elaboration of this point; but see also Skemp, Plato's Statesman, note 2, p. 184, who notes that the Stranger does not classify slaves as living tools.

44 To that extent free wage labor, which is very much a tool of the artisan (or the corporation that now stands in for the artisan), fits this category nearly as well, as the Stranger implies at 290a4-5.
managed, as the Stranger seems to also imply at 289b7-8.\textsuperscript{45} then the art in question would be the art of the δεσπότης, the slave master, an art that was earlier identified with statesmanship itself (259b7-c4), though this identification was later implicitly called into question with the distinction of the statesman from the tyrant as the ruler of willing subjects (see chapter 6, section 6.1.3). It is, however, hard to believe that this is the art in question, given the Stranger’s emphasis on a continuum of autonomy among the servants of the city.\textsuperscript{46} Slaves themselves, not slave-masters, occupy the lowest rung in this continuum, as the Stranger indicates (289d11-e2).

The third alternative is that the art of the slave is simply the art of all the other artisans that produce the possessions of the city. Insofar as the slave is the tool of the artisan he must necessarily have the art of the artisan or at least a part of this art.\textsuperscript{47} There is thus no particular art of the slave; all arts can belong to the slave, or rather, anyone can become a slave insofar as he allows his art to be used or is forced to use it \textit{only} for the purposes of another human being.

We can put the same point in other words by saying that slavery recapitulates all the arts productive of the possessions of the city as tools for the production of money. The slave is used by the artisan only when he cannot meet demand for his product by himself, or desires to free himself from the toil required for mutually beneficial exchange

\textsuperscript{45} See also \textit{Laws} 777c1.

\textsuperscript{46} See Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note to 289d6.

\textsuperscript{47} Note that the more extensive the division of labor is, the smaller the knowledge necessary for any part of the artisanal/technical process, and thus the more likely that any such part of the work can be accomplished by slaves or free wage laborers. Indeed, this is the reason why the labor of slaves, i.e., of those who are, either temporarily or permanently, tools of others, can in some circumstances be replaced by the labor of machines (e.g., robots), who embody in compact form some particular quantum of knowledge for the production of something, a quantum so small that it can be programmed into them using the primitive techniques of computer science today.
with others; but these conditions are met only when there is a market, and a desire for money. The slave is thus the tool of the moneymaker, and insofar as one can speak of an art of the slave it is to make himself into a tool to further this purpose.

This is just another way of saying that slaves, or at least chattel slaves (those who are bought and are thus possessed in every way) are in no way self-directed, but stand at the opposite extreme of the chain of command or continuum of servants at the other extreme of which stands the king (289d11-e2). Slaves can in no way dispute with the king, since their usual activity and experience is the complete opposite of that of the king (289d7-9): they are commanded, he commands.

This chain of command or continuum of servants presents, as we shall see, progressively stronger competitors for statesmanship, i.e., progressively more commanding agents: the merchant, the administrator of city affairs (whose association with heraldry, 290b2, marks him as the intermediate step between slave and king), the priest and guardian of sacred things (who hold sway over these, so long as his arts are sound and the city relatively healthy), the false ruler (who in actual cities rules over all of the previous artisans), the true rhetorician, the true general, and finally the true judge, the most commanding rival to the statesman. Each of these servants – and hence each of these arts – are progressively more self-directing, but only statesmanship is fully so.50

48 That this is what is at stake can also be seen from the reference to heraldry later on (290b1). Pure slaves are neither self-commanding nor even merely commanding (like heralds); they receive commands only, but never transmit them.


50 This continuum could also be seen as a series of progressively more theoretical arts, ranging from the purely practical (that is, bodily) art of the slave to the purely theoretical art of the statesman, though this is not the dimension of the continuum the Stranger chooses to emphasize.
In a sense, therefore, all of these arts and people have been separated off from the statesman before, when the Stranger placed statesmanship among the self-directed arts and separated it from the merely translating arts (260c7-e9). Their separation from statesmanship at this point is thus a second separation. But we would have been unable to see this in the abstract distinction between merely translating and self-commanding arts, since almost every art appears to be self-directing in its own domain. It is only when these arts are seen within the context of the city – i.e., as parts of πολιτική, arts directly responsible for bringing about the polis and thus for the care of human beings – that we can see that their self-commanding character within their own domains is qualified by their subordination to the complete task of caring for human beings in the city under the supervision of the statesman.

The continuum of servants is also “genetic,” just as the sequence of the possessions of the city was, for it gives us a picture of the arts required for society to expand into a polis properly speaking. The expansion of society (and its transformation into a full-fledged polis) first requires a labor force ready to be used as tools. The purchase of such a labor force, as well as the disposal of the surplus generated by the expanded activity of the craftsmen in pursuit of ever greater wealth, requires in turn merchants and retailers. The emergence of a market further demands a number of regulators (a state, in modern parlance). The stability of this market-state mixture would then demand what later commentators called a civic religion, and ultimately some sort of political authority, however devoid of true knowledge of rule. The preservation and
perfection of this structure in turn requires the true arts of rhetoric, judgment, and
generalship, which are necessarily crowned by true statesmanship.\textsuperscript{51}

It should be emphasized that the \textit{incompleteness} of this continuum of servants
does not preclude the emergence of the \textit{polis}, only its perfection and full preservation. In
fact, the \textit{polis} is essentially complete as a self-regulating structure of nurture with the
emergence of false rulers or sophists, who also often pretend to be great generals and
proper rhetoricians. We shall examine this issue in more detail later (see sections 7.4.5
and chapter 8 below for more detail), but it is nevertheless worth keeping in mind.

7.4.2 Merchants and free wage laborers

In accordance with the principle of increasing self-directedness, the Stranger now
(289e4-290a7) introduces “merchants” as the next item in the series. Merchants are those
among free human beings who \textit{willingly} (rather than unwillingly, as slaves do) put
themselves into the service\textsuperscript{52} of all the things that were recently described, i.e., all the arts
of nurture; the Stranger specifically cites farming among these (289e5). This service
primarily involves the transportation and exchange of these goods by land and water,
both within and outside the \textit{polis}. They are thus associated with the storage and transport
of all of these goods, connecting the use of vessels and (more importantly) vehicles to the
arts of nurture. Just as slaves are associated with tools (see above, section 7.4.1), the

\textsuperscript{51} See Miller Jr., \textit{The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman}, p. 85, though Miller stops at the fourth
level, i.e., that of priests.

\textsuperscript{52} \`α\'υτο\'υς τά\'ττωσι 289e5; they are self-commanding to some degree, i.e., insofar as they do
this voluntarily, but not to a great degree.
first in the series of the possessions of society, the merchants are associated with the
second and third in the series of the possessions of society.

Merchants thus play a crucial role in regulating the temporal and spatial expansion of the city by disposing of its surplus and bringing in needed goods: as the Stranger says, they “transport” and “equalize” (289e7) the works of all the other τέχναι, i.e., they use money so that quantities of one possession that are in surplus can be easily exchanged for quantities of other possessions required by the city. They are responsible, if one may say so, for the necessary permeability of the web of the statesman, insofar as they sustain a self-regulating market in which the polis is necessarily embedded and which puts it in contact with the external world, breaking its impossible isolation as the unit of nurture.\(^{53}\) (Without merchants we might say that the web of the statesman would be impermeable rather than permeable, keeping out all “flows” – cf. 280d1).

Merchants are also associated with money, the paradigmatic example of an item that could not be easily fitted into the seven possessions of the city (289b2-7): they exchange money for some of the goods of the other arts, and sometimes they engage in purely financial transactions, exchanging money for money. The merchant is the moneymaker par excellence, and his pursuit of this will necessitate a further layer of regulation, a new class of people to prevent merchants and people like them from getting out of hand. The richest merchants, in particular – the ἐμπορευτικοί, the wholesale

\(^{53}\) The regulation of this permeability is shown by the Athenian Stranger to be a part of the task of the statesman in book XII of the Laws, though the Eleatic Stranger is silent on the subject, probably for pedagogical reasons.
traders and bankers – will want to dispute with the statesman for pre-eminence in the city, as young Socrates suggests, somewhat uncertainly (290a3).\(^{54}\)

The Stranger retorts that people who are always most ready to hire themselves out for wages and as \(\theta\eta \tau \alpha \varsigma\) (290a4) to anybody could hardly pretend to kingship; they are not self-directed enough for this. This is a rather cutting remark: surely the rich merchants who are the subject of it do not see themselves as mere hired hands, but as the ones doing the hiring, and not as lowly \(\theta\eta \tau \alpha \varsigma\), members of the lowest class in Athens, but as lordly human beings, members of the highest class.\(^{55}\) The Stranger mocks their pretensions to statesmanship by pointing out that, insofar as their work involves, however willingly, service to another in exchange for money, they are no better than hired human beings; they too make themselves into the tool of another. Only their legal freedom, like that of the free laborer, prevents them from sinking to the level of the \(\theta\eta \varsigma\), the serf or slave.

Despite the Stranger’s sarcasm, however, the merchant is not merely the tool of the artisan; as we have seen, his art, pursued for the sake of money, performs a genuine service, namely the transport and equalization of the goods produced by the nurturing arts. The question is whether this represents a genuine function of his art or a by-product of his pursuit of money, as the Stranger seems to imply. Whatever the case, it cannot be said that the merchant, unlike the slave (or the free wage laborer, at least \(qua\) laborer) is merely the instrument of the artisan; by disposing of the surplus produced by the artisan,

\(^{54}\) Accepting Robinson’s emendation \(\tau\iota \nu \varepsilon \varsigma\) for the manuscript’s \(\tau\iota \varsigma\). See Rowe, \textit{Plato: Statesman}, note ad loc. Even without this emendation, the meaning remains the same, though it requires some parsing; see Skemp, \textit{Plato’s Statesman}, note 1, pp. 186-87.

\(^{55}\) A \(\theta\eta \varsigma\) is a kind of serf in Homer; in Athens it meant a member of the last class – the poorest – in the Solonian constitution (cf. LSJ \textit{s.v.}), which counted four classes.
on the contrary, he does something that the artisan cannot do by himself even with the assistance of merely human tools (slaves). There is a distinct knowledge of the merchant as there was not a distinct knowledge of the slave or the wage laborer (whose knowledge was merely the knowledge of the artisan himself or a part of it), and hence they deserve a distinct place in the hierarchy of arts of the city, though necessarily a low one. They too care for human beings.

7.4.3 Minor officials

The next class of people described by the Stranger (290b1-6) can be characterized as minor administrative officials (“state bureaucrats,” we might say, anachronistically), whose emergence was already hinted at in the need to regulate the expansionist market created by merchants. The Stranger, as we have already noted, classes them as a “heraldic” γένος, in other words translating but not self-commanding (cf. 260d7-9), unlike the statesman, as young Socrates strongly confirms.

It is interesting to note young Socrates’ confidence that these people are not statesmen in this case, unlike in the case of merchants, where he had shown himself dubious about whether some merchants did perhaps raise a real claim to statesmanship. He is confident about this despite the fact that the Stranger uses several terms that are rather favorable to state bureaucrats and that seem to support their claims to

---

statesmanship: they are σοφοί, wise, concerning letters (i.e., law), and πάνδεινοι, extremely clever, in toiling over matters concerning the ἀρχάς, the ruling offices of the city.57

Young Socrates’ differing reactions thus seem to be a reflection of the fact that rich men, in Athens as well as in many other places, often did rule or at least made very powerful, hard to ignore claims to rule, whereas minor officials of the πολις, embedded within a clear hierarchy, could hardly claim to rule, even if they did so in secret. This suggests that Plato (through his depiction of young Socrates’ reactions) would thus be hinting that the true hierarchical order between these two classes of people has been reversed in most cities. In modern terms, the state should rule the market, not vice-versa, but the reverse is what happens for the most part: moneymakers hold the highest offices or at least direct the operation of the state for the benefit of their pursuit of money.58

Indeed, the Stranger himself seems to betray a hint of this in his response to young Socrates’ confident separation of minor officials from any claim to statesmanship (290b7-9). There, he says somewhat wistfully that he did not think that he had merely had a dream-vision when he said that those who most completely dispute with πολιτική

57 Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 289b1-3, thinks there is some irony in σοφοί and πάνδεινοι, and that the Stranger is being a bit insulting in comparing these functionaries to heralds. I am not so sure. There is clearly irony in describing these people as σοφοί, but Rowe goes too far in thinking that there is practically nothing valuable in their work, as if the existence of the polis did not require competent civil servants. His further point – that perhaps some such functionaries “claimed to play ... more than a subordinate role” in the polis is unconvincing, given young Socrates reaction; Rowe only provides a (not very persuasive) citation from Isocrates as evidence. Rowe does make the interesting point that the description suggests that these people acquire their skills by repetition, but why such repetition would be in opposition to “talent” and “initiative” is not entirely clear to me, as Rowe also claims. Repetition can, to be sure, be in opposition to talent and initiative, but it need not always be; all technical knowledge is after all acquired by practice and imitation, and this involves some repetition.

58 This happens, of course, in both “communist” and “capitalist” regimes. The point is not about institutional form but about the rule of particular kinds of people: those whose knowledge concerns principally how to make money by engaging in “market” exchanges, and those whose knowledge concerns principally the law (letters) and administration (ἀρχαί).
were to be found among the “servants,” despite the oddity of searching for them there. People within the *polis*, he seems to suggest, *should* perhaps raise their claim to statesmanship against the merchants a little more insistently than they have actually done thus far; after all, their knowledge, when properly nurtured, renders them σοφοί about *some* things.

This is not to say that they should take *over* the task of the merchants, much less that they should claim to be statesmen; that is knowledge they do not have. Their knowledge is of law and administration – which sets *limits to*, but does not itself engage in market exchange. They are hardly suited for the task of trading (and thus meeting the needs of the city). The knowledge necessary for rule lies beyond the confines of the routinized operations of the state “machinery,” as we put it today, and this knowledge has little to do with the regulation of commercial transactions or the efficient administration of government services.  

7.4.4 Priests and diviners

The next rung in the hierarchy of the city introduced by the Stranger, priests and diviners (290c4-291a3), has once again a greater *theoretical* level of self-directedness than the earlier arts. This greater self-directedness comes from the fact that their apparent

---

59 This, of course, is the Weberian understanding of the “state,” not Plato’s, though I am claiming that this understanding can be based on the Stranger’s discussion of minor officials. For the Weberian understanding of bureaucracy and the state, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. Guenther Roth and Klaus Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), Part I, Chapter I, sections 12-17, as well as Part II, Chapter IX. See also Davis, "The Statesman as a Political Dialogue," pp. 328-31.
superiors are not human beings but gods. Priests and diviners, at least insofar as they are true priests and diviners, have a form of knowledge that allows them to act as intermediaries between human beings and gods, relaying our prayers and gifts to them and declaring what is lawful, νόμιμον (290c8), for us according to the gods. Their ability to declare what is lawful especially makes them rivals to the statesman. The Stranger thus says that they are thus finally on the track of the king, as he finds (startlingly) that priests and diviners are full of φρόνησις, arrogance (with a nod, however, to φρόνησις; this is arrogance that styles itself φρόνησις) and have an inflated opinion of their own importance, a δόξα σεμνή that makes them “sacred” in their own eyes (cf. the inflated self-opinion of cranes and human beings, 263d7) due to the magnitude of their undertakings.

The adjective apparent, however, has to be stressed: as the Stranger’s comments indicate in an ironic way, in a world that the gods have left to its own devices (as the myth implies), priests and diviners can hardly be translators of their specific commands, and hence can hardly be said to have knowledge (cf. 290c5) of such matters. In fact, it seems clear that in such a world there cannot be true priests and diviners: to know the divine order of things is in this age the task of statesman or philosopher, not priest or diviner. At any rate, priests and diviners were no longer much esteemed in Athens, despite the fact that the king-archon was supposed to perform the greatest sacrifices

60 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.122: priests and diviners are the only kinds of servants that the city does not “hire or fire at its discretion.”

61 Note also the Stranger’s use of νομίζονται (290c5), “are considered” when speaking of how the diviners are considered ἔρμηνευται. Its echo of νόμος suggests that diviners are not merely considered the interpreters of the god but that this interpretive task consists in the explication of the νόμος of the gods to human beings.
The king archon, of course, will preside over the trial of Socrates; Socrates had in fact gone to him the previous day to respond to the charge lodged to Anytus and Meletus (Theaetetus 210d, Euthyphro 2a). But he has no real authority in the city; those who do will pervert its justice regardless of anything the king Archon does or fails to do.

The problem is not restricted to Athenian society, however. The Stranger gives a backhanded compliment to Egypt in this respect too, saying (290d9-e3) that there it is not possible for kings to rule without ἱεροτική, the art of the priest, and that even people who have forced their way into becoming kings later must necessarily be inducted into the γένος of priests. At first sight, one might think that this anecdote shows the high esteem in which priests are held in Egypt; but in fact the story shows that the priesthood in Egypt has simply become the tool of usurpers, a caste of hypocrites who are not above legitimizing violence.

The Stranger’s attack on priests and diviners, already quite vicious, is about to get worse. Unusually, he does not directly say whether statesmanship is to be found among priests and diviners. Instead, he classes them with a new “crowd” (ὥξλον 291a3, a fairly pejorative word) that has only now emerged after they have separated statesmanship from all the others. This new crowd they must examine together, though it will turn out to contain all false rulers, the “greatest sophists” (291c3). The claim is a bit startling, since it means that priests are simply false rulers, in Egypt as in Athens, and belies the Stranger’s previous attribution of real knowledge to them (cf. 290c9). This assertion borders on impiety, the very thing that Socrates was accused of, though it is put forward so

---

62 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 85-86.
63 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 85f.
inconspicuous a manner, and apparently dropped so quickly, that it is very easy to miss;
yet the implications seem clear. The Stranger seems to be saying that the situation in
regards to priests and diviners is about the same as that in regards to true statesmen; very
few have real knowledge, and most of them are quacks who not only lack true knowledge
of rule, but fail to have even the proper knowledge of the will of the gods.

7.4.5 False rulers and the completion of the city

At any rate, the “crowd” the Stranger spies is not immediately identified by him:
he claims it is quite strange, or out of place (291a6). The shapes (ιδέας 291b3) of the
“crowd,” however, are not stable: members of this γένος exchange their look and power
rather quickly with each other. Someone might appear to be a ferocious lion, or a
harmless, drunken silenus, or even a wise Chiron-like figure. This instability appears to
jog the Stranger’s memory (291b7-c4): they are a chorus concerned with the affairs – the
πράγματα – of the polis. These are people who consider themselves rulers in the city,
their self-directedness for the most part unchallenged except by other members of the
same chorus. But since, as the Stranger goes on to make clear, they are not the true rulers
of the city, given that they do not have the requisite knowledge, they are the greatest
enchanters among the sophists and the most experienced in this τέχνη (that of the
sophist, i.e., σοφιστική).

The Stranger’s claim that these people are the “greatest sophists” has to be taken
quite literally, even though such people do not at first glance seem to be the same as those
sophists the Stranger and Theaetetus had discussed earlier. As the Stranger says, it is only
“out of ignorance” that this crowd appears strange, i.e., does not look like the sophists they discussed earlier. This ignorance, of course, can hardly be the Stranger’s own, despite his claim that it is; it is young Socrates’ ignorance (and ours) that is at stake here, which the Stranger is dramatizing for us. In our ignorance, these people appear to us to be the rulers of cities, statesmen, generals and rhetoricians, judges and priests rather than the sophists described in the *Sophist*.

When they are shown to us in their true colors, however, they appear monstrous and “out of place” in the most literal sense of the word: they should not be in the position in which they are. Their preliminary exposure as lions, centaurs, satyrs, and other beasts thus prepares young Socrates for the argument to come; they are yet to be fully exposed as sophists, i.e., as imitators of wisdom.\(^64\) Before we move on to consider how they are separated from the statesman in a long but essential digression from the series of the “service” arts, it is worth stopping for a moment and considering the implications of what the Stranger has just said.

If indeed the members of this crowd are the greatest of sophists, then they must have the art described in the *Sophist* as the art of the sophist, namely, the art of creating images of wisdom (without thereby being wise). According to the Stranger (unlike, say, Socrates), this is a *real* art – a τέχνη, as Theaetetus and the Stranger agreed near the beginning of the *Sophist* (221d5) – of producing distorted images of wisdom. These images of wisdom, we shall learn, are images of the just and unjust, the good and the bad, and the noble and the shameful, i.e., the things that only the true statesman would really know. But without such images, and in the absence of the statesman, the city could not  

\(^64\) See Gill, "Rethinking Constitutionalism in *Statesman* 291-303," p. 292, for more on the Stranger’s pedagogical device of presenting something to young Socrates in unfamiliar ways.
exist. It needs an image of wisdom to live by; and if this is so, then these greatest of
sophists, however harmful to the city from the point of view of the true statesman, are
nevertheless necessary to its naked existence in his absence. Yet the naked existence of
the city is essential to the preservation of human beings, as the myth shows, for the city is
nothing but the gathering of the arts of the care of human beings. It is better for cloaks to
be woven by an inexpert (“pretend”) weaver out of the work of the expert carder and
spinner than for cloaks not to exist at all and human beings to go uncovered in the
harshness of winter.

The entrance of the false rulers thus completes the “normal” city – the city
without the true statesman. Such a city is not good – it does not have the true πολιτεία –
but it is a complete whole, able to subsist for long periods of time, merely on the strength
of its images of wisdom, just as the myth predicted and as the Stranger will eventually
say (see chapter 8, section 8.4; cf. also 302a3-6). This is something that should be
emphasized, as it goes counter to our own intuitions about the necessity of statesmanship.
The city can subsist without true statesmen because what we normally consider to be
good, law-abiding rulers do not – and this has to be taken quite literally – have the art of
the statesman, but they do have the art of creating sufficient images of wisdom. The best
of such rulers – the law-abiding monarch – in fact turns out to have the wisdom of
knowing that he does not know, i.e., the wisdom of a Socrates. Such wisdom is – again,
this should be emphasized – not the true wisdom of the statesman (namely, the
knowledge of the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, the noble and the shameful, as
we shall see) but merely an image of such knowledge, as Socrates himself will imply
soon enough in his defense before the Athenians (cf. Apology 23a5-b4). The false rulers
thus *do* have a role to play in the direct care of human beings: without them, and in the absence of the statesman, the city would simply not exist, and neither would human beings be able to care for themselves as best as they could.65

---

65 Though not all to the same degree, as we shall see. *Pace* Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 86ff, these impostors thus need not be ultimately excluded from the division of the arts.
CHAPTER 8

THE RULE OF LAW

The Stranger’s argument to separate the true statesman from the false rulers turns out to be far more complicated than expected. Some false rulers take refuge in the majesty of the law, and the law must therefore be shown to be inferior to the rule of knowledge, an arduous endeavor. The rulers without knowledge and law, by contrast, are easily dismissed once the law has been shown to be inferior to knowledge.

In this somewhat involved argument, the law eventually emerges as an important form of order in the city – a partial order, to be sure, in comparison to the order that the statesman creates, but a real form of order nevertheless, and certainly better than the order imposed by people who rule without knowledge or law. In particular, the law emerges as the closest substitute for knowledge in the absence of the statesman, an absence that is shown to be, in the long run, inevitable.

There are three basic reasons for the inevitability of the absence of the statesman. All three reasons lead to the conclusion that the rule of the sophists, and in particular of the ruler under law as a specific image of wisdom, is unfortunately indispensable to the existence of the city and thus to the care of human beings, however imperfectly.
First (section 8.1), we shall see that statesmanship is a scarce form of knowledge, a scarcity that is both absolute (statesmanship is intrinsically hard to learn, and hence there are few people, if any, who possess it) and relative (complete political knowledge is nearly inexistent, though partial knowledge may be somewhat less scarce). This implies that the “usual” regimes cannot be genuine forms of order, and that the hope of transforming them into “true” regimes by having a true statesman come to rule over them is usually vain: there are not enough of them, and there is no reliable way of producing them “from scratch” either, as we shall also learn.

Second (section 8.2), the argument on the rule of law shows that the knowledge of the statesman must always be embodied in an individual; there can be no impersonal substitute for it. But this implies that the true statesman must always be partially absent from the city he rules (i.e., absent from parts of the city) even when he is present in it, since he cannot be everywhere in it. Yet the scope of his responsibilities as the supervising form of knowledge of all the arts means that his presence is required everywhere. But this implies that law (which is inferior to knowledge, a mere image of wisdom) is always indispensable to the existence of the city and thus to the care of human beings.

Third (section 8.3), we shall see that the huge scope of the responsibilities of the knowledge of the statesman, its claim to uniqueness (as the only form of knowledge that cannot be used for ill), and the fact that successful imitators of it (sophists) always exist, make it impossible for citizens to allow those who claim such knowledge to operate without restrictions in the form of law; but law, as we have already mentioned, is the death of such knowledge. This implies that statesmanship often goes unused even when
the statesman is actually present in the city: it is (nearly) always socially absent due to the inability of citizens to identify those who truly have such knowledge and then to trust them with their care even if they could be sure of correctly identifying them.

By contrast, the art of imitating the wisdom of the statesman is nearly always present in the city in the person of the sophist. Such an art, it goes without saying, can never fully substitute for the wisdom of the statesman, just as an ignorant captain could never fully substitute for a captain with real knowledge of navigation, even if all the other sailors on the ship had genuine knowledge of various aspects of sailing (as is the case in the city thus far). Yet among these false rulers, we shall see, there are various degrees of badness: those who rule according to the traces of knowledge in the law, without ignorantly attempting to change it, are better (or rather “less bad”) rulers in the absence of the true statesman than those who rule according to their own whim and private interest. The former have in the best of circumstances something approaching the Socratic knowledge of ignorance. I will argue (section 15.4) that, in a sense, these rulers under law represent the best that philosophy can offer to politics, so long as philosophy is not the complete knowledge of good and bad, just and unjust, noble and shameful, but merely the search for wisdom, i.e., so long as philosophy is not identical with statesmanship. Such rulers lack only the freedom of inquiry that philosophy must always have.

Indeed, I will argue that this section of the dialogue completes the exhibition of philosophy as “in-between” sophistry and statesmanship. As a form of rule in the city, philosophy must always look like sophistry in comparison to the true knowledge of the statesman; in comparison with even the best of the sophist-rulers, however, the philosopher looks incomparably better, for he retains a freedom of inquiry that even the
best of the law-abiding rulers do not have. The philosopher-king is thus detached from
the statesman in the Stranger’s implicit defense of Socratic politics, a defense which the
er elder Socrates will soon echo, in different terms, in the *Apology*.¹ Like Socrates, and like
the law-abiding rulers, the philosopher (not the statesman) respects the law, even at the
risk of his life, because he knows that he does not know better and yet, like Socrates, and
unlike the law-abiding regimes, the philosopher refuses to let go of the freedom of
inquiry that might yet yield knowledge of the good and the bad, the just and the unjust,
the noble and the shameful (*Apology* 37e3-38a7; cf. *Statesman* 299b3ff). The philosopher
is not a statesman because he does not know; he is not a sophist because knows this and
yet wants to know. He is always on the way from sophistry to statesmanship.

The Stranger’s argument about law, however, on which my claims above rest,
presents a deep puzzle. From the point of view of the statesman, the law appears as a *tool*
he must use, an imperfect expedient, to be sure, but still one that he controls and designs.
Law means here “good” law, not just any sort of thing that happens to pass as law in a
*polis*, but the rules written by one who has political knowledge. From the point of view of
the *polis*, however, law appears as a *restraint* on the use of knowledge, something
imposed on the statesman and created essentially without his input. Yet the Stranger
strongly implies that these two types of law are functionally identical, so that the law that
the city creates for itself, at least if it does so following a certain procedure, produces a
*good* imitation of the genuine regime ruled by the true statesman. This implies that the

¹ Many commentators, even careful ones, often make the unwarranted assumption that the
“statesman” and the “philosopher-king” are interchangeable concepts, despite the fact that the term
“philosopher-king” does not appear in any of the eight dialogues set around the time of Socrates’ death, and
the explicit claim by the Stranger at the beginning of the *Sophist* that philosopher, statesman, and sophist
are three, not two. See chapter 2, especially section 3.2.2.
law that the city creates for itself, so long as it does so in a certain way, actually
approximates the law that the statesman himself would have produced for the city.²

I argue in what follows that this can be the case because the law of the city (so
long as it is created according to certain specific procedures which force the polis to draw
on experience) actually does substantially the same thing as the law created by statesman,
namely, it provides limits to the use of technical knowledge. The good law-governed
polis, as I have already indicated, operates according to a political version of the Socratic
dictum: it knows only that it does not know, and hence does not allow any form of
knowledge to assume any pretensions beyond its own sphere of competence. In this sense
the law is a partial, but real, form of order, a good enough imitation of the wisdom of the
statesman (though an imitation nevertheless); and in the ultimately unbridgeable tension
between the perfect law of the statesman and the imperfect law of the city lies the law-
abiding inquiry of the philosopher which may yet reach results that contradict the law and
which Athens was not willing to tolerate (cf. 299b3ff and below, section 8.3.5.4).

² The puzzle is noted, among others, by Kahn, "The Place of the Statesman in Plato's Later Work," p. 52, Christopher Rowe, "Killing Socrates: Plato's Later Thoughts on Democracy," Journal of Hellenic Studies, no. 121 (2001), Samaras, Plato on Democracy, pp. 176-77. Kahn sees in this nothing much more troubling than evidence of Plato’s muddled thinking or hesitation on the way to the more consistent position of the Laws. Rowe and Samaras, however, try to interpret away what they see as a contradiction, the first by separating the law of the statesman from the law of the city, and the second by arguing that the law of the city approximates in important ways the law of the statesman. Rowe, in other words, distinguishes between good law (the law the statesman himself creates) and all other law (the law created by the city), whereas Samaras argues that all law that meets certain minimal standards is eo ipso good law, whether or not it is created by the statesman himself (this also seems to be the position of Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 100-01). I argue in what follows that Samaras’ position is closer to the truth, though it lacks some precision.
8.1 The scarcity of the statesman’s knowledge

8.1.1 The regimes in common opinion

In order to separate the true statesman from the false rulers, the Stranger introduces the notion of a πολιτεία, a regime (291d7). The πολιτεία is the form of political rule (291d1), and thus ultimate order of the polis. To ask what is the πολιτεία of a particular polis thus means to ask who rules, for what end, and how, i.e., what is the source of this order.

The πόλεις, in common opinion, differ with respect to their regime along four dimensions. First (291d1-9), they differ in the number of their rulers. This yields three basic sorts of πολιτείαι, namely, monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. Later on the Stranger will further characterize this dimension as that of the strength of the ruler(s) to impose his (their) order (cf. 303a2-b2); the greater the number of rulers, the greater the dispersal of power and hence the greater the difficulty for the ruler(s) to impose his (their) order. Second (291e1-3), the πολιτείαι in common opinion differ in a) the way in which the rule of the one, few or many is borne or experienced by the ruled, i.e., whether they submit “willingly” or “unwillingly” to it; b) the poverty and wealth of the rulers, i.e., their material interests; and c) the way in which the rulers actually rule, i.e., whether by

---

3 Kochin, "Plato's Eleatic and Athenian Sciences of Politics," pp. 70-71, 78, seems to think that the Stranger’s simple classification of regimes reflects the thinness of his political science. Similarly Annas and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, p. xix, complains that Plato never really develops a full-blown theory of political institutions in the Statesman, being, as they put it, “sidetracked” by the concern for knowledge. But the Stranger is merely reflecting on common opinion about regimes, not presenting a scientific typology, as his rejection of all these dimensions of the πολιτείαι show. A more elaborate classification (including, e.g., mixed constitutions) would not have made any difference to the Stranger’s argument about the rule of law.
means of general rules or arbitrarily, with or without law. These three dimensions further differentiate the three basic sorts of πολιτεία, in effect doubling their number. First, there is monarchy and tyranny, a distinction that emerges primarily – but not exclusively – out of the experience of the people of the rule of one, i.e., whether they bear this rule willingly or unwillingly, or whether they think it is according to law or not.⁴ Second, there is aristocracy and oligarchy, both of which seem to be the rule of the rich (cf. 301a6-8), presumably in their material interests, though such rule is carried out differently by the rulers: in an aristocracy according to law and (hence) willingly accepted, in an oligarchy not according to law and (hence) not willingly accepted. Finally there is just democracy, which is the rule of the poor (291e10-292a3), presumably in their interest, though the Stranger admits that democracy can vary according to whether the rich accept the rule of the poor willingly or unwillingly, and according to whether this rule is according to law or not.⁵

8.1.2 The impossibility of political knowledge in the many

The Stranger does not spend a lot of time straightening out the ambiguities and contradictions of the common opinions about πολιτεία. Instead, he points out that if

⁴ The distinction between poverty and wealth does not appear to have much bearing on the distinction between tyranny and kingship, in part because it is unclear what it would mean to say that a king is “poor;” even a fairly austere king (like, say, the current president of Eritrea) never really has to work for his sustenance. The distinction between lawful rule and unlawful rule is later said to be the fundamental distinction between king and tyrant (301a10ff) but at this point it is not clear that common opinion agree with this assessment.

⁵ The implication of the Stranger’s vague language seems to be that the rich do not willingly accept the rule of law, but that the poor always willingly accept the rule of the rich if such rule is according to law. One should not stress this point too hard, however, as the Stranger is merely restating conventional opinion about regimes, not putting forward a sociological claim.
statesmanship were indeed a form of knowledge as they have described it (292b3-c4), then their task would reduce to determining whether or not any of the dimensions of a regime they have identified is a proxy for “knowledge.”

The first of the dimensions they examine is the number of rulers. Is a majority in the polis capable of having this knowledge (292e1-2)? More precisely stated the question is: do the decisions of the majority – obtained through deliberation and majority voting procedures – reflect political knowledge? Young Socrates’ answer is at first very simple, and entirely expected: how could such a thing be the case? But the Stranger does not leave it at that; he asks further whether in a polis of one thousand people there could be found one hundred or fifty even that had this knowledge sufficiently (292e4-5).6 Young Socrates replies to this with an uncharacteristic outburst, giving his longest speech in the dialogue (292e6-293a1):7 if this were the case, he says, the τέχνη of statesmanship would be the easiest in the world to have of all the τέχναι; for, he adds, we know that it would be hard to find a hundred or even fifty checker or draughts players (πεττευταὶ 292e7) in a thousand human beings good enough to play against the best in

---

6 It is not entirely clear whether the Stranger would think that if the answer to this question were positive, then the decisions of a majority could have some (perhaps limited) validity, i.e., that the wise must constitute between five and ten percent of an assembly for its decisions to exhibit knowledge. The supposition is not theoretically sterile, since in an assembly where decisions are reached through deliberation, presumably the wise would have some influence, and hence their voting power would not be simply overwhelmed by the ignorance of their fellow citizens. Furthermore, in a situation where most decisions present choices between boldness and moderation (see chapter 3, section 3.2.3.1), the votes of most citizens would presumably cancel each other out (about half of them voting for the policy that encourages boldness, another half voting for the policy that encourages moderation), leaving even a small block of 5-10% of the votes of the wise with disproportionate influence in determining a correct policy.


8 The πεττευτὴς, draughts or checkers player (the exact nature of the game of πεττεῖα is unknown, but it is thought to be similar to the modern game of checkers) is an image of the god in the Laws (cf. 903d6), where it also seems to be used as an image of the statesman or legislator himself (Laws 739a1ff, though the reference is not unambiguously to the legislator).
other πόλεις. The conclusion he draws is that *a fortiori* it would be much harder to find a hundred kings among a thousand human beings, a phrase whose startling ring he softens by reminding his listeners that they had earlier agreed (cf. 259b3-5 and context) that “king” is he who has the kingly ἐπιστήμη, whether or not he rules in fact. The Stranger praises young Socrates for his memory – he has reminded them of the right criterion for rule – and concludes that they are thus to look for the right form of rule – the right regime – among those regimes with one or a few rulers. Before we move on, however, it is worth pondering the implications of young Socrates’ answer.

First of all, it should be noted that young Socrates cannot be saying that the members of the multitude cannot have any art at all. In fact, one may think that he forgets much too easily that the majority of the people already have arts (indeed, the city is in a sense nothing but the gathering of the artisans of human care), and that in a city of a thousand human beings one could well find more than a hundred farmers and other artisans. His answer is cast in a comparative form. It is not the case that one cannot find fifty or a hundred mediocre draughts players, but that one cannot find fifty or a hundred excellent checkers players, i.e., checkers players that have as complete as possible knowledge of the game and are therefore capable of competing against, and besting, the best in Greece, just as among a thousand people one would be hard-pressed to find a hundred excellent farmers or shoemakers or the like. One could, however, easily find a fair number of mediocre farmers or shoemakers, who despite their mediocrity nevertheless do possess the arts of farming or shoemaking, in whatever small degree. 9 It

---

9 Moreover, given that arts such as draughts-playing, farming, and even shoemaking admit of progress, excellence at one point is not likely to remain excellence forever: a hundred mediocre farmers today might be as good as a hundred excellent farmers a few centuries ago.
is in the nature of excellence to be rare, since most, if not all, forms of knowledge are almost never found in their most perfect state.

Furthermore, and in a related vein, though one may find a variety of artisans in the city (even large numbers of them in some cases), the very fact that the people already have arts is nevertheless an obstacle to their having an additional art, especially one as difficult as statesmanship is claimed to be. This is in part the point of Young Socrates’ comparison of statesmanship to draughts-playing. If even draughts-playing requires absolute dedication in order for one to master it, then statesmanship, which is infinitely more difficult, could hardly be learned on weekends and lazy evenings. One can learn to play checkers or chess in one’s spare time, and even become a mediocre player, but, barring exceptional gifts, only a professional, who devotes all his time to learning the τέχνη of chess, can really become a competitive player in world tournaments. This of course means that the majority of the population of the city, the artisans already separated off from the statesman, can hardly be expected to become excellent at a difficult art that they have no time to learn since they are busy practicing their own arts. The division of labor and knowledge, we might say, is the iron cage of democracy, at least on the assumption that statesmanship is indeed a difficult art, an assumption that young Socrates is no longer implicitly questioning.

Young Socrates’ comments, however, seem to imply that statesmanship can be possessed to some degree among the people, just as a large number of people can become mediocre πεπτευτής; what cannot be possessed is the highest degree of statesmanship. And yet the Stranger implies, by his framing of the question, that what matters is the highest degree of statesmanship, that only that degree is sufficient (cf. ἰκανὸς 292e5) for
the needs of the *polis*. This points to a fundamental difference between statesmanship and many of the other arts in the city. The city can do very well, for example, with a hundred mediocre farmers in every thousand human beings; perfect excellence in the arts is not required for their usefulness. Why, then, do young Socrates and the Stranger insist that the statesman must not merely have the art of statesmanship but be *excellent* at it?

There are two possible reasons for this. First, it may be that the *context* of politics in the age of Zeus is such that only excellence can ensure the care of the *polis*. Young Socrates’ choice of image, the competitive πεττευτής who is in constant battle with his counterparts all across Greece, suggests something of the sort: the “game” of politics appears to be too high-stakes to tolerate mediocre statesmanship. On the other hand, we will soon learn (as I have stressed many times before) that cities *without* any form of statesmanship survive, sometimes for long periods of time (cf. 302a5-6), which would seem to imply either that the care of the statesman is not so very urgent, or that his care has little to do with the mere physical preservation of the city. The former alternative implies a radical devaluing of statesmanship; the latter would make statesmanship into a Socratic art of caring for souls, about which the Stranger has said little thus far. This suggests that the demand for excellent statesmanship is *not* due to the competitive context in which the *polis* exists.

Second, it may be that for statesmanship, unlike for most other arts, pure ignorance (random guessing) is better than half-way knowledge, especially given the scope of the statesman’s responsibilities and the hardships the statesman’s mistakes

---

10 In fact, the implicit suggestion that statesmanship is no more important than draughts-playing already suggests that at least from a certain point of view statesmanship is just not very important. Cf. also *Laws* 803c2-804c1.
impose. The person who knows absolutely nothing about draughts-playing, and is not even learning to play, normally would not even manifest the desire to play, much less to play against strong competitors; but the player who thinks he knows something (perhaps because he has taken a few lessons in draughts-playing), though in fact knows less than he thinks, may want to engage in competition with much better players, with predictable, though in general harmless (at least for other people), consequences. In politics, the analogy would point to the ambitious youths who are constantly attempting to learn the art of the statesman. Their superiority to their fellow citizens in doing certain seemingly “political” tasks (though without real knowledge of the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, the noble and the shameful) may give them the false confidence that they know the art of politics even though they are merely starting to learn it, with predictable, but far from harmless, consequences. The private citizen, who knows nothing of politics and wants little to do with the assembly, may perhaps be in a better place from which to judge that he does not know. To put the point in somewhat modern terminology: the peasant is a hard-headed natural conservative, unlikely on his own initiative to choose a disastrous expansionist policy, and not greatly interested in politics (he has his own art to tend to); the rich young aristocrat is a troublemaker, who thinks he is learning the art of politics, and who may unfortunately move the passions of the hard-headed conservative peasants in disastrous directions.

The Stranger’s insistence on the need for excellent statesmanship (with some help from young Socrates’ image), like Socrates’ insistence to the ambitious brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus on a long course of preparation for the philosopher-kings, may therefore serve a pedagogical purpose. By stressing the fact that even partial knowledge of
statesmanship is insufficient for actual rule, he reminds his young listeners (and us) that the most important thing of all is to remember that one does not know. The Stranger is already preparing us for the argument on the rule of law, whose authority is safe only when the rulers do not believe that they know when they do not.

8.1.3 The irrelevance of willingness, wealth, and law to political knowledge

After concluding that the right regime (the one where the true statesman rules) would be one where only one or a few people rule, since only one or a few people would have the sought-after knowledge, the Stranger presents young Socrates with a comparison between the statesman and the doctor designed to show that the conventional regimes are incorrect, i.e., are not the regimes over which the statesman rules. Thus he argues (293a6-c3) that the statesman shall be considered (νομιστέων 293a8) a statesman so long as he rules according to τέχνη, whether or not this rule fits within the distinctions they had previously assumed to be important, by analogy with doctors, whom we do not consider (νεομίκαμεν 293b1) any less doctors just because we are willing or unwilling to be treated by them, or whether or not they cause us pain or act according to written rules or are themselves rich or poor, so long as they supervise/take care of us with τέχνη, acting for the good of our bodies and making them better from a worse condition.12

11 The word νομιστέων, with its common root with νόμος, suggests a pun: the statesman is to be “legally” considered a statesman, a statesman according to law, even if he turns out to rule without law, so long as he rules with knowledge. Knowledge is a higher law, so to speak, for the statesman.

12 We should be careful here about what the Stranger is saying. We do not think that somebody is not a doctor because one or more of his patients refuse to be treated by him, but because we think he does not have knowledge of medicine. The fact that one or more of his patients refuse to be treated by him,
Young Socrates agrees with this description of our attitude towards doctors, and the Stranger pushes the analogy, first abstractly (293c5-d2), simply asserting that the same thing is true of true statesmen, whether or not they rule over us willingly or unwillingly or with law or without law or they are themselves rich or poor (a sentiment with which young Socrates seems to readily agree, 293d3), and then more concretely (293d4-e6), detailing the specific things a true statesman might be justified in doing for the sake of the good of the polis, such as killing people, sending out colonies,\(^\text{13}\) bringing in new citizens, and so on. Only the concrete imagery of the statesman’s actions, done without recourse to law, manages to shake young Socrates’ complacent acceptance of the Stranger’s argument; he now admits to being troubled about the fact that the true statesman may act without law (293e7-9), as we too should.

The analogy, however, is somewhat flawed. The doctor, after all, treats a single person, whereas the statesman is concerned with a polis, which is composed of multiple persons. In the polis, the “parts” (the citizens) might disagree that what is in the interest however, might be counted as evidence that he does not have the requisite knowledge of medicine that would make him into a doctor, even though he claims to have it. There are quacks who claim to have the knowledge of medicine but do not have it, and it is not unreasonable to be unwilling to be treated by someone who claims to be a doctor but whom we believe is not actually one (cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.128-29; Benardete notes rightly that it is easier for us to tell the quacks from the real doctors than it is for the city to tell the sophist from the true statesman). Yet this evidence is not decisive; some people refuse to be treated simply because they fear the pain that the doctor may cause them, even if they think – correctly – that the doctor has knowledge of medicine (they misjudge their own good, or suffer from weakness of the will), or because they have the false opinion that the person who is to treat them does not really have knowledge of medicine (they misjudge the doctor), or similar things. Similarly, the fact that a doctor does not treat his patients according to generally established rules, or even that he is poor rather than rich, is at best to be treated as empirical (and hence, to some extent, unreliable) evidence that he does not really possess the art of medicine, but not as the grounds of his not being a doctor. Thus, pace Annas and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, p. xvii, and p. 59, note 56, the point at issue is not whether the doctor is entitled to use violence to cure us (he may or may not), but the kind of evidence that is decisive in identifying somebody as a doctor.

\(^{13}\) “Like a swarm of bees,” 293d5; this is later echoed in the Stranger’s remark that statesmen are not born superior in body and soul, unlike a queen bee (301d8-e1). This suggests that the Stranger recognizes perfectly well that such uncontrolled action by a true statesman is highly unlikely, if not impossible, for it would imply that human beings are like bees, i.e., that they recognize true knowledge when they see it.
of the whole of the “patient” (the city) is also in their own interest; and they might disagree that what preserves the city as a whole also makes it better rather than worse, two disagreements that do not arise in medicine. This disjunction is manifested in the fact that the Stranger says that the statesman uses ἐπιστήμη and the just when treating the city (293d8-9), even though nothing he has said before would lead us to think that the knowledge of the statesman fails to include the knowledge of justice. Nevertheless, what from the theoretical point of view – that of the statesman himself as well as the philosopher – is merely a hendiadys, looks, from the point of view of those lacking this knowledge (such as young Socrates), dangerously separate.

Yet it is only with the help of concrete imagery that young Socrates sees that the good of the city and the good of the parts of the city can at least in appearance diverge. As usual, the “abstract” or general perspective (like that of the law), is not sufficient for young Socrates to “connect the dots,” so to speak. Until concrete instances of particular actions are presented to him he does not see the problem in connecting the general knowledge of the statesman (which, presumably, includes knowledge of justice) to the

14 See Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," p. 268. The conflict between the good of the parts and the good of the whole is more clearly seen in the analogy of the statesman to the gymnastics trainer at 294d4ff; from the perspective of the law such conflict is inevitable, though the Stranger implies (by comparing the φρόνημα-governed city to a single body) that this is not so in principle, contra Stern p. 269. See also Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.132.

15 Most commentators seem to suggest that young Socrates’ reaction is simply a reflection of his being so to speak a good Athenian; (cf. Cooper, "Plato's "Statesman" and Politics," p. 101, note 38, Gill, "Rethinking Constitutionalism in Statesman 291-303," pp. 292-93); but it should be emphasized that he expresses his discomfort only after the Stranger has resorted to very concrete imagery of killing and radically changing the body of citizens. The abstract idea of rule without law does not faze him. This parallels his inability to understand the first genealogy of weaving until the Stranger used concrete images (cf. 280b6ff and context, as well as chapter 4, section 4.3.2.2), and even his inability to understand the implications of the first genealogy of the statesman until the Stranger used a myth. All this seems to indicate that young Socrates has difficulty “connecting” the general to the concrete, i.e., has little real knowledge; in Kantian terms, he exhibits little “judgment.” Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," p. 268, notes this, though on slightly different grounds. We might say that young Socrates is utterly lacking in the rudiments of statesmanship, which must be able to connect the general to the particular in each and every case.
particular circumstances of diverse human beings.\textsuperscript{16} It is thus no wonder that the Stranger now proceeds to criticize the general perspective of law, which also fails to notice its lack of applicability to particular cases.

The Stranger will examine later the psychology behind young Socrates’ different reactions to the doctor and the statesman (section 8.3.4); let us postpone, therefore, our analysis of it. At any rate, the Stranger says (293e10-294a4) that he was just going to ask young Socrates whether he truly accepted all that he had said or whether he experienced a certain repugnance (δυσχεραίνεις 294a2) at what they had just said.\textsuperscript{17} Since young Socrates feels some repugnance, the Stranger will now defend the position that the statesman should rule without law, though he cannot fully dispense with it. He will then explain why a certain kind of good law (cf. εὖνόμους 293e4) is nevertheless necessary for a regime to be a “more beautiful” (ἐπὶ τὰ καλλίῳ 293e5) imitation of the true regime, i.e., the regime of the statesman not bound by law.\textsuperscript{18}

---

\textsuperscript{16} This is not to say that a statesman could never do the things the Stranger he says might do without acting in contravention of the principles of justice and his own knowledge.

\textsuperscript{17} The importance of the notion of “repugnance” in the reactions of the citizens to the statesman’s potential actions is well emphasized by Lane, Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman, pp. 162-63.

\textsuperscript{18} The Stranger is not suggesting that any kind of law whatsoever makes a city a “more beautiful” imitation of the true regime; only a certain kind of law will do. And yet he is not suggesting that the cities that imitate the genuine regimes have laws that are created by the true statesman. This is a first piece of evidence against the interpretation of the argument on the rule of law in Rowe, "Killing Socrates: Plato’s Later Thoughts on Democracy," and in the later restatement in Christopher Rowe, "The treatment of non-ideal constitutions in the Politicus," Plato: The Internet Journal of the International Plato Society 5 (2005).
8.2 The inability of knowledge to be embodied in law and the necessary absence of the statesman

8.2.1 The inadequacy of law from the point of view of knowledge

The Stranger makes clear that he is not suggesting that lawmaking has nothing to do with statesmanship: in some way, he says (294a6-8), νομοθετική, the art of legislation, belongs to βασιλική. But the best situation is not for the laws to rule but for a kingly man with φρόνησις. The reason for this, in brief (294a10-b6), is that νόμος is unable to comprehend what is best (ἄριστον) and what is most just (δικαιότατον) together, and hence to command what is best (βέλτιστον), whereas the man with φρόνησις can.

Note that what emerged as a disjunction between knowledge and the just in the eyes of the citizens (293d8-9) re-emerges here as a disjunction between the best – in the sense of the άριστον – and the most just from the point of view of general simple rules (laws). This disjunction is such that their common product, so to speak, (which should be the best in the sense of βέλτιστον) cannot be commanded by the law, i.e., cannot be encompassed in a simple command. Any rule or command that could do this would be too complicated to be useful, though not necessarily impossible in principle, and any rule simple enough to be useful would inevitably compromise the just at the expense of the

19 It should be noted also that, though this problem may take many forms, it is exacerbated in political life due to the fact that the polis is not a single individual but a collection of individuals: only a very complicated formula could ensure that what is commanded at any given point in time is both the most just for the city and best for the individual citizen or vice-versa.
best (ἄριστον) for some, or vice-versa, thereby failing to attain the best (the
βέλτιστον). The reason for this is simply that, as the Stranger goes on to note, human
beings are too various, and their circumstances too diverse, for a simple rule to command
the best (the βέλτιστον) for everyone at the same time.

This “dissimilarity” of human beings and circumstances is ultimately rooted in the
nature of the cosmos, as we have already intimated (cf. chapter 5, section 5.6.1): the
dissimilarity (ἀνομοιότητες 294b2) of human beings and their actions, which is
derivative of the general tendency towards dissimilarity of the cosmos (cf. 273d6),20 and
more specifically the fact that human affairs never keep still, does not allow any τέχνη
whatsoever (not just political science) to make visible or bring to light a simple
instruction concerning all matters and for all time in anything whatsoever, as the Stranger
says. τέχνη must constantly rediscover what is best for any particular set of human
characters, actions, and circumstances.

It should be emphasized that this does not mean that τέχνη is merely knowledge
of particulars, but a general form of knowledge that fully comprehends particular cases,
as I have emphasized throughout. The Stranger is not saying that we simply cannot know
anything about human affairs in general terms, as he would be if we took “law” to mean
simply any general understanding of things. In fact, there may be rules – even simple
rules – that specify what is best for a particular sort of human being, or for a particular set
of circumstances, or even in reference to a set of actions; in ethical life such rules may
even be extant as proverbs that express a preference for one or another action in most

20 Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, p. 150, also notes the connection between the
dissimilarity of human characters and circumstances and the myth.
circumstances. But the combination of these simple rules concerning character, circumstance, and action does not in turn yield a simple rule or even a short list of simple rules, as can easily be seen: if there are N characters of human beings, C numbers of circumstances, and a set P of actions to be taken into account in maximizing some goal (such as happiness or justice), then the number of simple rules that express all the commands concerning what action p human beings of character n must do in circumstance c so as to be happiest or do the most just thing is N times C times P, which quickly becomes very large as C and P increase. Clearly such a huge list of simple rules would hardly count as a law; it is not compact enough to be useful.

The judgment of τέχνη, on the other hand, is the “compact” version of that enormous set of simple rules, and thus cannot itself be expressed as a simple rule. To have a τέχνη means to be able to generate the rule for person of type n in circumstance c who does p without looking it up in a table; but this can only be done if there is some ultimate regularity – though not necessarily a simple or even clearly expressible one – underlying the rules. In other words, the “compact” understanding of the world by τέχνη is ultimately a general understanding of nature in the regularity of its productive or generative aspect, as we saw in the section on measure. That this regularity of nature

21 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.131. Benardete cites the proverbs “he who hesitates is lost” and “look before you leap” as examples that embody the tension between moderation and courage. He concludes, correctly in my view, that the law, like the proverbs in question, is thus unable to inculcate “true virtue.”

22 Laws, ancient and modern, are in fact lists of simple rules that specify for a set of people N what actions from a set P are permissible in some restricted set of circumstances C so that some state of affairs (justice, happiness, ozone layer preservation) may be brought into being. But they can never be as long or as complete as they need to be while still remaining useful.

23 The term “compact” comes from modern computer science, in particular the field of artificial intelligence; much of what the Stranger says about τέχνη and rules is in fact a live issue for the field of artificial intelligence. For an interesting introduction, see Eric Baum, What is Thought? (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
cannot be expressed in simple rules is a testimony to the difficulty of discerning underlying similarities in a universe that has a tendency towards dissimilarity. But the fact that Τέχνη can generate simple rules for a variety of occasions, and indeed that law sometimes works decently well, is only possible because the universe is not entirely devoid of similarity in this age (cf. chapter 5, section 5.6 and chapter 6, section 6.4.2).

8.2.2 The need for law from the point of view of the statesman: Law as a necessary tool

Yet the Stranger thinks that there are reasons why it is nevertheless necessary for the statesman to legislate, even though the law has been shown to be inferior to knowledge. The statesman must use law because he is always either partially or totally absent from the city: partially, because even when he is in the city he cannot be everywhere in it due to the fact that he is a bodily being; and totally, because the mortality of the body and the scarcity of his knowledge means that most cities will always be deprived of his presence.24 The partial absence of the statesman is discussed by means of an analogy to the gymnastics trainer (294d4-295b6), whereas his total absence is discussed by means of an analogy to the doctor once again (295b7-296a4). We shall examine each of these analogies in turn.

24 On the scarcity of the statesman’s knowledge, see Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," p. 269.
8.2.2.1 The gymnastics trainer and the partial absence of the statesman

The gymnastics trainer (294d4-e7), like the statesman, deals with human beings in herds (ἄθρόοις 294d5, ἀγέλαις 294e10)25 because he cannot be everywhere at once to enjoin what is fitting (τὸ προσήκον 294d12) for each individual body to do if it is to do its best in the contest for victory; he thus issues commands for the athletes to do things all together, rather than tailoring his commands to the needs of individual bodies. The same is true for the statesman, the Stranger notes; he needs to use general instructions (laws) due to the fact that he cannot be everywhere at once. Two points should be emphasized about this analogy: first, the material basis of the trainer’s inability to be everywhere at once and its implications for statesmanship; second, the implications of the image of the trainer for the autonomy of the contestants.

The trainer cannot be with everybody at once because of the fact that there are fewer trainers than people who need training, i.e., because the knowledge of the trainer is scarce in the city relative to the need for it. The Stranger does not explain the exact reasons for this scarcity of trainers in the city (the knowledge of trainers might be more difficult to acquire than the knowledge of athletes, for example26); yet athletic training nevertheless works well enough with a few trainers for a large number of athletes.

25 The reintroduction of the herd terminology, which had dropped out after the myth, is noted by Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," p. 269-70. Stern thinks that this points to the scarcity of the knowledge of the statesman, in fact the great gulf between his knowledge and that of those he rulers, a gulf nearly as large as that between the shepherd-god and his human herd. I am inclined to accept this explanation, though it should also be noted that the terminology of herds drops out again from the rest of the dialogue.

26 We must distinguish here between athletic talent (which is very rare) and the practical knowledge of an athlete, which may be available even to people of mediocre talent. At any rate it is clear that the knowledge of statesmanship is much more difficult than any of the other arts of care in the city.
Human beings and women of exceptional talent or with great needs may lose out to some degree due to their inability to get individualized attention, but on average the aggregate performance gains of giving everybody such attention are often too small to justify the expense of additional trainers.

Like the trainer, the statesman cannot be everywhere he is needed at once; his knowledge is, if anything, much scarcer than that of the trainer relative to the needs of the city. He cannot sit next to each person throughout their entire lives and command them exactly what is fitting (τὸ προσήκον, what conforms to due measure, 295b2) for them to do at any given moment. Yet, as with the trainer, this inability to provide each citizen with individualized advice is not fatal to the city: the law can supply the defect well enough, though certainly not perfectly. It provides the statesman with a means of saving the good of the polis to some degree in the face of the limitation imposed by his necessary partial absence in the city, though at the expense of the optimal good of at least some individuals. The statesman is thus necessarily absent from the lives of most individuals in the polis even when he is present in it, leaving a space for a common life that would otherwise be absent from it.27 But this necessarily implies that in the absence

27 This point is noted by Howland, The Paradox of Political Philosophy: Socrates' Philosphic Trial, p. 274, though he emphasizes more strongly the “space” for freedom that the statesman’s necessary partial absence opens: “Like a tyrant or a ruling daimon of the counter-cycle, a scientific ruler who governed so as to insure the wisdom of all our actions would take up every inch of what would otherwise be common ground. And just as the withdrawal of the gods from the cosmos first opens up a space for human life, law alone, it would seem, provides the public space necessary for the freedom and dignity that characterizes a genuinely political life. Paradoxically, the correct regime is not even the best regime for human beings.” Other commentators are less well-disposed to the Stranger’s concession to law. Castoriadis, Sur Le Politique de Platon, p. 160, for example, thinks the Stranger is suggesting that everybody in the city is “sick;” the term παρακαθήμενος suggests a doctor who is at someone’s bedside. But we do not need doctors at every moment in our lives; to imply otherwise is, according to Castoriadis, the height of pernicious paternalism. Yet the Stranger’s point seems to be that for the most part we do not need a statesman at our side, just as people who train for gymnastic contests do not need a trainer at their side at every point to do reasonably well, and just as we do not need doctors at our side every moment to be
of the statesman the good of the parts and the good of the whole cannot but be in tension; the law is thus second-best in respect of the (ideal) harmonization of the good of the whole and the parts achievable if all the citizens were wise or the statesman were not subject to the limitations of the body.\textsuperscript{28}

The fact that the statesman is compared to a trainer points also to the potential total absence of the statesman, and thus to the second reason why law is necessary. A trainer is an enabler, somebody who allows others to perform certain actions even when he himself is absent. The trainer does not himself run the race, but prepares others to do so even when he is not himself with the group he trains for an extended period of time (cf. \textit{295e1}). Similarly, the statesman is not always present in the city; his activity, however, is supposed to prepare the city to run the race on its own (cf. \textit{311a1-2}), i.e., when he is away for whatever reason, including those times when he is no longer in the \textit{polis}.\textsuperscript{29}

8.2.2.2 The doctor on vacation and the total absence of the statesman

With the doctor analogy (\textit{295b2ff}) the thrust of the Stranger’s argument changes a bit. The Stranger no longer attempts to show simply that law is necessary because the statesman is partially or totally absent, but also that when he is present the laws are silent. To this end, he re-introduces the figure of the doctor, though this is a doctor who goes

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{28} See note 14 as well as chapter 4, section 4.1.2.
\item \textsuperscript{29} In this sense, Castoriadis, \textit{Sur Le Politique de Platon}, p. 160, is wrong to think of the imagery of the trainer as completely destroying human autonomy.
\end{itemize}
away, leaving instructions to his patient regarding the regimen he is to follow while he is absent.

In this image, laws emerge as a kind of memory of the statesman’s earlier presence (295c4) when he is not in the polis, in that they remind the citizens of what they are to do were the statesman himself present. They are thus ὑπομνήματα, reminders, of the statesman, i.e., the instructions he leaves behind in lieu of his actual presence.30 This absence of the statesman is different from the partial absence – in which the statesman was present in the polis, just not next to any particular person – that provided the first reason for the necessity of law, because the statesman is here absent from the polis itself. It is a more complete form of absence, an absence from the time of the polis, its continuing life, rather than simply from some (spatial) parts of it, as in the first case. Like the god who absents himself from the cosmos (cf. chapter 8, section 9.6), the statesman depicted in this image absents himself from the whole he cares for, as a doctor or a trainer might go abroad on a trip for an extended period of time, leaving behind those they care for (τῶν θεραπευομένων 295c2).

Yet why must the statesman leave behind instructions? When a doctor goes away for an extended period of time, supposing he practices in a polis and not in some extremely isolated area, his patients can usually count on another doctor; he need not leave any instructions but can instead refer them to another practitioner of the art. The

---

knowledge of medicine, in other words, is of such a kind that the *polis* can normally ensure its reproduction: not only is there usually more than one doctor in the *polis*, but the knowledge of medicine never dies as long as the *polis* exists. It “reproduces” itself in institutions (such as universities or apprenticeships) that allow people without the knowledge in question to imitate the practitioners and learn the principles of the art. The doctor and the trainer are never *completely* absent from the *polis* so long as the *polis* is in good order (since the *polis* is nothing but the gathering together of the arts of human care). There is always another doctor somewhere in it, i.e., the knowledge of medicine or gymnastic training is rarely entirely absent from the *polis* just because a given doctor or trainer decides to go away on vacation.

This is not the case for the statesman, however. His absence is much more thoroughgoing than the absence of a given doctor or trainer, since it means the absence of the *knowledge* of statesmanship in the *polis*. Not only is the knowledge of statesmanship so rare as to make it nearly impossible for a statesman who goes abroad or dies to refer the care of the *polis* to another person with the proper knowledge of statesmanship, but it apparently cannot even be institutionalized so that it “reproduces” itself within the *polis*. The reasons for this inability of statesmanship to reproduce itself will be discussed later (see chapter 9, section 9.2); for the moment let us note only that the expedient of leaving behind instructions makes sense only when other statesmen are not available to take care of the *polis*, just as a doctor or a trainer who goes away is reduced to writing specific instructions only when no other doctor or trainer is available.

Time, however, changes the condition of a *polis* as well as of a patient (295c7-296a3); he may get unexpectedly better, thanks to Zeus (the god who represents
statesmanship, incidentally). It would be laughable, the Stranger says, if the doctor, upon returning earlier than expected, insisted that the patient not do anything contrary to what he had prescribed, refusing to prescribe anything new; it would also be silly if the patient himself did not dare to do something contrary to the doctor’s written instructions, given the evident betterment of his condition. Similarly for the polis; should someone with the τέχνη of statesmanship arrive, if not necessarily the original framer of the laws himself, it would be laughable if it were forbidden to him to order things differently.³¹

Note that the Stranger, in the case of the doctor, stresses the unlikelihood of his early return, an unlikelihood that is only compatible with an extreme scarcity of knowledge of medicine. This is why law, with its implicit guarantee of permanence, is required; and the point is emphasized by the Stranger’s characterization of the simple notes left by the doctor as τάρχαὶ ... νομοθέτησιν (295d3), the ancient laws, a strange turn of phrase if the notes in question were merely reminders meant to tide the patient over for a short time. Law is thus not merely a short-term expedient; its force derives from the near-certainty that the statesman who framed it will never return. By the same token, though it may be laughable from the point of view of knowledge for the doctor and the statesman to be bound by the laws they or somebody like them instituted earlier, the sacralization of these laws by time hints at the empirical difficulty of changing

³¹ As Stern, "The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'," p. 270, notes, the analogy to the doctor who goes away focuses attention on the statesman as founder rather than mere governor. I have argued that the myth – and just about every image the Stranger uses – also does this, for the statesman’s knowledge is not really compatible with his continual presence in the polis.
them on their return. Changing the laws, from the point of view of the citizens, is never a laughing matter.\(^{32}\)

Note also that the Stranger stresses the *positive* nature of the change in the condition of the patient while the doctor is away. This is important for what in the next section we shall call the psychology of the law (see below, section 8.3), since presumably a patient that is getting *worse* under a prescribed regimen would normally be quite willing to try something else, even while the doctor is away, while a patient who is getting *better* under a prescribed regimen might think that this regimen should *not* be changed, since he would ascribe his improvement to it, and suspect that any changes suggested by his doctor could only be motivated by some form of ill will against him. It is change *for the good* that makes people most willing to hold on to the regimens they have been prescribed, though eventually even change for the good causes the forgetfulness of all prescriptions.\(^{33}\)

8.3 The need for law from the point of view of the people and the social absence of the statesman

The law has emerged thus far as the inadequate, but necessary, instrument of the statesman. Properly crafted law (i.e., law crafted with knowledge) provides a reasonable


\(^{33}\) Logically, to be sure, the Stranger’s argument works as well in the case in which the patient gets worse during the doctor’s absence as in the case in which the patient gets better. Changes in the condition of the patient, or of the city, for good or ill, by making the earlier directions/laws irrelevant, should license a man with knowledge of medicine/statesmanship to act as he sees fit, without constraining himself by his earlier instructions/laws.
substitute for the statesman’s absence, but it must fall silent when he is present. Now, however, the Stranger will examine law from the point of view of the many rather than the statesman (296a5-6).

8.3.1 The inadequacy of the demand for consent and persuasion

From the point of view of the many, the problem concerns the possibility of identifying the true holder of knowledge among his many imitators. The expedient they settle on to prevent unscrupulous imitators of the statesman from imposing their will on them is a procedural one, however: they demand to be persuaded (296a8-11) that any changes to the law are actually for the good,34 on the assumption (unstated by the Stranger) that someone who can persuade them of this must have the requisite knowledge of rule. They thus – reasonably, it might seem – reject changes to the law imposed by force. Young Socrates thinks this is a perfectly reasonable idea: aren’t they right? The Stranger does not say straightaway that the claim of the many is wrong (296b1). He instead presents him with a series of analogies designed to show that the presence or absence of force cannot be a correct criterion for identifying the true holder of knowledge. As we shall see, however, these analogies do not settle the question of what actually does count as sufficient evidence that someone possesses the requisite knowledge.

________________________

34 Note that the many cannot conceive of anything better than the rule of law; what is better than the current law is always another law, something that can be legislated (this is a view from which modern interpreters are not immune, interpreting the lawlessness of the statesman’s knowledge merely as control over the “amendment process;” see Davis, "The Statesman as a Political Dialogue," p. 327). But the statesman’s knowledge resists being legislated; all legislation is a falling off from it, even if a necessary one. See Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. 1.134, for more on this point.
The Stranger asks young Socrates to tell him what kind of violence is that which succeeds in making someone do something for the better without having persuaded him beforehand (296b1-c3). To this end, he presents him again with the case of a true doctor (i.e., a doctor who truly has the τέχνη of medicine) who forces a patient to do something against the established written directions (perhaps the very same directions he had given him beforehand) for his or her own good. The violence that such a doctor uses, the Stranger argues, can be classed with anything except, *ex hypothesi*, with those things that make one ill and those things done without knowledge, whereas every mistake in medical science can be classed with those things that make one ill. In sum, we do not base our judgments about whether or not someone is a true doctor on whether he persuades or forces us to follow a specific treatment, but on whether he can *cure* us (or at least on whether he does not make us sicker).

The Stranger does not, however, say what kind of violence is this that a doctor might use, only that it cannot be classed with the kind of violence that makes one ill. The question is nevertheless worth raising, for, whatever this violence may be, it is certainly not the best way of treating a patient, even though *ex hypothesi* it succeeds in making him better. Such force, furthermore, can only be an unavoidable necessity when the doctor feels duty-bound to help an ignorant patient or is himself forced to do so by somebody else, e.g., as when a parent tells a doctor to heal an unwilling child. It is, at best, a last

35 This implies, incidentally, that the doctor *qua* doctor never makes a mistake, a claim that the elder Socrates had shown to have some paradoxical consequences in Republic I when Thrasymachus put it forward (cf. Republic 340ff).

36 Cf. Laws 719e7-720e6, 857b9-e5. There, the Athenian Stranger discusses two types of doctors, one for free human beings (who persuades them before treating them, rather than using force) and one for slaves (who uses force without explanation). In the Athenian’s presentation, the law should contain both an element of persuasion and an element of force, but the element of persuasion appeals to our better part and
resort, but it can be a resort only if the doctor is bound up with the patient by his care for him and the patient is unable or unwilling to be persuaded by him, since all force is costly and may in any case cause unintended harm in other respects.  

The same is true of the violence a statesman may employ against the laws for the good of the polis (296c5-297b3), though here the Stranger’s argument is or needs to be a bit more delicate. The analogy suggests that the kind of force the statesman uses to do things that are more just or better or nobler than those enjoined by the laws cannot itself be called unjust or worse or ignoble, or at least that the people who are subjected to it cannot say, ex hypothesi, that they have suffered shameful or unjust or just plain bad things. Yet surely the fact that the statesman is forced to use violence already argues for a certain failure in his task, a limit to his power. The people who suffer the violence of the statesman (most probably) think they have suffered bad things at his hands, even if in fact they have not, and thus he appears to them as a tyrant, rather than as a statesman, as the Stranger had already noted earlier (276e1-14). If a person’s limb could feel wronged at the doctor’s use of amputation to save the patient, it probably would do so, even if the patient did not; similarly, since the violence of the statesman affects people unequally, not everyone would be convinced of its necessity. Thus, while the statesman’s violence may not be called “unjust” or “bad” or “ignoble,” it may perhaps be called by other

---


38 As Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.134, notes, the Stranger does not distinguish between things that hurt even if one is willing to suffer them and things that hurt only because we “balk” at them and thus have to be forced to do. Only the latter sort of violence is always in contradiction with persuasion, however, and thus would seem to be the kind of violence that the Stranger is discussing here.

39 See Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. 133-34.
names, some no less damaging to the statesman’s prospects for long-term success: impious, for example.40

Furthermore, while we can relatively easily say whether or not a doctor has cured us (or at least not made us sicker) by amputating a limb, i.e., it is relatively easy to distinguish good doctors from bad doctors,41 it is not nearly as easy to say whether or not a statesman has “cured” the city by exerting violence on some of its parts (or indeed, by doing anything at all). The many look to persuasion as a “proxy” for good statesmanship in a way that they would not for medicine in part because they are less able to identify good outcomes in the case of politics. The reason for this inability of the many to identify good outcomes in the case of politics (and hence to distinguish true statesmen from sophists) is not yet clear, though it will soon become clearer that it has to do with the fact that genuine statesmanship is much scarcer than (relatively) genuine medicine and deals with a more comprehensive good, which is harder than health for most people to judge.

The Stranger now extends his argument. Violence in political things does not become just or unjust by being committed by the poor or the rich, or by being accompanied by persuasion, or by being done according to written rules; only the

---

40 Taylor, Plato: the Sophist and the Statesman, p. 232, notes that even in the Seventh Letter (331a-d), where Plato disavows any violence in the pursuit of fundamental reform, he does not say that such violence would be “unjust;” but he does say that they would be impious. It is unclear what this implies for our views of Plato the man; it is nevertheless clear that if the violence of the statesman will be seen as impious, then it is not likely to be of much use. Nevertheless, it is not something that can ever be completely discounted. Voegelin, Order and History, p. III.160, for example, argues that Plato envisions a “savior with the sword who will restore external order to a polis by a violent, short operation, preliminary to the establishment of a more permanent order” and thinks Plato’s willingness to see law itself as a source of disorder makes him superior to Aristotle, who strikes him as complacent. Whatever the case, it is clear that the moment of founding or re-founding has the potential to be a violent one, as history shows; see Davis, “The Statesman as a Political Dialogue,” p. 325, and more generally Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (New York: Penguin, 1963; reprint, 1990).

41 There are some qualifications here. The best doctors may be those who take on the hardest cases (as “Redbeard” in Kurosawa’s film), and therefore fail more often, and information about success rates is not always easily available. Quacks exist in medicine. See Atul Gawande, "The Bell Curve: What Happens When Patients Find Out How Good Their Doctors Really Are?," The New Yorker, November 29 2004.
combination of both wisdom and goodness can justify such violence, and only this combination is the genuine “bound” of the correct management of the polis and of the interest of the ruled (296d7-e3).\(^{42}\)

Note that the Stranger feels the need to emphasize that the true and genuine ruler has both wisdom and goodness, something that he will reiterate a bit later, when he says that the true ruler rules with both τέχνη and νοῦς and distributes to the citizens that which is most just (297a7-b1). Yet nothing he has said so far suggests that knowledge is different from goodness; in fact, the previous argument clearly identifies injustice and badness with error, i.e., the knowledge of the statesman is the knowledge of the just, the good, and the beautiful (296c5-7). The fact that he still needs to use this hendiadys indicates how hard it is to convince the people (including young Socrates, a receptive audience) that virtue and knowledge are one. To say that the statesman acts with knowledge does not appear to be sufficient to convince the people that his rule is better than the rule of law, unless they are convinced that he also acts with goodness. We shall see later how this fear shapes the law and why it may be justified to some degree (297e11ff and section 8.3.4).

\(^{42}\) Note that the Stranger is hardly justifying most political violence. In fact, the requirement that the statesman must be σοφός (a word not used lightly by the Stranger in non-ironic contexts) suggests that even the philosopher would have a hard time justifying violence, since he is himself not σοφός. This is a point sometimes lost on commentators, especially those who argue that statesman and philosopher are one. The Stranger’s use of terms like διοικήσις, furthermore, suggests a view of the polis as a household that seems compatible only with the age of Cronos (see chapter 5, sections 5.4.2, 9.5.2).
8.3.2 The inadequacy of law in emergency situations

The Stranger uses one last analogy to argue that the law, as understood by the people, is inferior to the unfettered rule of the true statesman, this time to the ship-captain (296e4ff): to bind the ship captain to inflexible rules and procedures is to limit his ability to react quickly and properly in case of danger, and thus to thwart the point of having a ship captain at all. The analogy works only if we think that politics is like a voyage through stormy seas (cf. 273d5, where the whole world is compared to a storm-tossed ship), where every decision is a matter of life and death, and there is no room for discussion.\textsuperscript{43} But we have seen that there are grounds to doubt this view of political life, since the polis, as the Stranger will confirm, is perfectly capable of enduring for long periods of time without the benefit of statesmanship. For the most part, furthermore, political life is not a matter of life and death. When disorder becomes an existential threat law is indeed seen as a constraint; but this experience can be exploited by sophists as well as by true statesmen. Statesmanship not bound by law can only seem acceptable to the many, in other words, in emergency situations.

8.3.3 Law as second best and imitation

The Stranger has shown that the arguments of the many for the rule of law are untenable, at least under the assumption that politics is in a constant state of emergency

\textsuperscript{43} See Rosen, Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics, p. 167. Rosen notes also that ship-travel has a fixed destination, which is not a matter of “philosophical speculation.” The Stranger, however, seems to suggest that the destination of the “ship of state” is the making of citizens better rather than worse (297b2-3).
and the true statesman does have knowledge and virtue. He now re-iterates his contention that the \( \text{πολιτεία} \) ruled by \( \text{ἐπιστήμη} \) and \( \text{νοῦς} \) is to be found among those ruled by one or a few, but that the other \( \text{πολιτείαι} \) are merely imitations of it, some more beautiful, some less (297b7-c4; cf. 293e4-6). This statement now needs the explanation that was postponed by young Socrates’ unease with the possibility that the statesman rules without law; as he says, he did not really understand what the Stranger meant (nor do many of Plato’s interpreters, incidentally).

\( \text{πολιτείαι} \) imitate the genuine regime “beautifully” when they use the “writings” of the best regime, i.e., that ruled by the statesman, or, in other words, when they use those writings that a true statesman would have left for them upon going away had he been present earlier (297d6-8), the reminders they are to use upon the duration of his (possibly permanent) absence, and punish those who violate them with the greatest severity.\(^44\) This, the Stranger says, is the second-best thing.\(^45\)

But this is hardly enough to support the rule of law in most cities, for it seems to require that a statesman give the city its laws anyway. Yet not all laws are created by a Solon or a Lycurgus, as the Stranger will go on to describe in great detail. The argument

\(^{44}\) These laws would thus be adapted to the specific circumstances of the \( \text{πόλεις} \) that the statesman leaves, pace Kochin, "Plato's Eleatic and Athenian Sciences of Politics," pp. 64-69. Furthermore, the true \( \text{πολιτεία} \) does not have laws \textit{per se}, though the statesman uses them to arrange matters in his partial or total absence. Thus, it is only half-right to say, as Rosen, \textit{Plato's Statesman: the Web of Politics}, p. 167, does, that even the “epistemic city” has laws, and thus that “even the city in speech is a defective version of the genuine art of statesmanship.” The laws in question here are precisely those that the statesman gives the city so that it may “make do” while he is away.

\(^{45}\) This seems to me to imply that the interpretation of the “good imitation” of Lane, \textit{Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman}, pp. 158-59, and Rowe, "Killing Socrates: Plato's Later Thoughts on Democracy," cannot be right: the best form of imitation uses the writings of the statesman (or structurally similar ones) and refuses to change them; it does not consist merely in the refusal to change any writings. Pace Lane, I will argue that there is some reason to expect that the laws created by the city and those created by the statesman share in at least \textit{some} content. See also here Hirsch, "\textit{Mimeisthai} und verwandte Ausdrücke in Platons \textit{Politikos}," pp. 186-87.
thus far in fact seems to disqualify *most* law from proper authority. “Normal” law can be neither first nor second best, but perhaps third best, if that, since it does not have its origins in the instructions of a true statesman; yet the Stranger insists (cf. 297e5-6) that the rule of law in general – not just of those laws given to the polis in the past by a true statesman that is not longer present – *is* in fact second best. How can this be so? In order to answer this question, the Stranger needs to turn his attention to the normal origins of law.

8.3.4 The origin of law in the fear of a disjunction between virtue and knowledge

The origins of most law, the Stranger now proceeds to show, lie not in the actual absence of the statesman but in our inability to recognize his knowledge, and in particular in our inability to recognize that his knowledge *includes* his goodness. The argument relies, once again, on images (εἰκόνας 297e8), and in particular on the Stranger’s old standbys, the doctor and the ship captain.

The Stranger asks young Socrates to imagine (298a1ff) a situation in which we46 thought that we were suffering the most terrible things at the hands of the noble (γενναῖον 297e11) ship captain and the doctor worth many doctors (297e11-12). We do not think this, however, because we believe that ship captains and doctors are incompetent, and thus capable of inflicting evil through ignorance; on the contrary, it is their very competence that makes them dangerous in our eyes (the eyes of “everybody”).

46 Note that the Stranger uses the first person plural, emphasizing it with the adjective πάντες, “all of us.” He does not exclude anybody from his argument.
The point should be stressed: the Stranger’s argument assumes that we recognize the competence of the doctor and the captain, as indeed we must: he is not arguing that only a doctor could recognize another doctor, or that only a ship captain could recognize another ship captain. On the contrary, “we” think that precisely because the doctor and the ship captain have knowledge of medicine and navigation they are able to benefit or harm whoever they wish. Furthermore, since they can harm us, we can thus imagine that they will do so if we attribute to them corrupt motives (298a5-b7). We can, for example, imagine that they charge large amounts of money, little of which (in the case of doctors) goes to treatment, while most of it goes to themselves and their dependents; that they can be easily bribed by our relatives or enemies to do us in; and that all the while they can justify (or so we think) what they are doing on the grounds of medical or navigational necessity, even if we cannot see it, i.e., they take advantage of our “ignorance” (which we do not necessarily recognize, however; we just think that they are trying to deceive us, that they think we are ignorant, though we claim to know “better”).

Note that we – everybody – see a disjunction between the technical competence of the doctor or the ship captain and his “moral” competence. Technical knowledge can appear to be amoral in some crucial respect. The Stranger, after all, had felt the need to speak not of a run-of-the-mill captain but of a noble ship captain and a doctor “worth

---

47 As noted earlier, non-doctors recognize doctors on the evidence of their ability to cure them, and non-ship captains recognize ship captains on the evidence of their ability to transport them safely to their destination, evidence that is (relatively) easy to come by and which does not presuppose any special knowledge on the part of the non-doctors or non-ship captains. If only doctors recognized doctors, no science of medicine would be possible and most of us would be at the mercy of quacks all the time.

48 This conception of a τέχνη as the ability to err willingly (rather than unwillingly) is deeply rooted in Greek thought. See, for some discussion, Penner, “Platonic Justice and What We Mean by ‘Justice’,” p. 59, note 24. Penner cites Aristotle Metaphysics XIII.4.1078b26-7 and Nicomachean Ethics V.1.1129a11-17, VI.5.1140b20-25 as well as various Platonic texts, and argues, convincingly in my view, that in Plato it is only the expertise of justice (in this case statesmanship) that escapes this possibility: it is true only for that expertise that no one errs willingly.
many others” (297e11-13), adjectives that, though they may refer to the excellence of the specific competence of the captain and the doctor, suggest rather their moral superiority to other ship captains and doctors, i.e., their special knowledge of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, the noble and the shameful, which does not seem to be identical to their knowledge of medicine or navigation. Furthermore, earlier he had even spoken of a “good” as well as wise statesman (296e3), which suggests that, at least from the point of view of “common sense,” the knowledge of all these people is eminently corruptible. Competent doctors or captains are not necessarily noble or “worth many others,” and it is not entirely clear that competent statesmen are, either, at least from the point of view of the many.

Two questions arise at this point: 1) are we correct in our judgment that technical knowledge is potentially amoral, i.e., are our suspicions warranted even if they happen to be incorrect with respect to a particular person? 2) If technical knowledge is in fact potentially amoral, is statesmanship also potentially amoral, i.e., are competence and virtue separated in the statesman as well as in all the other artisans? These questions are not explicitly treated by the Stranger, but their answers should determine whether or not we think that the response of the many to the possible amorality of technical knowledge that the Stranger describes actually makes sense.

The answer to the first question is a straightforward “yes.” The error of the doctor is characterized as that which makes one ill, not as that which is unjust (296b9-c3), so it is at least theoretically possible for a doctor to unjustly heal somebody; and the Stranger nowhere suggests that the doctor can never willingly err with respect to his own art, i.e.,
that the doctor can never make someone ill willingly by his knowledge.\textsuperscript{49} That this is possible, indeed even likely, stems from the fact that the doctor \textit{qua} doctor does not have the knowledge of the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and the noble and the shameful, and thus may decide to misuse his art (err willingly) in pursuit of some mistaken view of his own good.\textsuperscript{50}

This implies, however, that the answer to the second question is a straightforward “no.” Statesmanship is the \textit{only} art – the only form of knowledge – which cannot err willingly in its own application. For the statesman to err willingly in the use of his τέχνη is to do the unjust rather than the just (cf. \textit{296c9-d5}); but such willing error is possible only on the assumption that the artisan mistakes the just and the unjust, the good and the bad, and the noble and the shameful, in order to gain some imagined advantage from the misuse of his art, something which the statesman \textit{ex hypothesi} does not do. Hence his art is necessarily always used for the good.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, while there are doctors who use their expertise justly, doctors who do not do so, and imitators of doctors, there are only

\textsuperscript{49} See also note 48.

\textsuperscript{50} In the \textit{Republic}, to be sure, Socrates argues, \textit{contra} Thrasymachus, that the true doctor always knows whether or not to treat the patient. But this seems to be an argument that the Stranger would not be willing to grant; and other arguments of Socrates might lead one to the opposite conclusion. On the other hand, the Stranger’s remarks at \textit{300a4-6} suggest that what is at stake is lack of knowledge, not the misuse of knowledge; but this is simply because the passage concerns statesmen, and as we shall presently see, the statesman can never \textit{misuse} his knowledge, so “bad statesmen” are \textit{eo ipso} ignorant (in contrast to the case of doctors, where the expression “bad doctor” might denote both a competent, but corrupt, doctor, and an ignorant quack).

\textsuperscript{51} Perhaps this is why, as I noted at the very beginning of our discussion of the dialogue, statesmanship, along with generalship, is the \textit{only} form of knowledge referred to by the statesman as both an ἐπιστήμη and a τέχνη, and that no other \textit{specific} form of know-how (such as weaving or medicine) is ever referred to as anything other but a τέχνη (see chapter 4, section 5.1.3).
genuine statesmen and people without the expertise of the statesman, i.e., imitators of the statesman. 52

The point is important for our understanding of the argument the Stranger is making. The many are unable to distinguish true statesmen from false statesmen because they labor under the illusion that statesmanship is like all other arts. They thus believe that their (terrible) experiences at the hands of false statesmen (i.e., people without the knowledge of statesmanship) are due not to the fact that such people are ignorant, but to the fact that they misuse their knowledge (something which, on the Stranger’s understanding of true statesmanship, is actually impossible). They thus think (mistakenly in the case of the true statesman) that the costs of the unfettered exercise of this knowledge are much higher than its benefits, and proceed to regulate it by means of law. But it should be stressed that, given this understanding of their own experience, the people think that the purpose of law is to codify the knowledge of the statesman so that it may not be misused, whereas the Stranger has shown that the true knowledge of the statesman cannot be codified in law and cannot be misused. 53

52 That we nevertheless trust alleged doctors and ship captains more than alleged statesmen is due, primarily, to two factors. First, the knowledge of doctors and ship captains is not so scarce that we do not have other options to turn to if we suspect that a given doctor or ship captain is corrupt. We count on “material incentives,” in other words, to keep the practitioners of the τέχναι aligned with our own partial views of the good (e.g., our health or our safe arrival). But this is not the case for the knowledge of the statesman, which cannot be misused; and obviously the sophists, who take his place in his absence, cannot be made to do good by means of “incentives,” since ex hypothesi they do not have the means (the knowledge) to do it. Second, we do regulate doctors and ship captains by means of law, though not to the extent to which the Stranger suggests that law regulates statesmanship. Malpractice suits, for example, were available in ancient times as in modern times, if the evidence of the Laws is to be believed (cf. Laws 932e1-933e5, especially 933d1-7); and such suits do not depend on showing that the person challenged is not a doctor but on showing that he misused his knowledge (for this passage, see also Trevor J. Saunders, Plato's Penal Code: Tradition, Controversy, and Reform in Greek Penology (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 319-23).

53 Thus, pace Gill, "Rethinking Constitutionalism in Statesman 291-303," pp. 297-300, the error of the political community described here is not that the people think that there is no scientific knowledge of politics, but that they think such an art could be codified in law so as to avoid its misuse.
8.3.5 The four stages of law and the autonomy of the arts

Accordingly, the many set up an elaborate system of law, with appropriate enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, restricting the things that the practitioners of the arts under suspicion can or cannot do, i.e., confining their actions to the letter of the law. This system, in their (mistaken) opinion, codifies the knowledge of (in this case) medicine and navigation while preventing its misuse, and it is presented in four steps, all of which have parallels in Athenian legal practice. Each step presents increasing degrees of constraint on the activities of the τέχναι; as the Stranger says, the resolution of the people is to prevent medicine and the art of the ship-captain from being exercised by people who are αὐτοκράτορ (298c1), self-rulers.54

8.3.5.1 The assembly: the codification of the knowledge of medicine and navigation into simple rules

The first step in this process of eliminating the “self-rule” of the arts – in particular the arts of medicine and navigation – is taken by the assembly, and results in what we normally call law. The assembly attempts to distill the knowledge of the doctor and the captain into simple rules, specifying the sorts of tools they may use, the way these

54 The word αὐτοκράτορ had emerged in the myth (274a5) to describe the way in which the universe and its parts were supposed to exercise their care over themselves by themselves, that is, in a self-directed fashion. The removal of αὐτοκρατεία from the τέχναι thus implies their subjection to somebody or something else. This is not, by itself, incorrect; as we have already indicated (chapter 5 and chapter 7), the τέχναι should find themselves under the authority of the statesman (cf. 304a6ff), which is another way of saying that only the statesman could be αὐτοκράτορ, since only his knowledge is fully self-directing. But the people place all the τέχναι under the authority of law, not of statesmanship.
may be used, and the typical actions that are to be taken in typical circumstances. As we
saw earlier (section 8.2), however, this attempt is doomed to fail, for it is mistaken about
the nature of art, which cannot be fully specified as a set of simple rules.

Furthermore, since the point of making the law is to prevent the misuse of
knowledge while reaping its benefits, the assembly thus codifies the practices with which
it is familiar and rejects those with which it is not familiar, considering them dangerous
innovations. It can thus at best enshrine some past “state of the art” of knowledge
(medicine and navigation, in the example), stopping its further development or even
actively setting the clock back. 55 The point should be stressed: the people, in codifying
the arts of doctor and ship-captain, do not simply invent random practices, but look to the
practices of those who are recognized as doctors or ship captains – who, by assumption in
the story, are doctors and ship captains – and choose to codify only those practices of real
doctors and ship captains with which they are long familiar, such as fighting at sea with
“long ships,” an archaic practice (298d4). They act by experience (cf. 300b1-2), not by
knowledge, but their experience does capture some actual practices of those who have
knowledge, and the law they create thus reflects, like a photograph or a painting of a
doctor or a ship-captain at work, some real aspect of the doctor or the captain’s practice.
The laws are thus like old “snapshots” of the practice of real knowers, phantastic
imitations56 of the knowledge of the artisan rather than live forms of knowledge (cf.
300b5-7; see also chapter 2, sections 2.2 and 2.3.1).57

55 The Stranger emphasizes the resistance to innovation that such a process might generate by
talking of “long ships” and κυρβεῖς, a kind of ancient pine tablets for inscribing laws. See Skemp, Plato's
Statesman, p. 205, note 1, and Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note ad loc.

56 “Phantastic” since they look to the people to be real images of knowledge even though they are
not; they are distorted by the prism of familiarity. Palumbo, "Realtà e apparenza nel Sofista e nel Politico,"
Further confirmation of this point is given by the fact that the Stranger stresses that participation in this assembly is not restricted to those without knowledge of the arts to be regulated (namely medicine and navigation, in the example), but allows (though does not privilege) people with the arts to be codified to make their voices heard (298d5-7). This of course means that even though the law cannot fully embody knowledge (for knowledge is not codifiable in simple rules) or even be the kind of “picture” of the art that the artisan could make (the kind of “picture” a doctor or a ship captain could make for the use of others in their absence, i.e., an eikastic imitation of his art), it can contain traces of it (after all, it is written in part by doctors or navigators, and at any rate by people with various τέχναι). The greater the influence of doctors and ship-captains in crafting these laws about medicine and navigation, the greater the closeness of the laws of the people to the laws a great doctor or a ship captain would have constructed on his own in case he needed to do so, i.e., the greater the number of practices closer to the “state of the art” that would be enshrined in writing. Hence the laws of the assembly, if it includes some people with knowledge, can be said to come “as far as possible” (cf. 300c5-7) from those who know (i.e., as far as possible given their limited numbers in the assembly).58

---

57 Contra the interpretation of 300c5-7 by Rowe, "Killing Socrates: Plato's Later Thoughts on Democracy," and his restatement in Rowe, "The treatment of non-ideal constitutions in the Politicus," pp. 4-5.

58 Pace Rowe, "The treatment of non-ideal constitutions in the Politicus," p. 2ff., where he argues that “as far as possible” refers to “written,” i.e., the things of those who know are written “as far as possible.” But the Stranger has shown that the things of those who know cannot be written to any degree; opinion can be written down, even true opinion, but not knowledge. Rowe’s rejection of the possibility of
Such laws may restrict innovation, but they do not yet destroy the τέχναι in question; in fact, even in modern societies, which are not known for discouraging innovation, such regulation can be encountered fairly often. At any rate, this kind of regulation does not yet imply that anybody may practice the τέχναι in question, only that those who are its recognized practitioners must practice them in accordance with certain rules, a proposition that need not strike us as absurd. Indeed, it strikes young Socrates as merely “strange” or “out of place” (298e4), but not as intolerable.

8.3.5.2 Elections: the opening of the practice of the arts to everybody

But now the Stranger introduces a further restriction on the τέχναι. The people who are to practice the τέχναι are not those normally recognized as doctors or captains, or those who have had the requisite education, but people selected, by the more or less random process of election and the certainly random process of the lot, from among everybody (298e5-9), to serve as “doctors” or “ship captains” for a period of a year. It is at this point that the Stranger’s example starts to seem truly comic; for we do not normally think that doctors should be selected at random or by election from among the people, including people who know nothing of medicine; and this is reflected in young Socrates’ response, suggesting that if this were the case the situation would be harder than if there merely existed some regulation or codification of technical activity (298e10). Once again, the people’s misunderstanding of the nature of knowledge affects

“knowledge as far as possible” seems to me unjustified: the resolutions of the assembly, where only some have knowledge, are clearly the product of knowledge “as far as possible,” i.e., depending on the extent to which the people are able to listen to those with knowledge.
the kind of institutions they create: thinking, erroneously, that the knowledge of the arts can be distilled into simple rules, they now believe that such knowledge is available to anyone who can read, and hence (logically) that anybody can practice it.

This is not yet entirely incompatible with Athenian practice, which regulated medical malpractice and appointed public doctors and naval commanders by election, though even the Athenians discriminated between offices where competence was required (and election the preferred method of selection) and offices where competence was not thought to be required, or thought to be available to any literate male (and lot the preferred method of selection). But this emphasis on the selection of competent doctors or ship captains by lot as well as by election, joined to the earlier restriction on their activities by written rules, is enough to prompt young Socrates to say that if this were the case the situation would be harder than if there merely existed some regulation or codification of technical activity (298e10).

8.3.5.3 Courts: the examination of everybody’s practice of art by anybody

Yet this is not enough, for it does not take into account the original suspicion of the people, namely, that knowledge may be misused. If knowledge is available to everybody in the codification of the laws, then it follows that it may be misused by anybody. The people thus create courts and other mechanisms which further restrict the

59 See the interesting remarks on this point by Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: a Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 305-06. The Stranger makes no great distinction here between lot and election, presumably to sharpen his point, though it should be noted that in the fiction he constructs “election” would have a greater chance of leading to the selection of people of recognized competence; it is the use of the lot that is especially problematic. For the fact that public doctors were appointed by the assembly in Athens, see Skemp, *Plato’s Statesman*, p. 124, note to 259a1ff.
self-rule of the art. Malpractice suits and the like are allowed, a fact that young Socrates, who is imagining this, greets with what amounts to a dismissive “serves them well,” saying that people who would willingly practice the τέχναι under such conditions would most justly suffer whatever punishments are meted out to them (299a8-b1).\footnote{Cf. Voegelin, Order and History, p. III.165: “Even the boys of the Academy know that no self-respecting person will take office under the contemporary government of laws (298e-299b).”}

But are these punishments truly “just”? Young Socrates does not appear to be entirely wrong about this: if people willingly submit to practice the τέχναι under these conditions, it is as if they had entered into a contract, and the contract includes the possibility that they may be hauled before a court of justice, having been accused of having broken the law, and perhaps convicted. This is the reason why, under current circumstances, Socrates refused to participate in politics; he was not willing to offer his wisdom to the polis under these conditions, preferring to converse with the young privately.\footnote{Cf. also Strauss, "Plato," pp. 227-28.} The possible substantive wrongness of the conviction does not mean that the punishment is not just so long as the correct procedures were followed and the person indicted willingly practiced his τεχνη publicly under such conditions (cf. Crito 49e-53a).

From the point of view of the city, in other words, considerations of justice can only be settled procedurally. At the same time, the possibility that the laws may themselves be unjust or the jury improperly swayed does seem to cast doubt on the justice of the entire system. This question is raised most pointedly by the detour the Stranger’s argument now takes. For he will now appear to describe the case of Socrates.
The Stranger now says that it still seems necessary to the people to set up another law in addition to the laws they have described already, namely the laws regulating the activity of the τέχνας and the laws restricting the power of their practitioners. This is the law restricting inquiry on the part of the already regulated practitioners (299b2-3d1). While the first law codified the practice of the τέχνη (was in fact nothing other than the codification, or image, of the τέχνη that the assembly created) and the second and third established enforcement mechanisms and regulated the power of the practitioners of the arts, the whole system of law thus far had not entirely closed the way to change in the law by means of inquiry. One could well imagine the (regulated) practitioners of the τέχνας introducing proposals in the assembly for the people to judge. If the people accepted them, these proposals would then become part of the established law. But this new law regulates not only the practice of the τέχνας but their very development and further codification.

According to the Stranger, this new law prevents inquiry into the matters already codified in law, i.e., it gives finality to the knowledge supposedly embedded in the laws passed by the assembly. The law thus presents itself not only as a codification of the knowledge of the ship-captain or doctor, but as a complete codification of this knowledge. Those who, contrary to it, engage in research into these matters, thinking that such knowledge as is embedded in the law is not complete but can be increased, are called μετεωρολόγοι and garrulous sophists (cf. 299b7-8), as the elder Socrates was called when he engaged in inquiry about the good, the just, and the noble, and accused of
corrupting the young by persuading them to act contrary to the established nautical or medicinal practice (299b8), just as Socrates was accused of corrupting the young. They are thus accused of persuading the young to set themselves up as συτοκράτορες, self-rulers, and therefore of violating the very intention of the laws, namely, that no practitioner of any τέχνη is to be συτοκράτορ, self-ruling in it (298c1).

It is clear that the Strange does not literally mean that a “new” law is set up to prevent inquiry, but that it is the nature of law itself that prevents such inquiry. Since it claims to be the complete codification of the knowledge of the ship-captain, doctor, or statesman, i.e., the complete account of the healthy, the nautical or the good and the just, law as such prevents inquiry into those matters over which it sets itself up as authoritative. Yet law is in truth no more than an imperfect image of such knowledge, and hence at best a partial and incomplete account of the healthy, the nautical, or the good and the just. This fact about the law is especially significant when the knowledge that the law claims to embody is that of the statesman, for then the law would present itself as the complete account of the good, the just, and the noble. But if the law could, per impossibile, offer such an account, then further inquiry into these things would be rightly seen as corrupting. Yet even when such inquiry is not corrupting, it always threatens the authority of the law, and it is therefore, even under the best of circumstances, politically delicate.

It is not entirely clear, however, that all law must present itself as a complete codification of the knowledge of the practice it regulates, and in particular of

62 Lane, Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman, note 37, p. 154, notes that “[t]he reference [to Socrates’ trial] is substantively flawed, for Athens had no such laws against investigation, nor was Socrates charged with breaking such a law; one implication might be that the city's law against inventing new gods amounted to such a ban.”
statesmanship.\textsuperscript{63} The fact that the Stranger thinks it necessary to explicitly say that an additional law is needed (rather than the nature of law itself) restricting inquiry into the healthy and the medicinal and the navigational and the nautical once again suggests a fundamental difference between statesmanship and all the other arts. Only statesmanship seems to be \textit{αὐτοκράτωρ} in every respect, putting at its command all the other arts, whereas the rest of the arts can be self-ruling only in restricted spheres. Hence the law of the city does not always deign to regulate inquiry into medicine and navigation (though it may regulate other aspects of the practice of medicine or navigation), whereas it necessarily presents itself as an authoritative view of what is \textit{just} and \textit{good} in the city, preventing, by force if necessary, all activity that understands the good differently.\textsuperscript{64}

There can be no Socratic humility to the law if it is to be effective: the law never says that it does not know the just and the good, though it may sometimes say that it is indifferent with respect to some competing accounts of them.

\textsuperscript{63} Lane, \textit{Method and Politics in Plato's Statesman}, p. 161, notes that later none of the “law-obedient constitutions is said to ban investigation,” which suggest that this feature of law is not strictly necessary. Strauss, "Plato,” p. 228, also notes that “Socrates obeyed without flinching the law which commanded him to die because of his alleged corruption of the young; yet he would not have obeyed a law formally forbidding him the pursuit of philosophy,” i.e., would not have obeyed a law forbidding inquiry. All of this suggests that the Stranger sees law as leading in this direction by its own inner logic, but nevertheless being able to stop short of it. The Stranger is thus prophetically claiming that it was in a sense the \textit{excess} of law, the inability of the Athenians to bear with Socrates’ investigation of the just and the good, that leads to killing Socrates; this was law that was not able to keep to due measure. But this does not mean, \textit{pace} Rowe, "Killing Socrates: Plato's Later Thoughts on Democracy," that all law will lead to the death of Socrates; only that this is an inherent tendency in the law. Cf. also Voegelin, \textit{Order and History}, p. III.165: the “culmination of lawfulness” is the “murder of Socrates,” but, I would add, not \textit{measured} lawfulness. There is a mean of lawfulness too.

\textsuperscript{64} This is so even under a modern understanding of the proper role of law, as the critics of John Rawls have amply demonstrated. The law necessarily postulates its own view of the good and the just and sets it down as authoritative (punishing those who overstep the limits of the law), even if the view of the good embedded in law is “permissive” enough to allow many others to pursue their own interests according to their lights, i.e., even if the law is indifferent regarding (some) competing accounts of the just and the good.
This necessary finality of law regarding the just and the good is also the reason why the law of the city, which claims to embody the statesman’s knowledge (in contrast to the law the Stranger is describing in his comic story, which claims to embody the doctor’s and ship-captain’s knowledge) treats other arts differently from statesmanship.65 The law (normally) does not prevent inquiry into the nature of the healthy or the nautical, since the healthy or the nautical are to a great extent independent of the understanding of the good and the just embodied in the law. Hence the law does not (normally) destroy such arts by preventing inquiry into their objects, but merely aims at keeping medicine within its own sphere of competence, i.e., preventing doctors from thinking that they can use their τέχνη for the pursuit of whatever partial visions of the good they might have (doing unjust and shameful things, for example) contrary to whatever total vision of the good the laws themselves establish. The object of statesmanship, by contrast, is the good, the just, and the noble, of which the law claims to be the comprehensive account, and hence something emphatically not independent of what it says. Hence the law implicitly regulates all inquiry into such things, and punishes any new understandings of it. But statesmanship cannot be so regulated without destroying it: law and statesmanship are therefore incompatible, whereas law (or rather, the law of the city) and the other arts are not.

65 Cf. Lane, Method and Politics in Plato’s Statesman, note 37, p. 154. There were no laws against inquiry into medicine or navigation in Athens, though such laws are not unknown elsewhere. In 15th and 16th century China, for example, the emperors successively banned not only all building of multi-masted ships but even all investigation into such ship-building, effectively putting China at a disadvantage vis à vis the European powers that were only then coming into their own. But even then, the ban was implemented with a view to the (presumed) good of the Chinese empire (ocean-going voyages, according to the emperors and their courts, wasted resources and corrupted people in return for little of interest), not out of fear that ship-builders would misuse their knowledge. Cf. David S. Landes, The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are So Rich and Some So Poor (New York: Norton, 1998), pp. 93-98. Landes also discusses other examples of bans on investigation throughout human history; the debate over stem-cell research and human cloning might eventually lead to such a ban for the sake of the (presumed) care of the polis as a whole.
The Stranger concludes his argument about the law by reciting a list of seven τέχναι and kinds of τέχναι and asking young Socrates to consider what would happen to life if all of them were regulated in the four ways he has described. Young Socrates, in an unintentional echo of Socrates’ famous speech in the *Apology*, says (299e6-10) that it is clear that all the τέχναι would be completely destroyed and that they would not emerge in the future due to the obstacles placed in the way of seeking by the hindering νόμος; so that life, which was already hard, would become completely ἀβίωτος, unlivable.

Unlike young Socrates, however, the elder Socrates will stress that it is not properly the life without the arts – or at least the arts in their perfected form – that is unlivable, but the unexamined life, i.e., the life without inquiry into the good, the just, and the noble, just as it was not the mere regulation of the arts in the Stranger’s story (up to and including the selection of practitioners by lot and their subjection to judicial review) that made life unlivable, but the prohibition of private inquiry. As we learned from the myth, human beings in general need the τέχναι to make life livable, though they seem to do well enough without statesmanship itself; yet the elder Socrates will soon claim that without at least inquiry into the objects of statesmanship life cannot be made livable. The

---

66 The structure of the list is of some interest, but has little bearing on this argument. For some reflections on it, see Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.137; he relates it to the seven sorts of regimes.

67 Cf. *Apology* 38a5-6; ὃ δὲ ἀνεξέχειντος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπως, the unexamined life is not livable for a human being. For more on the significance of young Socrates’ echo of the elder Socrates, see Miller Jr., *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*, pp. 99-100. Miller argues that young Socrates, with this response, passes the “test of recognition” that the elder Socrates had set up at the beginning of the dialogue, and thus demonstrates his philosophical nature. For a less sanguine view of young Socrates’ nature, see Stern, *The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman'*, note 44, p. 273.

68 See Stern, *"The Rule of Wisdom and the Rule of Law in Plato's 'Statesman',"* p. 273.
care of human beings by the arts comes to naught if we do not inquire also about the good towards which all the arts aim, and such inquiry necessarily involves questioning, however subtly, the foundations of all law. The law, Socrates and the Stranger both seem to imply, must thus find a way to accommodate some form of inquiry into the objects of which it claims to be the authoritative account. One institutional form for such inquiry is provided by the Athenian Stranger’s account of the nocturnal council in the *Laws*.

8.3.6 The imitative character of law and its sources. Experiential knowledge.

But can there be anything worse than the complete regulation of τέχνη? The Stranger now says that there is (300a1-7). Even the regulation of τέχνη and the prohibition of inquiry is preferable to the possibility that a practitioner of one of the τέχναι, selected by lot or elected, and actually ignorant of the τέχνη he is to practice, were to disregard the laws for the sake of some partial vision of his own good (such as, for instance, his private profit or pleasure). The evil in that case, the Stranger emphasizes (with young Socrates’ agreement) would be greater than the evil resulting from the rule of law.

Note that this conclusion is not stated specifically in reference to statesmanship, but generally with reference to all the τέχναι. This means that even the situation that young Socrates has just described as “unlivable” is actually better than a situation in which all of these things hold (namely, all the τέχναι are regulated and inquiry is prohibited) but the artisans act for the sake of their private profit, misusing their τέχναι or acting without knowledge for the sake of some private gain (300a6). In other words,
the rule of law over all the τέχναi is better than the rule of the private visions of the good of individual artisans.

The reason for this is not immediately clear. The discussion above, however, suggests two distinct ways in which the rule of law – or at least of law that meets some preconditions implicit in the Stranger’s story – is always better than the rule of those without knowledge or who misuse their knowledge.

First, the law emerged from the story as an image of knowledge properly used. The people selected the practices of the possessor of knowledge that were familiar to them and that had benefited them in the past to create this image, which thus retained a real connection to knowledge and its proper uses. We should stress that in the Stranger’s story the people recognized the possessor of knowledge but failed to trust him. They thought they could preserve the benefits of his knowledge while preventing its misuse by codifying it in law, something that the Stranger showed was impossible. What they codified, however, were actual medicinal and navigational practices, which, even if obsolete, were part of the knowledge of navigation or medicine at some point. To ignore the practices thus codified is to lose this connection to real knowledge and hence to do harm.69

One may argue that this may well be the case for the Stranger’s story, which speaks of laws controlling medicine and navigation, but cannot be the case for the law of the city, i.e., the law that pretends to embody the knowledge of the statesman. Such law is at best the result of trial and error (ἐκ πείρας πολλῆς 300b1-2) and the “elegant” advice

69 To be sure, this does not mean that the people have knowledge of medicine or navigation, only that they can tell, with tolerable accuracy, who is a doctor or a ship-captain and who is not (cf. Laws 950b5-c2); they err in this only when the doctor tries a new medical technique or the ship-captain uses a new tactic of naval combat.
of dubious counselors; it is not the result of a selection from the practices of actual
statesmen, who cannot be easily distinguished from sophists anyway. Yet even here,
insofar as the counselors who influence the shape of the law have some knowledge (as I
already argued, section 8.3.5.1), then the “trial and error” of which the Stranger speaks
cannot but yield images of practices that a statesman might use. “Experience” or “trial
and error” is most certainly not knowledge (which anyway could not be embodied in
law), but there is no reason why it cannot occasionally produce what in the Theaetetus
Socrates called “true opinion;” and “occasionally” is all that is needed here. In fact, as the
Athenian Stranger shows in deed, much law created by trial and error (Athenian law)
does image some practices that a true statesman would use in some circumstances.

Finally, the law of the city, in presenting itself as a complete account of the good,
the just, and the noble, keeps any practitioner of any τέχνη from misusing it for his own
partial vision of the good, just as the law of the statesman would do. It thus keeps the arts
within their own competence, weaving together the forms of care represented by all the
arts of the city for the sake of its vision of the good of the polis. This vision may be
substantially wrong, but according to the Stranger’s argument any account of the good set
in law is substantially wrong, including the statesman’s own. Law simply cannot be a
correct account of the good and the just, regardless of whether or not it is created by the
statesman. Yet insofar as the law of the city keeps the artisans from overstepping their
own competence (and thinking they know about the good and the just when they do not),
it thus does substantially the same thing as the law that a true statesman would give to the
city. The laws then essentially say that every person should do his own job within the
bounds of the city’s “knowledge” (really opinion) of the good, the just and the noble, and
this job is defined to a great extent by what the laws say. The only difference between the laws of the city and the laws of the statesman in this respect is that the laws of the statesman may be correct for a longer period of time, or be more correct for the specific circumstances in which they were created; but from the point of view of true knowledge, they are both insufficient, insubstantial images. They, too, in the absence of the true statesman, become “idols” of the good, the just, and the noble; yet without such idols not even the makeshift web of care formed by the artisans in the city in the absence of the statesman would hold, and human beings would perish in the attempt of every possessor of knowledge to misuse it for his or her own mistaken purposes.

To be sure, the entire system of law that the Stranger describes seems a little too conservative. It is better to wait for a savior than to attempt gradual change, he seems to say, because any proposed changes under current circumstances will be motivated by private profit and led by complete ignorance; a sentiment that seems somewhat out of keeping with his own argument, which seemed to indicate that so long as the law is created by a process of informed deliberation, it approximates some form of true opinion. Whether there is some way of defending the rule of law without forbidding all inquiry is not addressed in the Statesman; for that, we have to turn to the Laws. In that dialogue, as I have already indicated, the Athenian Stranger cautiously institutionalizes some forms of inquiry (especially in the regulations concerning travel, the treatment of

70 Cf. Republic 433a-434d. This is the definition of justice that Socrates and Glaucon and Adeimantus arrive at.

71 Cf. Voegelin, Order and History, pp. III.163-64, especially 164: “The conservative counsel that the polis will do best if it adheres to its ancient laws and customs does not mean, of course, that Plato has suddenly found good points in a government of laws but that he considers the mimetic polis so bad that, whatever the citizens will do, they will change things for the worse.”

72 Plato has often been criticized for the extreme conservatism of this position; see, for example, Annas and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, p. 68, note 65.
atheism, and the nocturnal council in books X and XII) and thus avoids the rather too extensive conservatism of the Stranger’s argument, though the city of the Laws is still quite conservative by modern standards.73

Nevertheless, even on its own terms, the Stranger’s argument is more powerful than it has been given credit for. To see this, note that in the situation described by young Socrates as “unlivable,” all that would be left of knowledge would be the fixed images of it in the law. But these images would at least be reliable ways of dealing with the hostility of nature so long as the circumstances under which these do represent forms of knowledge do not change drastically, something which could not be said of the blind and self-interested groping that the Stranger suggests is the alternative in the absence of knowledge. Thus, for example, so long as the circumstances under which battles with long ships are an effective means of repelling aggressors at sea do not change (by the introduction elsewhere of other, deadlier kinds of ships, for example) then the use of long ships, prescribed by law, is not nearly as damaging to the city as the ignorant attempt to do battle with any other random ship. Indeed, if the consequences of error are dire and

73 The exact degree of conservatism in the Laws is much debated. Among those who believe that the laws of the city in the Laws can scarcely ever be changed (and thus that the regime of the Laws would not be an improvement over the regime of the Statesman) we find Richard F. Stalley, An Introduction to Plato's Laws (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett, 1983), and Maurice Vanhoutte, La Philosophie Politique de Platon dans les "Lois" (Louvain: Publications universitaires de Louvain, 1954). A defense of the contrasting position (which I take to be correct, namely, that the conservatism of the Laws is not nearly as extensive as the conservatism of the Statesman) is to be found in Christopher Bobonich, Plato's Utopia Recast: His later Ethics and Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 395-408, and Glenn R. Morrow, Plato's Cretan City: a Historical Interpretation of the Laws (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960). One could add to their arguments that the nocturnal council would lose much of its point if Vanhoutte and Stalley were correct.
circumstances relatively stable, then the Stranger’s argument becomes very powerful: a conservatism of experience is then *always* better than ignorant and lawless innovation.74

The Stranger’s argument also implies that there are three sorts of πολιτεία or “political orders,” as he now goes on to describe. The first is the πολιτεία that the statesman himself rules directly, and that is the kind of πολιτεία where there are no laws properly speaking, since in it all laws – pictures of knowledge – are revocable in the presence of living knowledge. The second is the imitation of the first kind of πολιτεία in law, a “picture” of knowledge in action preserved by the action of the citizens in the absence of the embodied representative of living knowledge. Though there are real differences between the kind of picture that a true statesman would create of his own practice and the kind of picture that an assembly would create on the basis of *its* experience of political knowledge (i.e., of its “view” of the practice of those who are recognized as having political knowledge), in the final instance they are both pictures of knowledge, “inquiring” imitations of the real thing (*Sophist* 267e1-3 and chapter 2, section 3.3.2), rather than the real thing, and hence liable to become quickly obsolete and even harmful without the living presence of the statesman. The third πολιτεία is the one where there is no longer even a picture of knowledge in action, as the laws are disregarded or changed on the basis of personal whim. This πολιτεία is an imitation of the characteristic gesture of the true statesman (rule without laws) but it is an empty

---

74 A “conservatism” born of experience has in fact helped some societies survive for relatively long periods of time in precarious environments, though it has often ultimately led to their demise, just as the Stranger would predict. Cf. the account of the survival and eventual demise of the Norse in Greenland in Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005), especially chapters 7 and 8; see pp. 239-240 for the question of Norse conservatism in the face of climatic and environmental change. Norse conservatism was necessary in a harsh environment were the margin for error was small, but it became a liability once circumstances changed (climate, trading relations, and the technology of neighboring Inuit communities).
imitation, since it is no longer even a picture of his knowledge. It is like a snapshot of the wrong thing. The first kind of imitation is thus preferable, as closer to the truth of the statesman’s presence, than the second; as imitations, however, the Stranger will soon suggest that neither of them really is a πολιτεία but merely a στασιωτεία, a factional order for the sake of a part and not the whole (303b8-c5).

The Stranger uses this insight now to re-classify all the πολιτείαι (301a6-c9). There is now only one true regime, as we have seen, namely kingship, and the other regimes divide according to whether or not they imitate the true one by holding to their own laws or by disregarding them. The first form of imitation is further characterized as a form of rule by means of δόξα, opinion (301b2), whereas the second is a form of rule by a certain kind of desire and ignorance (301c3). These distinctions yield seven regimes, namely the true one plus six imitations, but only five names (301b7-8), since the kingship of the true statesman and the kingship of the imitative king share a name, and democracy, whether according to law or not, still has only one name.

8.3.7 The difficulty of recognizing the true statesman

The Stranger now turns to explain why only five regimes are recognized by human beings, rather than the six/seven he has described (301c6-e5). The explanation centers on the difficulty human beings have believing that a true statesman can exist, i.e., on the difficulty for human beings to believe in the conjunction of technical competence

75 There are some real textual problems with this passage, but this is how I interpret it. For some discussion, see D. B. Robinson, "The New Oxford Text of Plato's Statesman: Editor's Comments," in Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), p. 41, and the apparatus criticus of the Oxford text.
and moral ἐπιστήμη, a point we have already emphasized. They think such competence as a statesman would have would be necessarily misused in harmful ways to them, not understanding that the statesman’s competence, being the knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble, cannot be misused. They are thus distrustful, δυσχερανάντων (301c9), i.e., they find a single monarch of that sort hard to take, just as young Socrates had found the fact that the true statesman rules without law hard to take (cf. δυσχεραίνεις 294a2), and do not believe that anybody could ever be worthy of such an ἀρχή, such position, so as to be able and willing to rule with both virtue and knowledge.

At any rate, the distrust of the people is well-founded given the evidence available to them; as the Stranger says, kings do not emerge among human beings as among bees, immediately identifiable as such for their evident excellence in body and mind (301d8-e2). The king really is like a god among human beings (cf. 303b4-5, where the Stranger makes the comparison explicitly), though a hidden god, as we argued in our presentation of the myth, a god that returns to impose order in the city but must always recede into invisibility (see chapter 5, section 5.6.3). Only situations of extreme emergency would allow the king to emerge to impose his order, presenting the people with the alternative of either complete death or trust in the statesman, just as it is only the near-death of the universe that makes the god return to re-order the cosmos.
8.4 The strength of the polis

The inevitable non-recognition of the true statesman by the people, and thus their necessary reliance on law, is the reason, the Stranger suggests, why cities are full of evils (301e6ff). This is not surprising, since such complete reliance on law would destroy the products of any other τέχνη (302a1-2; cf. 299e6-10); hence what is deserving of wonder (and thus of philosophical reflection, we should note) is the fact that cities are not easily destroyed, that in fact they are strong by nature (302a3-4), at least some of them, despite suffering all sorts of evils. Some cities in fact endure for a long time without being overturned (it is understood that these are the cities that are the good imitations of the true πολιτεία, though the Stranger does not say so) while those cities governed by people who think they have the επιστήμη of statesmanship but in fact do not have it are constantly being overturned (302a5-b3).

The cities that endure thus have within themselves a certain form of the Socratic “I know only that I do not know,” whereas the other cities do not know that they do not know, thus displaying the worst kind of ignorance. The strength by nature of the cities is manifested in the healthy fear of the citizens, who, knowing only that they do not know whether or not the knowledge of the statesman actually exists, refuse to think they do know when they do not, and thus prefer to put their trust in laws that are designed to prevent the misuse of knowledge by people without virtue. It is the nature of human beings – their natural distrust of the possibility of the coincidence of virtue and knowledge, the evidence of which is all around them in the possible amorality of all technical knowledge – that leads them (in some cases) to construct cities that, in spite of
everything, endure for a long time because they happen to hit upon the functional equivalents of laws that a true statesman would have established for the duration of his absence. The Stranger does not continue this fruitful line of thought; the strength of the city by nature is left as something that is θαυμαστόν, worthy of wonder and thus of philosophical reflection, but also something for a different time.

8.5 The best imitative polis and the self-restraint of lawful regimes

Instead, he now turns to something he terms explicitly a digression (πάρεργον 302b8), yet a digression of the utmost “practical” importance for the life of human beings (302b8-9): which of these imitative πολιτείαι are best for the common life of human beings (συζήν 302b6).

The basic argument is quite simple (301c1-303b7): considering all six imitative forms of government, the two dimensions of power (cf. 303a4-7) and closeness to the true πολιτεία determine the degree to which a common life is tolerable in them. The rule of one is highest in power, that of many lowest; the rule of law is closer to the true πολιτεία, that of human beings without knowledge farthest. This leads to a complete ranking of all the regimes: lawful monarchy first (closest to the true πολιτεία and highest in power to do good), lawful oligarchy (aristocracy) second, lawful democracy third, unlawful democracy fourth, unlawful oligarchy fifth, and tyranny last (farthest from the true πολιτεία and greatest in power to do evil). The best place to have a common life is under a kingship according to law, and the worst is under a tyrant. Conversely, it is better to live under a lawless democracy than under tyranny; democracy is the “middle”
or “mean” form (303a2-3), the natural outgrowth, one might say, of the general distrust of the coincidence of τεχνη and virtue that gives rise to the law itself.

The position of democracy within the ranking of regimes deserves further thought. As we saw, the Stranger’s hypothetical “story” about the origins of the rule of law took democracy, not monarchy or, despite some minor references, oligarchy, as its paradigmatic case. Democracy was paradigmatic because it showed precisely how the fear of the disjunction between τεχνη and virtue gives rise to law, and how this fear is assuaged by restrictions on the power and knowledge of all artisans.

From this point of view, monarchy, even if law-abiding, always falls under the suspicion that the monarch might one day abuse his power and knowledge; hence lawful monarchy, i.e., kingship, shares a name with the true πολιτεία, suspicion of which gave rise to law. Democracy, on the other hand, is also ambiguous since both lawful and lawless democracy share a name. Though the Stranger does not discuss the reasons for this, the fact that both forms of democracy share the same name seems to be a reflection of the blurring between the rule of law and lawlessness in that regime: what the assembly, in its fear, makes, it can also unmake. Democracies are not particularly conservative places. It makes a difference for living whether the laws are or are not respected there, but this difference is not manifested clearly enough for people in general to come up with different names for the two forms of democracy.

The double ambiguity (the same name for the true regime and the regime of the lawful monarch as well as the same name for both lawful and lawless democracy) thus

76 Cf. Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.124, though on different grounds.

77 See Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, pp. III.124-25.
points to what we might call the fragility of the law. Though the Stranger does not elaborate on this point, all monarchy already points to the demise of law: in its bad form this is by definition; in its good form by its closeness to the lawless rule of the true statesman, which (we might suspect) the lawful king is always tempted to imitate, despite his lack of knowledge. A lawful king must have veritably Socratic self-control, i.e., must know that he does not know how to rule, a difficult thing for a monarch to know.78

Democracy, from which law emerges most clearly, also points to the demise of law. The confusion of names between the two forms of democracy is not accidental, but the result of the necessary lack of self-control of democratic politics. The multitude can always be convinced, sometimes with good reason, to change the laws. The Eleatic Stranger has no theoretical argument for a regime that preserves the law better than others; for that, we would have to turn to the Athenian Stranger in the Laws and the doctrine of the mixed regime. This is another way in which the natural “strength” of the polis was merely characterized as wonderful (302a3), i.e., as reflection-inducing, though such reflection was not further pursued. Reflection on that strength should lead (and it does not do so here) to a consideration of what forms of law, and under what conditions, make a city and regime “strong” and “stable.”

Finally, we must note the shift from common life (συνή 302b6) to merely life in the lawless regimes (303b1-3). The absence of law means, in a certain sense, the absence of community; the regime without law is clearly a factional regime, as the Stranger notes (303c2), though his charge applies to all imitative regimes, whether lawful or not. Hence

only a privately good life, rather than true common life, is possible in the lawless regimes.

The factional character of both lawful and lawless regimes presents a problem, however. It is easy to understand why there is no true community in the lawless regimes, since the law does not knit them together in any meaningful way. But how are the lawful regimes factional? The reason for this will not become clear until the end of the dialogue, but we may anticipate it here: since the law is merely a “snapshot” of the knowledge of the statesman, and this knowledge is ultimately a “balancing” of temporally significant tendencies (moderation and courage), then any form of law will enshrine a “bias” towards one or the other tendency. Such a bias, however, means that these are not really orders for the sake of the whole but ultimately for the sake of a part. Yet we could still say that the rule of law allows what is by all rights a factional regime to form, for a time at least, a genuine community, allowing for true living together, though we should have to say that the instability of the rule of law in such circumstances (when one “faction” rules over another) eventually destroys whatever community emerges in these regimes. We would need the doctrine of the mixed constitution and the Athenian Stranger, once again, to see how to move beyond a purely “factional” regime.

The digression on law concludes here with the complete separation of the “false rulers” from the true rulers. It should be noted that at no point in this discussion have these false rulers been denied a certain form of knowledge that contributes directly to the making of the web of politics. Clearly this is the imitative τέχνη, namely sophistry (303c4-5). This form of sophistry directly “contributes” to the making of the web of

_____________________

79 See Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.135.
politics essentially by ruling the city in the statesman’s absence. Such rule, furthermore, is necessary simply because the statesman must of necessity be for the most part absent from the city, just as the presence of slaves or their equivalents, merchants, bureaucrats, and priests was seen to be necessary. The city needs illusion in the absence of the statesman; and this illusion should be based, as much as possible, on true opinion and experience. It needs “ironical” false statesmen, who suspect that they really do not know, and hence are reluctant to change the law, the idol of the city.

The city ruled by law is like the universe when devoid of a god; it can try to remember the instruction of the statesman, i.e., hold on to the basic principle underlying the rule of law, or it can forget it, and thus fall into death and destruction (cf. chapter 5, section 5.6.1). With the passing of time it also becomes harder and harder for the city to hold on to its laws without change, as they become less and less adequate to its actual situation (cf. 294a10-b6, 295c7-e2); it is thus in danger of losing its grip on its own order, as ignorant changes in the law become more and more easily passed, justified by too-evident changes in its situation. The city, even as it holds onto the law, must necessarily descend into disorder, just as the universe does. Similarly, the statesman is (according to the Stranger) the only possible savior of the city, since any changes to the laws made without knowledge are only likely to aggravate the situation of the city. The city without a true statesman at its helm, like the universe without a god at its helm, is subject to inevitable entropy, reversible only by the return of the statesman, who provides an “injection” of knowledge. The specific character of the statesman’s knowledge is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 9

THE STATESMAN

In the previous chapter, we saw how the Statesman was separated from the false rulers. This separation completed the emergence of the actually existing city – the disordered city, ruled by sophists. Yet the statesman has not yet been separated from all the arts that have a hand in the production of the true web of politics. These arts that have not yet been separated from the statesman are the direct causes not of the actually existing city but of the true regime, mediating between the insight of the true statesman and the realm of practice. In this chapter, we shall see how the true regime emerges from the cooperation of these arts with statesmanship, and thus how statesmanship finds a place in the ordering of the city for the care of human beings.

Three arts,\(^1\) in particular, still remain to be separated: those of the general, the judge, and the rhetorician (303e10-304a2). The fact that these arts emerge after the false rulers of the city suggests that they are dependent on the statesman’s presence, i.e., that they cannot be found in the city in the absence of the true statesman, which is simply

\(^1\) Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 266, and Cooper, "Plato's "Statesman" and Politics," p. 90, count four: they include the educators of the young among the arts that have not yet been separated from the statesman. I argue below that education is the essence of statesmanship and that the “educators” do not have a specific art but merely exercise their arts of music and gymnastics under the close supervision of the statesman.
another way of saying that they are not direct causes of the city as such but of the true
regime. Without the guiding knowledge of the statesman these three arts thus become
simply forms of sophistry, namely, those arts of imitation of wisdom possessed by the
ambitious generals, corrupt (or sometimes upright) jurors, and the demagogues who
actually rule in the city. On the other hand, as we will see, without these arts, the
knowledge of the statesman could never become effective in the city. They are the arts
that allow the theoretical knowledge of the statesman to become effective in practice.

These arts also represent the penultimate step in a progression from bodies to
φρόνησις in the arts of the care of human beings in the city. As we saw in chapter 7,
section 7.1.2, the Stranger first described the things that the “indirect” causes of the city
produced. These were the physical things that human beings need to take care of their

---

2 Cooper, "Plato's "Statesman" and Politics," pp. 87-88, argues that only these arts are to be
considered “true” causes; yet his own argument would seem to demand that the previous arts mentioned
(the “service” arts) be considered causes too, if not of the true regime, at least of the city as such, as I
argued earlier (see above, chapter 4, section 4.4).

3 It is worth noting at the outset that at least in the case of rhetoric, this argument implies no
substantial change between the view of rhetoric in the Phaedrus and the view of rhetoric in the Statesman,
contrary to the claims of Annas and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, p. 75, note 73 to 304e, and Skemp,
Plato's Statesman, pp. 218-19, note 1 to 304d. Without the guiding hand of the statesman the kind of
rhetoric the Stranger has in mind simply ceases to be a proper art and becomes merely a form of sophistry,
i.e., an art of imitation of wisdom, the kind that was just separated from statesmanship. True rhetoric, by
contrast, is reciprocally dependent on statesmanship, and hence is not to be found in actually existing
regimes. (For a similar argument, see Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 304a1-2). I am not arguing,
however, that these arts must be found together in a single person, but that their status as arts, however
embodied (whether in a single person or in a number of them) depends on the guiding presence of the
statesman’s knowledge, a knowledge that itself has to be made effective in the practitioners. This, of
course, is easiest if the arts in question all belong to a single person.

4 The “kindred” arts to the statesman thus simply recapitulate the false forms of rule in the absence
of the statesman: the judge recapitulates the “lawful” ones, the general and rhetorician the “unlawful” ones.
See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 103, as well as Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to
303d4-6.

5 We might say that the mutual dependence of statesmanship on the arts of judge, general, and
rhetorician thus mimics the mutual dependence of the art of weaving properly speaking on the arts of
carding, fulling, and the like, unlike the dependence of weaving on the tool-making arts (which are not
reciprocally dependent on weaving, as we saw earlier, chapter 4, section 4.3.4). If this is so, then the
“service” arts that produce the actually existing city might be said to be indirect causes of the true regime,
even though they are the direct causes of the actually existing city.
own bodies, and they can, in turn, be likened to the physical body of the city: its fortifications and houses, its vessels and vehicles, its tools and decorative artifacts, its foods and medicines, even its evanescent theatrical performances, and ultimately all the human beings that use and consume them. The Stranger then described the people that directly produced the actually existing city, ending with the false rulers. These people emerged out of the growth of desire in the city (see chapter 7, section 7.3) and are themselves its managers, though such order as they impose on human desire is itself a form of disorder. They can thus be likened to the “disordered” soul of the city. The Stranger will now emphasize the powers (δυνάμεις; cf. 304d9, 304e3, 305b2) that make the statesman’s true order effective in the city, which can be likened to the agencies of the soul that mediate between reason and desire, and he will end with the ordering principle of the city itself, the technical ἐπιστήμη of the king, which can be likened to reason or φρόνησις in the individual.

The perfect city (the city with the true regime) thus emerges from this progression as an analogue to the perfected human being, though this is something the Stranger chooses not to emphasize in any particular way and the analogy is at any rate imperfect in many particulars. The important point here is not so much that (or whether) there is such

---

6 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 104, though Miller speaks of these arts, somewhat misleadingly, as forms of “practice.” Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature,” p. 257, commits the same error, though her analysis is well worth reading. In fact, all of these arts are about as “theoretical” as the art of the statesman; see chapter 2, section 2.2.1.

7 To be sure, when the Stranger spoke of “things” and “people” he did so only as shorthand for the arts that produced these things and the people who practiced the arts of service; so now, in speaking of “powers,” he merely means the forms of knowledge that are actually capable of making effective the order of the city, as we discussed earlier (chapter 4, section 4.1.2).

8 Though Plato gives us enough hints to make the connection. Cf. Benardete, "Eidos and Diaeresis in Plato's Statesman," pp. 212-13. Such an analogy results not so much from the deliberate intention of the
an analogy, but that the arts – the uses of φρόνησις – in the city become increasingly “theoretical” as the Stranger proceeds with his work of separation. As we shall see in this chapter, the gap between the practical knowledge necessary for human care and the theoretical knowledge of the statesman that can alone give proper direction to such care is no more easily bridged in the city than in the human soul.

9.1 Rhetoricians, generals, and judges

The Stranger compares their experience of separating these remaining arts to the experience of those who purify gold (303d6-304a4). Gold is at first mingled with dirt and stone, which are more or less easily separated from it at first, just as they have separated all the other arts of care from the statesman. After this separation is complete, however, there still remain those things that are kin to gold, which are τίμια, valuable, and separable from gold only by “fire” (always a symbol of φρόνησις, as we have seen; see chapter 5, section 5.6.3, p. 228). While, in other words, the exercise in separation of all the other arts might have appeared pointless to some (who is going to confuse statesmanship with vessel-making?) the remaining exercise in separation demands great φρόνησις, for the arts that remain are in fact confused with the statesman: the heroic general, the master rhetorician, and the upright judge are often used as images of the statesman. The gold-refining metaphor the Stranger employs suggests, furthermore, that these arts are not found separated in nature; only the light of analysis (the “fire” of

Stranger’s presentation (unlike Socrates’ analogy of city and soul in the Republic) but from the real structural similarity of the care of human beings in cities to the care of human beings individually.

406
φρόνησις) can ultimately separate them. But only when they remain together can the knowledge of the statesman be made effective as the order of the city.  

9.1.1 The unnamed art of selecting the arts to be learned

The argument the Stranger devises to separate these arts is superficially rather simple (304a6ff). Using the example of playing musical instruments as something that is learned in the city, the Stranger asks whether there is also an ἐπιστήμη, a form of knowledge, that determines whether it and other handicrafts should be learned or not (304b4-6), and which is in turn different from it. This ἐπιστήμη, whose existence is agreed to by young Socrates, is then said to rule over those other ἐπιστήμαι rather than the other way around (304b11-c6). The same sort of argument is then applied to the arts of the rhetorician, the general, and the judge.

The Stranger does not stop to name this ἐπιστήμη. Yet an ἐπιστήμη that determines whether other ἐπιστήμαι or τέχναι are to be learned or not must surely know about the benefit or harm any art would bring to its possessor and to the city, a knowledge that can scarcely be possessed by anyone who is not a statesman. Indeed, in the myth on writing in the Phaedrus, Socrates attributed this sort of ἐπιστήμη to the true king (cf. Phaedrus 274c5-275b2). But if this art is indeed statesmanship, then

9 A point rightly noted, though in a somewhat different way, by Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.140.

10 As Klein, Plato's Trilogy: Theaetetus, the Sophist, and the Statesman, p. 193, notes, the Stranger means here the art of “handling” musical instruments (e.g., flute-playing and the like), rather than the “theoretical” arts of music (e.g., the art of composition).
statesmanship is the art that prevents the unchecked effects of the practical arts, as we surmised earlier when discussing the implications of the myth (see chapter 5, section 5.6.3), i.e., the form of knowledge that weaves the practice of the arts in the city for the benefit of the care of the whole polis and ultimately of human beings.

It is not entirely clear, however, why the Stranger fails to explicitly identify this art with statesmanship. This unnamed ἐπιστήμη, after all, is concerned with what the citizens in the city, and more specifically the “practical” artisans, must learn, and thus with their “technical” education (education in the sense of Laws 643b4-d4), just as statesmanship will later be explicitly said be concerned with their “moral” or “civic” education (education in the sense of Laws 643e3ff).11 Both forms of education are clearly within the purview of the statesman. Yet the Stranger clearly considers the “civic” education much more important, and probably thinks that the “technical” education must be subordinated to the “civic” education. Perhaps this is why the Stranger does not deign to say explicitly that this unnamed art is in fact statesmanship, since it might foster the wrong impression in young Socrates that the determination of the proper “mix” of arts in the city is just as important a task of the statesman as his inculcation of “moral character” (to use a modern term) in the citizens. With proper awareness of good, just, and noble things, the citizens will be able to make the most out of any mix of arts in the city, while a proper mix of arts without proper awareness of good, just, and noble things can only be a stop-gap measure with respect to the good of the city.

11 Cf. Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman, p. 104, though he does not call this art a form of education. Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 304b7, unaccountably says that “this ‘kind of knowledge,’ in ordinary life, would presumably not be separately identified or named” though he also suggests that it would be the knowledge of the statesman, who supervises education.
Whatever art this unnamed art is, it does not appear (on the Stranger’s account) to be concerned with whether or not the artisans should *use* their knowledge at any particular moment, unlike the (alleged) knowledge of a Soviet central planner, for example. By contrast, statesmanship is later said to be concerned not with whether or not the arts of the general, the true rhetorician, and the judge should be learned (it is assumed that they should) but with whether or not they should be used at any particular moment or according to standards set by the statesman. However, if this unnamed art is indeed (part of) the knowledge of the statesman, then we should expect likewise that it would determine not only what the artisans must learn but also whether or not they must use it at any particular moment, just as it does for rhetoric, generalship, and the art of judging. As we saw earlier (chapter 8, sections 8.2.2.2 and 8.3.4), since the knowledge of the “practical” artisans does not include the knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble, only an omnipresent statesman could tell them whether any particular act on their part is good, just, and noble. The doctor does not know whether any particular act of healing is just or not, nor does the ship-captain know whether any particular trip is good for the city; such knowledge belongs to the statesman.

Yet from the argument on the rule of law we know that the omnipresence of the statesman is impossible. Furthermore, while the absence of the statesman might lead the artisans into error regarding the good, the noble, or the just in any particular case, it does not lead them to error regarding their own arts: the doctor knows what actions cure the patient whether or not the statesman is present (i.e., he knows the healthy). Thus, the absence of the statesman does not affect the ability of the practical arts to do their own (necessary) work. Given these facts, the best the statesman can do with respect to the
practical arts is therefore to legislate which of them should be learned and which should not, what uses of them are absolutely “off-limits” (e.g., murder), and live with the consequences of their development (except in the rare cases in which he finds himself next to an artisan doing his work). But this means that with respect to the practical arts statesmanship just is the unnamed art the Stranger has just described.

Such a policy on the part of the statesman regarding the practical arts has as a consequence that the actual use of these arts in the polis (which include all the arts of bodily care, such as medicine) will thus be determined by the interplay of the desires of the people (i.e., the “economy”), the law (which might prevent certain uses of the arts), and the judgment of the artisan as to whether a given situation calls for the use of his art or not (e.g., whether a sick man needs healing or spiritual assistance). The statesman, to put the point in modern terms, cannot be a central planner, though he is also not a laissez-faire ruler: he needs to understand the effects of a given mix of arts on the order of the city and issue his commands accordingly. This is something that the Athenian Stranger does explicitly in the Laws.

In the case of rhetoric, generalship and the power of judging, by contrast, the argument must necessarily concern itself with whether these arts are used at any particular moment or according to any particular standards (cf. the emphasis on the καιρός at 305d4), since without the guidance of the statesman’s knowledge of the good, the true, and the noble these arts become simply forms of sophistry, i.e., they cease to be

12 This includes the possibility that new arts may be discovered which the statesman had not foreseen, which presents a problem for the statesman crafting legislation on these matters. So long as he is present in the polis the statesman may of course determine that a new “mix” of arts of human care is necessary for the good of the city (emphasizing primary care at one point and neurosurgery at another, for instance) but such a decision would not for the most part impinge on the judgment of the artisan regarding whether or not to use his or her art at any given moment.
genuine arts of persuasion, war, or judgment. As they are the arts that “mediate” between the statesman’s knowledge and the citizens, without his presence they must necessarily set themselves up as sources of the good, the just, and the noble and cease to be themselves to become imitations of statesmanship.

The Stranger does not say much about the specific relationship between these mediating arts and statesmanship. Statesmanship decides whether true rhetoric or generalship are to be applied in a given situation, but is not itself true rhetoric or generalship; and it determines the just and unjust for the city in general, but does not concern itself with the determination of whether a given contract (cf. τὰ συμβόλαια 305b4-5) is just or unjust. But what are the conditions for successful mediation? We shall examine these conditions in turn for rhetoric, generalship, and the art of judging.

9.1.2 The art of persuading crowds by means of myth

The art of persuading crowds by means of myth mediates between the statesman and the citizens considered as an assembly – i.e., a law-making body. Such an art might seem unnecessary, since we have seen that the statesman operates above the law. But, as we also saw earlier (chapter 8, section 8.2.2), the statesman needs to use law even when he is present in the city (though he might need to change it often); and he cannot hope to impose laws on the citizens without something like their consent, since force is

13 As “mediating” arts these are in a sense like the arts of the herald that were earlier discussed and separated from statesmanship, though it is only now that these can be seen in their fullness.
not part of his art and obedience does not come naturally to the citizens.\(^{14}\) Persuasion, therefore, must be the primary instrument by means of which the statesman makes his commands – and thus political order – effective in the city. Hence the claim that true rhetoric co-governs (συνδιακυβέρνα \(304a2\)) the actions in the polis; for without it, practically no action directed by the statesman can truly take place.

Persuasion, to be sure, comes in two flavors, as the Stranger has indicated (304d1-2): there is persuasion by means of “myth” and persuasion by means of “teaching.” The first seems to apply in particular to the multitude, though the Stranger’s use of some form of “mythology” in his conversation with young Socrates should warn us against taking this restriction too strictly. On the other hand, there does not appear to be a persuasion of the multitude through teaching,\(^{15}\) even though one-on-one teaching \textit{does} exist, as the conversation itself proves. Such “teaching” persuasion must belong to the art of the statesman or the philosopher, who would use it to provide the rhetorician with at least a true opinion (but not necessarily knowledge, which would make the rhetorician into a statesman) about the good, the just, and the noble.\(^{16}\) The rhetorician, in turn, armed with

\(^{14}\) More generally, people must be either forced or persuaded to accept the statesman’s commands, making the rhetorician and the general two sides of the same coin; but force alone seems incapable of creating law. See Miller Jr., \textit{The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman}, p. 104. He rightly notes that this requires us to think of diplomacy as a form of rhetoric and of police action as a form of generalship, something that the Stranger does not say. It is significant that, contrary to the discussion of the statesman’s possible use of force earlier (cf. 296a5-297b4) the Stranger does not speak of any distinct art of the “internal” use of violence (an art of police, as we might call it). This may be because he does not think such an art exists, even though the Statesman needs to make use of the physical power of others to enforce his order, or because the “muscle” for the statesman’s policy is provided by the citizens themselves. Similarly, he does not speak of an art of diplomacy perhaps because such an art would directly belong to the statesman: diplomacy is always the wise counsel of someone with an ἐπίστημη (304e10).

\(^{15}\) A conclusion reached by Cropsey, \textit{Plato’s world: Man’s Place in the Cosmos}, p. 138. This presents some problems for the conception of statesmanship as a form of education that emerges at the end of the dialogue, in that statesmanship becomes at best the art of \textit{civic} education rather than true education.

\(^{16}\) Such a rhetoric – a mixture of myth and argument – is used by the Athenian Stranger in the \textit{Laws}. 

412
this true opinion, would then use his own art to persuade the multitude to pass laws that embody this true opinion.

In light of these facts, the proper relationship between the true rhetorician and the statesman requires that the former be willing to be taught the just, the good, and the noble from the statesman. But such willingness is only possible if the rhetorician has a “Socratic” attitude towards his own knowledge, i.e., knows that he does not know about the good, the just, and the noble. In the absence of this attitude, however, (an absence that the Platonic dialogues show is extremely common and hard to remedy) the rhetorician will always be strongly tempted to substitute his own judgment about the good, the just, and the noble for that of the statesman, and hence to use his skill at persuading the crowd to pass laws in his own interest, which would make the rhetorician into the representative ruler of a lawless democracy or oligarchy. The proper relationship between statesman and rhetorician is thus exceedingly fragile, and their separation is fraught with difficulty, as the Stranger warned us (303d4ff).

9.1.3 The art or power of warmaking

As the art of the true rhetorician mediates between the statesman and the citizens considered as lawmakers, the art of the general mediates between the statesman and the citizens considered as soldiers. He translates the statesman’s commands into “force” against other cities, just as the rhetorician translates them into laws freely accepted and convictions fully internalized.
Just as in the case of the rhetorician, the proper relationship between statesman and general requires that the latter be willing to be guided (or taught) by the statesman’s knowledge of what would constitute an advantageous victory for the city and what would not, which in turn would require a great deal of Socratic self-restrain on the part of the general, i.e., a knowledge that he does not know about the good, the just, and the noble in matters concerning the victory of the city. But just as the absence of this attitude produced in the rhetorician the temptation to substitute his own judgment for that of the statesman concerning the good, the just, and the noble of which the city must be persuaded, the absence of this attitude in the general would make him easily tempted to substitute his own judgment for that of the statesman in its external affairs. This temptation would be all the greater since, in contrast to the rhetorician and the judge, the general actually “rules” a herd of human beings and, like the king, (and even more so than the true rhetorician), his art is one of understanding and seeing the right moment for doing anything, for holding back as well as for rushing forward.\(^{17}\) All of this suggests that a (good) general is in a position to believe himself (incorrectly) deserving of kingship and thus to set himself up as a tyrant, as the Stranger intimates by describing the art of the general as a great and terrible one over which the true king must exercise a kind of despotic power \((305a4-6)\).\(^{18}\) Thus, just as the rhetorician becomes the representative of lawless democracy or oligarchy as soon as he abandons his Socratic self-restraint, the general similarly becomes the representative of lawless monarchy, i.e., tyranny, as soon as he stops recognizing the authority of the statesman. The proper relationship between

---

\(^{17}\) Note the military-sounding ὀρμήν at \(305d3\) in reference to the king.

\(^{18}\) In fact some (false) regimes are not very different from armed camps. Cf. Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful*, p. III.141, and *Laws* 666e1ff.
statesman and general, like that between rhetorician and general, is therefore also extremely fragile and fraught with difficulty.

9.1.4 The power of judging

The art of judging represents a form of mediation between the statesman and the citizens considered as individuals. It presupposes the law (305b5), in contrast to the art of the rhetorician (which is used to make law) and that of the general (which operates beyond the borders of the city, i.e., beyond the confines of the law). With the help of the law (which the statesman may of course change so long as he is present) the judge mediates between the general insight of the statesman and the specific case at issue, though, like the statesman, the judge can do no more than “declare” the just. His art is as theoretical, in some sense, as the art of the statesman, since it does not contain the ability to enforce his decisions. Further mediation between the art of the judge and the realm of practice is sometimes required (the “police,” in modern parlance), though in a well-ordered polis respect for the judges (right opinion in the citizens) usually makes such further mediation unnecessary.

The fact that the art of judging presupposes the law makes the proper relationship between the statesman and the judge different from the proper relationship between the statesman and the rhetorician or the general. While the rhetorician and the general must have an attitude of Socratic self-restraint towards their own knowledge and a willingness to learn from the statesman, the judge must strongly believe in the truth of the law, i.e., he must believe that what the law says is the truth about the good, the noble, and the just.
(perhaps even more so than the citizens in general). One might thus think that the essence of the judge’s art would be the ability to interpret this opinion of the just embedded in law rightly, a kind of “heraldic” art (cf. 260d7ff)\(^{19}\) of judging (cf. 259e5ff).\(^{20}\) While this must clearly be an element of his art, however, the Stranger emphasizes rather the judge’s strength (cf. \( \varphi \text{κωμη} \ 305c6 \)) to resist temptations (such as fear or gifts or pity or hatred or friendship) that might bias their judgment away from what the law says. The art of interpretation of the judge seems to be thought of as straightforward once these biases are overcome, potentially making every citizen into a judge.\(^{21}\) Yet this strength that allows the judge to overcome these biases does not appear to be a form of knowledge, and is presumably the especially successful result of the general education that the statesman will provide to the citizens (see below, section 9.2.3.2).\(^{22}\)

This strength, however, is also emblematic of the inflexibility of the rule of law: the judges, by disregarding all these factors, might indeed do something that, though perhaps just according to the law, need not correspond to the true knowledge of the just for that particular situation. Indeed, this inflexibility might imperil the ability of the statesman to render justice to the citizens, since the judge substitutes the law (which is at best the true opinion of the just) for the judgment of the statesman (which is the

\(^{19}\) All the mediating arts have something of the “heraldic” in them in that they allow the theoretical insight of the statesman to become effective in the realm of praxis. See note 13 as well as chapter 3, sections 3.3-3.4. On the other hand, the art of the judge is more “heraldic” than that of the rhetorician or the general, since it is more exclusively concerned with interpretation and demands fewer additional skills.

\(^{20}\) It is unclear whether the judge should be said to merely judge or also to order; I am inclined to say that the judge’s judgment is also an order, like the statesman’s. But the contrary case is also plausible.

\(^{21}\) A point noted by Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note to 305b6-7, who comments on the apparent passivity of the judges vis à vis the law.

\(^{22}\) Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.141, goes further and says that the judges do not really have any knowledge; their virtue is simply their “law-abidingness.” I do not think this is correct; if nothing else, their art is the art of imitating the statesman by law.
knowledge of the just). Their judgments, in other words, will always need to be supervised by the true statesman if their art is not to degenerate into a form of law-governed rule, i.e., a form of “good” sophistry. But since rule by rhetoricians or generals in the absence of the statesman is always a form of lawless rule (oligarchy or democracy for rhetoricians; tyranny for generals), this means that the power of the judge, even when deprived of the guiding knowledge of the statesman, is superior in rank to that of the other two “kindred” arts to the statesman, and hence rightly discussed last, as closer to the statesman.

9.2 The Statesman

The Stranger and young Socrates are now ready to discuss statesmanship itself, as they have separated it from all the other arts of the care of human beings in the city. Statesmanship is characterized in three different ways: 1) as the knowledge of the καιρός, the right time for the greatest arts to act (305c10-d5); 2) as the common or public, rather than the private, ἐπιστήμη (305d7-305e10); and 3) as the producer of the kingly web, woven from the two basic types of natures, by means of education (306a1ff). In what follows we shall examine these characterizations in turn.

---

23 The total number of arts discussed thus far is somewhat difficult to calculate exactly. The minimal number of arts described after the indirectly responsible ones is six (not counting slaves and the false rulers); the maximal number is thirteen. Either series, when capped by the statesman himself, results in a multiple of seven for the number of arts in the city, which is what we would expect. Since, however, slaves recapitulate the arts of nurture, and the rhetoricians, generals, and judges recapitulate the false rulers in the absence of the statesman, I am inclined to think that there are six “directly responsible” arts of the city, for a total of fourteen in the series of directly and indirectly responsible arts (without including the statesman, but counting the arts of breeding domestic animals as an eight art of nurture). Adding the thirteen steps of the original, corrected diairesis, plus an additional step for the statesman himself, we find that the statesman is found in twenty-eight steps, double the number of steps in the diairesis of weaving, and a multiple of seven (another example of the heptads that populate the work).
9.2.1 The statesman as master of the καιρός

The first specific characterization of what statesmanship is, rather than what it is not, occurs after the Stranger says (305c10-d1) that statesmanship is not any of the forms of knowledge they have discussed thus far (one presumes that he is referring to true rhetoric, generalship, and the art of judging). Statesmanship does not itself act (πράττειν 305d1), for, though the Stranger does not remind us, it is not a “practical” form of knowledge; it rather rules over those able to act (305d2), since it knows the ἀρχή, the beginning or principle, and the ὀρμή, the impulse or inner force (305d3) of the greatest arts in the city, concerning their ἐγκαίρια, the right moment, or their ἀκαίρια, the wrong moment.

The Stranger’s restriction of the statesman’s knowledge of the καιρός to “the greatest arts” reflects the fact that the statesman does not supervise every possible activity of every art in the city, as we discussed above (see section 9.1.1), even though this is in

24 Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 257, argues that the theoretical/practical distinction here becomes simply a distinction between statesmanship and every other art in the city. I think this is not quite right: the Stranger is simply suggesting that on a continuum of the arts of the city, statesmanship is the most theoretical, as I have already indicated; generalship and rhetoric, despite being theoretical arts too, have larger “practical” residuals (the general must lead his troops occasionally into battle; the rhetorician must be able to project his voice).

25 I take it that τῶν μεγίστων at 305d3 refers back to τῶν δυναμένων πράττειν at 305d2, i.e., the arts, even though grammatically speaking the reference is unclear, and τῶν μεγίστων could conceivable refer to “things” or “people” generally.

26 The language of the Stranger recalls an earlier image of the statesman as a gymnastics trainer (294d4-e7), where the Stranger had spoken of gymnastics as an activity for the sake of the love of victory, in which the assembled body of human beings are trained by being told to “rush forward” (ἐξορμώσων 294e6) together and hold back similarly. The statesman here appears as giving the order to rush forward and hold back, to start great enterprises while calibrating the particular impulse necessary for them.
principle possible. The mention of the knowledge of the καριός further suggests that in this description the statesman’s art is primarily (though not exclusively) the art that must supervise the arts of rhetoric and generalship, which were explicitly singled out as arts that did not know their own καριός (304d3ff, e9ff). As we have already indicated, those arts necessarily go beyond the laws, and hence can be said to be concerned with the “greatest actions” of the city: rhetoric because it is used to create and change laws that make the citizens better rather than worse and generalship because it is necessarily concerned with the physical survival of the city in rapidly changing circumstances.

The description of the statesman as the supervisor of the “greatest arts” in respect of their καριός thus points to the fundamental role of the statesman as founder or re-founder rather than as day-to-day ruler. He uses rhetoric to persuade the many of the justice of his (new) laws and force to vanquish existential threats to the right order of the city, calculating the proper beginning and the proper “impulse” of the polis under its own motion; but he does not micromanage the life of the polis down to the individual actions of every artisan, except for those of the rhetorician and the general.

27 The judgment concerning what forms of practical knowledge are to be learned can be interpreted as a judgment about the right time to learn a given science, as we saw earlier (with the example of a statesman who encourages scientific research in some fields but not in others, setting, for instance, healthcare priorities; see note 12), but need not; at any rate, the Stranger does not hint that this is the primary way in which judgments as to the harms and benefits of particular sciences must be understood.

28 This twin field of concern also foreshadows the activity of the statesman as the weaving of the moderate and the bold, as persuasion and force are the two basic modes of action by means of which the moderate and bold natures manifest themselves in the city. As the Stranger suggests later, the moderate dispositions think diplomacy and deliberation are always appropriate, while the courageous think war is always appropriate (cf. 307e1-308a9). To be sure, there is such a thing as the use of persuasion by the bold, but the basic point is unaffected by this fact. At any rate, the Stranger later presents the “quick” or “bold” as always preferring war to diplomacy.

29 Cf. Davis, "The Statesman as a Political Dialogue," p. 325, and Voegelin, Order and History, p. III.159. This view has not always gained wide acceptance (many scholars insist on thinking of the statesman as a day-to-day ruler, including people, like Lane, who originally thought of him as a founder-figure), but it seems to me clear that the statesman cannot be a day-to-day ruler. The relationship between his knowledge and the realm of praxis is far too fragile for this.
In this respect, the statesman’s knowledge of the καιρός of these greatest arts echoes the knowledge of the god in the myth (see chapter 5, sections 5.3 and 5.4.1), who knows the καιρός both for taking control and for letting go of the universe (cf. 270a6). The god takes control of the universe at the right time to renew its order, but then ceases to manage it in every detail, though he keeps watch to save it again at that time when its disorder becomes too large.30 The universe, we might remember, like the city, normally moves under its own motion and “impulse” after the god orders and lets go of it (cf. 273a2 and above, chapter 5, section 5.6).

The καιρός that the statesman must primarily know is thus the right time for changing the fundamental laws of the city (via the use of persuasion), an activity that clearly could not and should not be undertaken every day; and the right time for undertaking bold action to change the “external context” of the city (by shaking off the chains of imperial tyranny, for instance). Both of these activities are undertaken by the statesman in order both to preserve the city and to make it better rather than worse (297b2-3),31 just as the god both preserves the universe and puts it in its best possible condition (see chapter 5, section 5.4). Such knowledge necessitates insight into the regularity of nature as well as into the just, the good, and the noble (as was indeed implicit in the argument at 296c5ff), i.e., the forms of order, at least insofar as these forms of order affect human beings. Only insight into the regularity of nature allows the


31 Pace Kochin, "Plato's Eleatic and Athenian Sciences of Politics," pp. 70-71, the Stranger never suggests that the statesman’s only goal is the preservation of the city, without regard to making it better rather than worse. Only the knowledge of the statesman can determine whether the safety of the city is consistent with its order. The statesman might think that civil war is necessary to make the city better rather than worse, for example.
statesman to determine whether any given use of persuasion or force can preserve the city; but only insight into the just, the good, and the noble allows him to determine if the preservation of the city is consistent with its order, and indeed whether any given use of force or persuasion will result in an increase or a decrease of order in it. The statesman is thus the prudent man *par excellence*, φρόνησις incarnate.

We must still ask, though the Stranger does not do so, whether this knowledge is possible in the sense of whether there can be human beings who might, after long study, acquire it. If the field of action of the statesman is restricted to the “foundational” moment of the city or its greatest actions, namely, constitution-making and war-making against existential threats, we might think that this knowledge is just barely attainable, though exceedingly hard, for it depends on a deep insight into the eidetic order of the whole that is beyond the reach of most people. Such knowledge would be both of how to *produce* a certain order in the city (which implies knowledge of the καιρός of the actions that would produce it) and of how such an order would affect the city as it is let go by the statesman. Even if such knowledge were attainable, at any rate, it would be unlikely to be teachable simply because the effort required to attain it is so great, and hence teachers of it necessarily very scarce, though it may be possible to make people receptive to it.

The issue of whether or not this knowledge is attainable by human beings is also closely connected to the issue of whether *wisdom* is available to human beings. The Stranger has said that the knowledge of the statesman is “nearly” (or “roughly,” σχεδόν) the most difficult and biggest of the sciences (292d4-5), though perhaps not the most.

---

32 The Stranger has never assumed that this knowledge is actually embodied in himself or others, so the answer to this question might be negative.

33 This, one might argue, is the purpose of the nocturnal council in the *Laws.*
difficult and biggest.\textsuperscript{34} If, however, the knowledge of the statesman is as I have described, it is hard to imagine what kind of knowledge could be bigger and more difficult that is not complete wisdom. In fact, statesmanship appears to be complete wisdom (cf. 296e3, where the statesman is called σοφός) in that it is the knowledge of the good, the just, the noble, and of the way in which these things can become actual for human beings. Short of a generalized knowledge of all things (the kind of wisdom that Theaetetus and the Stranger agreed was impossible for human beings, \textit{Sophist} 233a3ff) there seems to be no other form of knowledge that would qualify as human wisdom.

One could still argue that \textit{philosophy} must be that knowledge towards which the Stranger seems to point by suggesting that statesmanship is not simply \textit{the} biggest and most difficult form of knowledge. But there are two problems with this argument. First, the only way in which philosophy could be a more difficult and bigger form of knowledge than statesmanship would be for it to be the knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble not only \textit{for} human beings but \textit{in themselves}. As Socrates indicates in the \textit{Philebus}, the good, the just, and the noble \textit{in themselves} are different from the good, the just, and the noble \textit{for} human beings (cf. \textit{Philebus} 21d9-22e3 and \textit{passim}). Yet Socrates nowhere argues (nor does the Eleatic Stranger) that one can attain knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble \textit{for} human beings without also attaining knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble \textit{in general}. In fact, it seems clear that the good \textit{for} human

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{34} σχεδόν sometimes means “approximately” or “roughly” rather than “nearly” (see LSJ s.v.). The Stranger might therefore not be saying that there \textit{is} a more difficult and bigger form of knowledge but that statesmanship is \textit{roughly} the biggest and most difficult of them, at least given our measures of such things.
\end{footnotesize}
beings can only be known through the form of the good itself.\textsuperscript{35} Hence, to say that the statesman knows the good, the just, and the noble \textit{for} human beings is to say that he \textit{eo ipso} knows these things in themselves.

Second, even if there \textit{were} a distinction between knowing the good for human beings and knowing the good \textit{in itself} (if, for example, there were a specific form of “good for human beings”), and philosophy \textit{were} that knowledge, then philosophy would have to be identified with wisdom, thereby blurring the crucial distinction between the \textit{φίλο-σοφός} and the \textit{σοφός}, and one would have to say that neither Socrates nor the Eleatic Stranger \textit{are} philosophers, since they evidently do not have this knowledge. I take it that this is not a desirable result: the philosopher can hardly be the wise man and still remain the seeker of wisdom depicted in all the dialogues (and embodied \textit{also} in the figure of the Eleatic Stranger, as \textsuperscript{285d1ff} shows). Moreover, it is unclear that such a wisdom would be worth much: this wise man would be like the “philosopher” ironically described in the digression of the \textit{Theaetetus} (\textsuperscript{173c7ff}), who can hold his own in discussion of the good and the just in themselves, but would be unable to know what to command in the \textit{polis} in order to actualize them for human beings.

Note that the question here is not whether the life of philosophy is \textit{happier} than the life of the statesman; in fact, it may well be the case that the statesman labors under a burden of responsibility that precludes his individual happiness, as the doctrine (in the \textit{Republic}) of the forcible return of the (now wise) philosopher to the cave after seeing the form of the good suggests. The question is rather whether statesmanship is “more

\textsuperscript{35} This seems to be the implication of the argument on the form of the good in the \textit{Republic} as well.
difficult and bigger” than philosophy, and by that criterion, it would seem that philosophy can only be smaller and easier than statesmanship.

Finally, I should emphasize again (as I argued earlier, in chapter 2) that philosophy must be different from statesmanship, as the Stranger explicitly says at Sophist 217b1-4. It will not do to say that if philosophy is not superior to statesmanship as a form of knowledge, then it must be identical with it. Even in the Socratic presentation of the doctrine of the philosopher-king in the Republic the philosopher is not said to be identical with the king; in fact, the philosopher must become the king, and this process of becoming implies a transformation of the φιλο-σοφός into the σοφός through the ascent to the vision of the form of the good.36 Thus, if philosophy is not more difficult and bigger than statesmanship, and it is also not identical with it, then it must be smaller and easier than it.

This still leaves open the question, however, of whether human wisdom as such is different from statesmanship. I believe the answer to this question is negative, though I do not mean to say that because the statesman is wise he knows “everything.” That is only the sophistical conception of wisdom, and the dialogue has taught us that statesmanship is not the knowledge of every art, but a very specific art itself. I argued earlier (see chapter 2, section 2.3) that the characterization of the sophist as the imitator of the wise (whether publicly or privately) necessarily implies that the statesman is the wise man. His knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble for human beings, as well

36 This is a somewhat controversial point, often elided by unsympathetic commentators on the dialogues, and which would require a thorough interpretation of those sections of the Republic in order to establish it conclusively. The confusion is understandable, however, since Socrates talks about “philosopher-kings” when the point is that the philosopher (the lover of wisdom) is the only one who has a hope of ascending to the form of the good, thereby becoming wise, and thus qualified to rule. Philosophy alone (i.e., as love of wisdom) is not knowledge of the good.
as his mastery of the καλός of the greatest arts in the city (and thus his superlative
φρόνησις or prudence) also suggest as much. Furthermore, if after the myth the
Stranger’s discussion led to the conclusion that the statesman could not be a god (see
chapter 6, section 6.1.2), it now leads to the conclusion that the statesman (or the
regime ruled by him, which amounts to the same thing) is “like a god to a human being”
(303b4), implying an enormous gap between most human knowledge and the knowledge
of the statesman. But this gap can only mean that the statesman is wise, σοφός.

In saying that the regime that the statesman rules is like a god to a human being,
the Stranger further hints that, even though the statesman is not a god but a mortal man, if
he existed he would “mediate” between divine order (the good, the just, and the noble)
and human order through his knowledge of that order, just as rhetoricians, generals, and
judges further mediate between the statesman’s knowledge and the realm of praxis. We
might thus say that the statesman is the image of the god in that he imitates the god’s
ordering of the whole by means of his (human, and hence imperfect) knowledge of the
good, the just, and the noble, creating a (necessarily imperfect, due to the use of law and
the limitations of his materials) image of this order in the order of the city. By contrast,
the philosopher must be an image of the statesman (cf. Sophist 216d1 and chapter 2,
section 2.3.4). As an image of the statesman we might say that the philosopher is properly
the king who rules by law, the βασιλεύς who shares the name of the true king (301a10-
b3) yet knowingly restrains himself from violating the law because he knows that he does
not know enough to go beyond it, though he strives to know. The philosopher is thus the
mean between sophist and statesman, between the ignorant imitator of wisdom and the
possessor of wisdom, as I indicated earlier (see chapter 8). The Statesman is the
vindication of the philosopher-king in this restricted sense: the philosopher is the only proper ruler by law.

9.2.2 Summation: the statesman as ruler, caregiver, weaver

The second characterization of the statesman’s knowledge is as the common, rather than the private, knowledge which rules, cares for, and weaves the constituent elements of the polis. This characterization emerges from the observation (305d7-e6) that all the other forms of knowledge they have just discussed rule neither each other nor themselves, which means that each of them has only a “private” or “particular” praxis. Rhetoric should be restricted to persuasion, and medicine to healing human bodies, and neither of them cares for or rules the whole of arts and people that constitutes the city, or is even fully responsible for their own acts, since their knowledge does not include the knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble. The Stranger contrasts this with the common character of statesmanship, which cares for and rules all the arts, laws, and people in the polis, weaving them together (305e4) in the light of its knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble. It is from the common whole which all of these things form – arts, laws, and people – that the power that cares for and rules all of them gets its name, namely πολιτική, the art of the polis.

Note that the statesman is here said to do three things: he rules, cares, and weaves.37 These are the three aspects of his activity concerning the polis, which is

---

37 See Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," pp. 256-58.
similarly threefold, appearing as the whole composed of human beings who have arts and are ordered under laws.

He rules insofar as he provides the ἀρχή, the beginning or principle, of all the arts: he is the unmoved mover\textsuperscript{38} of the city, the origin of its order. We have seen three ways in which he does this: a) with respect to the practical arts, the statesman determines which of them are to be learned and which of them are not, i.e., grants them a “beginning” (ἀρχή; see section 9.1.1); b) with respect to the “greatest” arts, the statesman determines their moment of application, the beginning (ἀρχή) of their actions (305d4); and c) with respect to the laws, the statesman is their proper author (their ἀρχή) and the principle behind their correctness, and thus can always overrule them; he is the νόμος ἔμφυσος. We can perhaps also say that d) with respect to all the arts, the statesman, by providing limits to their activity and thus making them private rather than common, orders them into a single whole according to a single principle. The rule of the statesman thus describes his activity as the effective \textit{source} of the order of the city.

The care of the statesman, by contrast, was his provision of protection against the encroaching disorder of nature and the arts for whatever part of the ἔθος of human beings he was fated to encounter as a herd. Our understanding of it thus demanded an explanation of the kind of being human beings are – the “material” of the statesman’s activity – something that at times required the use of myth and playfulness (see chapters 4 and 5). The care of the statesman thus describes the \textit{purpose} of the statesman’s order.

The weaving of the statesman, finally, ties together his care and his ruling. We might say that, as a weaver, the statesman finally becomes the caring ruler; and if ruling

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. Cropsey, \textit{Plato's world: Man's Place in the Cosmos}, p. 138.
points to the effective source of political order and caring to the function of political order, we might speak of weaving as pointing to the form of political order. Weaving is the only aspect of the statesman’s activity that has not yet been discussed, and thus the Stranger now turns to discuss it.

9.2.3 The statesman as weaver

The explicit re-introduction of the weaving paradigm is accompanied by a nod (305e4-6) to the explanation of the name of πολιτική at the end of the first genealogy of weaving (279e5–280e6). At that point, the Stranger had said that πολιτική was to βασιλική as ἰματιουργική was to ψφαυτική. The Stranger now says that all the γένη, all the kinds (of arts/people) in the city have now become clear to us (305e8ff). This means that the internal structure of πολιτική as the art that brings about the polis, or rather, the ordered polis, the true regime, into existence has finally been revealed. Yet at the same time the Stranger points to the fact that πολιτική still has an internal structure, even though no further forms of knowledge in the city are to be distinguished from it, by suggesting that they are still at that point in the discussion where the internal structure of ἰματιουργική still had to be unraveled. But the Stranger no longer attempts to separate statesmanship from any other arts, only to explain its internal structure as a form of education. Before doing so, however, he must explain what sort of thing is the kingly web created by the statesman and in what way it is woven (306a1-3).
The two natures and their relation to the cosmology of the Stranger

The Stranger must first describe the equivalents to the warp and the woof in the web of politics. Yet there is a difficulty that must be overcome before these things can be discussed (306a5-6). The problem, according to the Stranger, is that a part (μέρος) of virtue is in some way at variance with an ἐидος, an eidetic part of virtue (306a8-10). These are “moderation” and “courage,” both of which are thought to be “parts” of virtue, and yet are opposed, indeed appear to hold a “hatred” for each other and are in internal war (στάσις) inside many beings. 39, 40

---

39 This passage and its sequel have generated a great deal of puzzlement among scholars. Many commentators believe the Stranger is somehow attacking the Socratic (and presumably academic as well, personified in young Socrates) view of the unity of virtue (cf. Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 339-40), though some do not. Scedel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman*, p. 163, goes so far as to detect an insult to Socrates, by, according to him, portraying the Socratic view as if it were the opinion of “the man in the street.” I prefer to avoid this controversy, as it is not material to my present argument. The controversy is discussed in some detail in Christopher Bobonich, "The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato's Statesman," in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), pp. 313-14, who distinguishes among the theses of the reciprocity of the virtues (having ones implies having the rest), the identity of the virtues (all the virtues are the same virtue), and the unity of the virtues (virtue is one, and courage and the like are its parts). Bobonich argues that what is asserted here is that the virtues of courage and moderation (among the citizens) are incompatible, which is a denial of reciprocity and inconsistent with identity, but that Plato was not necessarily committed to the identity thesis, only to the unity thesis, which is not necessarily incompatible with the denial of reciprocity. The main positions in the debate can thus be characterized as “compatibilist” (i.e., the position that argues that what the Stranger says here is not incompatible with the Socratic position, and in general that the thesis of the unity of the virtues holds for both: cf. Diès, *Le Politique*, pp. lx-lxii and note ad loc.) and “incompatibilist” (i.e., the position that argues that what the Stranger says here is incompatible with what Socrates says elsewhere and in general with the unity thesis: cf. Teruo Mishima, "Courage and Moderation in the Statesman," in *Reading the Statesman: Proceedings of the III. Symposium Platonicum*, ed. Christopher Rowe (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 1995), Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, p. 339, Frederick J. Crosson, *Plato's "Statesman": Unity and Pluralism,* *New Scholasticism* (1963), p. 37, though Crosson thinks that a way can be found to make the Stranger’s position consistent with Socrates’ view, and Skemp, *Plato's Statesman*, p. 223, note 1 ad loc., with similar reservations).

40 Note that the Stranger does not say that these tendencies or virtues are opposed in every being, only in many of them. This qualification is retained throughout the argument; cf. the σχεδόν at 307c2, noted by Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 264, who says that in this σχεδόν lies all of the Republic and the teaching about philosopher kings. Moreover, it is clear that the Stranger is talking only about “civic” virtue here, not about the virtue of a philosopher, as Bobonich points out (Bobonich, "The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato's Statesman," p. 313 note 2). Bobonich fails to specify
This *looks* like the “common sense” view of the many, but it is much too
articulate, and certainly too harsh in its assessment of the eternal hostility of the parts of
virtue. At any rate the Stranger seems to be saying that it is *not* the view of the many (cf.
306b13-c1): the many may think that there is some occasional tension between the parts
of virtue, but in general they appear to believe that they are “friends.”41 It is clear,
however, that whether or not the view the Stranger is proposing is shared by the many, it
is clearly open to typical sophistic objections (objections that appeal to the many, as we
can see in the *Euthydemus*) once it is stated as “a part of virtue is in opposition to another
part of virtue.”42

Yet this view in fact has its roots in the way in which we praise and blame things,
i.e., in common opinion. The focus on praise and blame points to the way in which the
political community (and civic virtue) is constituted through common opinion, but, as we
shall see, what is at stake underneath these discordant judgments is not merely common
opinion, but a real discordance at the heart of being, the opposition between the quick and
the slow and ultimately courage and moderation as qualities incompatible with a *single
right moment.*43

---

the connection between the virtues of the true statesman and the virtues of the citizens. It should be noted
that the identification of the virtues the Stranger is talking about as “civic” virtues is not universal: Irwin
Irwin, Plato’s *Ethics*, pp. 339-41, seems to think that these are the virtues tout court.

41 Annas and Waterfield, *Plato: Statesman*, p. 77, note 75 ad loc., think that this is the “common
sense” view of the many, and thus find it puzzling that the Stranger should say that it is not, but they miss
the Stranger’s emphasis on the *hatred* between the parts of virtue, which is hardly part of “explicit”
common opinion about virtue.

42 The Stranger seems to be saying that by stating matters as he does (saying that a part of virtue is
opposed to another), he and young Socrates run the risk of falling into a typical sophistic trap; this is the

This opposition is initially presented not in terms of “moral” characteristics,\(^{44}\) but in terms of qualities belonging to all sorts of beings: bodily qualities, souls (“character” in modern parlance), and the tones of voice that can be put together as music, both in themselves and in images (306c10-d3). All of these are “things in motion,” and their motion or physical quality can be characterized, by means of the “relative” measure, as quick or slow, sharp or soft, energetic or gentle, or rather, as quicker or slower, sharper or softer, more energetic or gentler, than something else of the same kind.

The Stranger points out that when these qualities “please” us on any particular occasion (306e6), we then call them by the name of the virtue associated with them: quickness, sharpness, and energy in bodies, souls, voices, or actions are then said to be “manly” or “courageous” (306e9-12), the opposite qualities are said to be “moderate” or “orderly” (307a7-b3). These qualities “please” us when we judge them to happen at the “right” time (ἐν καιρῷ 307b1); whenever we judge them to happen at the wrong time, we thus put blame on them (307b5-7). Note that there is no opposition between moderation and courage yet, and certainly no “civil war” or hatred between them; the only opposition thus far is between the underlying qualities that are praised or blamed.

The claim here is that all bodily things, souls, and sound tonalities have qualities that belong to a set of continua defined, in the Stranger’s explanation, by their extremes: the quick and the slow, the sharp and the soft, and so on. The Stranger does not describe the εἴδος under which all of these continua fall, though I suspect that they ultimately

\(^{44}\) Mishima, ”Courage and Moderation in the Statesman,” p. 309, seizes on this fact as a criticism of the Stranger’s theory of virtue, arguing that it is not possible to define the virtues in terms of non-“moral” qualities such as quickness and slowness. But Mishima misses the connection of these non-moral qualities with praise and blame, and more generally with the idea of “due” measure: it is not the qualities \textit{per se} that constitute the virtues, but the judgment that they occur at the proper times.
refer to the εἴδος of motion explored in the *Sophist*, as they all seem to suggest determinations of the *rate* of change in all things.\(^{45}\) Whatever the case, these continua are such that when occurrences of these qualities are measured not against one another but against the due measure – the καιρός – in respect of their ability to bring forth the human good, and we find that the “quicker” qualities – associated with courage – happen at the wrong time, they thereby appear to be the opposite of moderation (rather than courage; cf. μανικά 307b10), and similarly, when we find that the “slower” qualities – associated with moderation – happen at the wrong time, they thereby appear to be the opposite of courage (rather than moderation; cf. δειλά 307c2).

The problem is that if something happens more quickly than the opportunity demands, then something that happened slower would have fit the καιρός better, and similarly if something happens more slowly than the καιρός required, then something that happened quicker would have fit the due measure of the occasion. Hence if a “moderate” action is needed, a courageous action just will not do, and vice-versa. The “right measure” of quickness is almost\(^{46}\) incompatible with the “right measure” of slowness within the realm of becoming, i.e., in actions and even in souls (307c4-7); on occasions where moderation is demanded, courage will be out of place, and vice-versa.\(^{47}\) This is the reason for the “civil war” between the ἰδέαι of virtue (cf. 307c4).

\(^{45}\) This is not always evident in English, though it is somewhat clearer in Greek. See Skemp, *Plato’s Statesman*, p. 223, note 2 to 306d.

\(^{46}\) See note 40. Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 264, notes that music is founded in the compatibility of the high and low notes happening at the same time.

\(^{47}\) As Bobonich, "The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato’s *Statesman,*" p. 314, puts it, the Stranger “is making the ... claim that courage and moderation are such that it is impossible to co-instantiate them.”
When quick or slow actions happen at the right time, they are truly virtuous actions, however, since they are in accord with the right measure. Note that since “courage” here means the quality of quickness and the like when it happens at the right time, and similarly “moderation” means the quality of slowness when it happens at the right time, one could say that the essence of the human virtue of courage or moderation is making true judgments about the right time when such qualities are demanded. A virtue, in the Stranger’s view, is thus not a disposition to do the right thing, for human dispositions come in two incompatible varieties, one of which will always be wrong when the other one is right. It is the doing of actions that are quick or slow, sharp or soft, in accord with the καιρός, the occasion; but this doing cannot reliably result from human disposition, as we have seen. It can only result from proper knowledge of the καιρός, unaffected by any natural bias. For the Stranger, as for Socrates, virtue is knowledge.

This implies that, in principle, there is no reason to think that a single person could not make the true judgment that sometimes a situation demands quickness and sometimes it demands slowness. Such a person would have both virtues, though they would not both be present in a given situation. Yet in practice, as the Stranger goes on to

---

48 This is also true of the Socratic view of virtue. Cf. Weiss, "Statesman as ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ: Caretaker, Physician, and Weaver," p. 221, note 31.

49 The Stranger’s view is thus incompatible with some modern views of virtue, and perhaps more profound. See, for contrast, Immanuel Kant, The Metaphysics of Morals, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1797, 1798-1803]), especially the section on virtue.

50 It should be stressed that the opposition between the moderate and courageous does not manifest itself at the level of opposed courses of action (e.g., retreat versus attack) but at the level of the timing of any single course of action (retreat sooner or later; attack now or later), pace Bobonich, "The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato's Statesman," p. 317. Otherwise the theory would be incoherent.

51 See Miller Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, p. 108, on other grounds.
note (307c9-d4), judgments of praise or blame, and hence the judgments regarding the καρπός of any given quality, are made according to the “kinship” of each person with each set of qualities: thus, the quick tend to praise their own qualities and blame the qualities of the slow and vice-versa.

We see here that the γένος of human beings, with some possible exceptions (perhaps the naturally philosophical), like the universe itself, is divided into two eidetic parts, one of which has a tendency towards “quickness” and “sharpness” and another towards “slowness” or “softness,” and that each part judges the καρπός according to its own nature. This division was not attempted in the original genealogy of human beings simply because statesmanship needs to deal with both sides of it, and hence it would not have separated statesmanship from any other form of knowledge. Yet it was already intimated in the Stranger’s remark that human beings can be eidetically divided into male and female (262e6), and, more problematically, in the tame/wild division of all animals (see chapter 4, section 4.3).

To be sure, if the division between quick and slow were simply congruent with the division between male and female we might expect that no art would be needed to mix these dispositions, since mixing would naturally occur through sexual reproduction. The fact, therefore, that art is needed to mix these dispositions indicates that nature is not

52 See Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," pp. 261-62, 64; the Stranger is always careful to suggest that some people perhaps escape this conflict. Dixsaut refers incidentally to the fact that “dogs,” who represent “le naturel philosophe” were left out of the division of human being, and that only in such people could the contrariety of dispositions be resolved.

53 Though human beings are generally tamable animals, an eidetic part of their γένος tends towards wildness, sometimes incurably so, as we shall soon see (309a1-2), and similarly, some part of the γένος is incurably devoid of wildness, to the point that it can be easily enslaved (309a5-6). The statesman’s knowledge is required to separate the part of the γένος of human beings that is capable of mixture, i.e., that is tamable without being slavish, from the part that is not. Cf. Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 270.
sufficient: its divisions are too deep. More generally, we should say that the γένος of human beings, though pointing to a single, complete nature (that of the philosopher), is in any given individual incomplete, and in fact cannot properly speaking be completed, merely tempered by art (not by nature), as we shall see.

Furthermore, the fact that each eidetic part of the species judges of the καιρός in accordance with its own nature means that they will often be wrong, i.e., that they do not properly have the virtues of courage or moderation, though they will occasionally act virtuously. Without knowledge of the καιρός when their respective qualities are demanded, their actions will often fall short of virtue, though one might say that they will be right perhaps half the time, depending on whether the cosmos is such that quickness and slowness are demanded of human beings in roughly equal proportions if their good is to be actualized.

In fact, if human beings lived in the age of Cronos, it is clear that only slowness would be required of human beings, since there is no καιρός in that age that would demand forceful action, quickness, and energy. We might thus say that, even though the

______________________________

56 The Stranger insists that the virtues of courage and moderation are incompatible for reasons we have already discussed (situations that demand moderation cannot demand courage and vice-versa), but he never suggests that people who have a tendency towards quickness or towards slowness actually have the virtue of courage or moderation strictu sensu.
57 The connection of the two virtues with the two alternating ages of the cosmos is noted by, among others, Scodel, Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman, pp. 164-65, and Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 271. Dixsaut's formulation is worth quoting in full: “Le courageux sait sous quel règne il vit, mais a le tort d'oublier l'autre, dont provient pourtant le monde dans lequel il habite; le tempérant a la naïveté de se croire toujours sous le règne de Cronos, mais ce faisant il se ressouvien de sa soumission au divin. La dissension entre les deux vertus reflète une dualité plus originaire (cf. 274d-e). C'est cette dualité que refuse chaque espèce de vertueux en concevant la Nature à son image - mère
virtues properly speaking are unnecessary in the age of Cronos, “moderation” is the virtue of the “golden age.” This is indicated by the identification of moderation with κοσμιότης, orderliness (307b2), and thus with the ordered cosmos of that age.

Moderation, at any rate, is required only when things are already in order, since it preserves that order: in the most general terms, this is the virtue that “restricts” motion so that order is not disturbed. The “slow” thus accept whatever order is given around them, something that is perhaps fine if human beings are ruled by a god, but not necessarily if they are ruled by human beings. They are “conservatives” in the classical sense of the word.58

With the release of the cosmos by the god, and its increasing disorder, times arise when quickness, sharpness, energy, and the like, in short, what in other Platonic dialogues is called “thumotic” action, is demanded of human beings. Such action is required when order needs to be restored. When the polis or the cosmos is not fully ordered, the action of man is required to re-impose a modicum of that order; hence the name of the virtue, ἀνδρεία. The quick fail to accept the order or disorder around them: they are “revolutionaries” or “radicals” in the basic sense that they are dissatisfied with the order of things and act to change it.59 However, they also tend to forget that the order of the whole is not made merely by human willfulness; they forget the divine sources of order (cf. 309a1), as we saw earlier in the case of young Socrates (see chapter 6, section

---

nourricière ou marâtre, et sur tout l'homme à son image: comme un frère ou comme un loup. L'ennui, pour le politique, est qu'ils ont raison tous les deux.”


59 Crosson, "Plato's "Statesman": Unity and Pluralism," p. 41, speaks of “liberals,” though current American usage of this term is so muddled as to be almost useless for identifying the quality at stake here.
6.1.1), and consequently threaten to *increase* disorder rather than restore order by their misguided, out of καρός interventions for the sake of restoring that order.

The virtue of courage is thus fundamentally a virtue of this age. In fact, the farther in time the mythical release of the cosmos is from our time, the greater the need for it, though at the same time it should be said that the greater this distance, the lesser its effectiveness as a way of restoring order (since the greater this distance, the less the knowledge of this order is likely to exist). At the beginning of the age of Zeus, moderation is thus much more in demand that courage, as things are still fundamentally ordered, and “quickness” is more likely to disturb this order than to improve it. As disorder increases, however, “quickness,” and hence courage, is much more often in demand, though moderation – attunement to order or orderliness – never ceases to be required, as the only virtue that straddles both the age of Cronos and the age of Zeus.60

“Quickness” and its associated virtue of courage, by contrast, are both the cause *and* the solution of the disorder of politics in the age of Zeus. Mere quickness – i.e., quickness not at the right time – increases the disorder of things, but courage – i.e., quickness at the right time – restores it. This can be seen clearly in the example the Stranger uses about the effects of the tendency of each kind of people to misjudge the καρός, i.e., to think themselves in a world where all that is required is the tendency that they themselves have.

The example concerns foreign policy, though as the Stranger indicates, the same is the case for the whole “provision” of life (307e1). Those who are exceptionally “orderly” (κόσμιοι) are always ready to live their lives quietly, doing their own business

---

60 Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato’s Statesman*, p. 165, is thus correct to say that “[t]he virtue of kosmiotes is ultimately seen ... to take precedence over the virtue of courage.”
and not interfering in anybody else’s, and in particular they are always ready to be peaceful towards other cities and unwilling to wage war on them. For the slow (and thus conventionally moderate), the inhabitants of other cities seem just the same as they are, and thus never “strangers.” If everyone were like them, this would pose no problems; but clearly there exist cities where the opposite tendency predominates; and to forget about these people, as the moderate do (cf. ἐλαθον 307e8) is to court disaster, more particularly slavery for themselves and their children. Slavery is that condition in which human beings accept or are forced to accept an external order, no matter how injurious to them, and thus particularly appropriate to these natures, which tend towards the preservation of any order (cf. also 309a5-6).

The existence of people with a tendency towards quickness, energy, and the like, is the reason why the moderate do not have true virtue, i.e., the reason why their judgment of the καιρός in which slowness, restraint, gentleness, and the like are required is sometimes mistaken (ἀκαιρότερον ... ἡ χρή 307e7). The tendency towards “quickness” in other people emerges here as the source of disorder threatening the moderate natures and falsifying their virtue. At the same time, the correct judgment that quickness and energetic action is required to counteract the threatened disorder by those with a tendency to quickness, i.e., the true virtue of courage, also emerges as the indispensable corrective. How these tendencies in nature can be ameliorated, i.e., how the

61 Note that the language the Stranger uses here, αὐτοὶ καθ’ αὐτούς μόνοι τὰ σφέτερα αὐτῶν πράττοντες, recalls the eventual definition of justice in the Republic (433a-434d). As we shall see, moderation is closer to justice than courage: cf. 309a1, 309e1, as well as Bobonich, “The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato's Statesman,” p. 324.

62 See Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.147.

63 Pace Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 270.
gentle can be taught to judge that certain situations require quickness, which goes against the grain of their nature, and similarly how the quick can be taught to judge that certain situations require gentleness, which also goes against the grain of their nature, is something that the Stranger proceeds to describe as the task of (civic) education, and thus of statesmanship as such.

9.2.3.2 Education as the essence of statesmanship

Having described the main components of the “web” the statesman is supposed to weave – the moderate and courageous dispositions – the Stranger will now explicitly describe the weaving of the statesman, which turns out to be a kind of education. This education does not result in knowledge properly speaking, but in true opinion, because it occurs in common, not one-on-one. But only individual education could possibly lead to knowledge, and in particular to the kind of knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble that the statesman has. We may thus call this education a “political” or “civic” education (rather than education simply).

Yet because this civic education does not lead to knowledge, it does not, as we shall see, completely erase the original tendencies of human beings towards “quickness” or “slowness,” and thus does not produce genuine virtue. It merely ameliorates these tendencies, substituting a lesser sort of rigidity for the natural bias of human beings towards judgments that accord with their own nature. This openness to the other side, so to speak, functions as a kind of substitute for the unattainable wisdom of the statesman.
Civic virtue is thus to genuine virtue as the rule of law is to the rule of the true statesman: one is rigid, unable to cope with changing circumstances, and otherwise biased in ways that make it inappropriate to a wide variety of settings; the other is flexible, able to cope with changing circumstances, and never biased. Civic virtue, we may say, is “law” in the mind – a somewhat more flexible and complex law than the written law of the city, since it the product of education, but nevertheless in the final instance only marginally better than the law of the city. It can thus only slightly temper the deficiencies of law.

Moreover, just as the rigidity of law is predicated on its inability to properly determine the καιρός, the right time for any action, in contrast to the insight of the genuine statesman, so the rigidity of civic virtue is similarly predicated on its inability to overcome its bias in the determination of the καιρός: it always determines the καιρός wrongly in some subset of possible situations, even after the natural tendencies of human beings have been exposed to the other side by education.

This education into civic virtue is not worthless, however. It makes the rigidity of law somewhat less fatal to the city, all the while pointing to the (more powerful) theory of the mixed regime that the Athenian Stranger introduces in the Laws. In order to see how it works, we will examine it in some detail. It has four components: a preparatory component which is in turn divided into an initial “testing” stage and a secondary “separating” stage, and a “synthetic” component which comprises a “divine” and a “human” bond. We shall examine these in turn.
The first step in the process of education is explicitly likened to the preparatory separation in the process of weaving (308c1ff, especially 308d6-e2), and it is said to separate good from bad. This is in contrast to weaving, where two sorts of separation needed to take place before the web could be woven, first of wool from non-wool things like dirt (of like from like, by means of washing and fulling), and then of good wool from bad wool (of better from worse, by means of carding). The process of fulling thus “disclosed” the wool as such, separate from any impurities that did not truly belong to its nature.

The equivalent process to “fulling” in statesmanship is here assimilated (though silently) to the early stages of education, namely, the “testing” of children by means of play (308d3-4). This “testing” does not yet “separate” the good and bad natures, but merely discloses them to have this or that character, or rather, this or that tendency – some will emerge as “quick,” others as “slow.” The work of actually separating the good “quick” or “slow” natures from the bad, i.e., those capable of tempering their own natural tendencies by education from those incapable of doing so, belongs to a different part of the process of education, properly compared to the process of carding (308d4-e2).

This part of the process of “preliminary” education prepares the citizens to receive the true opinions about just, beautiful, and good things. Though the Stranger does not say so, such preliminary education is thus likely to consist in activities that expose each

---

64 It does not actually provide them with such opinions, something that is unlikely that subordinate educators would be able to do unless they all possessed the knowledge of the statesman.
nature to the other disposition. For example, the quick and the sharp may be exposed to appropriate music and poetry, and the moderate may be exposed to martial games. Preparatory education thus mixes the natural tendencies, but only at the level of dispositions, not of opinion. At the same time, this process reveals who cannot take any mixture of the contrary disposition. It is thus analogous in weaving both to carding and to warp- and woof- making (cf. 309a8-b7).

Only the statesman himself can make the decision to cast away or enslave those he judges to be incapable of further mixture at the level of opinion. What in the case of weaving was separated into distinct arts that weaving properly merely supervised – fulling, carding, warp-and-woof making – is thus in the case of statesmanship actually gathered together into a single art that has different “aspects” or “processes.” Statesmanship as a single art thus mirrors the internal structure of the multiple arts that were directly responsible for the web in the case of weaving, something which might lead

65 The Stranger suggests that this part of the process is accomplished not by the statesman himself but by those “able to educate” (308d5) and of “educators and nurses” (308e5) under the supervision of the statesman. Such people, however, do not appear to have a distinct art, but possess merely the arts of those people that were earlier included with the makers of “ornaments” and “games” (288c1-d1), and which were never fully separated off from statesmanship, arts which are now put into the service of statesmanship so as to serve an educational purpose, pace Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 266, and Cooper, "Plato's "Statesman" and Politics," p. 90. This explains why the Stranger never explicitly identifies education as a separate art in the city. On the other hand, it is arguable that the Stranger is mistaken about this: just as there is an art of rhetoric different from statesmanship, so there may be an art of education different from the art it is supposed to teach. The best scholars or practitioners do not always make for the best teachers, though the best teachers do know their subjects very well.

66 This is what the Athenian Stranger recommends for preliminary education, at least.

67 Cf. Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature," p. 266: "Mais la paideia n’est pas seulement un art diacritique: une fois le tri doublement opéré, elle doit tordre les fils afin d’assouplir la raideur des uns et renforcer la souplesse des autres. Ce premier mélange, oeuvre de l’art éducatif, ne mêle encore que des tendances naturelles, propres à [267] toute âme d’homme (les inhumains ayant été éliminés et les infra-humains réduits en esclavage), mais d’intensité variable en chacun." Dixsaut assumes throughout that there is an art of education separate from statesmanship, something I am dubious about.
one to wonder whether all the other arts of the city are not, strictly speaking, only
“indirectly” responsible for the web of politics and thus for the care of human beings.\footnote{See above, section 5.1, especially note 5, as well as chapter 4, section 4.4.}

The “wool” of the statesman consists of the potential citizens, and the separation of good from bad “wool” thus produces a body of citizens. Those cast out are either made into slaves (309a5-6, the incorrigibly “slow” or “soft,” who are said to have a tendency towards ignorance and self-abasement) or put to death and exiled (the incorrigibly “quick” or “sharp,” who are said to tend to atheism, ὄβρις, and injustice).\footnote{The difference in treatment suggests that for the city excessive “slowness” is less harmful, and can be put to more profitable use, than excessive “courage.” Cf. Bobonich, “The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato’s Statesman,” p. 320. The city, as we have already indicated, is an essentially conservative place.} The citizens, though they retain a “bias” towards one extreme or the other (neither tendency is ever fully eliminated), have natures that can be tempered by education: some are warp-like, fundamentally “quick” but mixed a bit with the “slow” disposition, and able to take further mixing at the level of opinion; some, conversely, are woof-like, fundamentally “slow” or “soft” (309a8-b7). They must now be “woven” together so as to complete the work of the statesman. This, the Stranger now says, is done in two ways, by means of two “bonds,” a divine one (which takes precedence both temporally and in other respects) and a human one (309c1ff).\footnote{Skemp, Plato’s Statesman, p. 230, note 1 ad loc., argues that the introduction of the word δεσμῶς signals a change of paradigm or metaphor, since the word does not have any technical meaning in weaving; this shows, according to Skemp, the fundamental inadequacy of weaving as a metaphor for statesmanship. I believe this is incorrect. While δεσμῶς need not have a technical meaning in weaving, the Stranger’s point is that the warp and the woof are bonded or twined together, firmly attached to one another without losing their own fundamental nature in the process.}
The “divine bond” harmonizes that part of the human soul that has a kinship with that which is “born from eternity,” i.e., the part of the soul that is connected to the divine, reason or λόγος (309c1-2). This bond, which is the result of the statesman’s educative activity, is the *enduring* true opinion about beautiful, just, and good things as well as their opposites. It is not, however, knowledge of the beautiful, the just, and the good. This he cannot teach, at least not to the mass of the citizens; in fact, he apparently cannot even pass on this knowledge to selected others, as cobblers and doctors train the next generation of cobblers and doctors.

There is a threefold distinction implicit here among mere true opinion, *enduring* true opinion, and knowledge. As I have emphasized throughout, knowledge is always more than true opinion. True opinion (like law) is fixed, and hence liable to be falsified by changes in circumstances, while knowledge is the insight into the regularity of nature (or perhaps more precisely, into εἰδη) that allows the knower to always determine the opinion that is true for the specific circumstances (true opinion being the mere assent to a proposition inside the soul, whenever such assent happens to correspond with things). To have knowledge is at least partially to be able to say “yes” or “no” appropriately to what “seems” to us to be the case. In this respect, true opinion is to knowledge in the citizens as the rule of law is to the rule of the statesman in the polis; and like the law, it is better when it is firm and enduring rather than fragile. But what makes true opinion endure?

---

71 This is the translation of ἀειγενές at 309c1 proposed by Voegelin, *Order and History*, p. III.168.

Note that knowledge does not make true opinion endure; in fact, it is the mark of knowledge that it does not think that matters that change will fall under a given proposition forever, just as the statesman does not think that the laws of the city will always be beneficial to it. Opinion by itself, on the other hand, is always easily changed, as it is liable to the corrosive use of reason and assaulted by the sometimes contradictory evidence of the senses; this is especially true of opinions “unconnected” to other opinions. True opinion endures either on account of some irrational or suprarational process that prevents its “corrosion” by misused reason (habit, law, and religious ritual come to mind here; cf. 310a1-2), partial understanding of the regularity underlying it, or some connection to other true opinions (as, e.g., a particular opinion may be connected to a more general one).

To say that the statesman provides the citizens with an enduring true opinion about beautiful, just, and good things thus means that he provides them with a system of mutually supported opinions, which are sufficiently general to serve them as guides to action in a variety of different situations, and which are in turn supported by additional suprarational or irrational opinions that make the true opinions about beautiful, just, and good things resistant to “corrosion,” including the corrosion of misused λόγοι. (Such suprarational opinions might say, for instance, that “killing is wrong” is a divine command, or that killers will meet their just deserts in an afterlife). The Stranger does not say how this is done; for that, we would have to turn to the Athenian Stranger, who uses a

---

73 Pace Bobonich, "The Virtues of Ordinary People in Plato's Statesman," p. 323, and Cooper, "Plato's 'Statesman' and Politics," p. 93, I do not think that the endurance of true opinion in this case is necessarily to be accounted for by some process of reason-giving or -accepting, though it is not entirely incompatible with it. Such reason-giving or –accepting might be said to be a partial understanding of the underlying regularity that accounts for particular things being just or beautiful. But the mere “generality” of the opinions in question can serve just as well to make them enduring, as we shall see.
combination of myth, vague argument, institutions (including laws against impiety), and religious ritual to inculcate and fix some more and some less general opinions about beautiful, just, and good things in the citizens. At any rate, we should note that such true opinion, if firm, is liable to be eventually falsified by changes in circumstances or by cases that do not fall under it: it is only a more refined form of the law, a law in the souls of the citizens (cf. 310a1-2).

The education of the statesman produces a “bond” because, with enduring true opinion about beautiful, just, and good things, the citizens, whatever their disposition, will be less likely to misjudge the καιρός of their own actions in accordance with their own tendency only. The courageous (or rather, the quick) will be “tamed” (309e1) so that they will now become very much willing to partake of justice (as well as exhibit a truer courage), becoming more divine rather than beast-like (309c7-8, e3), whereas the orderly will become truly moderate and φρόνιμοι, at least insofar as the polis is concerned, rather than merely naive (309e5-8).

The different tempering of courage by justice and of moderation by a kind of civic φρόνησις (the qualification ὅς γε ἐν πολιτείᾳ at 309e6-7 is important) deserves some notice, as it reintroduces the virtues of justice and prudence into the polis. Justice and φρόνησις are both “limits” on the civic virtues of courage and justice. Civic courage is limited and brought closer to true virtue by directing energetic action only towards causes that are deemed just, while civic moderation is limited and brought closer to true virtue by a recognition that sometimes φρόνησις demands that it fall silent. The “tempering” of both natures leads to a partial convergence of judgments of the καιρός of energetic or gentle action among both types, but courageous natures remain more disposed to action,
while moderate natures remain less so, as the everyday meanings of justice and prudence indicate: the just are fired by the quest for justice, like the courageous; the prudent are slower to action, pondering the many things that can go wrong in any course of action. Their judgments, informed by true opinion, are correct for the most part, but they may diverge in cases not covered by it or as circumstances change.

This means that the most the statesman can achieve is to open a space for persuasion by means of law and opinion (310a1-2) where the energetic are willing to be convinced that the city is better off if their actions are stayed, while the slow and gentle are willing to be convinced that the city is better off acting energetically. The statesman’s divine bond is merely a φάρμακον, a remedy (310a3), for a situation that has no real solution, given the dissimilarity of the parts of virtue (310a5; cf. 294b2). This dissimilarity is a reflection of the general dissimilarity and sickness of the cosmos left on its own by the god (cf. 273d6, 273e2), and it thus cannot be cured completely except by the god, whose rule eliminates the need for energetic action altogether, restoring moderation to its place as complete virtue, “doing one’s own business.”

The statesman’s “divine” remedy, which is, after all, designed by a human being, can only arrest the progress of the sickness for a time. Its character as a mere remedy is emphasized by the fact that the true opinion of the citizens must be embedded in law and habits (310a2), i.e., unchangeable and firm rules which will eventually cease to be true unless they are continually updated; but they cannot be continually updated except by one with knowledge, i.e., the statesman. But the statesman cannot ensure the reproduction of his own knowledge in the citizens, or else he would have given them knowledge rather
than mere true opinion;\textsuperscript{74} and “updating” them would mean destroying habits and laws, something that only a true statesman is in a position to do well, according to the Stranger. The statesman’s remedy is better than mere law in that it provides a basis for the inevitable judgments of the citizens which need to go beyond law, but it is still only a remedy that will eventually fail. The (increasing) dissimilarity of the cosmos in this age frustrates any complete solution to the political problem.\textsuperscript{75}

The fact that the divine bond consists of “enduring” opinions also has implications for how we understand the role of the statesman in the city: just as I argued above on other grounds (see section 9.2.1), it implies that the statesman must be a founder figure rather than a day-to-day ruler. The reason for this is simple. If the statesman were to assume the day-to-day management of the affairs of the city, then he would \textit{either} need to do things that contradict the enduring opinions that he has fixed in the souls of the citizens \textit{or} not. If he would not need to do so, then his management of the city’s affairs would be unnecessary, since the true opinion of the citizens would effectively arrive at the same decisions he himself would make; but if he \textit{did} need to do things that contradict the citizens’ opinions because these become false in some circumstances (opinions that, we must remember, he himself has given to them) then he would effectively undermine their fixity and thus his own authority. The best thing a statesman could do after creating the “divine” bond would thus be to leave the city (or at

\textsuperscript{74} Cf. Miller Jr., \textit{The Philosopher in Plato’s Statesman}, p. 110.

\textsuperscript{75} This is not to say that the statesman’s remedy is worthless. Depending on the cosmological assumptions we make, these “enduring” opinions are likely to remain true for longer or shorter periods of time, demanding the emergence of people with political knowledge at similar periods to save the πόλεις whose laws and opinions have become no longer true. As we saw earlier, a “conservatism” of experience (the kind of conservatism of law that the Stranger recommended earlier as second best; see chapter 5, section 5.3.6) is a “rational” survival strategy in a hostile environment, though it is not perfect.
least retire from politics), since his continuing presence in it would represent a threat to
the fixity of the citizen’s opinions, just as the god must let go of the cosmos after he has
put it in order if he does not want it to “unravel” by a complete separation of body from
soul (see chapter 5, section 5.4.1). This is in fact what the Stranger recommends (311a1-
2): 76 the statesman must remain a stranger to his creation, given the limitations of his
material.

9.2.3.2.3 The human bond

The human bond is the bond of marriage. Proper marriage is supposed to bind
citizens of “courageous” bias (already tempered by justice, to be sure), with citizens of
“moderate” bias (tempered by φρόνησις). True opinion about beautiful, just, and good
things will quickly prevent marriages contracted for the sake of money and power, since
such things are not true goods (310b7-9). But the citizens will still retain their attraction
to their like; and to allow such attraction to proceed unchecked risks undoing the bond of
ture opinion, as the children of such families will be less likely to be exposed to the
moderating or encouraging influence of the opposite tendencies, leading, in the course of
the generations, to either madness (in the case of courageous dispositions, 310d6-9) or
complete dullness (in the case of moderate dispositions, 310d11–e3).

The point here is not that the Stranger is proposing some sort of crude eugenic
theory. It matters little whether dispositions are transmitted genetically or by means of

76 See Lane, "A New Angle on Utopia: The Political Theory of the Statesman," p. 283. In her later
work, Lane retreats from this position a bit, in my opinion wrongly. See also Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note
ad loc.
education. Without exposure to the “other side,” however, the bond of true opinion can hardly be expected to endure. The “human bond,” however, is a limited, desperate expedient, which, in going against the grain of ἑπτάδωσις, is unlikely to last much after the statesman dies or goes away. Like Socratic matchmaking (cf. Theaetetus 149d10ff), the making of such bonds should be a delicate art, requiring the individual attention of the statesman to each individual citizen. In practice, the marriage bond is merely the expedient the statesman uses to compel human beings to become “interbreeding” creatures, when they are not naturally so.

9.3 The web and the law: concluding reflections on the completeness or incompleteness of the dialogue.

The creation of the divine and human bonds nearly complete the work of the statesman. These bonds make the citizens, whose nature is divided, share in the same opinions, honors and dishonors, marriage-pledges, and offices (310e7-311a2). The sharing in offices is the institutional result of the statesman’s work, and it completes his task, for it implies turning the city over to the citizens for them to manage in common (311a1-2), without further direction from him. In practice, this means that he chooses for

77 Cf. Crosson, "Plato's "Statesman": Unity and Pluralism," p. 40: “intermarriage is not intended to produce offspring who combine the two qualities, since this is, by hypothesis, practically impossible. It is rather to associate their fortunes (in a broad sense), to give them a common lineage, as the divine bond gives them common values.”

78 As Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.148, notes, “[t]he statesman can of course arrange the most suitable marriages, but he cannot make the partners love one another, however much each couple might be convinced their marriage is good for the city and their own families.”

79 Cf. Dorter, Form and good in Plato's Eleatic Dialogues, p. 227.
those offices where a single individual is required a person who has both courageous and moderate dispositions (311a4-5), and for those bodies that require multiple members he ensures that the courageous and moderate dispositions are more or less evenly distributed (311a5-6). With this initial distribution of people into offices, the web of politics is finally complete, and it protects and “encloses” everybody else in the city (311c3-5), both slave and free: the citizen body properly speaking does not include everybody in the city, just as it does not do so in the city of the Laws.81

As we have seen, the statesman prepares the city to survive without him. No hope is offered of a quick return, just as the god does not promise to return until the cosmos is nearly destroyed. He cannot train others to take his place – his knowledge is too scarce and too difficult, too tied to the “seeing” of the καρός in its connection to the good, the just, and the beautiful, to be easily taught by the normal means by which knowledge is transmitted. His continued presence would moreover threaten the necessary fixity of the citizen’s opinions, a fixity that will be especially required after he dies.

But this is not to say that his achievement is all for naught. Even after he is gone, the opinions he has implanted in the souls of the citizens will continue to be true for some time, and they will be reproduced by the laws and institutions he creates. The rhetoricians and the generals, whose supervision by the statesman I had earlier argued was necessary, would still be able to draw on these opinions to do their work well, since, after all, they

80 Since only people like the statesman lack the bias towards one or the other nature, we might think that this means that either the city lacks offices that are under the supervision of a single person, or that only a true statesman can properly hold those offices.

81 See Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note ad loc. Only some people would have the leisure and time to be educated into firm true opinion, as the Athenian Stranger discusses in some detail in the Laws.
too are citizens; and as long as they do not pretend to know the just and the good and the
noble when they do not, the city will not revert to lawlessness.

The achievement of the statesman is thus a partial healing of the partiality or
incompleteness of human nature. This partiality is most apparent in the split between
the courageous and moderate dispositions, but it was also apparent in the dispersal of
knowledge among all the forms of expertise in the city. At any rate, this achievement
now appears in its most paradoxical light, since the Stranger has indicated that neither
nature nor the city produce the knowledge of the statesman. Nature does not normally
produce statesmen, since it produces people with a bias towards one or the other
disposition, but not the kind of balanced people that would be able to acquire the
knowledge of the statesman. This makes naturally occurring statesmen exceedingly
scarce. But this natural scarcity is amplified by the fact that everybody, future statesmen
as well as everybody else, is born in cities that are not normally ruled by statesmen, and
hence places that ipso facto are devoid of the knowledge of the statesman. Though
occasionally such places allow scarce natural talent to develop (as Athens allowed the
Athenian Stranger of the Laws to develop, Laws 642c6-d2), in general they provide very
little support for the development of the statesman’s knowledge. The statesman is a freak
accident of both nature and culture, a stranger to both the city and the world.

The dialogue concludes with one of the Socrateses – we cannot tell if the elder or
the younger – addressing the Stranger formally as ξένος to say that the Stranger has most

82 Cf. Strauss, "Plato," p. 230, as well as Dixsaut, "Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature,"
pp. 253, 70-73.

83 Annas and Waterfield, Plato: Statesman, note 85 ad loc, Diès, Le Politique, note ad loc, Miller
Jr., The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman, pp. 112-13, Rowe, Plato: Statesman, note ad loc., and Skemp,
Plato's Statesman, p. 235, note 1 ad loc., follow Schleiermacher and Robinson in attributing the last words
beautifully completed the kingly and political man. We do not know whether the Stranger also thinks so. We can only say that having discussed the imitator of wisdom and the wise man, the Stranger has not yet completed the philosopher, who is in-between these two.

He has, however, validated the elder Socrates’ initial impression of him as a philosophical man. The Stranger is no statesman (or at least he has not conclusively shown that he is one), but he is on the way to statesmanship, as his small-scale demonstration of the kind of weaving that he said was required of the statesman shows: he did manage to temper young Socrates’ theoretical recklessness and to encourage Theaetetus’ moderation. This was, however, merely an “example” – it shows the bigger task that the statesman should accomplish, but is not identical with it, as we saw earlier (see chapter 6, section 6.2). But the example is all one has in the striving for this knowledge; and in presenting us with a broad set of comparisons and contrasts that define the knowledge of the statesman, the Stranger has indicated the way to political knowledge as clearly as one can expect a philosopher to do so.

of the dialogue to the elder Socrates. Skemp, Robinson, and Annas and Waterfield also follow Campbell’s speculation in thinking that a reply by young Socrates has dropped out of the text just before the last line of the dialogue. (Miller’s argument would seem rather to support the attribution of the last words of the dialogue to the younger Socrates, as he thinks that there is something incomplete about this last genealogy, yet he prefers to attribute them to the elder Socrates). Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful, p. III.155, note 50, Campbell, The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato, note ad loc, Crosson, “Plato’s "Statesman": Unity and Pluralism,” pp. 42-43, Dixsaut, “Une politique vraiment conforme à la nature,” p. 273, Friedländer, Platon, and McCabe, “Chaos and Control,” p. 117, note 90, either follow Burnet in attributing the last words of the dialogue to the young Socrates or at least see that the question of this attribution is whether the πολιτικὸς has finally been truly defined, contrary to young Socrates’ earlier confident assertions that it had been so defined (267a1-3, 277a1-2; in τῆς λατέρος σποτ, θονύγ Σοφρατέως εφόν αὕδρεσεις τῆς Στρανγερ φορμαλλθ σα ξένε, as at 311ε10, if we accept the words are his). The ancient manuscripts would not, of course, have allowed us to determine whether the last words of the dialogue belonged to the younger or the elder Socrates, unless a reply had in fact dropped out, as Robinson speculates.

453
In previous chapters, we have examined the shape of political knowledge vis à vis all other forms of knowledge in the city. The results can be summarized in figure 1 and figure 2. A few important points we have discussed throughout this study are worth re-emphasizing:

1) Statesmanship is a theoretical form of knowledge, that is, a form of knowledge that is not directly connected to the performance of any bodily actions. But it is concerned with the care of a bodily being, namely human being. In order to affect the bodily realm in which human beings have their lives, statesmanship thus requires a full complement of practical forms of knowledge, that is, of forms of knowledge that are capable of directing the actual movement of bodies (summarized in figure 2). As such, statesmanship is the integrative knowledge that directs (at greater or lesser removes) the activities of the practical forms of knowledge (“technology” in the broadest sense of the word) for the sake of the care of human beings.

2) Statesmanship is a commanding form of knowledge, that is, a form of knowledge that acts in the world by postulating a certain arrangement of things as imperative or needful. But the achievement of this (new) arrangement of things requires
the cooperation of other arts and other people, something that statesmanship cannot ensure by itself alone. Hence statesmanship stands in need of a full complement of mediating arts, that is, of arts that can ensure that other arts and other people act in accordance with the statesman’s insight (summarized in figure 2, right hand corner).

3) Statesmanship is centrally concerned with the care of human beings in a universe that is not in wholly good order. This implies that, as a form of know-how, statesmanship must draw on insight into the forms of good order (the good, the just, and the noble) and the form of human being (which is complex and naturally divided). The knowledge of the statesman is thus in the first instance the knowledge of what needs to be done at any given moment in order to bring human being into good order, i.e., in order to preserve its form in a universe where all living bodily existence is constantly threatened by disorder (“formlessness” or “dissimilarity,” in the Stranger’s understanding). This involves knowledge of how to ensure the physical preservation of human beings over time, but it is not identical with it; and it involves the ability to measure what is needful at any given time to achieve this objective. The activity of measurement, moreover, is extremely hard, as shown by the Stranger’s many mistakes of measurement, and yet essential if statesmanship is to be actualized.

4) Statesmanship is concerned with human beings not as simply rational animals, but as “modularly” rational animals, that is, rational insofar as they possess arts (and in particular insofar as particular people possess this or that art). Thus, though every human being has the capacity to develop knowledge, reason is actual only as knowledge, that is, as art. This means that the knowledge of the statesman takes into account both the diversity of forms of knowledge that care for human beings and their basis in the
nakedness of bodily human nature (as featherless bipeds), but not their simple rational
capacity. The care of human beings is thus a common task of the citizens insofar as they
possess arts, but the task of the statesman alone insofar as such care must be integrated
for the sake of the common good.

5) As a theoretical-commanding form of knowledge statesmanship is also best
characterized as *productive* rather than acquisitive, i.e., concerned with bringing into
being things (or arrangements of things) that did not exist before. At a very abstract level,
we may thus say that the statesman produces human being, i.e., produces human being in
good order, or human being fully “formed.” Less generally, the statesman produces “the
web of politics,” i.e., the set of laws and opinions that promote the good order of the *polis*
and hence protect human beings from the harm that may come from the misuse of his arts
and from the divisions in their nature into swift and slow characters. The process of
creating these laws and opinions is *civic* education, and it results in people with certain
civic virtues, broadly distributed between the “moderate” and “courageous” dispositions,
and tempered in such a way that each part of the city is open to the persuasion of the
other part.
Figure 1: The genealogy of statesmanship as the care of human beings by human beings
I have presented the Eleatic Stranger’s position on political knowledge as a strong one, implicitly arguing that it is a good way of understanding what political science or knowledge would be like were it to exist, though I have not argued that it actually does exist. Two broad themes of my argument need to be emphasized in this connection, for they may seem at first sight to represent crucial weaknesses in it.

First, I have disregarded throughout the Aristotelian distinction between the prudential knowledge of the statesman and the theoretical knowledge of the scientist. Knowledge is not complete unless it is both the ability to make particular judgments and
to ground those judgments, not in some specific proposition or set of propositions, but on insight into form, i.e., into the general structure of reality, as I think the Stranger (and, more generally, Plato), argues. The point here is not that the statesman must have some general theory that grounds his judgment (at best, general theory, like law, is only an abridgment or image of knowledge), but that all knowledgeable judgment works through the identification of form in the manifold of reality. Experience and “practice” are crucial to learning how to do this (as the discussion of paradigm showed – chapter 6, section 6.2), but ultimately experience alone is not knowledge. Plato (not just the Stranger or Socrates), I believe, is thus right to argue and imply throughout the corpus that if knowledge is to be possible, it depends ultimately on an intuition of the enduring structures of reality (its “forms”); but he is also right to emphasize that such knowledge must also be able to reflect back onto the things which image form in the world.

Second, I have also disregarded throughout the Aristotelian distinction between ποιήσις and πράξις, making and doing, on which Hannah Arendt drew to indict the Platonic conception of politics. I have argued that the statesman indeed makes the well-ordered polis, which then must subsist on its own, separate from the statesman’s continued action. To that extent, the Arendtian characterization of Plato’s political thought as privileging production over Aristotelian action is indeed correct. But, contrary to Arendt’s (and other’s) fears, this does not spell the end of politics. In fact, the making of the well-ordered polis is a foundational act that marks the retreat of political knowledge and opens up a space for political doing, i.e., activity for the sake of the constant care of human beings through the arts and their regulation. Politics in the polis then becomes the constant struggle to preserve the rule of law – the image of political
knowledge – in a world largely devoid of such knowledge; and this is not an
inconsiderable or unimportant task. Such politics do not leave a great deal of room for
radical political change (unlike Arendtian politics), but I take it that the Stranger – and
Plato – are correct in thinking that change that is not led by knowledge is unlikely to be
any good. That radical or nearly-radical change sometimes happens for the good merely
testifies to the fact that human beings can achieve something at least like such knowledge
from time to time.

The politics of the Eleatic Stranger, however, though “conservative” in one sense,
are still in another sense uncomfortably “messianic.” Because political knowledge is in
some ways radically foreign to the city, as I have argued throughout this study, there is no
“normal” politics that involves the statesman; the foreignness of the statesman – his being
a Stranger – implies that politics is either deficient or messianic. Human beings may only
hope for a statesman, which they apparently cannot cultivate; yet only a statesman can
ultimately “fix” their most fundamental political problems, at least for a time. They are
thus left to await a savior who will most likely not come, though in the meantime they
will be tempted by all sorts of dubious imitators of such a savior. And yet, if the polis is
healthy, its proper resistance to the statesman’s imitators will always destroy its ability to
welcome the genuine article. This is a paradoxical situation, liable to lead to unhealthy
millenarian expectations.

At the same time, the Stranger’s “conservatism” – his injunction to preserve the
law at all costs in the absence of a statesman – seems jarringly at odds with the admitted
possibility of achieving relatively good law by drawing on the lessons of experience. This
suggests that Platonic politics does not have to be messianic, at least if the city has some
access to something like knowledge, i.e., some way of processing experience and incorporating it into its common life so as to more or less reliably adapt to changing circumstances.

This is precisely the effect that a variety of institutional and rhetorical arrangements devised by the Athenian Stranger in the Laws have, making the politics of Magnesia much less “messianic” than the Eleatic Stranger’s politics apparently are. Though a detailed examination of these arrangements is beyond the scope of this work, suffice it to say that the Athenian’s persuasive example – as an Athenian helping a Cretan and a Spartan found a city1 – as well as his treatment of atheism in Book X (enabling the cautious discussion of such doctrines by some people in the city),2 his regulations of foreign travel and foreigners in book XII (enabling the regulated exchange of ideas about law and virtue with other cities), and the institution of the nocturnal council (also in book XII, enabling the analysis of new ideas in the city and their cautious incorporation into law), all point towards a – very cautious – integration of philosophical and political inquiry in the city. Such inquiry – not quite knowledge, but pointing towards knowledge, as Aristotle saw3 – provides Magnesia with a flexibility that is denied to the abstract regime of the Eleatic Stranger. The Laws thus provides a model for the partial integration of knowledge in the city, though, to be sure, it is a very risk-averse sort of integration.


3 Politics 1265a2-3: “[Plato] gradually brings it [the Laws] around toward the other regime [the regime of the Republic],” Carnes Lord translation.
with a very conservative bias, very different from the regimes of free inquiry of a Kant or Mill.¹⁴

The Laws, by providing a concrete context for the exercise of political knowledge (exemplified by the Athenian Stranger), thus shows how the ideas discussed abstractly by the Eleatic do not necessarily lead to a messianic politics. This is not to say, however, that there are no differences of doctrine between the Eleatic and the Athenian Strangers. The Athenian in some respects improves on the Eleatic’s theory of politics by introducing the theory of the mixed regime and making more precise the ways in which the second-best regime (the lawful regime) images the first-best.⁵ He also appears (and rightly so) less sanguine than the Eleatic about the possibility of the existence of incorruptible statesmen, as his presentation of a myth very similar, though not identical, to the myth of the Statesman, indicating that only gods could rule human beings rightly,⁶ and his acknowledgement that it is not safe to entrust power to absolute tyrants, even well-
advised ones (713c5ff), shows; and his account of the virtues is, if not better than the Eleatic’s (which I consider to be quite appropriate), at least lengthier and less tied to any particular doctrine of measure. But both the Eleatic and the Athenian seem in general agreement about the way in which political knowledge is a foundational knowledge that relies on the understanding of the right time and circumstances and regulates both the arts in the polis and the proper mixture of the moderate and courageous dispositions; and both seem in accord regarding the difficulties such knowledge faces in its integration into the city.8

Indeed, it seems to me that the much-too-emphasized differences between the political theory of the Statesman and the Laws can be explained without reference to any chronological schemes (either dramatic9 or of composition), and without presuming any sort of decay in Plato’s intellectual faculties.10 To put the point bluntly, the Statesman

7 This seems to be a large departure from the arguments of the Statesman, where, as we saw, the statesman could not use his knowledge for ill since it was necessarily knowledge of the good, the just, and the noble. But there is no necessary contradiction, since the Athenian (even more clearly than the Eleatic) argues that such complete knowledge is beyond human reach.

8 The proper mixture of the courageous and moderate is a subject that recurs throughout the Laws, but is explicitly treated at length in the very first book.

9 For an interesting argument concerning the dramatic place of the Laws in the Platonic corpus, see Catherine Zuckert, “Plato’s Laws: Postlude or Prelude to Socratic Political Philosophy?,” Journal of Politics 66, no. 2 (2004). Zuckert suggests that the Laws is set before the Peloponnesian war (a conclusion that is not universally accepted; insofar as the question of dramatic placement has been considered at all, the Laws has often been placed during the war – cf. Slobodan Dusanic, ”The Laws and the foreign policy of Eubolus’ Athens,” in Plato’s Laws and its Historical Significance: Selected Papers of the I International Congress on Ancient Thought, Salamanca, 1998, ed. Francisco Lisi (Sankt Agustin: Academia Verlag, 2001)), and that it points to the need for political philosophy (of the kind practiced by Socrates, in her estimation). I reach a similar conclusion in that I think the nocturnal council and other features of the Laws do represent an attempt to “institutionalize” philosophical inquiry.

10 Stalley, An Introduction to Plato’s Laws puts a lot of emphasis on Plato’s age in his discussion of the Laws. He also argues that the Laws is a “popular” work rather than a serious philosophical work, which explains, according to him, some of the discrepancies between it and other dialogues (cf. p. 9), a position also developed by Herwig Gögemann, Beiträge zur interpretation von Platons Nomoi (München: Beck, 1960). I think there is no need to assume that the Laws is a “popular” work; at any rate, its forbidding length alone would militate against this possibility.
talks about statesmanship, while the *Laws* depicts it in action as far as Plato thought such a thing humanly possible.\(^{11}\) Once these dramatic differences are taken into account ("controlled" for), one finds no significant variation in the presentation of political knowledge in either dialogue. In both cases, statesmanship appears as the knowledge (the know-how) of the care of human beings, which aims to preserve the city and make it better rather than worse (in the Eleatic’s formulation, cf. *Statesman* 297b2-3) and thus as best and long-lasting as it is humanly possible (cf. *Laws* 739b8-e7). The statesman achieves this through laws that provide for education in “civic” virtue (conceived as firm true opinions about the good and the noble, not as knowledge of the good in its relation to every particular situation, which is the virtue of the statesman) and the regulation of the arts in the city.

Yet regardless of whether the institutions of the *Laws* resolve or ameliorate the twin problems of extreme conservatism and millenarian messianism one can apparently find in the Eleatic Stranger’s presentation by more completely integrating knowledge into the *polis*, it is still possible to object to the argument for the primacy of knowledge in politics that the Eleatic offers. Indeed, people have been objecting to this argument, with greater or lesser degrees of plausibility, at least since Aristotle. In what follows, therefore, I sketch out some of the most important objections to the idea of political

\(^{11}\) A similar view is defended in Schofield, "The Disappearance of the Philosopher King," especially p. 223, though with different implications (Schofield draws on both Strauss, "Plato," and Andre Laks, "Legislation and Demiurgy: On the Relationship between Plato's 'Republic' and 'Laws'," *Classical Antiquity* 9, no. 2 (1990)). Schofield thinks that political knowledge in the *Republic* is presented differently than in the *Laws*; I agree with the view of Kametkar, "Philosophical Rule from the *Republic* to the *Laws*: Commentary on Schofield," that the differences are not as great as Schofield seems to think, though I disagree with the particular interpretation of the *Republic* she gives. Nevertheless, the exact relationship of the *Republic* to the *Laws* is not of any particular importance to my argument; the only claim I am making right now concerns the relationship between the *Statesman* and the *Laws*. 
knowledge that the Stranger presents in the *Statesman*, drawing primarily, though not exclusively, on arguments from Aristotle and Michael Walzer.

I explore three kinds of objections to the Eleatic (and I think Platonic) position: objections that question the possibility of political knowledge (section 10.1); objections that question the primacy of knowledgeable judgment over law (section 10.2); and objections that question the primacy of technical knowledge over democratic consent (section 10.3). I take it that these are the most important objections to the utility of the idea of political knowledge, not only in Plato but in any other thinker whose main conceptual category for the analysis and evaluation of political reality is that of knowledge, but I do not claim to be exhaustive: other kinds of objections could readily be imagined.  

Though my responses to these objections differ, one common thread running through all of them should be noted. The point of the concept of statesmanship is not to provide a plausible alternative to the rule of law, but to serve as a critical guiding ideal for philosophical inquiry. Political knowledge is an instrument of philosophical critique. In political terms this can be interpreted as a vindication of both the Socratic philosopher as the “humble” ruler, aware of his own limits, and of the systematic inquiry into politics as a necessary counterpart of all politics of law or consent. This, I take it, is the deeper lesson of the *Statesman*, which I present in my concluding remarks (section 18.4): no matter how the political community is conceived, philosophical inquiry into its ground and its good, and hence into the knowledge that could give it ordered form, is the

---

12 In particular, I do not consider objections from within the natural law tradition, since this tradition also understands political practice partly from the point of view of knowledge, even though it is evidently incompatible with the Platonic position in the *Statesman*.
necessary (though not sufficient) bulwark against its degeneration. The Statesman, in its own way, is the vindication of the philosopher king.

10.1 Objections against the possibility of political knowledge

In his writings, Aristotle engages in a running conversation with Plato’s political thought, and at many points differs, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, from Platonic positions. Some of these differences – such as the attack on the idea that political knowledge is the same for both polis and household, at the very beginning of the Politics, or the implicit critique of the Platonic idea of political science found in Aristotle’s theory of the prudent man who nevertheless does not have a science properly speaking – we have already noted. In book III of the Politics, however, Aristotle objects directly to the argument for the primacy of knowledge over law in the Statesman (III.15-16, 1285b35-1287b35), though without mentioning Plato or the dialogue by name.

He makes two sorts of objections against this argument. The first kind of objection (and the one we will consider in this section) is concerned with the possibility that a single person with the knowledge of rule could actually exist and rule justly (1286a16-1286b27). Aristotle accepts the premise that law is not appropriate in all circumstances, i.e., that case by case determinations of what is best are necessary in politics. But he suggests that the kind of person who could have this knowledge would either be corruptible (contrary to the Stranger’s construction of the statesman as the possessor of incorruptible knowledge; cf. 1286a16-18, 31-35, b11-26, 1287a30-b4) or would be inferior in judgment to a number of people who are generically good but did not
necessarily have that specific kind of knowledge (1286a25-31, b2-16, 1287b8-35) or would simply not be sufficiently superior to the other citizens by nature to claim rule (1287a7-24). Yet he eventually concludes (III.17, 1288a17) that if someone who is sufficiently pre-eminent in virtue over the community were to arise, this person should be given power without real control (as a monarch), though he suspects that this is not in accord with nature and unlikely to be true in most circumstances, i.e., that no such person really exists. 13 The second kind of objection is concerned with the kind of knowledge embodied in law, and I will address it in the next section (10.2).

It is tempting to say that Aristotle’s first kind of objection is beside the point, since the Stranger does not suggest that true statesmen must exist, and his argument, as I have tried to argue, does not rest on their existence. Such knowledge is described, but it is not asserted that there is some system of education or some particular procedure that can lead to it. The function of the knowledge of the expert ruler in the Platonic argument is thus much like the function of Kant’s regulative ideals: they are both standards against which real situations can be evaluated and towards which we strive, even if they are not actually achievable. Hence it is no counterargument to say that such people would be corruptible, since in the Stranger’s argument they are incorruptible ex hypothesi, as logical constructions that would fully embody the kind of knowledge that the law (mistakenly) claims to embody.

Aristotle’s claim that a body of people could nevertheless judge better of particulars than any conceivable expert deserves a fuller consideration, however, since

13 This is essentially the same conclusion that Plato comes to (though Aristotle gives it a different, more “sociological” twist), and I suspect that this accounts for his reluctance to mention Plato by name in this case, though elsewhere he is not shy about doing so when he attacks one of his arguments. Since his differences with his teacher were on minor points of detail, he chose not to attack him directly, but merely to argue against a particular interpretation of the Platonic arguments.
the Stranger did argue that a single person would be better able to possess the expertise of ruling than a body of many people (Statesman 292e1-293a4). Aristotle’s view here, moreover, anticipates modern ideas (such as the Condorcet jury theorem) about the ability of “crowds” to aggregate “information” (what Aristotle calls “particulars”) more efficiently than any single person in them, given certain conditions.14 And even Plato himself contemplates this possibility in the Laws, when he has the Athenian Stranger praise the ability of the many to render good judgments of virtue even if they are not virtuous themselves (Laws XII.950b5-c2). Finally, modern psychology has shown that the judgments of experts are often much less good than we (and the experts) think they are, and certainly are not always better than simple extrapolation rules of thumb.15

Aristotle may indeed be right on this point for any plausible human expert ruler (though there are difficulties concerning the aggregation of value judgments of the kind the Eleatic Stranger has in mind), but it should be noted that the argument is not self-evident. In some very important cases, the judgment of the many concerning what is to be done is simply not very good (think of surgery or novel-writing by plebiscite), especially if the constraints under which it is to be aggregated (the “general account” under which

---

14 For a popular, if somewhat breathless, account of many of these ideas, see Surowiecki James Surowiecki, The Wisdom of Crowds: Why the Many are Smarter than the Few and How Collective Wisdom Shapes Business, Economics, Societies, and Nations (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

15 See the recent work of Philip Tetlock, Expert Political Judgment: How Good is It? How can We Know? (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005). Tetlock shows that if we understand political judgment as a kind of predictive judgment of particulars (something that at the very least would have to be part of the statesman’s knowledge as understood by the Eleatic Stranger) then the vast majority of the people who claim to have it do not actually have it, and those who do marginally better than simple extrapolation algorithms and other rules of thumb tend to be people who have a “Socratic” attitude towards their own knowledge (foxes rather than hedgehogs, in Tetlock’s terminology). This conclusion is, of course, compatible with the Eleatic’s argument, though Tetlock suggests that there is a trade-off between the Socratic attitude and the self-confident predictions of the “hedgehogs,” who tend to be spectacularly right once in a while.
the particulars are to be judged) are radically unclear, as they normally are in the case of political life.

The analogy Aristotle uses to establish his point, however, suggests that what is at stake is the capacity of one person to aggregate all the relevant information in making a decision: he speaks of a feast that is finer when many people bring dishes than when only one person brings them. It is not clear if Aristotle means that the feast is finer because there is intrinsic value to bringing dishes (a democratic objection) or because there is value to variety (which suggests that decisions are better if contrasting viewpoints are heard), but let us assume for the moment that he means the latter.

We may indeed think that where the information and knowledge necessary to making a proper decision is decentralized, then a single centralized decisionmaker is worse than some kind of institutional aggregator, such as an assembly or a market, and it stands to reason that decisions that consider a variety of alternatives are better than decisions that do not do so. Thus, in the modern question of whether a central planner or a market is a better allocator of economic resources, the modern answer seems to be that a market would always be better, since it would incorporate knowledge that would necessarily be inaccessible to a central planner (due to strategic concealment of information by the people affected by the allocation).\(^\text{16}\) Similarly, in medical decisions we expect the doctor to consult with the patient, and perhaps with other doctors, in order to reach a decision concerning the patient’s proper treatment, and we think that a statesman’s decisions would be better insofar as he is able to consult with others. But

\(^{16}\) Yet this does not necessarily mean that a market mechanism (or any other mechanism) is an “optimal” allocator of such resources; only perfect knowledge would do. See Adam Przeworski, Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chapter 3, for a complete discussion with extensive sources.
such consultation is discouraged in a monarchical regime such as the Eleatic seems to envision: everything appears to happen from the top down, so to speak, with little or no information flow “upwards.”

Yet even this argument does not directly contradict the Eleatic’s position; as he told young Socrates, the statesman could not sit next to every person to tell them what to do, and presumably neither he could sit next to each person to gather information from them (cf. Statesman 295a10-b5). Though the Eleatic’s argument is cast from the point of view of what the statesman can order, we could easily recast it from the point of view of the information he can gather, and arrive at a similar conclusion: if the law is necessary from the point of view of what the statesman can prescribe, consultative institutions of various kinds are necessary from the point of view of what the statesman can learn, though they are also not necessarily ideal, since they imply mediation and strategic concealment of information.

Moreover, as I have emphasized, information – true opinion – is not knowledge; what matters, from the point of view of the Stranger’s argument, is the ability to issue a judgment in conformity with what is good given the relevant information. The Stranger’s argument thus assumes that the possessor of knowledge can find the relevant facts (which is certainly not always the case). Given the relevant facts (knowledge of circumstances, we might say) the problem is not how to aggregate them, but how to use them (via the arts of measure) to reach the correct judgment as to what is to be done for the whole community; and this is something that requires a single know-how. Thus statesmanship is common rather than private (cf. 305d7-e6): it weighs competing interests and
information, not arbitrarily, but according to the good of the whole.\textsuperscript{17} From this point of view, the aggregative function of an assembly is a makeshift or image of the real thing, like the law: it will do the trick, but not always very well.

It should be admitted, however, that this is not something that the Eleatic emphasizes, and that perhaps distorts his conclusions. The statesman, as I have already emphasized, does appear to be foreign to the community, and this may lead one to think that he ignores the community’s particular circumstances and institutions, i.e., that he does not learn from them. But as I have argued above, the statesman’s knowledge is always particularized – it takes into account times and circumstances – though it must necessarily transcend the customary practices of the city. His foreignness is not due to his ignorance of the city but to his disregard for mere custom; and, as the Athenian Stranger shows, such knowledge would necessarily require the comparative study of laws and institutions.

By the same token, however, when we go beyond the Eleatic Stranger to note the importance of consultative institutions we thereby show the conceptual utility of the notion of political knowledge in the \textit{Statesman}. It is only in light of such an idea that institutions such as markets and assemblies can be evaluated as places where judgments about the common good are reached (either explicitly, by a single person, or implicitly, by the decentralized decisions of participants). In other words, whether or not the Stranger sufficiently takes into account the need for the statesman to gather information about the city he would rule, the very idea of a perfect political knowledge prompts us to raise the question about whether any mechanism of deliberation or consultation can

\textsuperscript{17} One can still object to the very idea of a common good that could be determined independently of the deliberations of a community; see below, section 10.3.
analyze all the necessary information for reaching a decision in the common good. Some mechanisms will turn out to be better than others, but in general we should find that they all fall short of the requirements laid down by the Stranger. For example, we may find that these mechanisms will be unable to take into account all the information necessary to make a decision, or they will be unable to act at the right time, or they would be insufficiently authoritative, or they would be unable to balance properly all the forms of care embodied in the other arts, or they would evaluate information against the wrong measure (e.g., profit rather than the care of human beings in the case of markets). The task of selecting among such mechanisms or institutions is thus a task of balancing trade-offs in light of an idea of perfect political knowledge. Aristotle’s objections against the possibility of political knowledge (and for the possible superiority of mechanisms of aggregation or consultation such as assemblies for the formation of judgments) may thus be empirically correct, but they make sense only in light of the Platonic notion of statesmanship described in the Statesman, which in turn serves to criticize these very mechanisms.

10.2 Objections against the primacy of expertise over law

Aristotle raises another objection to the idea of political knowledge, challenging this time not its possibility but what we may call its “preferential embodiment.” He suggests that law embodies a “universal account” (of the practices that care for human beings, i.e., the practices that are good, just, and noble) that is only inapplicable in particular circumstances, and on which the hypothetical statesman must rely in order to
make determinations in specific cases; at any rate, Aristotle suggests, if the law is unable
to make such determinations, so would human beings (1286a16-31, 1287a24-29). We
might state the point thus: law is as good an embodiment of knowledge as the human
mind, due to its generality; and the objection gains force in the modern world, as we
survey the intricate structure of modern law, which no single human mind could
encompass.

But in a sense this is simply a restatement of the Stranger’s own thesis, namely,
that law is simply an “image” of wisdom. As such, law is a distillation of some kinds of
experience that do point towards real knowledge, and somebody planning to become an
expert ruler (somebody learning about the care of human beings) would do well to study
all sorts of laws, as the Athenian Stranger recommends in the Laws. But the Eleatic’s
point is more far-reaching: the law is defective not merely because it is a general account,
but because all simple general accounts are mere images of real knowledge. It is not
possible to separate the general from the particular in the knowledge of the true
statesman, writing down the former and applying it on a case by case basis to determine
the latter, since the “general” in the statesman’s knowledge escapes fixed rules.

I take it that in this respect the Eleatic has the better argument: any general
account sufficiently complex to do justice to the world (pun intended) would be of
necessity too complex to be useful as law, even the highly complex general accounts
provided by modern law (with its endless corollaries and clauses and sub-clauses and
attendant corps of specialist interpreters). This of course may mean that no human brain
could internalize such accounts either (meaning that statesmanship would be strictly
speaking impossible) but it may also mean simply that no general account can encompass
true expertise. That there is no possible general written account of medicine and that medicine is not something that a single human mind can master do not imply that the knowledge of medicine does not exist in the network of specialists that engage in medical inquiry and care; the Aristotelian argument at best shows that the Eleatic is wrong to think of statesmanship as necessarily associated with a single individual, not that statesmanship is capable of written embodiment which is then straightforwardly applied to particular cases.

10.3 Objections against the primacy of technical knowledge over consent

If the Stranger’s argument, relying on the concept of a science of politics, escapes Aristotle’s objections, we may still want to consider objections coming from two different tradition, which we may broadly call the “social contract” and the “moral right” traditions. Michael Walzer formulates the classical objection from the social contract tradition in a particularly lucid way in the course of discussing the “ship of state” analogy in the Republic: political decisions are not like the activity of the ship captain in keeping his crew and passengers safe, but like the activity of the passengers in deciding where they want to go; they are about ends, not means; and such ends cannot be determined “technically,” but must be subject to the free deliberation of all, under some constraints to ensure that agreement is uncoerced and otherwise just. Technical knowledge is subordinate to democratic decision-making, not the other way around, and cannot be used to understand or even judge the latter.

18 Walzer, Spheres of Justice: a Defense of Pluralism and Equality, pp. 284-90, following Brumbaugh.
The just (and so necessarily good law) is thus simply what the people decide in an ideal deliberative situation; it is not a matter of technical determination, and cannot be antecedently determined (much less imposed) by any form of knowledge. Political theory in this tradition becomes largely the formulation of the ideal conditions of lawmaking and deliberation and the critique of existing conditions of lawmaking and deliberation, and “statesmanship” becomes the practical knack of applying essentially just laws to specific circumstances. From this point of view, to think that politics is a matter of technical knowledge is to be tempted to “apply” one’s solutions to the problems of politics without consulting one’s fellow citizens: it is the temptation of tyranny, reinforced by the Stranger’s emphasis on statesmanship as a “commanding” form of knowledge.19 Not for nothing is “technocracy” a derogatory term in our time.

One answer to this objection is that politics is often a great deal like the activity of the ship captain, i.e., it is concerned with keeping human beings safe for their varied purposes and in the various circumstances of human life. One may disagree regarding how much intervention into these purposes is necessary for keeping them safe (or caring for them), since the purposes human beings pursue (the “values” they cherish) are not independent of the ways in which they may be kept safe, but it is clear that much political life, and in particular much law, is or should be concerned with codifying those practices likely to help preserve the political community in its physical and moral existence. From this point of view, politics, and law in particular, is inescapably a “technical” activity, that is, an activity that can be evaluated by the standards of art regarding its intended

---

outcomes. The notion of a political science here is critical, not actual: to criticize a law or institution for failing to fulfill the purpose of caring for human beings is not necessarily to suggest that one possesses such an art.

This does not imply that “care” is an uncontroversial concept, or even that it may be fully defined independently of the interplay of interests and values in the political community (though this last point is in fact an implication of the Stranger’s argument). But it does imply that insofar as we understand politics to have purposes that include the care of human beings, something like the standpoint of political knowledge is both possible and necessary for the critique of actual practice.

One might nevertheless wish to argue that the understanding of human beings in the Statesman as not self-evidently rational animals but rather as “modularly” rational animals (i.e., rational only insofar as they have one art or another, and no further) prevents the Stranger (and thus Plato) from understanding the rational basis of consent in the moral autonomy of each individual human being. This results necessarily in an authoritarian politics – whether of law or of men, it hardly matters – for it is only through an understanding of human beings as rational beings that a politics that avoids the twin pitfalls of extreme conservatism and messianism can be found, i.e., a politics where the care of human beings by human beings is the truly common and progressive task of all (a politics such as presented in the myth of the Protagoras, perhaps) rather than the ultimate responsibility of an impossible and hypothetical statesman. There is some truth to this objection (the statesman’s knowledge, as described by the Eleatic, is clearly incompatible with any doctrine of human rights), yet such a politics would still require the idea of a political knowledge independent of any deliberation or consent, as Protagoras assumes in
the *Protagoras*; and at any rate actual politics does point to the occasional necessity of statesmen, i.e., people who know what is to be done far better than other people.

Yet once we understand that the political art is not easily, if at all, attainable, but rather serves as a standard of judgment, we see that it should also serve as an *obstacle* to the authoritarian temptation inherent in all utopian proposals by intellectuals. For, as I argued earlier, the notion of a political expertise requires the antecedent notion of a Socratically self-aware inquiry into the things that make law good or bad. Thus, by indicating the necessary deficiency of all law, the notion of political expertise never ceases to have a critical function, and yet it is never *recklessly* critical, that is, critical without implying an awareness of our own ignorance, for those who use this notion properly must be aware that they do not possess the knowledge that it represents. To understand politics in the light of the notion of political expertise leads, properly speaking, to a middle way that is dissatisfied with the status quo but is aware that the status quo sometimes does reflect our best guesses as to what is good and just, i.e., what practices we think best care for ourselves. Most importantly, to understand politics in the light of political expertise means never to abdicate one’s responsibility towards inquiry into these matters.  

10.4 The vindication of the philosopher-king: concluding thoughts

The *Statesman* has a twofold “practical” lesson: political knowledge is such that political leaders should be humble, conservatively holding on to the law and refusing to

---

20 A similar conclusion is reached by Griswold Jr., "Politikê Epistêmê in Plato's *Statesman*," pp. 157-62.
let go of it due to their lack of it (a particularly timely reminder today, when some advocate that our leaders ignore the law in the face of supposedly existential threats); and inquiry into political matters is necessary (though not sufficient) to the care of the polis. Jointly, they amount to a vindication of the philosophical attitude in politics, or, more bluntly, of the philosopher-king.

By now it should be clear that I do not use the term “philosopher-king” to mean “statesman,” as the term is sometimes used in the Republic. The philosopher-king is precisely the humble king, not the self-confident and brash statesman of legend, in possession of the truth about the world. To be sure, self-confidence and brashness may be essential ingredients of the successful leader, as Machiavelli pointed out, but the Statesman suggests that though these qualities may occasionally lead to improvements in human life, more often than not they will also lead to disaster. Only the proper mixture of both is adequate to the city, but such mixture is impossible without knowledge. In its default, the dialogue suggests, the political leader should err (for erring it is) on the side of caution, i.e., on the side of established law.

But precisely because such “erring on the side of caution” is in fact erring – for caution alone, no more than brashness or courage, is inadequate to political life – political inquiry is also essential to the city, that is, inquiry into what is good and just for the circumstances and the times. Thus kings must be “philosophers,” i.e., inquirers after the truth of what is good for the polis.
Such inquiry looks towards the integrative care of human beings, not towards their “pastoral” care, to use Foucault’s term.\(^{21}\) This means that political inquiry (and, indirectly, political power) should respect the partial autonomy of the many arts by which human beings care for themselves while pointing towards their integration in the care of the city. But it need not take the exact form it takes in the *Statesman*, nor do we need to think of it as necessarily issuing in the mastery by one person of a complete know-how. In fact, given the complexity of the modern political community, such inquiry will necessarily be performed through a division of labor and a great deal of dialogue. The search for statesmanship need not be the search for saviors, but rather, for the kinds of partial and temporary improvements in our condition that the systematic accumulation of experience and its analysis permit.

In the end, the *Statesman* tells us that there is no cessation of evils in human affairs, only a partial mitigation of them through law and inquiry. This mitigation is a great and always-threatened achievement, but a mere mitigation nonetheless, a remedy for an incurable condition in an always changing world. The *Statesman* is a great Platonic reflection on the necessary imperfection of the political world.

\(^{21}\) See Foucault, "Omnis et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of "Political Reason"," p. 232?, as well as chapter 3, section 3.6, note 92.
REFERENCES


