A TALE OF TWO DRINKING PARTIES: PLATO'S *LAWS* IN CONTEXT

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Abstract: In accordance with Leo Strauss's ingenious suggestion, the Athenian Stranger of Plato's *Laws* is best understood as an alternative 'Socrates', fleeing from the hemlock to Crete. Situated between *Crito* and *Phaedo*, *Laws* effectively tests the reader's loyalty to the real Socrates who obeys Athenian law and dies cheerfully in Athens. Having separated Plato from the Stranger, a nuanced defence of Karl Popper's suspicions about *Laws* confronts the apologetic readings of both Strauss and Christopher Bobonich. As hinted by his preference for wine, the antidote for hemlock, the Athenian Stranger repeatedly proves himself the opposite of Socrates, particularly with respect to piety. Once the Stranger is recognized as 'an unreliable narrator', this apparently ponderous product of Plato's senility becomes the taut thriller of an innovative teacher at the peak of his powers.

The word κώνειον never appears in *Phaedo*; hemlock is repeatedly called simply 'the drug' (τὸ φάρμακον).[2] An even more abstract manner of speaking about hemlock occurs in Plato's *Laws*:[3] the Athenian Stranger introduces his lengthy discussion of regulated wine drinking with an enigmatic reference to an unnamed 'fear drug' (φόβου φάρμακον) that would cause those who drank it to fear (φοβεῖσθαι at 647e4) in exactly the same way that wine causes them to be bold and confident (θαρρεῖν at 649a5).

> *Athenian*: Now tell me, has god bestowed on mankind any specific to induce fear — a drug [φόβου φάρμακον] whose effect is that the more a man permits himself to imbibe of it, the darker he fancies his fortunes at every draught, present and future alike grow increasingly alarming, and the climax is abject terror in the bravest, though when the subject has recovered from his stupor and shaken off the effects of the potion, he regularly becomes his own man again [πάλιν ἑκάστοτε τὸν αὐτὸν γίγνεσθαι]? *Clinias*: Nay, sir, where in all the world can we find a liquor [πῶμα] like this? *Athenian*: Why, nowhere [οὐδέν].[4]

The Stranger's remarks about this potable 'fear drug' are interesting because he seems to assert hemlock's non-existence (οὐδέν) even while describing it

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[2] *Phaedo* 57a2, 115a7, 115d3, 116c3, 116d8, 117a6 and 117e6. All references are to Burnet's OCT edition; hereafter, references to *Laws* will be by Stephanus number alone. All translations come from *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton, 1961), except where stated otherwise.

[3] S. Benardete, *Plato's Laws: The Discovery of Being* (Chicago, 2000), pp. 2–3 and 51.

[4] *Laws* 647e1–648a6; translation A.E. Taylor.

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in terms that a sympathetic reader of *Phaedo* will instantly recognize. As suggested by the doubled first word of Echechrates (αὐτός at *Phaedo* 57a1–4) as well as Socrates' last words (*Phaedo* 118a7–8) — words that reverse conventional value judgments about the comparative worth of life and death[5] — *Phaedo* arguably tells the story of a man who shakes off the effects of a most fearsome drink (πῶμα at *Phaedo* 117b6) and once again becomes *himself* while attempting to persuade his comrades that it is necessary to be bold and confident (θαρρεῖν χρὴ at *Phaedo* 114d8) in the face of fear and death. The Stranger's apparent unfamiliarity with hemlock in the context of his remarkable endorsement of wine suggests the need for reconsidering *Laws* in connection with *Phaedo*.

The textual basis for initiating this reconsideration is found in *Lysis*, the only place where Plato uses the word κώνειον; hemlock is there linked with wine in a revealing way:

> If a man sets a value on a thing — for instance, if, as is frequently the case, a father prizes a son above everything else he has in the world — may such a father be led by the extreme regard he has for his son to set a high value upon other things also? Suppose, for example, he were to hear of his having drunk some hemlock [κώνειον]; would he set a high value on wine, if he believed that wine would cure his son?[6]

Wine is the antidote that counteracts the effects of hemlock and it is precisely the ramifications of this relationship that bind together *Laws* and *Phaedo*, the apparently disconnected parts of Plato's integrated 'tale of two drinking parties'. While Socrates courageously drinks despair-inducing hemlock in *Phaedo*, the Athenian Stranger emphasizes the importance of its confidence-building antidote in *Laws*. In the analysis that follows, I will show why Plato's sympathies are with Socrates in *Phaedo*, not the Stranger in *Laws*.

If this seems an uncontroversial claim, consider the second Plato volume of the *Oxford Readings in Philosophy*,[7] where important papers on *Laws* and *Phaedo* are juxtaposed in the opposite manner: it is almost as difficult to find any praise for Plato in David Bostock's 'The Soul and Immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*'[8] as it is to find any criticism in Christopher Bobonich's 'Persuasion,

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[5] *pace* G. Most, 'A Cock for Asclepius', *Classical Quarterly*, 43 n.s. (1993), pp. 96–111; cf. Cicero *de Republica* 6.14.

[6] *Lysis* 219d5–e4; translation J. Wright.

[7] *Plato: Ethics, Politics, Religion, and the Soul*, vol. 2, ed. G. Fine (Oxford, 1999).

[8] The only example of praise in D. Bostock, 'The Soul and Immortality in Plato's *Phaedo*', in *Plato*, vol. 2, ed. Fine, pp. 404–24, I found at p. 421: 'There are some problems with the precise delimitations of the functions of these three parts, which I do not intend to go into, but one must applaud Plato's recognition that the soul is not after all such a simple and unitary thing as the *Phaedo* seems sometime to suggest.' I count forty-seven unanswered criticisms and seven rejected defences (pp. 410, 414, 416, 416 n. 8, 417, 420 and 423).

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Compulsion, and Freedom in Plato's *Laws*'.[9] In some indefinable but nevertheless unmistakable way, Bostock proves to be as critical towards *Phaedo* as Bobonich is sympathetic to *Laws*. This article's purpose, by contrast, is to use the connection between these two dialogues in order to reverse the way in which Bostock and Bobonich have read them. To put it another way: although the Stranger's wine undoes the effects of Socratic hemlock, it is Plato's *Laws* that should be treated as the poison and *Phaedo* as its specific antidote.

Current understanding of *Laws* in the English-speaking world is mediated by Christopher Bobonich and the reading proposed here will reverse the way he treats both *Laws* and *Phaedo* in his *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics*. Here, Bobonich defends the late *Laws* as a salutary shift on Plato's part away from the pessimistic verdict of *Phaedo* that 'all non-philosophers are radically ethically defective'[10] to a 'far more optimistic'[11] position, one that rejects any 'backsliding into the elitism of the middle period':[12]

> What Magnesia offers to its citizens is the possibility that non-philosophers — even while remaining non-philosophers — can lead virtuous lives and can make the sort of progress that entitles them to the opportunity of increased happiness.[13]

Bobonich's road to this conclusion begins in Chapter 1 with a discussion of *Phaedo*:

> More prominently and insistently than any previous dialogue, the *Phaedo* distinguishes philosophers from all non-philosophers and asserts Socrates' status as a philosopher. The dialogue that depicts Socrates' death opens by sharply contrasting philosophers' and non-philosophers' attitudes towards death.[14]

An important point of intersection therefore emerges: it is Socrates' attitude towards death — i.e. towards drinking the hemlock — that reveals him to be a philosopher and *Laws* is more sympathetic to non-philosophers than *Phaedo*. Unfortunately, Bobonich confines his remarks about the Stranger's discussion of regulated wine-drinking parties ('which figure so prominently in the

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[9] C. Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom in Plato's *Laws*', in *Plato*, vol. 2, ed. Fine, pp. 373–403. Apparent criticisms are answered, as at p. 387: 'There is good reason for us to feel leery of such a procedure . . . Nevertheless we have no reason for thinking that Plato in the *Laws* is proposing this in bad faith.' See also pp. 390 ('But we can now see . . .'), 395 n. 66, 401 n. 83, 401 n. 84 and, in particular, 394 (c).

[10] C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford, 2002), p. 14.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 479.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 474.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 479.

[14] *Ibid*., p. 13.

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early parts of the *Laws*'[15]) to a single footnote: 'Plato proposes drinking parties (*symposia*)'.[16] But his central claim about *Phaedo* and *Laws* — apart from the value judgment implied throughout — reveals the radical difference between the Stranger and Socrates to be their attitudes towards death. If we admit that Socrates' position in *Phaedo* is the truly valuable one, it will be the Stranger's legislation that must be seen in a more pessimistic light, thereby calling into question the basis for Bobonich's unfailingly sunny optimism about Magnesia.

It is no accident that Bobonich quotes *Phaedo* 82a11–c1 both at the beginning and the end of his book:[17] here Socrates discusses the future incarnations of 'those who have practiced popular and political virtue . . . without philosophy or reason'.[18] Socrates comments that these will be reborn 'into a political or tame race' like 'bees or wasps or ants, or back again into the very same one, the human race'.[19] It is noteworthy that Bobonich does not simply reject this improbable vision of reincarnation but makes use of it to justify what he calls 'the tight restrictions that Plato places on the citizens' lives in Magnesia':[20]

> . . . those with less developed reason in this reincarnation may develop more fully in the coming series of reincarnations. Their tutelage is not a permanent condition and it is not the best that they are capable of. The sort of virtuous life in the city that is open to non-philosophically virtuous citizens in Magnesia is both a genuine expression of rationality and an essential stage in further rational progress.[21]

In the name of the same egalitarianism that underlies his implicit critique of *Phaedo*, Bobonich ultimately grounds his defence of *Laws* — i.e. of 'the tight restrictions' he attributes to Plato rather than the Stranger — on what he insists is a *rational* evolutionary process that promises eventual progress to all. Eliding the Stranger's own views on equality and his silence on reincarnation,[22] Bobonich suggests that a merely evolutionary egalitarianism justifies inequality as long as it can be broadly conceived as temporary; in the context

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[15] C. Rowe, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 255 n. 2.

[16] Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 546 n. 125.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 14 and 475.

[18] *Phaedo* 82a11–b3, translation Bobonich; cf. *Republic* 619c6–d1.

[19] *Phaedo* 82b5–7, translation Bobonich; cf. Rowe, *Art of Philosophical Writing*, pp. 101–9.

[20] Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 478.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 479.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 440–5 gives limited attention to the Athenian Stranger's troubling conception of 'equality'; cf. *Laws*, 757a2–4, 757b5–7 and 757c1–6. The vulgar form of equality becomes momentarily advantageous for the city once again at 773b5–e1.

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of reincarnation, this means 'temporally extended'[23] to include the entirety of a person's life.

The single most important question facing every reader of *Laws* is as simple to pose as it is difficult to answer: who is the Athenian Stranger? It is noteworthy that Bobonich assumes throughout that he is justifying the legislation *of Plato*, not of the Athenian Stranger: he simply takes it for granted that the Stranger speaks for Plato. Karl Popper shared this assumption while offering a highly critical sketch of the totalitarian elements in *Laws*: the dialogue's objectionable features constitute Popper's indictment of Plato.[24] This article proposes another way of reading *Laws* based, necessarily, on a new way of thinking about why Plato wrote *Laws* as he did.[25] As Popper suggested, *Laws* is indeed a prescription for 'a closed society' that paves the way, in accordance with an extended application of Alfred North Whitehead's golden sentence, for the poisonous police states of the twentieth century.[26] Contrary to both Popper's critique and Bobonich's apologia, however, I reject their shared assumption that this nightmare vision[27] reflects Plato's mature political thought and will therefore argue that *Laws* should be read at least as critically as, for example, Bostock reads *Phaedo*.

Although this approach will naturally require criticism of Bobonich's reading, it also embraces a central aspect of it: the juxtaposition of *Phaedo* and *Laws* with which his book begins and ends. But it is not Bobonich's contrast between an elitist *Phaedo* and an egalitarian *Laws* that becomes relevant here but the contrast between Socrates and the Athenian Stranger, symbolized or rather dramatized by the antithetical relationship between hemlock and wine that joins them in a tale of two drinking parties. Within this tale, *Laws* will be presented as a test for the reader created by Plato for a pedagogical purpose: it is the Athenian Stranger, not Socrates, whom Plato's chosen reader will pronounce guilty of impiety and who deserves the hemlock that his hero Socrates

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[23] The previous block quotation in the text is preceded by: 'Aristotle, for instance, reconciles citizens' need to rule and be ruled in turn with the permanent rule of adults over non-adults by the fact that non-adults will eventually grow up and take their turn ruling. We can see Plato as having a temporally extended version of this.' Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 479.

[24] K. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Princeton, 1950), vol. 1.

[25] An important and very welcome step towards gaining recognition for Plato's deliberately contrived inter-dialogue dialectic is C. Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers: The Coherence of the Dialogues* (Chicago, 2009).

[26] Cf. G. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* (Princeton, 1960), pp. 189–90; W. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*: *The Later Plato and the Academy* (Cambridge, 1978), vol. 5, p. 350; L. Strauss, *The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws* (Chicago, 1975), p. 115 ('hunting of human beings'); and J. Randall, *Plato: Dramatist of the Life of Reason* (New York, 1970), p. 187.

[27] 808c2–d1; note 'courage of a kind' (translation mine).

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didn't. The Stranger's ignorance of hemlock, on the other hand, both explains his interest in wine and illuminates his dark purpose.

Leo Strauss provides the key to such a reading and, as will become clear hereafter, this fact is ironic: like Popper, Strauss fully recognizes the illiberal or totalitarian aspects of the Stranger's legislation but, like Bobonich, he nevertheless gives the dialogue a sympathetic reading. To begin with, no careful reader of Strauss can doubt that he regarded Socrates as guilty of the charges to which he responds in *Apology*[28] or that his Socrates would have escaped from prison in *Crito* had he been a younger man.[29] Although Strauss wrote little on *Phaedo*,[30] his colleague Joseph Cropsey has not only rejected the view that Plato actually endorses the immortality of the soul[31] but Strauss himself, through his reading of al-Fârâbî,[32] has given his chosen readers good reason to think that Plato rejected immortality along with the Ideas.[33] The reading of *Laws* presented here implicitly excludes Strauss's claims or insinuations about Plato and Platonism. But there is one element of Strauss's reading that will be embraced and which, indeed, is the key to my own: his view — first expressed in a 1938 letter to Jacob Klein,[34] then published in his last book on Plato's *Laws*[35] and finally revived in Thomas Pangle's 'Interpretive Essay'[36] — that the Athenian Stranger is who Socrates would have been had he escaped from prison and thereby avoided the hemlock. It is the decision of

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[28] L. Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago, 1983), pp. 53–4, 59 and 62 ('On Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Crito*'); the case is more fully developed in L. Strauss, *Socrates and Aristophanes* (New York, 1966).

[29] Strauss, *Platonic Political Philosophy*, p. 65; cf. L. Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?* (Glencoe, 1959), p. 33.

[30] See W. Altman, 'Leo Strauss and the *Euthydemus*', *Classical Journal*, 102 (2007), pp. 355–79, at p. 376.

[31] J. Cropsey, *Plato's World: Man's Place in the Cosmos* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 186–7.

[32] L. Strauss, 'Fârâbî's Plato', in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1945), pp. 357–93; pp. 371, 364 and 363; with the latter, cf. Strauss, *Platonic Political Philosophy*, p. 143: the reader will note that what 'is frequently impossible to say' applies no less to Strauss in relation to Fârâbî.

[33] L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 119–21.

[34] L. Strauss, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 3; *Hobbes' politische Wissenschaft und zugehörige Schriften — Briefe*, ed. H. Meier, with the editorial assistance of W. Meier (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2001), p. 562 (translation mine): 'The *Laws* rests on the fiction that Socrates has escaped from the prison!'

[35] Strauss, *Argument and Action*, p. 2; cf. Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*, p. 33.

[36] T. Pangle, *The Laws of Plato* (New York, 1980), p. 379: 'In the *Laws* we learn what Socrates would have said and done if his quest for self-knowledge, and his friendships, had ever allowed him the leisure to engage in giving advice to political reformers — and if he had ever found himself in the appropriate circumstances.'

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this fraudulent Socrates to flee death in Athens that explains his remarkable interest in wine, hemlock's antidote.

As Strauss recognized,[37] the decisive text is found in *Crito*, where the deafening Athenian laws, through the mouth of Socrates, suggest five geographical alternatives for Socrates to consider as refuges: Thessaly, Thebes, Megara, Sparta and Crete.[38] The first three are specifically identified as places to which Socrates might now escape but which suffer from various obvious defects, while the last two — 'which indeed you repeatedly say are well-governed' (*Crito* 52e6; translation mine) — are the only places where Socrates could have continued to discuss virtue without being recognized as the law-breaker he would *ipso facto* be.[39] The fact that *Laws* presents an elderly Athenian Stranger — i.e. what Socrates would have appeared to be having escaped from the prison cell in Athens[40] — giving voice to a set of laws in the company of a Cretan and a Spartan on Crete should therefore be understood as a dramatic link between *Crito* and *Laws* created by Plato that Strauss was acute enough to rediscover although he drew from it incorrect conclusions about Plato's intentions.

The notion that a lawbreaker — i.e. the man who turns a deaf ear to the Athenian Laws for the sake of preserving his life — would employ any means necessary[41] to secure absolute obedience to his own law code reveals (818e10–11) the Athenian Stranger to be an extremely rich and complex

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[37] Strauss, *Argument and Action*, p. 2: '(*Crito* 53b4–6 and d2–4, 52e5–6)'

[38] The five are divided into three classes: (1) Thebes and Megara are well-governed cities but too close to Athens (*Crito* 53b3–5); (2) Thessaly (*Crito* 53d2–54a9) cares nothing for Socrates' concerns; (3) Sparta and Crete (*Crito* 52e5–6) are mentioned first.

[39] *Crito* 53b5–8. Consider also the words of the Athenian laws at *Crito* 53c5–8 (translation H. Tredennick): 'Do you intend, then, to avoid well-governed states and the higher forms of human society? And if you do, will life be worth living? Or will you approach these people and have the impudence to converse with them? What arguments will you use, Socrates? The same you used here, that goodness and integrity, institutions and laws [νόμιμα καὶ οἱ νόμοι], are the most precious possessions of mankind?' See R. Weiss, *Socrates Dissatisfied: An Analysis of Plato's Crito* (Oxford, 1998), p. 125: 'Socrates does speak, to be sure, of virtue and justice as being "of most worth to human being", but is it true that he speaks in that way of "the lawful and the laws", *ta nomina kai hoi nomoi* (*Cr*. 53c8)?' This pertinent question points forward to *Laws* and, it should be added, back to *Minos*. The critical impulse behind this reinvestigation of *Laws* began with reading Chapter 7 of R. Weiss, *The Socratic Paradox and its Enemies* (Chicago, 2006), a valuable study.

[40] Strauss, *Argument and Action*, p. 2: 'It thus suggests itself to us that if Socrates had escaped from prison, he would have gone to Crete, where he was wholly unknown and would have come to light only as an Athenian stranger. In the circumstances of which his old age was no mean part, it was indeed impossible for him to act on Kriton's advice.'

[41] The expression 'ἁμῶς γέ πως' is a *Leitmotiv* throughout *Laws*; cf. 663c1 and 664a4. The Stranger uses it fifteen times in the course of the dialogue, more than half the instances in Plato's writings as a whole.

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character: if nothing else, readers who return to *Laws* with the hypothesis of a warped or cowardly Socrates in mind will find the text far more interesting than they did, under the influence of the traditional view, when reading it for the first time.[42] Building on the assumption of a fraudulent Socrates, a healthy dose of suspicion will here be applied to Plato's *Laws* in order to suggest — to state the hypothesis in its strongest possible form[43] — that everything the Athenian Stranger says is a lie except when he speaks the truth for a fraudulent purpose, as he not infrequently does.[44]

As indicated earlier, even a weaker form of this hypothesis immediately confronts the generally optimistic vision of Bobonich and, in particular, the feature of the Athenian Stranger's legislation that he justly finds most attractive: the proposal that preludes be attached to the laws proper. For Bobonich, these preludes indicate something important about Plato's core beliefs: '. . . the goodness of persuasion as opposed to compulsion is based on his view about what sort of treatment is owed to or befits a free human being'.[45] As shown earlier, it may well befit 'a free human being' to be treated like a child *temporarily*, i.e. for the duration of this particular incarnation. For Malcolm Schofield, who follows Bobonich in his recent discussion of *Laws*,[46] the preludes are made the basis for what he calls 'rational freedom'.[47] Without denying that the Athenian Stranger's legislation 'remains at its core a threat',[48] Schofield claims that the citizen's obedience isn't grounded in coercion but in 'the entitlement to persuasion deriving from political freedom';[49] it is therefore a willing obedience, a rational freedom to obey, after having been

[42] Cf. Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom', p. 379: 'Since no writer on the *Laws* can presume a familiarity with its text on the part of his readers . . .'.

[43] Cf. the quotation from G. Ast cited and translated in Guthrie, *History*, vol. 5, p. 322: 'One who knows the true Plato needs only to read a single page of the *Laws* in order to convince himself that it is a fraudulent Plato that he has before him.' After replacing the second 'Plato' with 'Socrates' (and thereby jettisoning Ast's attempt to prove *Laws* inauthentic), this may stand as a more readily defensible formulation of my hypothesis than its strongest possible form.

[44] A particularly important truth is discussed at 731d6–732b3; 'the better than himself' (translation mine) is, however, the Stranger masquerading as something better than himself.

[45] Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom', p. 374.

[46] M. Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 84–8; cf. p. 98 n.100.

[47] For Hegel's influence on such claims, see Schofield, *Plato*, p. 99 n. 111. For a related instance of Hegelianism in this context see A. Laks, 'Freedom, Liberality, and Liberty in Plato's *Laws*', in *Freedom, Reason, and the Polis: Essays in Ancient Greek Political Philosophy*, ed. D. Keyt and F. Miller Jr. (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 130–52, at p. 152: 'one is free when one's reason masters one's desires'. Cf. Hegel on *Willkür* (beginning at *Philosophy of Right* §15).

[48] Schofield, *Plato*, p. 85.

[49] *Ibid*., p. 87.

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persuaded to do so.[50] A more troubling implication of these preludes appears in *Laws* VII where a good citizen will be held responsible not only for obeying the law but also for conforming to the lawgiver's *intentions*.[51]

In addition to the preludes, Bobonich relies heavily[52] — and in several different places[53] — on the passage in Book VII where the Stranger suggests, in Bobonich's formulation, that 'the entire *Laws* be read by all the citizens'.[54] Because *Laws* is a dialogue[55] and contains different points of view as well as rational arguments for the Stranger's point of view,[56] the fact that citizens will read and presumably discuss[57] this text proves, according to Bobonich, that their obedience is voluntary,[58] arising as it does from 'rational persuasion'

[50] The dangers of Hegel's conception of freedom are usefully revealed at E. Tugendhat, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstbestimmung: Sprachanalytische Interpretationen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979), p. 349 (translation mine): 'The meaning of this *Umkehrung der Freiheit* into that which would normally be considered just the opposite is . . . that the individual should feel himself free insofar as he fulfils the duties proceeding from the powers that be [*der Macht des Bestehenden*].' In the deleted portion, Tugendhat refers to his earlier discussion of §484 and §514 of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.

[51] 822e8–823a6 (translation Taylor): 'This is the truest eulogy which can be bestowed on a citizen [sc. 'he is the best who has spent his life without qualification in obedience to all the legislator has written, whether by way of enactment, of approbation, or of reprobation'], and a real legislator should not confine himself to the composition of statutes; he should further entwine with the text of his laws an exposition of all he accounts laudable or the reverse, and the citizen of eminent goodness must feel himself no less bound by such directions than by those enforced with a legal sanction.' This single sentence becomes three sentences at Pangle, *Laws*, p. 215.

[52] Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom', pp. 389, 391, 394 n. 60 and 400 n. 78.

[53] C. Bobonich, 'Reading the *Laws*', in *Form and Argument in Late Plato*, ed. C. Gill and M. McCabe (Oxford, 1996), pp. 249–82, 251, 252–4 and 263; Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 99.

[54] Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 99; cf. *Plato*, ed. Fine, vol. 2, p. 400 n. 78.

[55] Bobonich, 'Reading the *Laws*', p. 253: 'Although he [sc. Athenian] does not refer to its [sc. the *Laws*] status as a dialogue, do we have reason to think that its form is one of the features that makes it appropriate to read?' The answer, already implied at p. 251 ('a Platonic dialogue'), is given at p. 252: 'we have some reason . . .'.

[56] Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom', p. 394 n. 60: 'And since their [sc. the citizens of Magnesia] education includes reading of the *Laws* itself, such a study would also have to evaluate the satisfactoriness of all the arguments presented in the *Laws*.'

[57] Bobonich, 'Reading the *Laws*', p. 251 (emphasis mine): 'In the *Laws*, Plato, or more precisely the Athenian Stranger, requires all the citizens to read *and study* the *Laws* itself as a central part of their education.' Note the unusual and welcome precision here with respect to Plato.

[58] Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom', p. 401: 'Because the citizen is a free person, the state ought to try, as far as possible, to secure his rational agreement to its laws and social practices and to foster his powers of rational understanding.'

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rather than compulsion.[59] But Bobonich never quotes or discusses this important part of the relevant passage:

> He [sc. the lawgiver] should begin by making it compulsory on the teachers themselves to learn this material itself and appreciate it [μανθάνειν καὶ ἐπαινεῖν]. Teachers who are dissatisfied with it he must not employ as colleagues; those who concur with his own appreciation [ἐπαίνῳ] he should employ, and to them he should entrust the young for their instruction and education.[60]

Laws will be taught by teachers who earn the right to teach it on the condition that they both 'learn and praise' (811e6; translation mine) the established text. As if to preclude an attempt like Bobonich's — who could, after all, have argued that the teachers themselves are freely persuaded even if their students are not — the Stranger introduces these teachers a few pages earlier by stipulating that they too are foreigners who are 'persuaded by salaries'.[61]

Although Bobonich does the best he can with the 'dialogue' contained within 'the great prelude'[62] to the atheism law in Book IX,[63] the heart of his argument for 'rational persuasion' in Plato's *Laws* — supported, that is, by what I will call 'the reading of the *Laws*' passage in Book VII[64] — is the analogy of the two doctors in Book IV (720a6–e5). The Stranger uses this analogy to justify his innovative preludes and Bobonich emphasizes that the free doctor — analogous to the legislator *qua* prelude-maker — treats the citizens as free, and thus uses rational means to secure their willing obedience.[65] What Bobonich does not emphasize is that the free doctors also have slaves (720a7): slave *doctors* who are directed by the free doctors to order yet other slaves to obey prescriptions *without* having first been persuaded to do so. The Stranger is more candid than Bobonich about the fact that it is only in the analogy that

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[59] *Ibid*., p. 389: 'By using the *Laws* as a school text, Plato ensures that the citizens will receive a public statement of how their freedom of inquiry has been limited and of the reasons for this limitation; in fact, the entire basic social structure and the justification of these institutions — including the institution of censorship — will be given a frank public account.'

[60] 811e5–9 (translation Taylor); cf. Bobonich, 'Reading the *Laws*', pp. 252–3.

[61] 804c8–d1; translation mine.

[62] Bobonich, 'Reading the *Laws*', p. 250 n. 4 and p. 251.

[63] Cf. *ibid*., pp. 265–9 (and p. 251 n. 6) with A. Nightingale, 'Writing/Reading a Sacred Text: A Literary Interpretation of Plato's *Laws*', *Classical Philology*, 88 (1993), pp. 279–300, especially p. 295.

[64] Bobonich relies on the Preludes (and the compulsory reading of the *Laws*) to introduce philosophical discourse (and dialogue) into the dialogue, but the word 'philosophy' never actually appears in the *Laws*. See D. Clay, *Platonic Questions: Dialogues with the Silent Philosopher* (University Park, PA, 2000), p. 277.

[65] Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, pp. 97–100 and Bobonich, 'Persuasion, Compulsion, and Freedom', pp. 392–3, 400–1; cf. Schofield, *Plato*, pp. 84–7 and T. Samaras, *Plato on Democracy* (New York, 2002), pp. 313–15.

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there are two distinct types of doctors; the actual legislator is free doctor and slave doctor in one, issuing both peremptory laws and persuasive preludes.[66] Nor are there, in actuality, two distinct types of 'patients'; the 'free citizens' will be compelled to obey the laws if they are not persuaded to do so (719e7–720a2), or rather, if the preludes fail to put them in a frame of mind where they will voluntarily obey them.[67] If the Stranger is less than explicit about how easily the doctor's *free patients* could become slaves — when not 'tamed with persuasion' (720d7; translation mine) and therefore forced to obey — he deliberately[68] and suggestively compares the *enslaved* doctors to 'tyrants' (720c6–7).

It is this comparison that establishes the link between 'the two doctors analogy' and the Stranger's remarkable request for 'a young tyrant' (709e6–710a2) through whom to rule the new colony in Book IV (cf. 711c4 and 720d6–7). Popper cited this passage only in a footnote;[69] it is not discussed either in Bobonich's book or that of Glenn Morrow.[70] Conservative as Crete and Sparta are, it is remarkable that Megillus and Clinias feel called upon not only to defend Athens (Clinias at 707b4–6) and human nature (Megillus at 804b5–6) from the Stranger but also to question his seriousness about the need for a tyrant,[71] a pliable young tyrant ('well disposed to learn' at 709e7; translation mine), it should be added, who could therefore be controlled behind the scenes by a forceful 'Nestor' (711e1–7). Just as the 'two doctors' are but two aspects of one and the same lawgiver, so also the Stranger — in the passage that indicates, with and without euphemism, what fate really awaits those who will prove disobedient (735b1–736a5) — explicitly calls for 'a tyrant and a lawgiver in one' (735d3–4; translation mine). The Stranger makes no secret of the fact that he regards 'doing through tyranny whatever one desires'[72] as a good thing that is indeed among the best of things (and the impiety of the claim should be noted) 'for just and pious men'.[73] And as if to

[66] Note the singular at 720e2 in the context of 720e2–8; also 720a2–3.

[67] 720d7–8; cf. Nightingale, 'Writing/Reading', p. 292.

[68] Laks, 'Freedom, Liberality, and Liberty', p. 149.

[69] Popper, *Open Society*, vol. 1, p. 610 n. 69.

[70] I.e. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City*. It is, however, the first passage from *Laws* cited at Guthrie, *History*, vol. 5, pp. 322–3.

[71] Clinias speaks for both at 711a4; see also 710c1–2 and 711a7.

[72] 661b2, translation mine; cf. 687b1 and 711b6.

[73] 661b4–6 (translation mine); see 661a4–c7 (translation Pangle): 'For the things said to be good by the many are not correctly so described. It is said that the best thing is health, and second is beauty, and third is wealth — and then there are said to be ten thousand other goods: sharp sight, hearing, and good perception of all the senses; and then, by becoming a tyrant, to do whatever one desires, and finally the perfection of complete blessedness, which is to possess all these things and then to become immortal, as quickly as possible. But you two and I, presumably, speak as follows: we say that these things,

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test whether any of his readers are still awake,[74] Plato also inserts in the Stranger's mouth precisely the definition of justice championed by Thrasymachus in the *Republic*.[75]

The reader of *Laws* must be alert to its brilliant author's pedagogical purpose and his skill in advancing it. Especially after the Stranger's tyrannical shortcut is implicitly abandoned, spotting his ingenious attempts to reinstitute it by other means requires a commensurately critical and suspicious reader (which is not to deny, of course, that the whole process is a great deal of fun). A critical playfulness is particularly important in Book VI where the election of magistrates is described. Amidst a plethora of lesser difficulties,[76] a pseudo-Athenian δοκιμασία stands out;[77] before entering office, officials must be subjected to 'scrutiny' by other officials (first mentioned at 753e1). Even on those occasions involving the democratic lot,[78] the undisclosed persons or person to whom this δοκιμασία is entrusted can easily negate its effects (759b4–c2). The process is the opposite of transparent: the priests are said to be subject to the same 'scrutiny' as the generals (760a3–4), the generals to the same 'scrutiny' as the Guardians of the Law (755d6), but the 'scrutiny' of these officials is nowhere described.[79]

Although there is considerable question about how the Guardians of the Law will be elected,[80] the Stranger's speech to the colonists (754a9–755b2) is

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beginning with health, are all very good when possessed by just and pious men, but all very bad when possessed by unjust men.'

[74] Thrasymachus is not mentioned at E. England, *The Laws of Plato* (Manchester, 1921), vol. 1, pp. 443–4.

[75] 714c6; an anonymous reviewer commented: 'But the formula "justice is the interest of the stronger" appears there, not as the stranger's own view, but as part of the popular view which the stranger is about to criticize.' In the passage as a whole (712b4–716b9), this principle is implicitly criticized only with respect to cities ruled by men (714a2–715c2) but is otherwise subjected to apotheosis (713e3–714a2 and 715c2–d7); it is not objectionable in a city ruled by divine beings (713c2–e3 and 716b8–9) for the collective good of the human herd (713d2–5 and 715e7–716a4).

[76] The lowest of four property classes, for example, need not participate in the election of their own 'representatives' while the highest two classes will be fined (and the highest class particularly so) if they do not participate in the election of representatives for the 'smallest' (but doubtless also the largest) class. See 756d1–e2.

[77] Morrow, *Cretan City*, pp. 215–29.

[78] 757b4–5 and 757e3–4; cf. Morrow, *Cretan City*, p. 162.

[79] Morrow, *Cretan City*, p. 218. Morrow runs into trouble when he attempts to divine Plato's intentions on the assumption that he follows Athenian practice; see pp. 218, 206 and 157: 'The assembly of the citizens is taken so much for granted in Plato's law that its existence as an organ of government is nowhere explicitly stated . . .'. The sole power granted the δῆμος (see 772d1) is to *block changes* in the law; see Morrow, *Cretan City*, p. 201.

[80] T. Saunders, 'The Alleged Double Version in the Sixth Book of Plato's *Laws*', *Classical Quarterly*, n.s. 20 (1970), pp. 230–6.

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consistent with his speech to the Knossians on three points: (1) there will be thirty-seven of them; (2) nineteen of these will be actual colonists, eighteen will represent the interests of Knossos; and (3) Clinias will be among the eighteen as well as being a citizen of the colony (753a1–4). There is nothing in the letter of the *Laws* to preclude the possibility that as soon as the Knossians depart the colony, or, more likely, as soon as the colony departs from Knossos, Clinias will speak for the eighteen absent Knossians as well as himself among the nineteen of the thirty-seven who remain and hence that his 'vote' will be decisive. Instead of the educable young tyrant who was his first choice, the Stranger must now rely on the second-best possibility that Clinias will become an educable old one (cf. 753a3–4 with 711c4). In this context, the Stranger's ongoing attempt to corrupt the Magnesian youth depends on his ability to corrupt first an elderly Knossian. The not inconsiderable drama of Plato's *Laws* depends on the open question of whether this possibility will be realized.[81] It is noteworthy that Megillus the Spartan, biding his time from Book VII on (806c8–9), is given the dialogue's last ambiguous word (969d3; cf. Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon).

Its first word is 'god';[82] it proves to be no less ambiguous and, more importantly, it introduces the important question of the Athenian Stranger's piety or lack thereof. Although the Stranger hints from the start that the law codes of Crete and Sparta, traditionally ascribed to Zeus and Apollo through the lawgivers Minos and Lycurgus, are not in fact divine,[83] he becomes increasingly less reticent about suggesting that his own code should be conceived as such.[84] Using λόγος[85] and 'reason'[86] as intermediaries, the Stranger invokes 'god' as the basis for his 'law'.[87] Careful not to upset any traditional religious beliefs the colonists may bring along with them (759a8–b1), the Stranger uses 'god' to explain his having spoken of human beings as puppets (804b3–8) and to justify his claim that even their leaders are 'slaves to the law' (715c6–d6; translation mine). Religion is used to prevent innovation in music (796c4–d1); the first indictment for impiety in *Laws* arises from musical innovation contrary

[81] The bait is dangled at 702b4–c8; the Stranger devours it at 702d6. Note that the Stranger first addresses Clinias as ὦ δαιμόνιε at 705d3.

[82] 624a1; cf. Schofield, *Plato*, p. 74 and Strauss, *Argument and Action*, p. 2.

[83] Strauss, *Argument and Action*, pp. 4–5 and 7; cf. Nightingale, 'Reading/Writing', p. 283: 'By putting the blame on Clinias for misrepresenting his mythical ancestor's principles, the Athenian is able to co-opt Minos and conflate him (as well as Lycurgus) with his own ideal legislator.'

[84] Cf. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, pp. 93–6.

[85] 659c9–660a8; cf. Strauss, *Argument and Action*, pp. 26–7.

[86] 713e3–714a2; cf. the progress of Book VII between 788a4 and 822d7 with respect to subsuming νουθετήσις to νομοθεσία.

[87] Beginning at 716a3, the process is ongoing throughout *Laws* and, if *Epinomis* is Plato's, beyond it. Once the Athenian Stranger is divorced from Plato and Socrates, the ostentatiously un-Platonic character of *Epinomis* presents no obstacle to its authenticity.

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to the Stranger's law (799b7–8). The ambassadors to Delphi, ostensibly a source of extra-legal authority, are subject to 'scrutiny' (759d7–e1). With three hundred and sixty-five festivals to various divinities each year,[88] the Stranger's city is a theocracy[89] with place in it for only a single 'god' who proves capable of doing anything more than moving in law-abiding cycles,[90] i.e. the lawgiver himself.

It is Strauss who illuminates, albeit cautiously, this utterly disturbing aspect of Plato's *Laws*.[91] Strongly influenced by Carl Schmitt's 'political theology',[92] Strauss made what he called 'the theological-political problem' — the relationship between religion and politics — the binding theme of his research.[93] While working on Maimonides in the twilight years of the Weimar Republic,[94] Strauss discovered in Plato's *Laws* the key to the Muslim philosophers of the Middle Ages:[95] just as the Athenian Stranger professes to believe in the divine origin of the Spartan and Cretan law codes for his own political purposes,[96] so too did the *falâsifa*, and in particular al-Fârâbî,[97] find it expedient to 'believe' (on an unbelieving basis) in their divine lawgiver.[98] If Strauss had

[88] 828b1; note the reliance on the solar year: the influence of theocratic Egypt on *Laws*, beginning at 656d2, is pervasive. See J. Ranieri, *Disturbing Revelation: Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, and the Bible* (Columbia, 2009), p. 183: 'If his [sc. Strauss's] goal is to get back to the most primordial layers of Jewish self-understanding, he would be on firmer ground by starting with the events of the Exodus, events considered to be constitutive of Israel's existence as a people.'

[89] Consider 716b8–9 in relation to the speeches of the Stranger that precede and follow it.

[90] 809c7, 821c7 and 822a6–8.

[91] Succinctly summarized at Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*, pp. 29–30.

[92] C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. G. Schwab (Chicago, 1985), originally published 1922.

[93] L. Strauss, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. K. Green (Albany, 1997), p. 453; cf. H. Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theologico-Political Problem*, trans. M. Brainerd (Cambridge, 2006).

[94] L. Strauss, *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*, trans. E. Adler (Albany, 1995), originally published 1935.

[95] See the quotation from Avicenna at Strauss, *Argument and Action*, p. 1; cf. Strauss, *Philosophy and Law*, p. 125 n. 62.

[96] Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy?*, p. 30: 'Very slowly, very circumspectly does the Athenian approach this grave question [sc. 'the question of the origins of the Cretan laws and the Spartan laws'].'

[97] *Ibid*., pp. 134–44 and, more to the point, Strauss, 'Fârâbî's Plato'.

[98] Strauss, *Philosophy and Law*, p. 76: 'It is in the *Laws* that Plato undoubtedly stands closest to the world of revealed law, since it is there that, in accordance with a kind of interpretation anticipating the philosophic interpretation of the revealed law among the medieval thinkers, Plato transforms the "divine laws" of Greek antiquity into truly divine laws, or [*bzw.*] recognizes them as truly divine laws. In this approximation to the revela-

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a solution to 'the theological political problem'[99] — his defenders seem most comfortable with the view that he didn't[100] — it was connected with what he called 'a non-theistic vindication of God'.[101] Nor does Bobonich completely ignore the fact that religion is part of the means — along with the Preludes and reading the *Laws* — by which the citizens of Magnesia are persuaded to obey the laws.[102]

The approach to Plato I am proposing here has some important antecedents. Andrea Nightingale's reading of *Laws* anticipates many of the points that have been made thus far about what the Athenian Stranger is doing; indeed a difference between us emerges only at the end of her insightful article in relation to Plato's intentions in composing the dialogue as he does:

> How then does the dialogue address its readers? Given the conspicuous absence of discursive strategies that would destabilize or undermine the Athenian's discourse — strategies that an author as playful and ironic as Plato could easily have included — it seems reasonable to conclude that the text asks the reader to defer to the authority of the lawgiver.[103]

A useful analogue to Plato's destabilizing strategies can be found in Stanley Fish's noteworthy reading of *Paradise Lost*:[104] just as Fish's Milton tempts the reader with Satan's fraudulent reasoning and masterful rhetoric,[105] he also challenges that reader to resist Satan for themselves.[106] Having already likened the *Laws* to poison, it is now necessary to show the strategies that

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tion without the guidance of revelation we grasp at its origin the unbelieving, philosophic foundation of the belief in revelation.'

[99] Cf. D. Tanguay, *Leo Strauss: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. C. Nadon (New Haven, 2007), pp. 193–215.

[100] H. Mansfield, 'Timeless Mind: A Review of *Leo Strauss and the Politics of Exile: the Making of a Political Philosopher*, by Eugene R. Sheppard and *Leo Strauss: An Intellectual Biography*, by Daniel Tanguay, translated by Christopher Nadon', *Claremont Review* (Winter 2007).

[101] Strauss, *Platonic Political Philosophy*, pp. 178–81; cf. Tanguay, *Leo Strauss*, pp. 161–2 and 232 n. 41.

[102] Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 93: 'Similarly, insofar as the Cretan and the Spartan interlocutors claim a divine foundation for their law codes, they are radically mistaken. Plato does accept, however, that in a good or just city, god, in a way, rules.' Cf. '. . . not the only means' at p. 99.

[103] Nightingale, 'Reading/Writing', pp. 299–300. On Plato's 'discursive strategies', see A.E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford, 1928), p. 614: 'When we find T. [sc. Timaeus] falling into inconsistency we may suggest that his creator is intentionally making him "give himself away".' Unfortunately Taylor never applied this hermeneutic to *Laws* and indeed regards the Athenian Stranger as Plato's mouthpiece *par excellence*; see in particular *ibid*., pp. 325–6.

[104] S. Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, 2nd edn., 1997).

[105] *Ibid*., pp. xlviii and 6–7 n. 1.

[106] *Ibid*., pp. xlix and 38.

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Plato, anticipating Milton, uses to 'destabilize or undermine the Athenian's discourse'.

As a general principle, Plato's readers have been altogether too quick to accept as definitive the strictures against written texts enunciated by Socrates at *Phaedrus* 275d4–276a9; *Laws* suggests that Plato had mastered the art of bringing the reader directly into the web of his text. Certainly Plato teaches the reader to interrupt his narratives, conspicuously in *Euthydemus*[107] but most productively in *Republic*.[108] Rather than according the Stranger the opportunity to unfold his impieties 'in a most majestic silence',[109] a reader bold enough to imitate Glaucon (or familiar enough with Socrates to imitate his old friend Crito) will create a dialogue with the text. It is precisely this extra-textual dialogue that supplies the dialectic that *Laws* itself may well be thought — accurately from a reader's perspective if deliberately from Plato's — to lack.[110] To put it another way: the reader's awareness of Plato's ability to create multi-layered texts[111] that promote extra-textual dialectic between reader and dialogue, confirms the existence of an ongoing pedagogical project first articulated by Cicero.[112]

Before turning directly to the principal destabilizing strategy used by the 'playful and ironic' Plato (in Nightingale's felicitous phrase) — i.e. the analogy between the Stranger's association with wine and Socrates' with hemlock — consider the use of the word βάσανος in the following passage:

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[107] *Euthydemus* 290e1–2; cf. Altman, 'Leo Strauss and the *Euthydemus*', p. 374.

[108] *Republic* 347a7–9, 357a2–b2 and 471c4–e5; see W. Altman, 'Altruism and the Art of Writing: Plato, Cicero, and Leo Strauss', *Humanitas*, 22 (2009), pp. 69–98.

[109] *Phaedrus* 275d6; translation R. Hackforth.

[110] See the letter of L. Strauss to E. Voegelin, 4 June 1951, in *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934–1964*, ed. and trans. P. Emberley and B. Cooper (University Park, 1993), at p. 90: 'Can one call the proper ordering of this *polis* (in Plato's *Laws*) a conversation? Here exists domination by command and legend, but precisely no conversation, which as such is based on the fiction or the reality of equality.'

[111] Consider in this connection Cicero's *multiplex ratio disputandi* at *Tusc. Disp.* 5.11; see W. Altman, 'Womanly Humanism in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 139 (2009), pp. 411–45.

[112] Cicero, *Orator* 12 (translation mine): 'Of course I'm also aware that I often seem to be saying original things when I'm saying very ancient ones (albeit having been unheard by most) and I confess myself to stand out as an orator — if that's what I am, or in any case, whatever else it is that I am — not from the ministrations of the rhetoricians but from the open spaces of the Academy. For such is the *curricula* of many-leveled and conflicting dialogues [*multiplicium variorumque sermonum*] in which the tracks of Plato have been principally impressed.' For the translation of *uarius*, see *OLD* §3; for that of *sermones*, see E. Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero's de Oratore* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 50 n. 2.

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> Pray, sir legislator — whether it is for Cretans or for any other society your legislation is intended — in the first place, would you be thankful for a touchstone [βάσανον] of the courage or cowardice of your citizens?[113]

Applied by Socrates to Callicles in the *Gorgias*,[114] the concept of a testing touchstone (βάσανος) applies not only to 'the fear drug' (648b1) and wine (649d9) in Book I of the *Laws* but also, on the present reading, to *Laws* as a whole:[115] it is a discourse intended by Plato — whose Socrates discusses such tests at length in Book VII of the *Republic*[116] — to test the reader.[117]

> And is not this true of the good likewise — that the man who is unable to define in the discourse and distinguish and abstract from all other things the aspect or idea of the good [τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν] and who cannot, as if in battle [ὥσπερ ἐν μάχῃ], through all refutations emerging [διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιών], not eager to refute by recourse to opinion but to essence [μὴ κατὰ δόξαν ἀλλά κατ' οὐσίαν προθυμούμενος ἐλέγχειν], proceeding throughout its way in all of these [sc. refutations] with the discourse untoppled, the man who lacks this power, you will say, does not really know the good itself or any particular good but if he joins himself in any way to some image [ἀλλ' εἰ πῃ εἰδώλου τινὸς ἐφάπτεσθαι] he does so by reputation but not knowledge [δόξῃ, οὐκ ἐπιστήμῃ ἐφάπτεσθαι].[118]

Although everyone would admit that the Stranger never mentions the Idea of the Good,[119] it is primarily the reader who reads *Laws* in the context of *Crito* and *Phaedo* who will recognize in his escape from the hemlock — penultimate reward for returning to the Cave (*Republic* 517a5–6) — Plato's pedagogical purpose in creating him. Reading *Laws*, a long and difficult task that requires both labour and keenness,[120] tests the reader ὥσπερ ἐν μάχῃ

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113 648a8–b2; translation Taylor.

114 *Gorgias* 486d2–7; cf. E. Dodds, *Plato, Gorgias: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 1959), p. 280.

115 The insight that *Laws* is a *third* kind of βάσανος and therefore itself a φάρμακον, belongs to my student Caroline Wooten.

116 *Republic* 537b5, 537d5 and 540a1; cf. 537c6.

117 Cf. Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, p. 216.

118 *Republic* 534c4–d6; I have modified P. Shorey's translation.

119 See 716d6, 792b2, 801c1, 809a5–6 and 966a5–b8; Guthrie makes Morrow's error when he writes: 'Knowing Plato as we do, we can confidently take the objective standards of reality and goodness, postulated in this sentence [966b4–8] to be Forms' (Morrow, 'The *Laws* and the theory of Forms' section, Guthrie, *History*, vol. 5, pp. 378–81, p. 380). Consider Plato's use of the word γιγνόμενα in the relevant sentence: the formula τά καλῶς γιγνόμενα κατά φύσιν applies to Becoming, not Being (οὐσία).

120 *Republic* 535b6–9 (translation Shorey): 'They must have, my friend, to begin with, a certain keenness [δριμύτητα] for study, and must not learn with difficulty. For souls are much more likely to flinch and faint in severe studies than in gymnastics, because the toil touches them more nearly, being peculiar to them and not shared with the body.' Cf. the Stranger on δριμύ at 808d7.

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precisely because doing battle with a mysterious character deliberately invested with δόξη requires a reader who is at once προθυμούμενος ἐλέγχειν but who will not do so κατὰ δόξαν ἀλλά κατ' οὐσίαν.[121] In this context, the Athenian Stranger becomes Plato's last word when it comes to a literary εἴδωλον. In accordance with the view that Plato wrote *Laws* to test the reader's grasp of the *Republic* — and supplementing Charles H. Kahn's brilliant conception of the 'proleptic' dialogues that prepare for it[122] — I propose that there are dialogues that should be recognized as *basanistic*. In fact, it is precisely this theoretical basis that explains Plato's decision to accord wine drinking such an important role in his *Laws*.[123]

Intimately connected with wine and hemlock, the constituent elements of Plato's basanistic tale of two drinking parties, are confidence (θάρρος)[124] and fear (φόβος).[125] The Stranger's failure to recognize hemlock as the φόβου φάρμακον reveals that it is only Socrates, presiding as 'symposiarch' over a drinking party in *Phaedo*,[126] who will master his own φόβος (*Phaedo* 95d6–8), persuade others to demonstrate θάρρος (*Phaedo* 114d8) and finally, after draining the πῶμα,[127] once again become himself (πάλιν . . . τὸν αὐτὸν γίγνεσθαι; 648a3).[128] At the simplest level, then, wine induces θάρρος, hemlock φόβος.[129] But this antithesis is only the first step in Plato's complex and ingenious tale: wine also causes the drinker to overcome a *salutary* form of φόβος — a sense of shame (646e10–647a2; cf. *Crito* 53b6–c3) — while giving way to a *defective* form of θάρρος (647a10) that leads to shamelessness.

> And are not its [sc. wine's] effects the very opposite of all we have just mentioned? When a man drinks it, its first immediate effect is to make him merrier [ἵλεων] than he was, and the more he takes, the more it fills him with optimistic fancies and imaginary capacity. In the very final phase, the drinker is swollen with the conceit of his own wisdom to the pitch of complete license of speech [παρρησίας] and action, and utter fearlessness [ἀφοβίας];

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121 Plato may well require his students to do this even when the speaker is Socrates; cf. *Philebus* 27b8–9 with *Republic* 534a2–3. See Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia*, p. 95.

122 C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of Literary Form* (Cambridge, 1996).

123 E. Belfiore, 'Wine and Catharsis of the Emotions in Plato's *Laws*', *Classical Quarterly*, 36 n.s. (1986), pp. 421–37.

124 649c8 and *Phaedo* 114d1–115a2; note 114d8.

125 649a1–6 and *Phaedo* 95d6–8.

126 *Phaedo* 117b6–7; readers of M. Renault, *The Last of the Wine* (New York, 1956), will recognize her influence.

127 Hemlock is called a πῶμα at *Phaedo* 117b6 and drinking verbs, both accompanying φάρμακον and used without it, are used repeatedly; cf. *Phaedo* 57a2, 115a7, 115d3, 116c3, 117a9, 117c5 and 117c6–7.

128 See also *Phaedo* 118a7–8; cf. 117d6, 65d1–2 and 57a1.

129 For the Stranger's first definitions of φόβος and θάρρος, see 644c9–d1.

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> there is nothing he will scruple to say [εἰπεῖν τε ἀόκνως ὁτιοῦν], nothing he will scruple to do.[130]

It is the double sense of both φόβος and θάρρος — θάρρος as confidence in the face of adversity as well as shamelessness; φόβος as either cowardice or respectful awe (647a8–b1) — that makes Plato's tale of two drinking parties so intellectually satisfying. Linked together as poison and antidote, the doubled characteristics of the two drinks reveal the abyss dividing their respective champions. The most significant and satisfying revelation vouchsafed by the story is that just as Socrates demonstrates a praiseworthy θάρρος in the face of a life-threatening φόβος, the Stranger overcomes the salutary form of φόβος in order to give way to a shameless θάρρος. In other words: both Socrates and the Stranger are simultaneously 'fearless and fearful' (646b9–c1; translation mine) *but in precisely opposite ways*. The Stranger's fear of dying in Athens will lead him to a shameless παρρησία in Crete while Socrates, over-awed by the Athenian laws in *Crito* (*Crito* 52c8 and 54c2), acts in accordance with a philosopher's θάρρος in *Phaedo* (*Phaedo* 95c1–4). In other words: both Socrates and the Stranger overcome φόβος while demonstrating θάρρος but, in accordance with their differing attitudes towards death — and dramatized by the difference between hemlock and wine — they do so in ways that are diametrically opposed. In summary: Socrates masters the evil form of φόβος in *Phaedo* — i.e. he masters his fear of death — while demonstrating, for the benefit of others, the salutary form of θάρρος whereas the Stranger, by fleeing Athens in accordance with his fear of death, abandons a salutary form of φόβος in order to give voluble expression to an evil form of θάρρος throughout Plato's *Laws*.

The Stranger's curious interest in wine is therefore best understood as a result of the fact that he is merely Plato's deliberately contrived εἴδωλον of Socrates. Having passed the Stranger's wine test in the *Symposium* (*Symposium* 223c4–d12), the real Socrates passes the test of 'the fear drug' in *Phaedo*. The Stranger, on the other hand, not only fails the fear test by reversing the decision Socrates made in the *Crito* but will also fail precisely the test[131] he himself institutes in *Laws*. If Plato hasn't playfully suggested that the Stranger would have required wine to make the decision to escape in *Phaedo*,[132] he will endow the protagonist of *Laws*, likewise playfully, with the relevant characteristics of a drunken man.

Attention has already been drawn to the emphasis that Bobonich, in his attempt to discover rational persuasion through dialogue in the Stranger's city, places on the fact the citizens of Magnesia will read *Laws*. A more detailed investigation of the Stranger's proposal reveals more evidence against Bobonich's view, gives a clearer picture of the Stranger's actual intentions,

[130] 649a8–b5; translation Taylor.

[131] Note the continued use of βάσανος at 649d9 and 650b4.

[132] Socrates is given the opportunity to feast and drink wine at *Phaedo* 116e4.

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and illustrates what I am calling his 'drunken' behaviour. The first point to notice is the Stranger's hesitation to reveal his proposal (810c4–811c2); given that he will be compelling the city's highest official (cf. 765d8–e2 and 811d5) to compel paid foreign teachers to indoctrinate the youth in his own discourses — discourses he will praise immodestly (811c9–d5) — this hesitation is perfectly natural. He must be brought to a state — and Clinias skilfully brings him there[133] — where his natural inhibitions explicitly give way to θάρρος (810e2) and παρρησία (811a6).

The second point is that the Stranger's proposal only applies to youths between ten and thirteen years old;[134] no less but likewise no more time is allotted to their grammatical education (810a2–5). Given the Stranger's remarkably hostile description of boys (808d4–7), it is difficult to believe that they are freely[135] encouraged to criticize the text as taught by paid foreigners required to praise it (811e5–6). As for Bobonich's main point about pedagogical dialogue, the Stranger's discussion of lyre playing — a process that fills the curriculum of the next three years (809e8–810a2) following the reading of *Laws* (812b2–813a5) — expressly forbids the use of harmony and counterpoint (812d4–e5). Not only is the allotted time insufficient (812e4–5), but, as the Stranger says, 'unsettling contradictions impede learning, and it is necessary that the young learn as easily as possible' (812e5–6; translation mine). Given that insufficient time will not permit the students even to be taught how to write beautifully or read quickly in the previous triennium (810b2–b4), it is easy to imagine what 'reading' the *Laws* would be like for a thirteen year old;[136] only its perfectly self-deluded father 'swollen with the conceit of his own wisdom' (649b2–3; translation Taylor) could assert that it is comparable to any kind of poem (811c9–10).

A third and far more insidious form of drunken ἀφοβία (649a4) is revealed when the Stranger claims divine inspiration for the morning's[137] discourses: 'since not without some kind of inspiration from the gods we seem to me'.[138] Found in Book VII — where the end of *Laws* first becomes a theme[139] — this passage shows the Stranger at a kind of half-way point on his long theological-

[133] Clinias implicates Megillus with his 'by us' at 810d6; cf. his λέγε καὶ μηδὲν ἀπόκνει at 811c1–2 with εἰπεῖν τε ἀόκνως ὁτιοῦν at 649b5, quoted above.

[134] 809e7–8; cf. H. Görgemanns, *Beiträge zur Interpretation von Platons Nomoi* (Munich, 1960).

[135] Note that free boys — along with their attendants and teachers — can be punished by any free man *as slaves* if they err in any way; 808e4–7.

[136] Cf. R. Browning's '. . . how ill had fared its leaves' ('Development').

[137] Given 811c7–8, Bobonich's claim that 'the entire *Laws*' will be read by 'all the citizens' is also false.

[138] 811c8–9, translation mine.

[139] 799e1–7; also 812a8–9 and 818a3.

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political journey to self-deification: he still uses 'we'[140] and he qualifies with 'some kind of' the divine inspiration for what really are his own words.[141] It will be noted that this speech (811b6–812a2), studded with references to the Stranger himself,[142] continues his ongoing attempt (particularly visible in Book VII) to collapse boundaries in his discourse. Among many others, the following may be mentioned: the boundary between any heroic man and the gods,[143] between the Stranger and his law (804d7), between either the Director of Music or the Guardian(s) of the Law and the Stranger (811d5), between the gods and the visible heavens,[144] and thus — given his knowledge of astronomy — between the Stranger and 'god'.[145] By the time, later in Book VII, that the best citizen will be defined as one who obeys not only the explicit laws but the lawgiver's intent,[146] the divisions between the gods, reason, the law, the lawgiver, and the lawgiver's inspired creator (in other words, the Stranger himself), will be rendered strictly theoretical. So drunkenly confident is the Stranger in his own powers, so devoid of 'divine fear' (671d2; translation mine), that he plots to usurp the place of both Minos[147] and Zeus

[140] 820e4, 821a2 and 821b5 with 821c6–d4.

[141] Although this is not the place to argue for the authenticity of *Epinomis*, the following should be considered: (1) as noted earlier, un-Platonic elements in the Athenian Stranger's speeches do not prove that he isn't Plato's creation; (2) the promise of 818a3 is most completely fulfilled in *Epinomis*; (3) the subject of astronomy, first raised in Book VII, is the subject of the *Epinomis*; (4) Book VII contains repeated references to the 'end' of the Stranger's legislation; (5) *Epinomis*, when added to the twelve books of the *Laws* (consider the ἐνέχυρα λύσιμα of 820e4) would constitute a thirteenth; (6) in a set of thirteen, Book VII of the *Laws* becomes 'the half-way point' of the Stranger's journey; and (7) together with *Laws*, *Epinomis* would balance *Sophist* and *Statesman*, the first dyad interpolated in the First Tetalogy. See W. Altman, 'The Reading Order of Plato's Dialogues', forthcoming in *Phoenix*, 64 (2010).

[142] There are six uses of the personal pronoun, only one of them plural, and two first-person singular verbs; consider, in particular, the confusion suggested by the nominative singular participle, two first-person plural verbs in the relative clause, the two dative singular pronouns, and the third-person verb at 811b6–10.

[143] The process that culminates with linking 'god' (*via* intermediaries) to 'a hero such as is capable of taking care of human beings with seriousness' (818c2–3; translation mine) begins at 796c8–d1 and continues through 799a7, 801e2–3 and 815d5–6. Cf. the use of ἵλεως at 649a9 (quoted above) with 712b4–6; the Stranger's 'drunken' lack of inhibition repeatedly exploits the theological ambiguity of this important word.

[144] See 809c7, 817e8–818a4, 818b7–8, 821b8–9 and 822a6–8.

[145] 818b9–c3 (translation Pangle): 'In my opinion, they [sc. 'divine' or 'numerical necessities'] are those which one cannot avoid acting according to and knowing something about if one would ever become among human beings, a god [γένοιτο ἀνθρώποις θεὸς] or a demon or a hero capable of exercising serious supervision over humans.'

[146] See 822e8–823a6; note that 'the great man in a city and perfect . . . the one who wins the prize for virtue' (730d6–7; translation mine) is an informant.

[147] When giving voice to the Athenian Laws in *Crito*, Socrates sharply distinguishes the laws of Hades (*Crito* 54c6–7) — with which Minos is implicated at *Apology* 41a3 —

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while — on a journey *up* to a cave — giving himself alone the freedom to say whatever he wishes.[148] Rejuvenated (769a1–2), as if by wine,[149] he schemes, on the assumption that he has taken control of Clinias,[150] to create a puppet show over which his own mind will rule as abiding law and thereby seeks through tyranny what he regards as the ultimate good (661a4–c7): a kind of immortality no genuine follower of Socrates desires.[151]

The lawful will be the abiding: the anagram[152] of νόμιμα ('lawful') and μόνιμα ('abiding,' i.e. from μένειν likewise reveals the Stranger's riddle, or rather constitutes but one of the many 'discursive strategies that destabilize or undermine the Athenian's discourse' in this ingenious tale. Like the Athenian hoplite that he was,[153] Socrates proves himself in *Crito* to be μόνιμος while performing the νόμιμα; the Stranger, having slavishly fled his post in defiance of Athenian law (*Crito* 52c8–d3), now makes a raid on the Island of Crete much like the Athenian marines he professes to abhor.[154] Demonstrating that he is not μόνιμος by deafening himself to the Athenian νόμοι and deserting his post, the Stranger now seeks to make his own νόμος the very thing he himself isn't: μόνιμος (797a7–9 . The crucial word is first used by Clinias (663e3; translation Taylor): 'Beautiful is the truth, O Stranger, and abiding [μόνιμον]'. The Stranger has just introduced the proposition that the lawgiver should 'lie to the youth ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ' (663d8; translation mine) on the grounds

from those that speak through him, precisely the opposite of what the Stranger does while giving voice to his own.

[148] See 634d–e (translation Pangle): 'Because, given that what pertains to your laws has been put together in a measured way, one of the finest is the law that does not allow any of the young to inquire which laws are finely made and which are not but that commands all to say in harmony, with one voice from one mouth, that all the laws are finely made by the gods; if someone says otherwise, there is no heed paid to him at all.'

[149] 646a4–5; cf. Belfiore, 'Wine and Catharsis', pp. 424 and 426.

[150] Cf. the drunkard's illusions at 671b3–6.

[151] C. Zuckert, 'Plato's *Laws*: Postlude or Prelude to Socratic Political Philosophy?', *Journal of Politics*, 66 (2004), pp. 374–95 at p. 375: 'Unlike Socrates or Pythagoras, the Athenian does not put forth a teaching concerning the immortality of individual souls or reincarnation.'

[152] Most obvious at 793d1, cf. *Republic* 537d2.

[153] *Apology* 28d6–10, *Crito* 51b7–c1 and *Phaedo* 62b2–6 (cf. *Laches* 190e4–7).

[154] Thanks to Zuckert, 706b7–c7 has recently become an important text. First in 'Plato's *Laws*: Postlude or Prelude' and then in Zuckert, *Plato's Philosophers*, she has argued that *Laws*, which never mentions the Peloponnesian War, is intended to predate it in a dramatic sense. Particularly in the former, she skilfully distinguishes the Stranger *qua* pre-Socratic from Socrates, particularly on the Ideas (p. 394). In *Plato's Philosophers*, she mentions the Strauss hypothesis of an escaping Socrates (pp. 32, 52 nn. 5–6, p. 761 n. 27) and even goes so far as to suggest precisely why it would have been impolitic for the Athenian to discuss the War with two Dorians even if the dialogue takes place after it (pp. 53–4). But the decisive evidence for a post-War setting is the present passage; the strategy of Pericles (Thucydides 1.143–4), implemented throughout the conflict, involved hit-and-run raids on the Peloponnese from the sea.

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that those who have been properly indoctrinated to believe that the best life is always the pleasantest will be practicing justice willingly rather than by force.[155] And in response to Clinias, he then proceeds to assert that the lawgiver:

> . . . can, if he tries, persuade the souls of the young of anything, so that the only question he has to consider in his inventing is what would do most good to the State [μέγιστον ἀγαθόν ἐργάσαιτο ἂν πόλιν], if it were believed; and then he must devise all possible means to ensure that the whole of the community constantly, so long as they live, use exactly the same language, so far as possible, about these matters, alike in their songs, their tales, and their discourses. If you, however, think otherwise, I have no objection to your arguing in the opposite sense.[156]

Precisely because Clinias responds that '. . . it doesn't seem to me that either of us is presently able to offer a challenge to these assertions' (664b1–2; translation mine), Plato cordially invites the reader to do so ὥσπερ ἐν μάχῃ. Certainly the reader who remembers that the Idea of the Good (τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέαν) is unchanging will be suspicious of the Stranger's attempt to reify some facsimile of it into a specious permanence (cf. 801c1). It will be noted that it is not even a question of doing or achieving the μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν *for* the city; the greatest good and the Stranger's city are just as identical as the sentiments of its brainwashed citizens will eternally remain (816c6–d2). It is worth bearing in mind that the Athenian Stranger's purpose in *Laws* is to guide Clinias and Megillus in legislating for the subjects of an actual city; the purpose of Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, by contrast, is to persuade his auditors, Athenian and otherwise, to freely choose the life of justice.[157]

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[155] 663e1–2; cf. Cicero *de Officiis* 1.28. See *de Finibus* 2.118 for a sharp distinction between the just life of benefiting others and the life of pleasure.

[156] 664a1–8; translation R. Bury.

[157] After making explicit the customary assumption that the Athenian Stranger speaks for Plato at p. 234, E. Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. 3; *Plato and Aristotle* (Baton Rouge, 1957) makes a useful distinction between *Republic* and *Laws* in a fascinating footnote that describes the three-stage process by which 'the great spiritualists' outgrow a belief in human equality. Although the entire passage deserves consideration (especially Voegelin's apt reference to 'the generosity of the aristocratic soul'), I will quote only his description of the final phase at 234 n. 2: 'The Myth of the hierarchically differentiated psyche, with gradual transitions from humanity to divinity, allows for divinization in this last phase. And this has been the solution of Plato in the *Laws*. The current interpretations [note that Voegelin anticipates Bobonich here], which want to see in Plato a development from a more autocratic to a more populist or democratic position, miss this decisive point. The atmosphere of the *Republic* is still that of an appeal to the equals of Plato; in the *Laws*, on the contrary, Plato has accepted the distance which separates him from other men; he now speaks as the divine lawgiver to men who are equal because they are equidistant from him.' Except for the error of identifying the Stranger with Plato, this analysis is right on target.

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It will be seen that the Athenian Stranger is, on this reading, one of the most remarkable characters in world literature. The comparison with Milton's Satan has already been suggested but it is not so much the Stranger's capacity to deceive others as his narcissism,[158] self-deception[159] and self-hatred[160] that best reveal Plato's consummate artistry. Having created by means of a series of dialogues both an unforgettable Socrates endowed with all the mathematical lore of the Pythagoreans (Cicero *de Republica* 1.16) and a reader astute enough to have already traversed the complexities of *Sophist*, Plato now brings the two together by confronting that reader with a character who both is and is not Socrates, a personalized object lesson in the being of non-being. The claim that the Athenian Stranger is who Socrates would have been had he escaped from prison and thereby avoided the hemlock is, in Plato's hands, not so much a contradiction in terms or an inconceivable conception as a thinkable impossibility. With something quite like an 'unreliable narrator',[161] *Laws* thus becomes Plato's most modern work, and is, in any case, his

[158] The 'reading the *Laws*' passage stands out; see Morrow, *Cretan City*, p. 340: 'This provision seems at first sight to express a very harsh and egotistical dogmatism, and some interpreters have thought Plato's suggestion to be at least half playful.'

[159] An early example is 701b5–c5 (translation Pangle): 'Next after this freedom [cf. 'the opinion that everyone is wise in everything, together with lawlessness, originated in our music, and freedom followed'] would come the sort that involves the loss of the willingness to be enslaved to the rulers; following upon this is the rejection of the enslavement to and guidance by one's father and mothers and elders; the next to the last stage involves seeking not to have to obey laws; after this comes the ultimate freedom when they cease to give any more thought to oaths and pledges and everything pertaining to the gods, but instead display and imitate what is called the ancient Titanic nature [cf. 713a6–b4 with Pangle, *Laws*, pp. 524 n. 44 and 525 n. 13] and — arriving back again at those same conditions, and introducing a harsh epoch in which there is never a cessation of evils. Why again have these things been said by us?' This is a good question: he is aware at last that he has gone too far (701c5–d1).

[160] After a warning that he is about to introduce 'something very strange and uncustomary', the Stranger says at 797a3–5 (translation Pangle): 'For I'm going to present an argument that is somewhat frightening to utter [λόγον οὐκ ἄφοβον εἰπεῖν]; yet by becoming bold ['by having become bold' would be a more literal translation for the aorist participle θαρρήσας], somehow I will not flinch.' After having introduced his innovation at 797a7–b8 (regulation of children's games; see Benardete, *Plato's Laws*, p. 199 n. 11 on 797a9–b2) he vigorously attacks innovators at 797b8–c9 (translation Pangle): '. . . where instead they honor especially the man who continually innovates with something new and carries in shapes and colors and all such things as are different from the usual, we would be speaking in an entirely correct way if we were to assert of such a man: there is no greater ruin than this that can come to a city. For escaping notice, this man transforms the characters of the young, and makes them dishonor what is ancient and honor what is new. Of this man and his talk and dogma I say once again: there is no greater punishment for all cities.' See also, 717a2, 728b2–c5, and 863c4–d1 (cf. ῥώμῃ at 711e2).

[161] W. Booth, *Rhetoric and Fiction* (Chicago, 1961).

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psychological masterpiece, extending as it does the results of *Republic* Book IX.[162] And when the reader begins to realize that Clinias and Megillus may not be the pliant fools they appear to be, that they may be deliberately leading the Stranger on to a rendezvous with his self-destructive destiny,[163] this ponderous book of Plato's senility becomes the taut, terrifying and tragic[164] thriller of an innovative writer at the peak of his powers. Above all, however, it is a pedagogical masterpiece: a dialectical lesson in politics and law, a guided tour through the shadows of the Cave.

As for its antidote *Phaedo*, I would only add in conclusion that in the context of *Laws*, what Socrates says about the deathless soul may be less significant than the simple fact that he remained in an Athenian prison in order to say it.[165] Three different responses to the tale of two drinking parties suggest themselves: the first is that the reader who has fought her way through *Laws*, battling the wily Stranger on every single page, will nestle comfortably — with the innocence of a child — into the liberating words of the immortal Socrates, discovering therein a long overdue homecoming to the 'self itself' (*Alcibides Major* 129b1; translation mine). The opposite extreme is an eternal possibility as well: some readers will embrace the Athenian Stranger in conscious preference to Socrates; *Phaedo* will be dismissed as a fairy-tale intended to divert the vulgar from grasping the dark possibilities of 'political theology'. But somewhere in the middle may perhaps be found Plato's chosen reader: a philosopher who knows that even if Socrates' arguments can't prove that our souls are immortal, the fact that he cared enough for us to make them proves that we should all be virtuous enough to follow his example, particularly if we combine, as Plato intended that we should, a reasoned faith in a higher world with a clear-eyed awareness of the tricks used by those who would exploit that faith in this one.[166]

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[162] Belfiore, 'Wine and Catharsis', p. 424, usefully connects wine to the tyrant's emergence in *Republic*.

[163] 806d1–2; note the grant of παρρησία.

[164] 816b2–3; note the connection between wine and ὕβρις at 649d5.

[165] *pace* Bostock, 'The Soul and Immortality', p. 416: 'In short, the morality which our "true philosopher" lays claim to is thoroughly egocentric.'

[166] Thanks are due to Kyriakos Demetriou and two anonymous readers for *Polis* as well as Roslyn Weiss, Melissa Lane, Alan Gilbert and James Wood who read and offered useful criticism of earlier versions.

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