

THE POLITICS OF VIRTUE IN PLATO'S *LAWS*

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation identifies and explains four major contributions of the *Laws* and related late dialogues to Plato's moral and political philosophy.

Chapter 1. I argue that Plato thinks the purpose of laws and other social institutions is the happiness of the city (*polis*). A happy city is one in which the city's parts, i.e. the citizens, are unified under the rule of intelligence (*nous*). Unlike the citizens of the *Republic*, the citizens of the *Laws* can all share the same true judgments of value, and this unanimity explains the city's unity. Plato thinks that aiming at the city's happiness is justified, moreover, because a unified city contributes to the universe's order.

Chapter 2. In the *Laws* Plato holds that the sick, poor, ugly, weak, but virtuous are happy, and that health, wealth, beauty, and strength benefit the virtuous but harm the vicious. Only in the *Laws* does Plato commit himself to all these claims simultaneously, and I explain how the ethical psychology of the *Laws* permits Plato to maintain them coherently.

Chapter 3. I argue that, in the *Laws*, becoming virtuous is the same as becoming like God. Becoming like God does not require escape from the world of change as it does in the *Theaetetus*, however. Rather, becoming like God requires bringing "measure" or appropriate order to the world of change, especially to those entities over which we have the most control—our own souls. In the *Laws*, citizens achieve this order as they learn to be just and to understand the nature of reality.

Chapter 4. Unlike the *Republic* and *Statesman*, the *Laws* holds that obedience of the citizens to their laws should be effected, if possible, with rational persuasion. I argue that Plato wishes such persuasion to educate the citizens of the reasons for the laws. Understanding the laws' justification is the principal way in which citizens acquire the good judgment necessary for virtue. The city becomes more happy as the citizens progress in virtue, so rational persuasion is a necessary means to the lawgiver's overall aim.

PREFACE

Most contemporary scholarship on Plato's ethical and political thought focuses on the early and middle dialogues, especially on Plato's middle period masterpiece, the *Republic*.¹ There are many reasons for this. One is the excitement that Gregory Vlastos generated in the 1980's with his provocative essays on the philosophy of Socrates.² Another is that the *Republic* is one of the most frequently-taught books in the liberal arts curriculum—a fact that affects the size of audience that Plato scholars can reach with work on the *Republic*. The preponderance of attention paid to Plato's early and middle dialogues suggests unfortunately that the late dialogues make less important contributions to Plato's moral and political philosophy.

The truth, however, is that the late dialogues are at least as important as their earlier siblings. This dissertation aims to reveal some of that importance, especially with respect

¹ The distribution of chapter topics in Terence Irwin's important book, *Plato's Ethics* (1995), is representative of the contemporary emphasis on early and middle dialogues as sources for Plato's moral and political philosophy. Of the twenty chapters in *Plato's Ethics*, seventeen deal almost exclusively with early and middle dialogues. Of these seventeen chapters, seven discuss the *Republic* almost exclusively. Of the remaining three chapters, Chapter 1 introduces the book with an argument about the chronology of the dialogues and the philosophical relationships of Plato and Socrates to the Socrates of Plato's dialogues. Chapters 19 and 20 conclude the book with a discussion of some late dialogues: the *Philebus*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*. Although the book's title suggests a comprehensive treatment of its topic, Irwin admits that his brief but valuable discussion of Plato's later ethical thought is highly selective (p. 4).

² These are collected in Vlastos (1991) and (1994).

to the *Laws*. The four chapters focus on four major contributions of the *Laws* and other late dialogues to Plato's moral and political philosophy.

The first chapter concerns Plato's answer to one of political philosophy's basic questions, namely, What is the purpose of social institutions? The question is basic because human beings live in groups, a group's life is ordered by its practices and institutions, and having a justified conception of the purpose of those practices and institutions is necessary for justifying the choice of some institutions over others. I argue that, according to the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*, the purpose of institutions is the happiness of the city. According to Plato, a happy city is one in which the city's parts, i.e. the citizens, are unified under the rule of intelligence. I argue further that there is a tension in the *Republic* among the principles used to explain the city's unity, and that this tension is not relieved until Plato recognizes in the *Laws* that all citizens can share the same true beliefs about what is just, fine, or good. As for what Plato thinks justifies this conception of the purpose of institutions, I argue that he considers the city's happiness to be part of the happiness of the universe as a whole, and that the value of the city's happiness, and of the happiness of the citizens, derives in part from their contribution to the order of the universe.

In the second chapter, I show that in the *Laws* Plato commits himself to the view that virtue is not only necessary for happiness, but sufficient—even in the absence of conventional goods such as health, wealth, beauty, and strength. I also show that in the *Laws* Plato thinks that the possession of conventional goods such as health, wealth, beauty, and strength benefits the virtuous but harms the vicious. Only in the *Laws* does

Plato commit himself to all these claims simultaneously. If one can be benefited by conventional goods when virtuous, though, conventional goods must make some contribution to happiness. But if they make a contribution to happiness, virtue by itself would seem to be insufficient for happiness. I argue that if we understand the ethical psychology behind Plato's claims about virtue, we can understand how conventional goods can make a contribution to happiness that does not undermine the claim that virtue suffices for happiness.

In the third chapter, I argue that in post-*Republic* dialogues Plato holds that becoming virtuous is the same as becoming like God. Becoming like God does not mean the same thing in all dialogues, however. In the *Theaetetus*, for example, becoming like God involves escaping the world of change. In the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, however, Plato's conception of God undergoes a significant change. God in these dialogues is identical with intelligence (*nous*). The activity of intelligence, moreover, is that of bringing "measure" or appropriate order to the world of change. Appropriate order for a changeable entity is determined by what its natural condition is. The natural condition of a soul, for example, is the full instantiation of intelligence so that all of the soul's movements are in accord with intelligence. We become like God, then, insofar as we create appropriate order in the world, especially in those entities over which we have the most control, i.e. our own souls. In the *Laws*, citizens achieve this order as they learn to be just and to understand the nature of reality. Thus, in the *Laws*, becoming like God does not require escaping the world of change, but instead requires ordering the world so that its parts are as good as possible.

In the fourth and final chapter, I examine Plato's emphasis on persuasion in the *Laws*. Unlike the *Republic* and *Statesman*, the *Laws* holds that obedience of the citizens to their laws should be effected, if possible, with rational persuasion. I argue that Plato wishes such persuasion to educate the citizens of the reasons for their laws. This requires informing the citizens of those reasons and helping them to appreciate why the reasons in fact justify the laws. Since one of the lawgiver's aims is the virtue of the citizens, the lawgiver tries to educate the citizens as to what virtue is so that they can appreciate his appeals to virtue when justifying their laws. The emphasis on explaining and justifying the laws shows that Plato is trying to use rational persuasion with the citizens. The use of rational persuasion is itself justified, moreover, because understanding the reasons for the laws is necessary for the citizens' progress in virtue, and because the virtue of the citizens contributes to the happiness of the city.

This glimpse at the content and argument of the chapters indicates the central place of virtue in the political philosophy of the *Laws*. The dissertation explains Plato's appeal to virtue in the justification of the city's institutions. It explains the way in which Plato conceives of virtue's relation to happiness and conventional goods. It ties Plato's conception of virtue to his metaphysics by explaining the role of intelligence in perfecting souls and the universe as a whole. And it shows how Plato tries to bring about the virtue of the citizens through rational persuasion. The dissertation does not, of course, contain all that could or should be said about virtue in the *Laws*, but it says enough to show that Plato's late political theory deserves to be called a politics of virtue. Indeed, it deserves this title even more than does the theory of the *Republic*. In the

Republic, only the rulers learn to value virtue for its own sake, whereas in the *Laws* all citizens are taught to value virtue in this way. It is true that even in the *Laws* some citizens will understand virtue and its requirements more clearly than others, but Plato is at least concerned that all citizens value virtue properly, and he tries to develop in each of them the understanding necessary for living by their own correct judgments of what is just, fine, and good.

For Plato and Aristotle, I used the Oxford Classical Texts with the exception of the *Laws* in chapters 2 and 3, for which I used the Budé edition. Line references refer to these editions. All translations of Greek are my own unless otherwise indicated. Abbreviations of the titles of ancient works are from Liddell et al. (1968) pp. xvi-xxxviii.

CHAPTER 1

THE PURPOSE OF INSTITUTIONS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses Plato's conception of the purpose of institutions. I aim to discover what Plato thinks that purpose is, and how he thinks it is accomplished. By "institutions" I mean not only political institutions such as the structure of government and the rules by which officials are selected, but also legal institutions such as courts and the criminal law, religious institutions such as religious orders and festivals, educational institutions such as the curriculum for children, military institutions such as the rules governing the conscription and training of soldiers, economic institutions such as the regulation of trade and property, and other social institutions such as communal meals and the family. I do not propose to describe how each of these institutions is thought to be connected to the overall purpose. Some connections are admittedly more distant than others. I shall instead focus on what the overall purpose is, on what general factors contribute to it, and ultimately on what Plato thinks justifies his conception of the overall purpose.

The idea that there should be a common purpose to all of these institutions may sound unreasonably demanding, but the demand is explained by Plato's deep dislike of

piecemeal legislation.¹ He prefers that a city's laws and other institutions be organized around a well-conceived goal—one that makes the purpose of institutions plain to the citizens and that provides guidance to public officials. Since Plato wrote so much on political theory, it is perhaps surprising that his own view of the goal is so elusive. I think, however, that we can reconstruct Plato's view on the purpose of institutions by attending to the remarks in the dialogues on the aim of a statesman (*politikòs*) or good lawgiver (*nomothtēs*). As students of Plato's political philosophy, we are perhaps more accustomed to "statesman" as the title of Plato's political expert, but "lawgiver" is the more common term. There is a reason for this: "lawgiver" had more historical resonance to Plato's contemporaries by suggesting ancient lawgivers such as Solon of Athens, Lycurgus of Sparta, and the legendary Minos of Crete.² I shall here treat the two titles as synonyms for the political expert—a position that reflects Plato's usage.³

In order to identify the purpose of institutions, then, I shall try to discover in the dialogues a coherent view of the expert's aim. The *Republic* and *Statesman* are natural places to look for such a view, but the long-neglected *Laws* is by far the richest source. I shall argue that the aim is the happiness of the city. For Plato, the city's happiness requires that the city be stable or well-preserved, so I shall investigate what he thinks

¹ Cf. *Lg.* 630e ff.; 962d ff.

² Nearer to Plato's time, Pericles asked Protarogas to design a law code for a new colony at Thurii in 444/3 B.C. Cf. Diogenes Laertius IX.50, Diodorus Siculus XII.10, and Ehrenberg (1948) pp. 168-9.

³ Plato sometimes uses "lawgiver" for someone who legislates, but who may not be expert in legislation. Elsewhere, however, Plato writes of a "good lawgiver" or a "lawgiver in the strict sense." It is this latter sense that is synonymous with "statesman."

preserves a city. Plato thinks that a city's unity is necessary for its preservation, stability, and happiness. He invokes a number of explanations for a city's unity, though, and he sometimes seems unaware that they do not always mesh. Indeed, I shall argue that only in the *Laws* does Plato reconcile two of the principal unifying factors: the performance by each citizen of his or her civic function, and the uniformity of the citizens' evaluative beliefs, i.e., their beliefs about what things are just, fine, or good. Without further explanation it is unclear how these two factors might be in tension. As we shall shortly see, however, the *Republic* invokes both, but the structure of the *Republic*'s ideal city allows only one to succeed as a unifying principle of that city. The structure of the city in the *Laws* is different in a way that permits greater harmony between the two factors, and is in this respect more compatible with Plato's political theory than the city of the *Republic*.

Sorting through the evidence of the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws* will take patience, but with some help from an ancient Platonist, our efforts will pay off in a better understanding of why Plato thinks some institutions are better than others. We will first examine suggestions that the statesman's aim is the virtue of the citizens, but I shall argue that this aim fits within, and is subordinate to, the statesman's further aim of preserving the city. We will then discuss unity as the principal feature of the well-preserved city, and will see how the statesman tries to produce unity in the cities of the *Republic* and *Statesman*. This will involve discussion of the contribution, or lack of contribution, made to a city's unity by the proper execution of civic duties on the part of the citizens and by unanimity of the citizens' evaluative beliefs. After a summary of the successes and

failures of the *Republic* and *Statesman* with respect to their explanations of the city's unity, we will turn to the *Laws*. We will see in the opening exchange of the *Laws* that Plato reaffirms most of the *Republic*'s and *Statesman*'s claims about the statesman's aim and how to achieve it, but suggests in addition that friendship among the citizens is an important feature of the statesman's aim. We will then examine how Plato in the *Laws* conceives both of the proper execution of civic duties by the citizens and of the unanimity and friendship that should obtain among them, and examine how these factors are thought to contribute to the city's preservation. We will notice how the tension between them is greatly diminished in the *Laws*. Once our discussion of the principles that explain the stability and unity of the city is complete, we will address a residual problem concerning the identity of the statesman's aim, namely, the relation between the city's preservation and its happiness. This will lead us in conclusion to consider the justification of the statesman's aim itself. I shall argue that Plato thinks that the well-preserved and happy city is worth aiming at because of its contribution to the happiness of the universe.

1.2 FROM VIRTUE TO STABILITY

At the close of the *Laws*, the dialogue's main interlocutor, the Athenian Visitor, says that right-thinking rulers aim like a statesman at the virtue of the citizens (962a9-b2, 963a1-4). Plato thus ends his career on the note with which it began. In the *Apology*, Socrates took the god to have commanded him to goad his compatriots into caring for their souls

(29c1-30b4). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates says that he is the only Athenian of the time to attempt the true art of politics by aiming to improve his audience rather than merely to please and flatter it (521d6-e1). For Plato, the virtue of citizens seems always to have been the goal of politics.

The Middle Platonist, Alcinous, interprets Plato differently. He says, “Statesmanship is a theoretical and practical virtue aimed at making a city good, happy, unanimous, and harmonious” (*Didaskalikos* 189.5-7, Whittaker). The statesman aims at certain good properties of the city. Alcinous does not mention the virtue of the citizens. If Alcinous is right that the statesman is focused primarily on the good of the city, we are left to wonder how the virtue of citizens fits into his aim. Of course, aiming at the city’s good need not be incompatible with aiming also at the citizens’ virtue: the virtue of a citizen may contribute to the city’s good condition as one of its causes, as one of its constituents, or perhaps as both. Whether a citizen’s virtue is a cause or a constituent of the city’s good condition, however, it seems clear that the citizen’s virtue is not the statesman’s principal aim. Indeed, unanimity (or likemindedness, ἰμόνοια) and harmony (or concord, συμφωνία) are properties that a whole has in virtue of an arrangement of its parts. Perhaps Alcinous considers the citizens to be the parts of the city. If the citizens are the city’s parts, and if the citizens must be virtuous in order for unanimity and harmony to obtain among them, then the statesman may indeed aim at the citizens’ virtue, but as an aim subsidiary to the good of the city as a whole.

We should take Alcinous' claim seriously. As a Platonist, he had a personal stake in getting Plato right.⁴ Moreover, in his day, Platonism had to compete with better-established philosophical schools, especially Stoicism, for intellectual respectability. To gain a hearing, Platonists had to present positions on logic, physics, and ethics (including politics) with force and coherence. This required an effort to determine what Plato's views on these subjects were. Unlike most Plato scholars today, Alcinous and other ancient Platonists did not take Plato to have changed his mind during early, middle, and late periods. Rather, they looked for similarities across the dialogues and reconstructed Plato's thought accordingly. Hence, when Alcinous says that statesmanship aims at the goodness, happiness, unanimity, and harmony of the city, we should take this as the best judgment of committed Platonist on an issue fundamental to political theory—a judgment arising from study of every Platonic dialogue relevant to politics, including the *Laws*.

We have seen, however, that the *Laws* seems to make the virtue of citizens the statesman's aim. Upon closer inspection, though, we discover that the Athenian has something further in mind—something that fits better with Alcinous' position. He says,

Let's consider, in the case of armies, what goal [σκοπὺν] generals—and the entire medical profession—would establish if they were to aim correctly at preservation [τῶν σωθῆναι]. Would it not be victory and power over enemies, and in the case of doctors and their assistants the provision of health to bodies? ...

⁴ For responses to the suggestion that Alcinous was a Stoic, see Dillon (1993) p. xii and Annas (1997) p. 25 n.9.

What about a city? If someone were plainly ignorant of the goal at which the statesman must look, would he, first of all, deserve the title of ruler, and, secondly, would he be able to preserve [s-zein] that thing whose goal he doesn't understand in the least? (961e8-962b2)

Generals, doctors, and statesmen aim at the preservation of the objects in their care: armies, bodies, and cities, respectively. To accomplish their aim, they must correctly identify a subsidiary goal. For generals, it is victory and power over enemies. For doctors and their assistants, it is providing health to bodies. For a statesman, we learn shortly that it is developing the virtue of the citizens.⁵ Hence, the virtue of the citizens contributes to the preservation of the city. That the citizens' virtue contributes to the good of a larger entity does not entail that such virtue is not intrinsically good. Indeed, a person's virtue is the only condition that makes other goods beneficial for that person, including health (631b-d, 660e ff.). Rather, it means that the statesman, from his point of view, is primarily interested in the preservation of the city and considers the citizen's virtue as necessary to the good condition of a larger whole.

What is preservation for a city? One might think that a city is preserved if its inhabitants persist in the same geographical location. It is possible that Plato thinks that this is necessary for a city's preservation, for a mass exodus caused by factors such as defeat and enslavement by an outside force, or such as a drastic change in the physical

⁵ 963a ff. At 963e it is clear that the Athenian has the virtue of individual souls in mind. Otherwise we might be tempted to think the Athenian means the virtue of the city as a whole.

environment, would seem to end a city's existence. Plato is concerned both for the city's ability to repel attack and for its physical environment. The physical environment should be able to support enough industry to satisfy the basic needs of citizens, but not so much that conditions of luxury result and the citizens begin to care more for wealth than for virtue. As for military preparation, Plato thinks that conflict with external forces can be avoided if the citizens have enough military might to defend their city and to come to the aid of allies, but not if the citizens are so military-minded and aggressive that other cities suspect that they are planning an offensive. If the city is militarily weak, it tends to invite the aggression of expansionist neighbors. If its posture is too aggressive, it invites others' hostility and aggression. It must be well-trained militarily, but must not suffer from greed for other cities' possessions.

These conditions are important for a city's preservation, but Plato is most concerned for a city's internal condition, especially its unity. As we shall see, Plato thinks that human nature is selfish and tends to disrupt the city's unity. Unless the passions of human nature are controlled by intelligence or wisdom, they will force individuals to pursue money, pleasure, power, and glory, and to neglect the common good. If left unchecked, human nature would cause competing factions to arise in the city—especially between rich and poor for the ability to use state power to further the faction's ends. That is, groups would form to pursue their own goals and would undermine the collective pursuit of the city's interest. At the extreme, such groups would fight each other and civil war would erupt. Internal fighting and conflict work against the city's preservation, so Plato takes measures to discourage faction. First, he tries to educate citizens to be more

concerned for the common good than for what they might deem to be their personal good. This involves developing in the citizens a concern for, and true beliefs about, what is just, fine, and good, and also involves promoting a sense of friendship or camaraderie among the citizens. We will discuss these conditions below. Second, just in case the tendencies of human nature prove intractable, Plato distributes power over various offices in a way such that no one can exempt himself or herself from the law's requirements without censure. The law, moreover, is designed such that the good of one citizen or group of citizens is never favored over the good of another citizen or group. Plato tries with these measures to produce greater unity among the citizens by encouraging them all to adopt a certain conception of the common good and by discouraging human nature's tendency to pursue goals that compete with that good.

To further understand what Plato means by preservation, we might consider other translations of the word. The Greek word is $\sigma\upsilon\theta\rho\epsilon\alpha$. In addition to "preservation," it can also be rendered as "deliverance" or "salvation," connoting escape from danger or security against destructive forces.⁶ The connotations fit Plato's analogies. The statesman should seek to save or deliver the city from destructive forces just as a doctor should seek to save a body from disease or as a general should seek to deliver an army from its enemies. How well-preserved a city is, then, depends on how free it is of factors that tend to undermine it. If factions are growing and causing citizens to subscribe to goals that conflict with the common good, or if the military is becoming too weak or too

⁶ Bury translates $\sigma\upsilon\theta\rho\epsilon\alpha$ at 962a1 as "salvation" (1926, ad loc.), Pangle as "salvation" (1980, ad loc.), Saunders as "to preserve" (1975, ad loc.), and Taylor as "salvation" (1934, ad loc.).

aggressive, then the city's preservation is in doubt. If, on the other hand, the citizens are committed to the common good and the military is strong but restrained, the city's chances of preservation are increased.

Whether a statesman can preserve a city would seem to depend on whether he knows what the city is. To help fix ideas for the treatment of key passages below, I offer the following hypothesis concerning the city's identity. In the interpretation of Alcinous above, I suggested that the citizens constitute the city as its parts. That, however, cannot be the full account of the city's identity. Individual citizens come to be and pass away, but the city remains. We might then identify the city with its structure—the structure of roles that the citizens as a group should occupy. The preservation of this structure would not depend on any particular individual occupying any particular role, but on how well the citizens who do occupy the city's roles execute their duties. The number of roles, and their different rights and responsibilities, would be determined by the city's laws. At the general level, the laws tell citizens that their function is the pursuit of virtue, and they try to educate the citizens in what virtue requires. At a more specific level, the laws tell the citizens how to execute particular offices, and how to select citizens to fill those offices. It is clear that Plato thinks the levels are connected, for he often emphasizes that city officials should be selected on the basis of their virtue, that is, on how far they have acquired temperance, courage, justice, and wisdom. Functioning well in a specific civic role, then, requires substantial progress in human virtue. To summarize, the citizens are the city's parts insofar as they have civic functions (whether general or specific), and the city's preservation depends on the virtuous execution of those functions.

Since the city's structure is determined by its laws, there is additional significance to the Athenian's concern that the laws be stable (797a9): if the laws do not persist, then neither does the city. Stability of the laws requires that the citizens be accustomed to obeying them (793d3). It helps too if citizens understand the principles and values underlying their habits, for then they can justify the laws to themselves and others, and thus gain confidence in the habits with which they have been raised. Also, widespread obedience to, and understanding of, the laws works to eliminate faction from the city as citizens converge on the passions and beliefs that the laws endorse. Plato thinks that the value judgments embodied in the laws are true, and so thinks that coming to understand and comply with the laws develops the citizens' virtue. The virtue of the citizens, then, tends both to make the laws stable and to preserve the city.

Before proceeding to the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*, we might note that Plato is not unusual in his concern for stability. Hobbes, for example, desired constitutional stability for the sake of peace and argued that attempting to change from one constitution to another—such as from a democracy to a monarchy—would risk plunging the community into a war of all against all. Today concern for stability is prominent in the work of John Rawls. His concern is not with the stability of laws or constitutions, though, but with the stability of the principles that order such institutions. Rawls argues that in democratic societies allowing their citizens to have different views about the good life, a conception of the principles of justice is stable only if those with different but reasonable views about the good life can agree on that conception, and only if the citizens raised under institutions ordered by that conception acquire a sense of justice such that

they generally comply with their institutions.⁷ The stability of a conception of justice depends, that is, on whether it can be the subject of such consensus and on whether its institutions can enjoy such compliance. Without a conception that is stable in this way, the citizens of a pluralistic society are left to advance their interests without a framework of commonly-held moral principles.

Nor is concern for stability unique to philosophers. Consider, for example, President Václav Havel's remarks to the Parliament and Senate of the Czech Republic on December 9, 1997. He argues that his country needs more robust public institutions—what he calls civil society:

That means a society that makes room for the richest possible self-structuring and the richest possible participation in public life. In this sense, civil society is important for two reasons: in the first place it enables people to be themselves in all their dimensions, which includes being social creatures who desire, in thousands of ways, to participate in the life of the community in which they live.

In the second place, it functions as a genuine guarantee of political stability. The more developed all the organs, institutions, and instruments of civil society are, the more resistant that society will be to political upheavals or reversals. (1998, p. 45)

Havel offers two reasons to improve public institutions: improving the citizens' lives and guaranteeing political stability. Plato also thinks that institutions should improve

⁷ Rawls (1993) p. 141.

citizens' lives, understood as developing their virtue, and should contribute to the political stability, understood as the preservation of the city's structure. Plato values the citizens' virtue for its own sake as well as for the sake of the city's preservation. Havel, on the other hand, does not say that improving the citizens' lives is good for the sake of political stability. This difference detracts little from the general similarity between the two views, however. Perhaps Plato's point of view, at least generally considered, is not all that provincial. Let's now consider the details.

1.3 THE *REPUBLIC* AND *STATESMAN*

Alcinous says that the statesman aims at the city's unanimity and harmony. Plato thinks that these are necessary for the city's preservation because the development of factions tends to undermine stability. In the *Republic*, Socrates goes so far as to say that none of the non-ideal cities around Kallipolis is sufficiently unified to be called *a* city. Rather, "each is two cities warring with each other—one of the poor and one of the rich, and in each of those there are many more" (422e9-423a2). Socrates explains that the poor, the rich, and whatever subgroups their might be among them wish to control the money, power, and even the members of the other groups (423a). That is, each group has a conception of its interests which conflicts with the conceptions that other groups have of their own interests. Socrates implies, then, that a city—to be one city—must have citizens who all hold the same conception of the common good.

Social unity removes internal conflict, but how is unity produced? Socrates offers two accounts. In Book IV, he says that each citizen “ought to attend to the one job for which he is naturally suited so that each citizen, by concentrating on the one thing that is his own, may become not many but one, and in this way the whole city may naturally become one and not many” (423d3-6).⁸ The “doing of one’s own” is what is later identified as justice in the city (433b4). Hence, a city is unified because it is just, and it is just because the citizens do only those jobs for which they are best suited. Let’s call this the Civic Virtue principle:

CV: A city is unified because each citizen performs only the job for which he or she is best suited.

In the *Republic*, being civically just, i.e., doing one’s job qua citizen, does not entail being personally just. This is true unless one’s civic role is ruling. Only in properly functioning rulers do civic justice and personal justice coincide. This is because rulership is the only civic role that requires a correct valuation of virtue, i.e., valuing it for its own sake. Other citizens may value virtue, but only because it conduces to a conventional good such as money or honor. This feature of the *Republic* will change in the *Laws*, for in the *Laws* civic justice requires personal justice. Functioning well as a citizen—whether ruler or ruled—there requires a correct valuation of virtue.

⁸ Socrates is here speaking of the non-guardians. Later, however, it is clear that the principle of specialization applies to every citizen (433a ff.).

How does CV explain the city's unity? CV requires only that citizens keep to their specified tasks, and this seems insufficient to explain what holds a city together. The answer must lie in the reciprocity of the virtues. In particular, if justice is present in the city in virtue of each citizen "doing his own," then temperance is also present.

Temperance, Socrates says, "makes the weakest, the strongest, and those in the middle sing the same song together" and is the same as "this unanimity, this harmony among the naturally worse and better as to which should rule in the city" (432a2-9). Hence, CV entails the city's temperance, and temperance unifies the city by involving an agreement among the citizens as to who should rule. The citizens can agree on this without agreeing for the same reasons, however. Some may like the rule of philosophers because it allows them to pursue money, others because it allows them to pursue honor, etc. This particular agreement, in other words, does not entail agreement among all of the citizens' value judgments.

In *Republic V*, Socrates offers a different explanation of the city's unity. He says the greatest evil for a city is that which "rends the city apart and makes it many instead of one," while the greatest good—that at which the lawgiver should aim—is what "binds the city together and makes it one" (462a2-b2). Thus far, Book V sounds the same as Book IV. Instead of appealing to civic justice, though, in Book V Socrates says, "The sharing of both pleasure and pain binds a city together when, as far as possible, all of the citizens are pleased and pained in a similar way at the same gains and losses" (462b4-6). Let's call this the Uniform Affections principle:

UA: A city is unified because all citizens are pleased and pained by the same things.

In contrast to uniform pleasures and pains, Socrates says that the “privatization” (fid€vsiw) of pleasure and pain, that is, the condition in which different individuals are pleased and pained by different things, dissolves a city (462b8). To avoid this, Socrates says that the citizens should use the words “mine” and “not mine” about the same things. As for what the citizens together should call “mine” and “not mine,” though, Socrates claims that having women and children in common causes the sharing of pleasure and pain and thus unites the city (464a-b). We should observe, however, that this institution exists only among the guardians. The workers have their own wives and children. Because the workers would seem to be partial to their own families, they would seem not to share the pleasures and pains of the other citizens in the manner required by UA. Hence, UA explains the unity of the guardian class, but not the unity of Kallipolis as a whole.

For CV and UA both to explain a city’s unity, the city must be such that the citizens can all perform their civic functions and still be unanimous in their pleasures and pains. The compatibility of the two principles would be helped if civic functions should encourage citizens to value the common good over what they might deem to be in their personal interest. If civic functions permit citizens to be partial to themselves and their families while thinking that personal interest can compete with the common good, then the unanimity of pleasures and pains required for UA would almost certainly not occur. As we leave the *Republic*, then, we are looking for a city in which the civic functions

encourage the citizens to identify with the common good where that involves being pleased by what promotes it and pained by what undermines it.

Like the *Republic*, civic unity is emphasized in the *Statesman*, but unlike the *Republic*, CV is nowhere invoked as the unifying factor. Rather, Plato adopts a principle similar to UA. In the dialogue's closing section (305e8-311c8), the Eleatic Visitor says that some citizens have characters tending towards courage, others towards temperance.⁹ The subsequent discussion makes clear that the Eleatic Stranger does not have the fully-developed virtues of courage and temperance in mind (cf. 309e6). Rather, he is considering two broad categories of different and sometimes competing character types. Some people are lively and energetic, others are restrained and withdrawn. The character types conflict because in some circumstances liveliness and speed are good, while calmness and restraint are bad. In other circumstances, the reverse is true. Hence, the Visitor says that the two character types are “allotted war and conflict [*polem̃an dialaxoÊsaw st̃asin*], nor do we find them mixed with each other in any relevant activities” (307c4-6). The courageous conflict with the temperate because, as the Visitor explains, “the affinity they have for their own kind makes them praise certain things as familiar and their own, while they fault as foreign the things liked by the other sort of

⁹ Bobonich (1995b) discusses in detail the ethical psychology of this passage. Much of his treatment assumes that the differences between courageous and temperate states of character, and between the desires of courageous and temperate people, “are explained by a difference in judgments of goodness” (p. 314). Although I agree that these states and desires imply different judgments of goodness, the causal arrow in this passage seems to me to point in the other direction: a person's character type (energetic or withdrawn, e.g.) determines her judgments of the good.

person. In this way they establish a great hatred towards each other about many things” (307d1-4). If the conflict is extensive enough, it will undermine the city.

Contrary to what we might expect, the conflict threatens the city not with civil war but with external war. The threat arises in two ways depending on which sort of person comes to power. When the temperate rule, they tend to influence the city’s younger generation in such a way that it becomes weak militarily and thus incapable of resisting the aggression of the city’s enemies. When the courageous rule, their enthusiasm for military life creates a military fervor in the city that tends to initiate conflicts with other cities which end in the city’s destruction or enslavement (307e-308a).

To prevent the city from becoming either too inattentive or too zealous about military affairs, the Visitor says that neither the temperate nor the courageous should be allowed to lead the city to either extreme. To prevent this, the Visitor suggests that the citizens be joined together with two kinds of bond: divine and human. The divine bond is the joint possession by the citizens of entrenched true beliefs concerning things fine, just, good, and their opposites. This, the Visitor says, harmonizes the immortal part of a citizen’s soul with the immortal parts of the other citizens (309c). The human bond, on the other hand, harmonizes the mortal part and is produced by forcing the courageous and the temperate to intermarry, thereby impeding the development of either extreme in the next generation. The Visitor does not say exactly what the human bond is, however. We are left with only the suggestion that it involves having a character that is both courageous and temperate (311a). Perhaps the idea is that individuals in the next generation will not be drawn to only courageous things, or to only temperate things, and so will not

contribute to a temperamental imbalance in the city. Both bonds, however, are clearly intended to prevent diverging value judgments among the citizens.

Near the dialogue's end, the Visitor says, "This is the entirety of the weaver-king's single task: never to allow the characters of the temperate and the courageous to stand apart, but to mix them together by means of unanimity in beliefs and valuations [imodoj€aiw ka< tima>w ka< étim€aiw ka< dÒjaiw], and by pledging their children to each other in marriage" (310e7-11). This summarizes the principle that unifies the city of the *Statesman*. Let's call it the Divine and Human Bonds principle:

DHB: A city is unified because all citizens have the same firm true beliefs about things fine, just, and good, and their characters partake of both courage and temperance.

Like UA, this principle emphasizes uniformity of mental states across the citizens. Unlike UA, however, DHB requires that the uniformity of the citizens consist of more than likes and dislikes which can become entrenched through unreflective habituation in pleasures and pains. The uniformity of DHB consists primarily in the sameness of value judgments—judgments located in the immortal part of the soul. Although pleasure and pain are not mentioned in this passage,¹⁰ it is reasonable to suppose that a citizen's pleasures and pains would affect these judgments, especially if the mortal soul's affections entail valuations that conflict with those of the statesman. That Plato separates

¹⁰ Pleasure is mentioned before this passage at 286d5 and 288c3.

the divine bond from the human bond indicates, however, that the source of the citizens' true judgments is not the mortal part of the soul. Rather, the source is "the statesman, the good lawgiver [tÚn dØ politikÚn kaç tÚn égayÚn nomoy°thn]," who uses law as an educational tool (309d1, cf. 310a2).

What makes the statesman the source of true evaluative judgments? The answer appears in an earlier discussion. The statesman knows what is good for the city and the citizens (296d7 ff.). He is like a ship captain who always does what is in the interest of his ship and crew. In a city, this involves "always administering justly, with intelligence and skill [metå noË kaç t°xnhw], to those in the city" (297a7-b1). The Visitor then says, as per usual in Plato, that the multitude cannot acquire this knowledge (§pistÆmhn). In making this claim, however, he again identifies the relevant knowledge with the ability to order a city intelligently (metå noË, 297b8-9). Therefore, having intelligence or, as the Visitor elsewhere says, having wisdom (frÕnhsiw) is necessary for true statesmanship (294a8). Intelligence must be what makes the statesman a source of true value judgments. If so, intelligence must involve knowledge of things about which ordinary citizens have only firm true belief: the fine, the just, and the good. This enables the statesman to make laws which, when he is absent, no one can justifiably infringe (300c).

Necessary for the city's unity, then, is agreement among the citizens on the edicts that the statesman delivers in person, or on the judgments embodied in the laws he leaves behind. The consensus makes the city stable not only by removing the threat of internal conflict, but by preventing the city from becoming too militant or too feeble and thus susceptible to external conflict. As in the *Republic*, stability results from the city's unity.

Unlike the *Republic*, however, the city's unity results from a unanimity of beliefs and affections among the citizens. This unanimity is possible because the citizens are not divided into different classes with institutions that shape their affections in disparate ways. With the absence of the *Republic*'s peculiar sort of class differentiation, Plato invokes DHB—a principle similar to UA—to explain the city's unity in the *Statesman*. Could he also invoke CV? Unfortunately, there is little information about the function of the citizen in the *Statesman*, so we are uncertain as to whether Plato has now reconciled the two explanatory principles of the *Republic*. The *Laws* will remove the doubt.

1.4 THE LAWS

In the course of examining the *Republic* and *Statesman* for their explanations of political unity, we have noticed several claims about the aims of the statesman or lawgiver. They agree with Alcinous' claim that the statesman aims at a unanimous and harmonious city. Alcinous also says, however, that the statesman aims at the city's happiness. Plato suggests the same. In *Republic IV*, for example, Socrates says the goal is to construct a city that as a whole is as happy as possible (420b, 421b-c). Also, at the end of the *Statesman*, the Visitor says that the statesman's job is complete when the city is as happy as it can be (311c5-7). Does unity suffice for happiness?

With this question in mind, we turn to the *Laws*. In examining the *Laws* on the purpose of institutions, I shall argue that Plato has a coherent view of lawgiver's aim, one

which ties together the explanatory principles we have noticed in the *Republic* and *Statesman*. These principles include:

- (a) each and every citizen performs his or her civic function (from CV);
- (b) the citizens are pleased and pained by the same things (from UA);
- (c) the citizens share the same firm true evaluative beliefs (from DHB);
- (d) the citizens are both courageous and temperate (from DHB).

Because citizens acquire their true evaluative beliefs from the lawgiver's prescriptions, we should indicate what makes the lawgiver an authority:

- (e) intelligence is the source of correct laws and conventions.

Plato thinks that principles (a)-(d) each contribute to the city's unity. It is unclear at this point whether he considers each to be necessary for unity, or whether he considers (a)-(d) or a proper subset to be jointly sufficient for unity. If we find that Plato stresses each principle in the *Laws*, however, this would be a strong sign that he considers each to be necessary. Principle (e) indicates what makes the institutions of a unified city correct. On the one hand, it explains why converging on the true value judgments of the lawgiver conduces to the virtue of the citizens. For the citizens to become virtuous, they must acquire true beliefs about what is just, fine, and good, and they must train their affections so as to be pleased and pained in accordance with these beliefs. The intelligence of the

lawgiver, or the intelligence embodied in his laws, is the primary source of the citizens' true beliefs. On the other hand, principle (e) helps explain what makes the unified city happy. For Plato, the happy city, like the happy individual, is ruled by intelligence. Moreover, as we shall see below, Plato seems to think that only the city ruled by intelligence is capable of unity. Intelligence prescribes a correct conception of the common good. Without this, Plato thinks that factions with incorrect conceptions arise, and that this undermines the city's unity. If we discover in the *Laws* a coherent view of (a)-(e), we will have shown the importance of the *Laws* in Plato's political philosophy. We will also be in a better position to evaluate his political thought as a whole—an impossible task if we read only the *Republic* and *Statesman*.

The *Laws* is a large work, and the Athenian's comments relevant to (a)-(e) are spread throughout. To capture the view behind these principles, we will first examine the opening exchange of the *Laws* for what is said regarding (a)-(e) and the purpose of institutions. We will then examine the rest of the *Laws* for ideas on civic function and civic friendship, and on how they contribute to a city's preservation. We will then return to the question of unity's sufficiency for happiness and answer the question of what, according to Plato, ultimately justifies institutions.

In the dialogue's opening exchange (624a1-632d7), the Athenian Visitor asks his Cretan and Spartan traveling partners about the origin of their law codes. Crete's comes from Zeus, Sparta's from Apollo, they say. The Athenian then asks about the purpose of the Cretan laws regarding common meals, exercise, and weaponry (625c6-8). He knows that Dorians value military prowess, so he likely picks this question in order to find out

whether his partners fit the stereotype. Clinias confirms the Athenian's suspicion: "All of these practices are adapted for war," he says, "and the lawgiver, it seems to me, arranged everything with this in mind" (625d7-e2). Clinias thus claims to understand Zeus' aim for Cretan institutions—a position that Plato surely thinks should be taken only with great care. "I think," continues Clinias,

that the lawgiver condemned the lack of intelligence [ênoian] of the many because they do not understand that throughout life there is always for everyone an unremitting war against all cities. ... What most people call 'peace' is only a name. The fact is that according to nature there is always a truceless war of each city against every other city. ... The lawgiver delivered the laws to be guarded according to these principles on grounds that nothing is beneficial—neither possessions nor institutions—if one does not conquer in war. For all of the goods of the conquered go to the conquerors. (625e5-626b4)

Clinias thinks that cities are naturally at war with each other. On this view, the Athenian infers, the well-ordered city (τὸν εὖ πολιτευόμενον πόλιν) aims at defeating other cities in war (626b7-c2). Thus, the goal of political institutions is the defeat of external foes. Can this be right?

To press the point, the Athenian finds that Clinias also thinks his view applies to the city's sub-units: the village, the household, and the individual. Each is well-off insofar as it can defeat other villages, households, and individuals (626c6-13). But then the

Athenian asks about an individual's relation to himself. Is each his own enemy? Clinias embraces this idea enthusiastically and declares that "this, right here, is the first and best of all victories—the victory of oneself over oneself" (626e2-3). The implication is that each has within himself a better and a worse part. "Victory over oneself" is the defeat of the worse by the better part, and "being defeated by oneself" is the victory of the worse over the better. The same applies to households, villages, and cities. Hence, the Athenian gets Clinias to agree that a city is good when its better, just citizens conquer the worse, unjust citizens (627b). To bring harmony to a city, then, one should aim more at victory over unjust citizens than at defeat of the city's external enemies (628a9-b4).

Some modes of victory are better than others, though. With respect to internal conflicts, peace can result from three different outcomes: (1) the worse citizens are destroyed and the better rule themselves, (2) the worse citizens become the willing subjects of the better citizens, and (3) the better and the worse citizens are reconciled to each other and become friends (627e-628c). The Athenian does not explain the difference between (2) and (3), but we can reasonably guess that being a willing subject requires only that one view the ruler's commands as advantageous to oneself. This is possible without the ruler and the subject sharing the same beliefs about the good—which may be what (3) requires. Whatever the difference, the interlocutors agree that the best ruler is one who reconciles the divided parties rather than destroying the unjust. The Athenian says that aiming at this sort of peace—the sort accompanied by friendship and affection among the citizens¹¹—is proper to the true statesman and lawgiver.

¹¹ φίλα and φιλοφροῦν (628b8, c11).

The emphasis on peace with friendship suggests that, in the *Laws*, producing a unified city is still one of Plato's chief concerns. But as the opening section has it, removing internal conflict does not require that differences among the citizens be overcome through education of their beliefs and affections. Execution will also serve. If removing the unruly element produces peace, then peace does not exhaust Plato's political ideal. Friendship and reconciliation are also part of the ideal, but for a reason we have not yet discovered. Why is a reconciled body of citizens so obviously preferable to one that has eliminated its more vicious members?

A possible hint appears in the same passage. The Athenian says that

with respect to the happiness of a city or a private citizen [pòlevw eÈdaimonéan μ ka< fidi≈tou], someone who thinks this way, that is, someone who considers first and only the matters of foreign warfare, would never become a correct statesman or a lawgiver in the strict sense [nomoy°thw ékribÆw] if he did not legislate the things of war for the sake of peace rather than the things of peace for the sake of war. (628d4-e1)

This is the reverse of Clinias' earlier position. With the reversal, however, the Athenian introduces the happiness of the city and the happiness of the citizen as important considerations in the lawgiver's deliberations. Indeed, the thought seems to be that peace somehow fits into a larger aim of producing happy citizens in a happy city. In the context, the happy city is the one characterized by civic friendship, that is, by citizens

who share in a conception of the common good and who are aware of each other's commitment to the common good. Perhaps, then, the reconciled body of citizens is preferable because happiness requires friendship, so peace without friendship falls short of happiness. But why, we might ask, is friendship among previously or potentially conflicting citizens superior to friendship among citizens too just to ever conflict? One answer might be that killing most of one's citizens is too repugnant a means for accomplishing any political end. That repugnance would explain Clinias' rejection of this alternative, and perhaps the Athenian's, too. There is another answer, however, which draws upon ideas to be elaborated in chapter 3, and which provides a link to Plato's ideal for human beings. It is that every individual should try to become like God, and we become like God by participating in God's activity. God's activity, moreover, is bringing appropriate order to the universe and its parts. For a lawgiver, the part of the universe to be appropriately ordered is the city. To order the city, the lawgiver must order the souls of the citizens. By killing most citizens without even trying to order their souls, the lawgiver fails to imitate God in the way appropriate for a lawgiver. Hence, the lawgiver should try to order the souls of all citizens so that they share the same true beliefs about the common good and thus become friendly to each other. I do not offer this as an answer suggested by something in the opening of exchange of the *Laws*, but as an explanation grounded in Plato's philosophy.

As the opening exchange comes to a close, the Athenian says, "Crete's Zeus-taught lawgiver, and any lawgiver worth anything, will always make laws by considering nothing other than the greatest virtue" (630c2-4). The greatest virtue is justice,

temperance, courage, and wisdom together (630a8-b1). According to Clinias, Cretan law aims at excellence in external war. But this sort of excellence requires courage alone. Excellence in civil war, by contrast, requires more. “One would never be trustworthy and sound in civil conflicts without complete virtue,” the Athenian counters (630b2-3). A lawgiver instructed by Zeus would not make something of lesser importance—e.g., courage alone—the target of his laws. Rather, he would surely hold that compliance with correct laws provides a city and its citizens with complete virtue and with conventional goods such as health, beauty, strength, and wealth (631b3 ff.). Having these goods suffices for happiness (631b5-6).¹² Hence, the Athenian again suggests that happiness of city and citizen belong to the lawgiver’s aim. As we have seen, the *Republic* and *Statesman*, too, suggest that the lawgiver aims at the city’s happiness. Moreover, the *Laws* passage emphasizes that compliance with correct laws makes the citizens temperate and courageous (as well as just and wise). This is principle (d) of the unified city—another early sign that the political concerns of the *Laws* are continuous with those of earlier dialogues.

What of the other principles of political unity? The Athenian says that intelligence (which in the *Laws* is the same as wisdom) is the leader of the virtues, and is that which should guide social policy (631d2-6; cf. 632c4-d1). This suggests that the policies derive their authority from intelligence: principle (e). The Athenian also says that the laws

¹² Although this passage suggests that conventional goods such as health, beauty, strength, and wealth are necessary for happiness, the suggestion is overturned in Book II where the Athenian claims that even in the absence of these goods, virtue suffices for happiness (660e ff.). See chapter 2 for discussion.

should be used to praise and blame correctly the pleasures, pains, and other passions of the citizens. To do this, the lawgiver must teach and define what is fine and what is not with respect to these passions (631d6-632b1). This suggests that the citizens should acquire the same beliefs about what is fine and what is not, and should order their pleasures, pains, and other passions accordingly: principles (b) and (c). Only principle (a) is left—the one concerning a citizen’s civic function. Before determining whether this principle is also present in the *Laws*, though, we should note how emphatically the opening of the *Laws* hits upon the explanatory principles already invoked in the *Republic* and *Statesman*. If the *Laws* continues to invoke these principles and contains a coherent view of the relations among them—a view that avoids the *Republic*’s tension between (a) and (b) and the *Statesman*’s omission of (a)—there is reason to take the *Laws* as an advance over Plato’s earlier political works.

1.5 CITIZENSHIP

Does the citizen’s performance of his or her civic function contribute to the city’s unity in the *Laws*? To see whether it does, we should first determine what the citizen’s function or task is, and then consider how the performance of this task contributes to the city’s unity.

Towards the end of Book I, the interlocutors are discussing the goals and methods of education. The Athenian argues that the games a child plays should be chosen so as to enhance job performance as an adult: future farmers or homebuilders should play games

and use toys that imitate the activities and tools of real farmers and homebuilders.¹³ This suggests that some citizens may need to understand farming or construction in addition to their other duties. Even so, the Athenian demands that the city's children not imitate retail traders and shipping merchants.¹⁴ Rather, he says genuine education consists in “the education from childhood with respect to virtue—an education that makes one desire and long to become a perfect citizen, one knowing how to rule and be ruled with justice” (643e4-6). The suggestion, then, is that a citizen's virtue involves knowing how to rule and be ruled justly, and that this requires avoiding commercial affairs.

Compare this remark with the claims of Books VII, VIII, and XI on citizenship. In Book XI, a law is established that only resident aliens or visitors may engage in retail trade (920b). The reason is that “majority of human beings ... want without measure when they are in need, and when they can make measured profits, choose instead to profit insatiably” (918d4-6). Poverty can cause one to be shameless for the sake of money, and wealth can cause one to care less about the condition of one's soul. Hence, the Athenian says that retail trade “should be assigned to those human beings whose corruption would not cause great damage to the city,” i.e. non-citizens (919c4-6). This sounds callous towards non-citizens, and it certainly implies that they are less central to the city's functioning than are citizens. It reveals, however, that Plato thinks care and attention are necessary for performing well the citizen's task, and that his principal concern is with the

¹³ Cp. *Lg.* 797a.

¹⁴ The Athenian claims that the citizen's sole task is the pursuit of virtue (see below), but this does not prevent him from thinking that some citizens will be farmers, shepherds, and beekeepers (842d). See Morrow (1960) p. 152 for discussion.

good of the city. Although non-citizens help to supply the city with material conditions necessary for its existence, they do not participate in its government—whether due to lack of time, lack of virtue, or both.¹⁵ Plato seems to infer from this that non-citizens do not constitute the city as some of its parts. Hence, he claims that their corruption would cause comparatively insignificant damage to the city.

Book VIII makes clear that any skill—not just the citizen’s—requires the exclusive attention of its practitioner to be exercised properly. The Athenian says,

First, no resident [citizen] nor any household slave of a resident [citizen] is to practice the technical crafts. For a citizen has enough of a craft already, one needing a great deal of practice and study: achieving and preserving the common order of the city—no mere side-pursuit. Among human beings, there is virtually no nature capable of practicing two skills or pursuits with precision, nor even anyone capable of practicing one while supervising someone else practicing another. Hence, this must be a fundamental rule in the city from the start: No one should be both a carpenter and a smith, nor should a carpenter supervise others who are smiths instead of attending to his own craft. ... Rather, each individual in the city should have one craft and gain from it his living. This law the city-regulators shall labor to preserve, and they shall reproach and dishonor the resident [citizen] if ever he should turn to any craft other than the pursuit of virtue until they restore him to his proper course. (846d2-847a7)

¹⁵ Cp. Aristotle, *Politics* VII.8, on the difference between a city’s parts and its necessary conditions.

Some want to make money by supervising a group of skilled laborers, but the Athenian's deep suspicion of the desire for wealth, and his belief that humans are incapable of performing well more than one skill, lead to the demand that individual citizens and slaves specialize in only one craft. The citizen's craft is here described in two ways: the preservation of the common order and the pursuit of virtue. It seems reasonable to suppose that the common order is the city's structure. Hence, we see that in the *Laws*, as in the *Republic*, Plato connects the performance of civic function to the preservation of the city. Hence, principle (a), just as the other principles of a unified city, is prominent in the *Laws*. Unlike the *Republic*, however, the citizens are not divided into classes according to functional ability. Every citizen is to pursue virtue and to preserve the common order. However, we need more detail in order to understand this conception of citizenship and how it contributes to the city's unity. Are the pursuit of virtue and the preservation of common order the same thing or do they somehow constitute different aspects of the same thing? How do they both relate to knowledge of ruling and being ruled justly? The relations among these features of citizenship need articulation before we see how civic function contributes to political unity.

We can begin with Book VII's comments on civic function. The relevant passage appears after the Athenian asks what is left for citizens to do after turning the tasks of farming and technical labor over to non-citizens. He says that life should not consist entirely of common meals where citizens spend their days like cattle (807a-b). Rather,

We say that a task that is neither the smallest nor the sorriest remains for [the citizens], but that is the greatest of all tasks assigned by just law. Compared to the life without leisure for any other task—the one striving for victory at the Pythian or Olympian games—the life concerned with the attentive pursuit of virtue in body and soul is twice as busy (or even more than twice), and is most correctly called “life.” There must be no hobby involving the other tasks as an obstacle to the proper provision of exercise and diet to the body, and of study and habits to the soul. Every night and every day is not nearly enough for one engaged in this task to win from them what is both complete and sufficient [tÚ t°leÒn te kaç flkanÚn]. (807c1-d5)

The comment about completeness and sufficiency suggests Aristotle’s formal criteria on the good that makes one happy.¹⁶ It also suggests the *Philebus*’ similar but less well-known criteria (20d).¹⁷ There is no mention of happiness here, however. The completeness and sufficiency in this passage pertain to excellence of body and soul: proper diet and exercise, study and habits are what the pursuit of virtue requires. However, training twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week is not enough to produce virtue. This suggests that no one ever achieves virtue completely. If virtue suffices for happiness, as I think it does in the *Laws*, then this passage is obviously relevant to Plato’s

¹⁶ Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7.

¹⁷ Although happiness is not mentioned at *Philebus* 20d, Socrates and Protarchus agree at the dialogue’s start that they are looking for the good that makes human life happy (11d).

eudaimonism.¹⁸ For our purposes, though, what is important is Plato's conception of the citizen's task: citizens should pursue virtue exclusively, but without hope of complete success—at least in this lifetime.

The lawgiver aims at the preservation and happiness of the city, and he tries to achieve this through unifying the city. How does a citizen's performance of his civic function contribute to that end? As we have seen, one specification of the citizen's function is the preservation of the common order. We supposed that the common order is the city's structure. The city's structure, we can further suppose, is the structure of roles that citizens occupy in the city. There are many different kinds of roles, however. These are the city's many different offices, including positions in the Assembly and Council, positions in the courts, positions in the schools, the markets, the fields, etc. How does the proper execution of these different offices contribute to the city's unity? And how, moreover, is the just execution of one's office compatible with the exclusive pursuit of virtue?

Aristotle wrestled with similar issues. We might understand how to interpret Plato's several claims about civic virtue if we consider Aristotle's treatment of the topic. In *Politics* III.4, Aristotle says that the task common to all citizens is the preservation of the

¹⁸ Does the claim that the citizens should be physically fit undermine the thesis that virtue suffices for happiness? Virtue is usually construed as excellence of the soul, but the Athenian here seems to place as much emphasis on excellence of the body. In response, we should note that for Plato an individual is identical to his or her immortal soul (959b3-4). Personal excellence, then, is primarily—if not exclusively—excellence of soul. It is doubtful, therefore, that bodily excellence constitutes part of an individual's good. It is more likely that Plato conceives of bodily excellence as instrumental to excellence of soul, i.e., a disciplined soul is unlikely to reside in an undisciplined body.

constitution. This sounds similar to Plato's claim that citizens should preserve the common order if we understand that order to be the city's institutional structure.

Aristotle says that individual citizens, however, will have more specific tasks defined by their more specialized roles in the city. A citizen is virtuous qua citizen if and only if he performs a specific task well and thereby contributes to the preservation of the constitution. Aristotle is able to conclude from this that, while on a general level all citizens have the same virtue, i.e., preserving well their city's constitution, their more specific tasks differ, and so what civic virtue is for each differs. He does not say exactly what these different specific tasks are, but his analogies to the relations between soul and body, reason and appetite, husband and wife, master and slave, a leader of a chorus and his assistants strongly suggest that his conception of specific civic tasks is divided into the broad categories of ruling and being ruled, i.e., between citizens who participate in government and citizens who only obey. Governing well and obeying well both contribute to the city's preservation. Hence, there is more than one kind of specific civic virtue. Moreover, Aristotle argues that since there are different kinds of constitution, and a citizen's virtue is relative to the constitution that structures his activities, it follows once again that there are different kinds of civic virtue. By contrast, there is only one kind of good man. Aristotle concludes that civic virtue and human virtue are not the same.

If human virtue and civic virtue are in fact different, Plato has a problem. He says several times in the *Laws* that the citizen's task is the pursuit of virtue. The assumption running throughout the *Laws* is that virtue includes courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom. This is human virtue. Thus, civic virtue, as Plato here conceives of it, is human

virtue. As we have seen, no one actually becomes fully virtuous in this lifetime, but all citizens are to pursue the ideal. Effort and fortune may enable some citizens to become more virtuous than others, but differences in degree are not differences in kind. For Plato, becoming a good citizen and becoming a good human being are one and the same process.

So who is right? To see that Plato might have the better account, consider the difficulties that arise for Aristotle in the second half of *Politics* III.4. He writes that “the ability to rule and be ruled is praised, and the virtue of a reputable citizen is the ability both to rule and be ruled well” (1277a25-29). In the first half of the chapter, Aristotle treats rulers and followers as mutually exclusive groups and holds that a good ruler, like a good man, must be wise (frònimon), but that a good citizen need not be (1277a14-16).¹⁹ In the second half, however, the good citizen knows both how to rule and how to follow. If Aristotle is still maintaining in the second half that ruling well requires wisdom, and if the good citizen knows how to rule well, then the good citizen must be wise. But it was wisdom that was supposed to mark the good man and the good ruler from the ordinary citizen. If the ordinary citizen must participate in government in order to be virtuous qua citizen, then the citizen must be virtuous qua human being also—or must at least have understanding that approximates that of the perfectly good human being. Aristotle never draws this inference, no doubt because it conflicts with the first half’s position that civic and human virtue are quite different. That they are the same or very similar, however, is implicit in the positions to which he commits himself in the second half of chapter 4, and

¹⁹ *Pol.* 1277a14-16; cf. 1277b25-30.

is supported by the famous conclusion of *Politics* III.1: “We say that one who has the right to participate in deliberative and judicial office is thereby a citizen of that city” (1275b18-20). Aristotle includes the right to rule in the essence of citizenship. If ruling well requires wisdom, then there is a problem for Aristotle’s account of the difference between the good man and the good citizen. Moreover, if ruling well is part of civic virtue, then civic virtue will not vary as constitutions vary. Only those who participate in ruling can exercise civic virtue, and the number of these citizens will be few if the number of rulers in a constitution is few. Connecting citizenship to the right to participate in government allows the number of citizens to change as constitutions change while allowing the essence of civic virtue to remain the same.

Instead of trying to keep civic virtue and human virtue apart, Plato tries to bring them together. To do so, however, he must conceive of human virtue in such a way that the understanding necessary for “preserving the common order” or “ruling and being ruled justly” constitutes part, if not all, of the understanding necessary for human virtue. Otherwise, the exclusive pursuit of human virtue would seem to take a course different from the pursuit of civic virtue.

Plato makes civic virtue and human virtue continuous, I suggest, by means of the rule of law. Correct law embodies true evaluative beliefs and so can be used as a standard for both personal excellence and civic administration. Consider the passage in Book I where the Athenian uses a puppet metaphor to explain the forces at work in the human soul (644b6-645c6). Within each soul are two “opposed and stupid counselors,” pleasure and pain. They are like opposing cords or wires that pull us toward different actions.

Expectation of pleasure draws us toward one action while expectation of pain draws toward another. In addition to pleasure, pain, and our beliefs about what will bring them on, the soul also contains a *logismos* or calculation of which course is better or worse, and this calculation is called “law” when it becomes the common opinion of a city. When the supple golden cord of calculation conflicts with the hard iron pull of pleasure and pain, the Athenian says we should always side with calculation. Hence,

[A]n individual must grasp a true account of these pulling forces in himself and live in accordance with it. A city, too, should receive an account of these things either from one of the gods or from someone with knowledge, establish it as law, and guide its internal relations and its relations with other cities accordingly. (645b4-8)

In Magnesia, the citizens’ true beliefs about what actions are right or wrong come from their acquaintance with the laws. Citizens become good human beings only when they gain some understanding of the value judgments contained in the laws. This involves more than strictly obeying the written law. As the Athenian says in Book VII,

When the laws and the whole constitution have been thus written down, the praise of the citizen distinguished in virtue is not complete when one says that he is good who serves the laws best and is exceptionally obedient. A more complete statement is that he is good who throughout his life obeys what the lawgiver legislates, praises, and blames in his writings. This statement is most correct for praise of a citizen. The

lawgiver truly must write not only the laws, but, in addition to the laws and interwoven with them, he must write what things seem to him fine or not fine [~sa kalâ aÈt“ doke> ka< mØ kalâ e%onai]. The top citizen heeds these things no less than those enforced by legal penalties. (822e4-823a6)

The good citizen is therefore alert to the value judgments that the lawgiver has mixed with the written laws, and lives in accordance both with these judgments and with the laws themselves.

In addition to understanding of the lawgiver’s value judgments, virtue requires that the pull of pleasure and pain come into line with the pull of calculation, i.e., that one’s affections be in accord with correct value judgments. In Book II, the Athenian suggests that this happens through proper childhood education:

I say that pleasure and pain are the first infantile perceptions in children, and that it is in these that virtue and vice first arise in a soul. The one in whom wisdom and firm true beliefs [frÒnhsin dç ka< élhye>w dÒjaw bebaœouw] arise even in old age is fortunate. Perfect [t°leow], though, is a human being who has these things and all of the goods they entail. ... Pleasure and liking, pain and hatred, arise correctly in the souls of those not yet able to understand the reason, but when they do grasp the reason [tÚn lÒgon], their passions agree with reason [t“ lÒgf] that they have been correctly trained by means of the appropriate habits. This complete agreement is virtue. (653a5-b)

Virtue, then, is complete agreement of one's passions with reason. The passions have pleasure and pain as their basis, and learning to guide the desire for pleasure and the fear of pain as reason requires is what makes us temperate and courageous. However, to see how courage and temperance contribute to the city's unity, that is, to see how principle (d) is further developed in the *Laws*, we need a better grasp of reason's relation to the citizen's task, and of the task's relation to the city.

To begin, we notice in this passage both that reason is the standard to which the passions must conform, and that virtue requires the individual to grasp what "the reason" is. Given the role that reason here has in relation to pleasure and pain, I suggest that it is the same as the calculation of right and wrong mentioned in the puppet passage of Book I. The thought, then, is that the lawgiver puts this calculation into the law code where the citizens can use it to understand the justification of their habits. Moreover, the passage suggests that true evaluative beliefs, when firmly established, are somehow similar to wisdom. In Book I, wisdom (or the same thing, intelligence) is mentioned as the leading part of virtue (631b-d), but in Book III, the Athenian emends his view. In a reference back to the Book I statement, the Athenian says that when setting up the laws "one should look to the whole [of virtue], especially to the first part, the leader of virtue as a whole, and this is wisdom and intelligence and belief [frÒnhsiw ... ka< noËw ka< dÒja], with love and desire following them" (688b1-4). If belief is an aspect of the leading part of virtue, then the demand that the citizens become virtuous is more realistic. Wisdom and intelligence involve the highest possible levels of understanding—presumably

knowledge of the good, the fine, and the just, and of how to apply them to the world of becoming. Only some members of the Nocturnal Council progress this far (cf. 963a-966b). True belief, on the other hand, is available to all citizens educated as the law prescribes. Hence, if the educational system is functioning properly, it is possible for the citizens all to share the same firm true evaluative beliefs: principle (c). Having these beliefs may not suffice for wisdom, but it contributes to the soul's progress toward perfect virtue, and it helps to unify the city by producing unanimous value judgments in the citizens.

But how does improving in human virtue make one a better citizen? Citizenship, as we have seen, involves knowing how to rule and be ruled with justice. In Magnesia, the laws rule; no one may exempt himself or herself from their requirements.²⁰ Learning to be a good citizen, therefore, involves learning to be ruled by the law. This aspect of civic virtue fits nicely with the role of law in the acquisition of human virtue. As for participation in civic affairs, the Athenian says that top offices should be filled by those proven to be the most obedient to the laws (715c). Many of the city's laws specify the duties of the various offices in the city, so the other aspect of civic virtue—"knowing how to rule with justice"—can naturally be understood to involve the careful execution of official duties in accordance with the law. This ability, too, would contribute to the development of human virtue. City officials need to grasp not only the content of the laws they should enforce, but also, it would seem, something of the rationale behind the laws in order to apply them properly to individual cases. Hence, becoming a better

²⁰ Cf. 714a, 715d. This does not entail that the laws may not be changed, however.

citizen makes one's understanding of the judgments embodied in the laws more perspicuous and subtle—just what one would want if the performance of civic function requires the development of human virtue.

This brings together the citizen's pursuit of virtue and his knowledge of ruling and being ruled with justice. The citizen's task is also to preserve the common order, however. It is easy to see how ruling and being ruled justly, as we have just described it, would conduce to the preservation of the laws. If, as we can reasonably assume, the laws determine the structure of the common order, then such ruling and being ruled will conduce to the preservation of the common order. We now have some conception of the unity in Plato's different descriptions of the citizen's task.

The unity goes deeper, however. At the end of the *Laws*, in the passage with which this chapter began, the Athenian seems to identify order in the soul with preservation of the laws. He argues that for Magnesia to be complete, there must be a means to the perfect and everlasting preservation of the city. So, just as the third Fate, Atropos or "The Unchangeable," binds irreversibly the work of the other two Fates, so an irreversible power "must provide to a city and its constitution not only health and preservation in bodies, but lawfulness in souls [ἐὐνομίαν ἢ τὰ νόμιμα], or, to put it another way, the preservation of the laws" (960d1-4). This power is the Nocturnal Council. It anchors the city by applying knowledge of virtue, the fine, and the good to the city's institutions and thus to the citizen's souls. What we notice here, though, is the near identification of *eunomia* in the citizens' souls with the preservation of the laws. I have rendered *eunomia* as "lawfulness," but more literally it means "well-orderedness."

The suggestion, then, is that the laws and the city are preserved when the souls of citizens are ordered by the laws.

Plato rarely uses the term *eunomia*,²¹ but he commonly links lawfulness with virtue. In the *Gorgias*, for example, Socrates says, “‘Convention’ and ‘law’ are the names for the arrangements and orderings of the soul that produce lawful and orderly people. These are justice and temperance” (504d1-3). Outside Plato, *eunomia* is an important political concept, but its connections to order in the soul are less pronounced. For example, Solon, two centuries before Plato, praises *eunomia* but says nothing of arrangements in the soul:

My heart [yumÚw] urges me to teach the Athenians this: lawlessness [dusnom€h] supplies the city with the greatest number of evils, but lawfulness [eÈnom€h] produces all things well-ordered and proper, and often puts shackles on the unjust; it smoothes down the rough parts, puts a stop to insolence, impairs wanton violence, and dries up budding flowers of recklessness. It corrects unjust verdicts, softens arrogant deeds, puts a stop to works of sedition, and ends the bitterness of troublesome strife. From it come all things proper and wise among human beings. (fr. 4.30-9, West 1992)

Solon thus credits *eunomia* with curbing social evils and providing human goods. He also condemns various vices, though he does not analyze them as Plato does in terms of conflict between misguided passions and the requirements of correct law. Another

²¹ *Hp.Ma.* 284d5, *R.* 425a3, *Sph.* 216b3, *Lg.* 713e2.

example is the famous *eunomia* of Sparta. Traditionally thought to have originated with the laws of Lycurgus, Spartan *eunomia* was admired by later generations of Greeks for its long-term stability.²² *Eunomia* is also the title of a work in which Tyrtaeus, Sparta's patron poet, reminds the Spartans that the advice of their kings and elders takes precedence over that of the populace.²³ Given this tradition in Doric political culture, Plato's appeal to *eunomia* in the *Laws* would likely have resonated with the Athenian's interlocutors and the Dorian inhabitants of Magnesia. For Plato, though, *eunomia* is not a property of the city but a property of the citizens' souls. By embedding the law in their souls, Plato is able to tie the preservation of the laws to the virtue of the citizens so as to make the two indistinct. If, as I have been suggesting, the laws determine the common order or basic structure of the city, then preserving the laws through developing the virtue of the citizens also helps to preserve the city.²⁴

1.6 UNANIMITY AND FRIENDSHIP

²² Cf. Herodotus I.65-6.

²³ Fr. 4, West 1992.

²⁴ Stalley (1983) claims that "there is no obvious reason why a person who is virtuous [because reason orders his passions] should necessarily be an obedient citizen, prepared to act as a reliable cog in the machinery of state" (p. 39). Given what we have now seen regarding the relation of virtue to the rule of law, it would seem that Plato's response would be that what good law requires is what reason requires. So if good law requires one to perform the duties of a specific office, then that is what virtue requires. Moreover, the virtuous performance of civic duties not only preserves order in one's soul, it also contributes to the preservation of the city itself.

Civic friendship and unanimity of affections also contribute to the city's unity and thus to its preservation. In the *Republic*, the city's unity required that the citizens be pleased and pained by the same things. This idea seems to be implicit in the *Laws*' opening exchange with its suggestions about both unanimity and friendship, but we should see how it is more fully developed in the rest of the *Laws*. We will then be positioned to see how friendship and principle (b) fit with the other principles and thus understand how Plato explains the unity of a good city.

We recall that, in the *Republic*, UA failed to explain the unity, and hence the stability, of the city because it required the common possession of women and children, and because this institution was found among only a small number of citizens. We might be surprised to learn, then, that Plato affirms the value of this institution in the *Laws*. The Athenian says that it belongs to the constitution "first in virtue" (739b3):

A city and a constitution is first and those laws are best wherever the old saying applies to an entire city to the maximal extent: it is said that truly the things of friends are common. This condition, whether it exists somewhere now or will ever exist, that is, where women are in common, children are in common, and all material possessions are in common; and by every device what is called "personal" is entirely rooted out of every corner of life, and so far as possible the things that are by nature personal have somehow or other been made common, for example, eyes and ears and hands should seem to see and hear and act in common; and to the maximal extent everyone should praise and blame in unison because they are pleased and pained by

the same things [ἴσα τὰ νόμιμα καὶ ἄνευ νόμου]; and so far as possible the laws make the city one. No one will ever establish another criterion that is better or more correct for the unsurpassed excellence of laws. Either gods or more than one offspring of the gods inhabit such a city, rejoicing as they live this way. Hence, one should not look elsewhere for a model constitution, but, holding to this one, one should strenuously seek what comes as close to it as possible. (739b8-e3; cp. 807b)

This is a clear statement of the principle (b). Unlike the *Republic's* statement of (b), though, this one makes clear that a city with unanimous pleasures and pains could be inhabited by only divine beings. Only gods or children of the gods could have all things in common and thereby be completely unified in their affections.

What hope is there for human cities? The passage calls for human beings to strive for the ideal constitution, but our selfish passions block us from having all things in common. Plato expresses some hope for humans, though, in Book IV's myth of Cronos (713b-714a). The Athenian says that long ago Cronos set daimons over us and that under this more divine species we lived in peace and without faction as we revered the daimons' good and just laws. The point of the myth, says the Athenian, is that for us "there is no means of preservation" (714a7-8) unless we "manage our households and cities by obeying publicly and privately as much of the immortal as there is in us and by calling the distribution of intelligence 'law'" (713e8-714a2). The Athenian's interpretation of

the myth strongly suggests that intelligence is divine and that we should obey laws that embody intelligence.

Another passage is also relevant. In Book IX, the Athenian explains that we must be ruled by law or else live as the most savage of animals:

The reason is that there is no human being whose nature develops enough both to know what things are politically advantageous for human beings and, upon having this knowledge, to be constantly able and willing to do what is best. For, first, it is difficult to understand that, according to the true art of politics, one must care for what is common and not for what is personal—for the common binds cities together, but the personal tears them apart—and that it benefits both what is common and what is personal that the common rather than the personal be established well. Second, even if one should advance enough in the art to know that these things are so by nature, but afterwards should rule a city as an unchecked autocrat, one would never be able to maintain this conviction and spend one's life supporting a leading role for what is common in the city while making the personal follow the common. Mortal nature will always urge one to greediness and personal affairs [pleonejēan ka< fidiopragēan], and, because mortal nature flees pain and pursues pleasure in an irrational manner, it will prefer both of these to what is better and more just. (875a1-c2)

Two things stand out here. First, the art of politics—the skill possessed by the statesman and the good lawgiver—gives priority to what is common over what is personal. This is because the common unites the city and the personal divides it. This aspect of the political art fits well with what Plato maintains elsewhere, since he often claims that the absence of internal conflict is necessary for the city’s unity and preservation. Second, mortal nature (τὸ θνητὸν φύσιν) is singled out as the cause of personal greed. In the Cronos myth, this was called “human nature” (ἑνὶ φύσει, 713c6) and, as with mortal nature here, was associated with unjust pleasures and desires (714a; cf. 732e). Plato’s hope for human cities, then, is that mortal nature will be ruled by whatever of the immortal there may be in us. Elsewhere, the Athenian identifies intelligence with God (897b1-2) and, as in Book IV, associates good law with intelligence (957c6-7). The thought, then, is that divine rule is necessary to prevent mortal nature from dividing cities into contending factions, and that the relevant divinity is intelligence. We can reasonably infer that intelligence involves knowledge of virtue, goodness, and beauty, for this knowledge is required of members of the Nocturnal Council. As the most virtuous citizens in Magnesia, they are likely to have all of the virtues, including the leading virtue of intelligence (963c-968a). It would seem, then, that this knowledge makes its possessor a source of correct political prescriptions. If divine rule cannot come in the form of personal rule by an individual—whether a god, a daimon, or some divine human being (cf. 951b)—then intelligence as embodied in the law must do. As in the *Statesman*, then, intelligence is the source of correct laws: principle (e). Whether intelligence rules in personal or impersonal form, human nature must yield to it for cities to be unified.

However, if having everything in common is impossible for human communities, then human nature will never yield completely to the divine. Plato must consequently find non-ideal arrangements to ensure that progress is made toward the ideal. Such progress is important, for Plato does not recognize as single and unified those constitutions in which one group rules at the expense of another (cf. 712b-715d). How, then, does he propose to establish a unified, though non-ideal, constitution? Here are a few of the Athenian's recommendations:

- Household affairs, like public affairs, should be regulated by the laws. For example, parents should not be allowed to raise their children however they please, for children belong more to the city than to their parents (804d). Moreover, education for virtue should begin in the womb (789a ff.). Pregnant women should be required to take walks because the movement calms the infant's soul and thereby accustoms it to overcoming fear—the first stage of courage. Properly managing household affairs such as this tends to make a city “stable [mònima]” (793d3) and discourages diversity of taste and character among the citizens, which diversity is “bad for cities” (788b4).
- Every neighborhood in the city should have a sanctuary for a god, daimon, or hero where, at appointed times of the year, its citizens “may greet each other at the sacrifices and become friendly and known to each other, since there is no greater good for a city than that its citizens become acquainted” (738d7-e2).

- Citizens should participate in appropriate songs and dances at various holidays so that “one and the same city and its citizens, by living in the same way, experiencing the same pleasures, and becoming as similar to each other as possible, may live well and happily” (816c7-d2).
- Citizens should participate in supervised drinking parties designed not only to strengthen their resistance to pleasures that cause shamelessness and injustice, but also to increase friendship among the participants (cf. 640c-d, 671e-672a).
- Limits should be placed on wealth and poverty. Ideally, property levels would be equal among the citizens, but Magnesia’s colonists will arrive with unequal amounts. Plato allows some inequality to persist, but requires that each citizen have the moveable property necessary to maintain his assigned plot, and forbids any citizen from having more than four times this amount. “We say that in a city that is to avoid the greatest affliction, which is more correctly called ‘disintegration’ than ‘civil war’ [diāstasin μ stāsīn], there must be neither severe poverty nor <excessive> wealth among any group of citizens since both conditions produce both results” (744d3-7; cf. 736c-737d, 919b-c).

- Both democratic and non-democratic methods should be used to appoint members of the Council and many other public officials (756b-759b).²⁵ The democratic method of appointment is the lot. The non-democratic method involves nominating and electing citizens by considering their virtue. The two methods are based on two different conceptions of equality: proportional and arithmetic. Proportional equality requires that citizens of equal virtue be honored equally and that more virtuous citizens be given preference for public office. Arithmetic equality treats all citizens as equally worthy of public office and does not discriminate with respect to virtue. The Athenian suggests that only the judgment of Zeus is capable of seeing precisely what proportional equality requires, but he nonetheless identifies it with “political justice,” “natural equality,” and “correct justice,” and says that cities and individuals should strive for it. One must use “the equality of the lot,” though, to avoid the discontent of the many and the disruption such discontent can cause. Hence, the Athenian says that both election and lot should be used “for the sake of mutual friendship” and “so that all may be as like-minded as possible” (759b4-7).

Some of these measures are designed to produce unanimity of affections in the citizens, while others seek reconciliation and solidarity where the seemingly necessary evil of

²⁵ The structure of penalties for not participating in the election of Council members encourages the participation of wealthier citizens. It is unclear whether Plato thinks that the poorer citizens are less competent electors, or whether he is merely allowing for their relative lack of leisure.

class difference might otherwise lead to the avoidable evil of class conflict. Underlying them all, however, is the thought that citizens should commit themselves to the common good and should not be distracted by human nature's inclination to seek selfish gain and glory.

With these thoughts in the background, we can approach an otherwise puzzling claim in Book III. There the Athenian says that “a city should be free and sound-minded [ἄμφορα] and a friend to itself, and the lawgiver should legislate with an eye to these things” (693b3-5). Thus far we have taken preservation to be the aim. Does this claim displace preservation with freedom, friendship, and sound-mindedness? Two things suggest that it does not. First, only a page earlier, the Athenian credits mixed government with “preserving” Sparta (692a8). He says, “The God has now shown what kind of government had to exist then, and has to exist now, to bring about a rule that is especially stable [τὸν μὲν ἔσαν μάλιστα ἐρχόμενον]” (692b). This refers to a government in which power is spread over several different offices—such as Sparta's two kings, its Council, and its Ephors—instead of a government in which power is concentrated in the hands of one king (691d-692b). Second, the Athenian asserts that “whenever we say that one should look to being temperate, or to wisdom or friendship, these are not different goals but one and the same, and let it not disturb us if many other such words appear” (693c2-5). The lawgiver's aim is single, but different words pick out different aspects of it. This suggests, I think, that Plato is working with a general conception of a unified, stable city, and that all of these items—freedom, temperance, wisdom, friendship—have a place in it.

Moreover, the above claims appear during a critical discussion of government in historical Sparta, and so are relevant to our inquiry concerning the unification of the city in non-ideal conditions. The discussion presents Sparta as having obtained a balance between the extreme despotism of Persia and the extreme freedom of Athens (683c-702b). The Athenian says that, under Cyrus and Darius, Persia possessed a measured amount of both slavery and freedom. Since the Persian king ruled as a despot, he would have been tempted to make his subjects more slave than free. Under Cyrus, however,

because rulers gave a share of freedom to the ruled and led them toward equality, the soldiers were more friendly toward their generals and more eager to involve themselves in dangers. And if someone among them was wise and was able to give counsel, since the king was not jealous but allowed for outspokenness and valued those able to advise on a matter, the ability to share one's thinking in the open became a common asset, and everything improved for them on account of freedom and friendship and sharing of intelligence. (694a6-b6)

Similarly, Darius introduced equality, friendship, and a sense of community among the Persians, and won over the popular army with money and gifts (695c-d). But the sons of Cyrus and, later, the son of Darius were raised in luxury and became used to satisfying their undisciplined desires. In this condition, they loved gold and silver and neglected the excellences of soul and body. Consequently, the sons became disastrous rulers:

[B]y excessively removing freedom from the populace [toË dÆmou] and by introducing more despotism than is fitting, they destroyed what is friendly and common in the city. When this is ruined, the rulers no longer make policy on behalf of the ruled and the populace, but for the sake of their own rule. If they think they will gain just a little more each time, they lay waste to cities and friendly nations, destroying them with fire, and thus they hate and are hated with enmity and without mercy. Whenever they come to need the people to fight on their behalf, they discover that there is no common will to run risks and fight with enthusiasm. (697c8-e1)

The disintegration of Persia is therefore blamed on the corruption of the rulers, which corruption involved a desire for personal enrichment over a concern for the ruled.

The alleged decadence of Athens, on the other hand, was caused by excessive freedom. The Athenian says that, at the time of the Persian invasions, the Athenians were bound together by reverence for their laws and by fear of the Persians. “Because of all these things, a strong friendship arose among us,” he says (698c2-3; 699c). Later, though, the poets introduced innovations in music and pandered to the pleasures of audiences, no matter whether those audiences was good or bad (700d-e). Hence,

Lawlessness and everyone’s belief that he is wise in everything began with our music, and freedom followed. For they became fearless, thinking they knew what was what, and the freedom from fear produced shamelessness. For audacity can induce one not

to be afraid of what a better person thinks, and this is all but the base shamelessness that is caused by an excessively bold freedom. (701a5-b3)

Questioning traditional standards in music set the Athenians on a course that led to questioning the authority of their rulers, their parents, their laws, and ultimately the gods (701b-c). The Athenian does not say how this extreme freedom undermined the friendship and intelligence of the city, but we can guess that he thinks the questioning of traditional institutions caused a loss of loyalty to the city, and that this led the citizens to feel less solidarity with each other. Moreover, the presumption of knowledge would have led to neglect of the intelligence embodied in the institutions they questioned. The corruption of Athens, then, is blamed a widespread conceit of wisdom in which the pleasures of the vicious were given as much weight as those of the virtuous (700d-701a).

The Athenian says that excessive despotism ruined Persia, and that excessive freedom ruined Athens, but we can now see what the Athenian took to be their common failing: the loss of intelligence as the standard of right. The loss of intelligence is the city's loss of sound-mindedness or wisdom, and it results in the disintegration of the city (or nation, in the case of Persia) as individuals pursue private interests over common interests. In Persia this happened when the king ceased to take counsel from the wise and began to rule for personal profit. In Athens it happened when the people judged themselves wiser than the laws. The Athenian does not say explicitly that these conditions harmed the stability of Persia or Athens, but it is certainly implied, and the fall of both Athens and

Persia to Macedonia within two decades of Plato's death may indicate that their stability as sovereign states had indeed been undermined by the conditions criticized by Plato.

To close this section, consider the Athenian's admonition concerning the love of self as contained in the great prelude of Magnesia's law code:

The greatest of all evils for most human beings is something innate to their souls, and each person, because he is lenient towards himself, contrives no way of escaping it. It is the evil indicated when people say that every human being is dear to himself and that it is correct that things should be this way. The truth, however, is that for each person the cause of all faults on each occasion is the person's excessive love of self. For the lover is blind concerning the beloved: he judges poorly what things are just and good and fine [τὰ δέκαια καὶ τὰ ἐγαυὰ καὶ τὰ καλά] because he thinks he must always value what is his own over what is true. For a man who is to be great must cherish neither himself nor his own things, but the things that are just—whether they happen to be his own deeds or those of someone else. (731d6-732a4)

Citizens should not love themselves, but should love justice, goodness, and beauty wherever they find it. If all citizens acquire true evaluative beliefs through obeying and studying the law, then this love will be a source of social unity. The unity is not the sort of reconciliation found in Persia—the sort caused by the rulers giving gifts and granting a measure of freedom to the ruled. This reconciliation rests on the assumption that the ruled are loyal for selfish reasons. Rather, the friendship of Magnesians should be rooted

in the love of things valued by virtue. In Book VIII, the Athenian explains that ordinary usage suggests there are two kinds of friendship (837a-b). One is the affection that people similar and equal “in respect of virtue [kat’ éretØn]” have for each other. The other, which he says is opposite in kind, is the affection of the needy for the rich. The latter was the sort cultivated by Cyrus and Darius, and it is the target of Magnesia’s compromise between proportional and arithmetic equality and its limitation of wealth and poverty levels. The former, though, is the kind that Magnesians ought ideally to have for each other. All Magnesians are to pursue virtue as their civic function and to honor each other in respect of their virtue when public offices are filled. We now see that civic virtue among the citizens entails the presence of the best form of civic friendship—a form that does not depend on the personal exchange of favors, but on the joint possession of true beliefs about the value of justice, beauty, and goodness.

1.7 STABILITY AND HAPPINESS

There is an important objection to preservation or stability as the purpose of institutions. It is that bad states can be as stable as good states, yet only the latter are justified. Plato anticipates this objection at a crucial point in the *Laws*. At the beginning of Book IV, the interlocutors are discussing the physical conditions surrounding the site of the prospective colony. The Athenian registers his concern that the presence of a harbor (nine miles away!) will enable the things associated with it—naval and commercial

affairs in particular—to adversely affect the character of the citizens. He explains his concern as follows:

But since we are now paying attention to the virtue of the constitution, we are examining the nature of the country and the arrangement of the laws—not because we, like the many, think that it is most honorable for human beings merely to be preserved and to exist. Rather, we think it most honorable for human beings to become as good as possible and to remain as such for as long as they live. (707d1-5)

This distinguishes mere life from virtuous life. It is the latter about which the interlocutors are concerned as they arrange the institutions of Magnesia. Mere stability, understood as mere existence, is not, therefore, the statesman’s aim. Moreover, the passage draws a connection between the virtue of a constitution and the virtue of the citizens in that constitution: concern for the one implies concern for the other. This echoes the earlier discussion of civic function where we saw that lawfulness in the city is identical to virtue in the souls of the citizens.

In Book VI, we find an even stronger statement regarding virtue in the city (770b-771a). It appears when the Athenian realizes that some details of Magnesia’s legislation must be turned over to those chosen as her law-guardians (nomofêlakaw), and hence that the law-guardians must sometimes function also as lawgivers (nomoyotaw, 770a8-9). As lawgivers, he says they must aim at the virtue of the citizens. If the city should become such that it makes its citizens into worse human beings, the guardians should leave the

city in exile or let the city be destroyed. Hence, attempting to preserve a city entrenched in vice could not be the good lawgiver's goal.

Does this conflict with Plato's emphasis on preservation and stability elsewhere? There are two reasons to think not. First, it is doubtful that Plato thinks that a bad city is stable. A bad city is one in which human nature dominates as the ruling force. In Book IV, the Athenian says that a city or an individual dominated by the pleasures and desires of human nature "tramples the laws under its feet," and that for such cities or individuals there is "no means of preservation" (714a4-6). There are two ways to interpret this remark. On the one hand, this sort of city may be incapable of preservation because the motives of human nature divide the city into many competing factions, thereby ending the city's existence as a unified entity. On the other hand, the city may be incapable of preservation because civil wars destroy its citizens or make the city ripe for takeover by a more unified and disciplined city or nation. Whichever, aiming at the city's preservation entails a concern for the city's virtue, i.e., its unification under the rule of intelligence.

The second reason is implicit in Plato's use of key terms. Plato sometimes mentions his concern for a city's preservation alongside a concern for its happiness as if they were the same thing. Consider two examples from Book III. In the first, the interlocutors are said to have inquired into political history and mythology in order to discover "what kind of laws preserve the things that are preserved and what kind destroy the things that are destroyed, and what sort of institutional adjustments would make a city happy" (683b2-4). In the second, the Athenian says that "it seems a city destined to be preserved and happy so far as humanly possible must distribute honors and dishonors correctly"

(697a10-b2). The correct distribution gives the most honor to goods of the soul, then to goods of the body, then to wealth and property (697b). Plato's association of preservation with happiness suggests that for him a city is well-preserved if and only if it is happy. The happy city honors virtue above all else. It is the opposite of the bad city in which virtue is displaced by desire for personal wealth.²⁶ It would seem, then, that a city's virtue, i.e., the rule of the citizens' passions by intelligent law, is necessary for a city to achieve the state that Plato sometimes calls "preservation," sometimes "happiness," and sometimes both.

We can now explain another puzzling remark, this time in Book VIII. The Athenian boldly says what a city, just as an individual human being, must do "to live well" (*zōon eû*, 829a1):

Those who live happily must first neither wrong themselves nor be wronged by others. Of these, the former is not very hard, but having the power not to be wronged is very hard, and it cannot be had completely unless one becomes completely good.

The same thing holds for a city: if it becomes good, its life is peaceful; but if it becomes bad, its life is full of external and internal war. (829a1-8)

The bad city is plagued by wars that ruin its stability and threaten its preservation. The good city, on the other hand, escapes both external and internal war, for its citizens do not fight each other, and they are both mentally and physically prepared to fight external

²⁶ See also 754d3-4 where preservation is associated with good fortune.

aggressors. (We recall that virtue of both soul and body is required of citizens, and that bodily training will be largely military in form. Cf. 829b ff.) Having the power not to be wronged seems an unreasonably high demand for the happiness of a city, but Plato was likely thinking of highly-trained cities such as Sparta which no one would dare attack when the troops were home. To wrong such a city would be to harm it where it counts, that is, to make it less virtuous or lawful.²⁷ The degree to which Magnesian education makes the bodies and the mortal natures of citizens conform with the demands of its intelligent law is the degree to which Magnesia has the relevant power to avoid being wronged by itself or others. It is also the degree to which the city is unified. Unity, then, would seem to suffice for a city's happiness.

The Athenian in many other places speaks of the city's happiness as the goal of good lawgiving and civic administration.²⁸ He also says, though, that "the presupposition of our laws was that citizens be as happy and as friendly to each other as possible" (743c5-6).²⁹ We might wonder whether there is a problem of priority here, that is, whether the citizens are for the sake of the city or the city for the sake of the citizens. The question's urgency is somewhat neutralized, however, when we recall the larger picture that Plato

²⁷ This is the political correlate of the Socratic dictum that the just man cannot be harmed. Cp. Stalley: "It is obvious to everyone that good men are sometimes the victims of injustice" (1983, p. 39).

²⁸ Cf. 628d5, 709c8, 710b7, 713b3, 718b4, 742d8, 781b6, 790b6, 806c6, 927b6, 945d3.

²⁹ Although this comment emphasizes the happiness of citizens, the lines that immediately follow highlight its emphasis on friendliness. Moreover, it is perfectly consistent to say that the laws aim at the citizens' happiness while holding that the lawgiver aims at the city's happiness when making such laws.

seems to be working with—a picture revealed at several points in our exposition thus far. According to it, the city's good and the citizen's good do not exist separately. Both goods involve the rule of intelligence. For citizens, this intelligence is embodied in the city's institutions. For the city, institutions are preserved if and only if their intelligence orders the citizens' souls. To think that the citizen's good could compete with the city's good is to assume mistakenly that citizens have reasons for action other than those dictated by their intelligent laws.

That said, the lawgiver is principally concerned with the city's good. This is revealed in virtue's requirement that citizen's value what is common over what is personal. There are other indications not yet discussed, however. Consider some of Magnesia's rules for women. In Book VI, the Athenian says that common meals for men "seemed to contribute greatly to the preservation" of Crete and Sparta (780b7-c1). He consequently requires that this institution continue in Magnesia, and says that if women should also share in the common meals, there would be at least double the benefit "to the city's happiness" (781b6; cf. 783b). In Book VII, the Athenian says that, because females are not educated equally with males, "almost every city is only half instead of double <of half>, and could become double with the same outlay and effort" (805a7-b1). Also, "if the female is allowed to live delicately and to spend money as she indulges in disorderly pursuits, while on the other hand the male is given careful supervision, scarcely half of the completely happy life is left for the city instead of double that amount" (806c4-7). The last remark is directed at the lawgiver (806c3-4). This indicates once again that the statesman or lawgiver aims principally at the happiness of the city: if only half of the

citizens are virtuous, then the city is only halfway happy. Caring correctly for the happiness of the city requires caring for the virtue of the citizens, but these passages suggest that the citizens' virtue is not the statesman's ultimate goal.

That is the statesman's point of view. Plato thinks there is another, more encompassing, point of view, however. This brings us to the justification of the lawgiver's aim: Why value the preservation and happiness of the city? An answer appears in Book X as the Athenian chastises the young atheist:

All things are systematically arranged by the one who cares for the universe with respect to the preservation and virtue of the whole [τὸν σὺνθρακὰ ἐρετὸν τῷ ἕλω], and each part, so far as it can, does and suffers what is fitting for it. To each of these parts, down to the least significant, rulers have been everlastingly appointed over their suffering and action—rulers that have produced an end [τὸ λῶν] for every last part. One of these—your part, stubborn one—yearns as it looks always toward the universe, although the part is microscopic. But it is this very thing that has escaped your notice: every creation [γένεσις] happens for the sake of the universe, in order that the life of the universe might have a happy existence. The universe is not generated for your sake, but you for the sake of it. For every doctor and every skilled artisan makes everything for the sake of a whole, and produces a part that strives for what is best in common, for the sake of a whole, and not a whole for the sake of a part. But you are irritated since you do not know how the condition of your affairs

that is best for the universe happens to be best for you, too, in accordance with the potential of your joint creation. (903b4-d3)

The happiness of the universe, then, is the ultimate goal. Contributing to that happiness is the purpose of individual lives. As the Athenian points out, making this contribution also constitutes the good of individuals. Virtue makes individuals happy, and the virtuous soul contributes to the preservation and virtue of the universe as an ordered part contributes to an ordered whole.

Does the happiness of the city fit into this picture? There is no mention here of the city's happiness, but based on this passage's ideas and on a Platonic conception of the statesman's craft, we can construct the following hypothesis. Every artisan, that is, anyone with a practical skill, aims at the good of a whole. To achieve this, the whole's parts must perform their functions well. The statesman has a practical skill and aims at the good of a particular kind of whole, namely, the city (cf. 902d; *Plt.* 305e). Citizens are parts of the city, so the statesman aims at their perfection as a means to achieving the perfection of the city. He accomplishes this by establishing and enforcing intelligent institutions. The statesman's whole is smaller than the entire universe, however, and constitutes only a part of it. Hence, it seems reasonable to infer that, while from the statesman's point of view the perfection of citizens and institutions is justified with

reference to the happiness of the city, their ultimate justification lies in the happiness of the universe.³⁰

1.8 CONCLUSION

Alcinous says that statesmanship aims to make a city good, happy, unanimous, and harmonious. Having examined the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and especially the *Laws*, we now see how and why Alcinous' interpretation is right. These are not four different goals, but merely different aspects of one and the same stable city. Its unanimity and harmony come from the citizens sharing, so far as is possible, the same affections and true evaluative beliefs. Where unanimity cannot be reached because of class differences, measures are taken to ensure that rich and poor remain friendly to each other. Moreover, the city is good because intelligence grounds its laws, and the laws rule in the souls of the citizens as they perform well their general and specific civic functions. Performing well requires at least substantial progress toward human virtue, and so entails that the citizens are learning to be both temperate and courageous as they learn to bring their pleasures

³⁰ This account contrasts with Bobonich's claim that "Plato holds that the ultimate end of all laws and social institutions is the production of the greatest possible happiness (eὐδαιμονία) for the citizens" (1991, p. 378). If the citizens are parts of the city, then the skilled statesman aims at their happiness as a means to the happiness of the city. How does Bobonich account for the many appeals to the happiness or preservation of the city in the *Laws*? He apparently interprets them as short-hand for appeals to the happiness of the citizens. For example, he glosses one appeal to the "greatest good for the city" (*Lg.* 664a3) with "i.e. it would bring about the greatest happiness for the citizens" (1991, p. 382). However, such an interpretation has difficulty accounting for Plato's concern for the city's unity, for unity is a property of a whole of which the citizens could only be parts.

and pains in line with reason. These factors explains how the city is unified and happy. Why aiming at the city's happiness is justified, however, can only be answered from a higher perspective—one that values the creation of ordered wholes as parts of larger ordered wholes. Good institutions may be justified with reference to the statesman's aim, but that aim is itself justified with reference to the good of the largest whole.

CHAPTER 2

VIRTUE AND CONVENTIONAL GOODS

2.1 VIRTUE AND VALUE

Health, wealth, physical beauty, strength, keen senses, life, pleasure, good reputation, and noble birth: the Stoics called them “indifferents.” Conventional goods are indifferent because their presence does not always benefit. Conversely, conventional evils are indifferent because their presence does not always harm. The only things the Stoics thought genuinely good or bad are virtue and vice, for virtue always benefits its possessor and vice always harms.¹ Thus, happiness is constituted by virtue alone and misery is constituted by vice alone.² If there were an ancient prize for virtue extremism, it would surely go to the Stoics.

Or should it go to Plato? More than one ancient Platonist thought so. Alcinous, for example, claims for Plato the view that “only the fine is good,” thereby using a Stoic slogan to describe Plato’s position on the value of virtue.³ Alcinous defends this attribution, along with the claim that virtue suffices for happiness, on grounds that Plato

¹ Diogenes Laertius VII.94, 101-104.

² Diogenes Laertius VII.89, 95-96.

³ *Didaskalikos* 180.39-40, 181.7 (Whittaker 1990). Cf. von Arnim (1903-5) III.29-37.

held it “in most of his works, but especially in the whole of the *Republic*” (*Didaskalikos* 181.7-9). He continues,

The one who has knowledge [of the primary good⁴] ... is most fortunate and most happy—not on account of the honors or rewards he will obtain when he is such, but even if he escapes everyone’s notice, or even if the so-called evils such as dishonor, exile, and death befall him. On the other hand, the one without this knowledge and in possession of all the conventional goods such as wealth, a great kingship, health of the body, physical stature, and good looks, is not a bit more happy because of them. (*Didaskalikos* 181.9-18)

Alcinous sounds like a Stoic. If this is the view of Plato’s dialogues, we can see why an ancient Platonist would contend that the Stoics were not the only champions of virtue around. Alcinous not only claims that virtue suffices for happiness and that virtue alone is good, but his conception of virtue—like that of the Stoics⁵—is highly intellectualized. Virtue is knowledge of the primary good, which Alcinous calls “God” or “intelligence.”⁶ Intelligent activity always causes good to come about, so having knowledge of God would seem to entail knowing how to order things for the best, especially one’s own life. The thought here is very close to the Stoic idea that the virtuous life is the one lived in

⁴ Cf. *Didaskalikos* 179.39-42.

⁵ Diogenes Laertius VII.90.

⁶ *Didaskalikos* 179.39-42.

accordance with nature, where that requires understanding the way that reason (“Zeus”) orders the world.⁷

In spite of these important similarities, Alcinous’ remarks leave open possible differences with the Stoics on the value of conventional goods and their contribution to happiness. While Alcinous denies that conventional goods make the vicious better off, he does not deny that conventional goods make the virtuous better off. If Plato thought that conventional goods make the virtuous happier, then his position is different from the hard line taken by the Stoics.

The issue is different with conventional evils. Alcinous says that the virtuous remain happy when conventional evils strike, but he does not say whether conventional evils make the vicious better or worse off. It might seem obvious that conventional evils would harm the vicious, but as we shall see, Plato claims that it is good for the vicious to suffer conventional evils. The Stoics, by contrast, might say that conventional evils, because separated from virtue, neither are neither good nor bad for the vicious. What grounds Plato’s distinctive position on the value of conventional goods and evils?

In this chapter I argue that Alcinous correctly attributes to Plato both the claim that virtue suffices for happiness (Sufficiency Thesis) and the claim that the value of conventional goods and evils depends on the virtue or vice of their possessor (Dependency Thesis). I shall go beyond Alcinous, however, to explain why Plato thinks that conventional goods and evils benefit or harm their possessors. This will require an examination of the contexts in which Plato makes his extraordinary claims about

⁷ Diogenes Laertius VII.88.

conventional goods and evils in the *Laws*. As we shall see, the *Laws* reveals a deep connection between Plato's ethical psychology and the value of virtue and conventional goods. In particular, the relation of intelligence to pleasure and pain is key to understanding Plato's position on this issue.

2.2 DEPENDENCY

Alcinous cites two texts as evidence of Plato's view on the comparative value of virtue and conventional goods appears. One is in the *Euthydemus*. We shall examine it shortly. The other is in *Laws I*—only six Stephanus pages into the 345-page dialogue. The early position of this key passage gives us reason to pause before accepting it as an authoritative statement of Plato's considered view; it is reasonable to suppose that the argument, and the understanding of the interlocutors, need more time to develop. Clinias and Megillus are military men whose views on the purpose of law and the state the Athenian finds incomplete and distorted. Clinias, for example, thinks that his Cretan institutions were established with a view to war, and that none of a person's possessions or practices would be beneficial unless one conquers in war. "On the other hand," Clinias explains, "all the goods of the conquered belong to the conquerors" (626b1-4). Thus, the state and its institutions get their value by allowing one to keep and acquire material or "external" goods.

The Athenian argues that the state should aim at peace, not war, and that the war-time virtue of courage so central to Spartan and Cretan educational efforts is only a part of the full virtue a person ought to have. Complete virtue includes justice, temperance, and wisdom in addition to courage (630a-b). This is what Lycurgus and Minos must have had in mind when they set up Spartan and Cretan law. Clinias and Megillus, the Athenian suggests, have misjudged the intentions of their founding lawgivers (630d-e).

The Athenian nonetheless sympathizes with his interlocutors' account of their institutions:

I thoroughly admire your attempt to explain the laws. It is correct to begin with virtue, saying that [Minos] established the laws for the sake of it. But when you claimed that he legislated by referring everything to a part of virtue, and the smallest part at that, you made clear to me that you were no longer speaking correctly, and that is why I have given the preceding argument. (631a2-8)

As readers, we can see why Plato would want to begin the *Laws* this way: before designing institutions for a future city, it is best to have at least a roughly correct understanding of virtue and of how virtue fits into the good lawgiver's overall aim. Indeed, Plato spends the first three books of the *Laws* sketching his views on virtue and describing institutions that assist in the acquisition of virtue—all before beginning to compose the law code's preamble. We can also see one of the reasons why Plato would want the likes of Clinias and Megillus as the Athenian's interlocutors: they have undergone the rigors of a military education and are thus experienced in subordinating their appetites and passions to their beliefs about the good. If the Athenian can improve those beliefs through an argument about virtue and its value, then Plato can use Clinias and Megillus as proxies for people with similar backgrounds, for example, the future citizens of Magnesia. Most of these citizens will be drawn from the populations of Crete

and Sparta. Arguments that Clinias and Megillus find persuasive should be persuasive to them also.⁸

After realizing that they might have misunderstood the point of their laws, Clinias and Megillus are inclined to hear the Athenian's view, which he gives as follows:

'O Stranger,' it should have been said, 'it is not in vain that the laws of Crete are so very famous of among all the Greeks. They are correct laws: those who use them achieve happiness, for they provide all good things. Goods are twofold: the human and the divine. The former depend on the divine goods, and if a city receives the greater goods, it acquires the lesser goods. If not, it is deprived of both. The lesser goods are those of which health is the leader, second beauty, third strength for running and for all other movements of the body, and fourth wealth—not blind but sharp-sighted, insofar as it follows wisdom. Wisdom [\leq frÒnhsiw] is first and takes the lead among the divine goods, second after intelligence [noËn]⁹ is a temperate disposition of soul, and from these mixed with courage comes the third, justice. Courage is fourth. All these goods are by nature ranked prior to the former goods, and this is the way the lawgiver ought to rank them. Next, the citizens should be told that the other imperatives directed at them look to these goods, and of these goods, the human look to the divine, and the divine to that which leads all things, intelligence [noËn].' (631b3-d6)

⁸ See chapter 4 for further discussion of Clinias and Megillus as proxy interlocutors for the citizens of Magnesia.

In reference to this bold passage, Alcinous says, “Of the things called ‘good’ by the many, for example, health, beauty, strength, wealth, and such, none is good by itself [kayāpaj] unless its use is linked to virtue.”¹⁰ Of contemporary scholars, Julia Annas (forthcoming) and Christopher Bobonich (1995a) also emphasize the Athenian’s claim that human goods depend on divine goods for their value. However, the justification of the thesis is not immediately apparent. Hence, Annas says that the Dependency Thesis “is bluntly stated, with no attempt at supporting argument” (typescript p. 16), and Bobonich says that it does not receive “any sort of justification in the *Laws*” (p. 118).

If we consider the exchange leading up to this passage, however, we see that the Athenian’s position is the development of views held by his interlocutors and should therefore seem reasonable to them. We have already noticed that Clinias holds a dependency thesis of another sort: victory in war is necessary for one’s possessions to be beneficial (626b1-3). We have also seen that the Athenian makes explicit this view’s emphasis on courage, for courage is necessary for victory in wars with other states. Thus, courage is necessary for being benefited by one’s possessions, according to the implicit beliefs of the interlocutors. Moreover, in the two pages preceding the Athenian’s statement, the Athenian argues that trustworthiness in civil war, as opposed to war with external enemies, requires complete virtue, and that such virtue is superior to courage alone. The idea here might be that trustworthiness in civil war requires loyalty to what

⁹ Reading, with the manuscripts and Stobaeus, νοῦν instead of νοῦ (Des Places).

¹⁰ *Didaskalikos* 180.9-16. Cf. *Grg.* 513e5-514a3.

one firmly believes to be just, and that this cannot be expected of the mercenaries whose boldness in external wars is allowed to pass as courage (cf. 630b). Clinias seems to agree with this assessment. Thus, the Athenian, by using his interlocutors' beliefs, has brought them very close to the Dependency Thesis as he understands it. If being benefited by one's external goods requires excellence in civil war, and if excellence in civil war requires complete virtue, then the value of external goods depends on complete virtue. However, the Dependency Thesis extends not just to an external good such as wealth, but to the bodily goods of health, beauty, and strength. Hence, what the interlocutors have agreed to does not imply the full Thesis. It is nonetheless reasonable to think that the interlocutors at this point would agree that even bodily goods are of little benefit to the losers in war, whether civil or external.

However, even if the Dependency Thesis can be drawn from the views expressed by the interlocutors in the exchange preceding the passage, we have not seen *Plato's* reasons for holding the Thesis. Indeed, the sentiments of Clinias and Megillus make virtue's value derive from its usefulness in war. But war, the Athenian insists, is a means to peace, not the other way around (628d-e). We consequently have good reason to think that the reasons the interlocutors find convincing are not the reasons to which Plato subscribes. We will find better ones elsewhere.

What kind of dependency does the Athenian have in mind here? Does the Athenian mean that virtue (and only virtue) *produces* health, wealth, etc.? This would be a causal dependence. Or does he mean that health, wealth, etc., are not *good* without virtue? This would be a normative dependence. Since Plato commonly recognizes the existence of

people who are both vicious and wealthy, a causal dependence seems unlikely. It should be said, however, that when Clinias claims that one's possessions do not benefit one unless one conquers in war, the dependency seems causal: loose the war and you loose your money. This might explain the hint of a causal claim in the Athenian's own statement: in part, he is still in *ad hominem* mode. I suggest, however, that the real thrust of the Dependency Thesis is normative.

To support this suggestion, let's consider Alcinous' other key text, *Euthydemus* 281d-e. This passage comes near the end of an argument about the goods necessary for happiness. Socrates argues that conventional goods do not benefit unless used wisely:

In sum ... it seems that with respect to all the things which we first said were goods [i.e. the conventional goods], the argument does not hold that in their nature they are goods by themselves [aÈtã ge kay' aÍtã p°fukén égayå]. Rather, it seems as follows: if ignorance leads them, they are greater evils than their opposites to the extent that they are more capable of serving their evil leader. If, on the other hand, wisdom and understanding lead them, they are greater goods. By themselves, though, neither is worth anything. ... What's the upshot of our claims? Isn't it that, of the other things, none of them is either good or bad, but of these two, understanding is good and ignorance is bad? (281d1-e5)

In this passage, the dependency is clearly normative and not causal. Conventional goods are better than conventional evils when lead by wisdom, but worse than conventional

evils when lead by ignorance. Only wisdom is good by itself, and only ignorance is bad by itself. The reason that conventional goods, if lead by ignorance, are greater evils than conventional evils is that health, wealth, beauty, power, etc., are better servants, i.e. better instruments, than are sickness, poverty, ugliness, impotence, etc. In other words, ignorance is able to get more done when conjoined with conventional goods than when conjoined with conventional evils. The same is true of wisdom. The main thought, though, is that use by wisdom or ignorance gives to conventional goods and conventional evils whatever value or disvalue their might acquire. By themselves, conventional goods and conventional evils are neither good nor bad.¹¹

I think that normative dependence is also the main thought in the *Laws*. To see that this is so, we can consider not only the relation of the divine goods to the human goods, but the relations among the divine goods themselves. Wisdom or intelligence, the Athenian says, is the “leader” of temperance, justice, courage, and the human goods.¹² In later passages, the Athenian claims that two of the virtues—courage and temperance—are

¹¹ According to Vlastos, the claim that no conventional good or evil is either good or bad should be glossed as no conventional good or evil is either good or bad *just by itself* (1991, pp. 228-30). For Vlastos, the significance of this gloss is that conventional goods, when conjoined with virtue, become “desirable for their own sake” (p. 230 n.98). He also says that Socrates “has said nothing which implies that health, wealth, and their likes have purely instrumental value” (p. 305). It is difficult to see, though, how something can be worth desiring for its own sake if it is not good by itself. That concern aside, the passage clearly suggests that conventional goods and evils are better or worse depending on how well they function as instruments of wisdom or ignorance. Hence, the virtuous are justified in desiring conventional goods because conventional goods make accomplishing virtuous aims more easy. There is nothing in this thought suggesting that conventional goods have anything more than instrumental value.

¹² $\rho\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta\sigma\iota\omega$ and $\nu\acute{\omicron}\epsilon\mu$ seem to designate the same virtue in the *Laws*. Compare 631b-d and 632c with 963a, for example.

possible without wisdom: some people are born with courageous or temperate dispositions—dispositions which may or may not come to be directed by wisdom.¹³

Justice, on the other hand, arises from wisdom, temperance, and courage together, and so is the same as complete virtue. It is perhaps for this reason that the Athenian earlier called the greatest virtue “complete justice” (630c1-6).

As in the *Euthydemus*, the beneficial leader is wisdom. If wisdom entails knowledge of the good itself, as we can reasonably think it would for Plato, then the explanation for the primacy of wisdom is evidently this: beneficial possession or use of courage, temperance, or any of the human goods requires the guidance of knowledge of the good. Hence, if a person is to be benefited by health, beauty, strength, wealth, or even by courage and temperance, he or she must be governed by the highest of the divine goods: intelligence.¹⁴ Thus, after sketching some of the practices a city would implement if guided by intelligence, the Athenian concludes his statement by saying,

¹³ For example, 661d-e, 696d, 709e-710b, 963e. Cf. *Plt.* 306a ff. and Bobonich (1995b).

¹⁴ Bobonich (1995a, pp. 102-3) groups courage and temperance, when possessed without wisdom, as human goods because the unjust can be courageous and temperate. I group courage and temperance—with or without wisdom—among the divine goods, since this seems closer to the Athenian’s practice. For example, even though Clinias and Megillus at the start value victory in war and hence courage above all else, the Athenian nevertheless recognizes them as talking about the virtue of courage. The principle of division between the divine and the human goods seems to be that the former are purely psychic goods, while the latter are bodily (health, beauty, strength) or external goods (wealth). See *Lg.* 697b, 717c, 724a-b, 743d-e, and 870a-b for the Athenian’s division of goods into these three categories.

Having looked over these things, the one laying down the laws will place guardians—some guided by wisdom [fronÆsevw], others by true belief [élhyoËw dÒjhw]—over all these practices, so that intelligence [1 noËw] by binding all these things together may show that they follow temperance and justice but not wealth or love of honor. (632c3-7)

This heavy emphasis on the leading role of intelligence in the city and in the individual soul is no accident. As we shall see, the justification of Plato’s high estimation of virtue rests on intelligence’s role in shaping and controlling the elements of human psychology.

2.3 SUFFICIENCY

What about Alcinous’ claim that virtue suffices for happiness? The Athenian says that “those who use [Cretan laws] achieve happiness, for they provide all good things.” Common sense has it that happiness comes by having good things.¹⁵ The passage counts human goods among “good things.” Does that mean that in the *Laws* Plato thinks that human goods are necessary for happiness? If so, then Plato does not hold the Sufficiency Thesis in the *Laws*, for the virtuous person without the human goods would not have all “good things.” To be sure that the Athenian is not maintaining the Sufficiency Thesis, we would like to see him claim that the virtuous can be sick, ugly, weak, and poor, but

¹⁵ Cf. *Smp.* 204d-205a, *Euthd.* 278e.

still happy. Unfortunately, this passage leaves it unclear whether Plato holds the Sufficiency Thesis, for it bluntly asserts that if one has the divine goods, one has the human goods.

A key passage in *Laws II*, one not mentioned by Alcinous, clearly asserts the Sufficiency Thesis. After the Athenian has explained how drinking parties, song, and dance can be used to develop temperance and the other virtues, he makes striking claims about the relation of virtue to conventional goods, and the relation of virtue to happiness. These go beyond anything said in the Book I passage favored by Alcinous, and beyond anything that Plato has written elsewhere in the dialogues, including the *Euthydemus*.¹⁶

The Athenian says approvingly that Crete and Sparta “require the poets to say that the good man, since he is temperate and just, is happy and blessed—whether he is large and strong or small and weak, and whether he is rich or not” (660e2-5). This is the Sufficiency Thesis: a person lacking bodily goods such as strength and external goods such as wealth will be “happy and blessed” if virtuous. This suggests, *contra* the suggestion of Book I, that human goods are not necessary for happiness. Conversely, the Athenian in the next sentence, quoting and (inaccurately) paraphrasing a poem of Tyrtaeus, claims that if someone is the most wealthy person in the world, “but is unjust, he is unhappy and lives miserably” (660e5-6). So not only does virtue suffice for happiness, vice suffices for unhappiness.

¹⁶ Cf. *Euthd.* 278e ff., esp. 281d-e. This passage, unlike *Laws II*, does not claim that the virtuous person with conventional evils and without conventional goods is happy.

If left with only this, we would have in Book I a clear statement of the Dependency Thesis, and in Book II a clear statement of the Sufficiency Thesis. But as the Book II passage continues, the Athenian makes further claims which show that he holds a more complex theory of goods—one which seems incompatible with a straightforward Sufficiency Thesis such as that held by the Stoics. He says that what the many call good—health, beauty, wealth, keen senses, tyrannical power, and immediate immortality once one has obtained them—are in fact

all excellent possessions for just and pious men, but are all the worst possessions for the unjust, beginning with health. Indeed, to see, to hear, to perceive, and, in general, to live is the greatest evil if one is immortal for all time and in possession of all the so-called goods except justice and complete virtue, but less so if such a person survives for the shortest time possible. (661b5-c5)

Here the Athenian reiterates the Dependency Thesis of Book I, with two additions. First, conventional goods are bad for the vicious. So not only does the goodness of conventional goods depend on their being possessed in a virtuous way, the badness of conventional goods depends on their being possessed in a vicious way. Second, the longer the vicious have the conventional goods, the worse it is for them. The harm of possessing conventional goods in a vicious way thus increases or decreases with the length of time the vicious person has them. The passage does not say whether the magnitude of the effect of possessing conventional goods varies in a similar way for the

virtuous; it only says that they are good for the virtuous. Still, we are left wondering what the benefit or harm of possessing conventional goods actually is for the just or the unjust. What does one get from conventional goods that one cannot get from virtue or vice alone?

How this question gets answered affects the way we understand the Athenian's conception of happiness. Socrates in the *Philebus* says that the good which would render a life happy must be "complete [t^oleon]" and "sufficient [flkanÚn]" (20d1-4), that is, "it must not have need of anything in addition" (20e5-6). If having conventional goods add something to happiness that one does not get from virtue alone, then virtue would seem not to be complete and sufficient and hence not the good that makes life happy.

And there is a further complication. The Athenian a few lines later, in words which unmistakably announce that he is delivering his own view, says,

I say plainly that the so-called evils are good for the unjust, but bad for the just, and the [so-called] goods really are good for the good, but bad for the bad. (661d1-4)

Thus, the Athenian thinks not only that conventional goods are good for the virtuous and bad for the vicious, but that conventional evils are bad for the virtuous and good for the vicious. So we not only have the difficulty of figuring out how conventional goods benefit the virtuous, we also must understand how conventional evils harm the virtuous, and vice versa for the vicious.

So, assuming for now that the virtuous and the vicious are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive groups, the Athenian's theory of goods consists of the following five theses:

- (1) Conventional goods are good for the virtuous.
- (2) Conventional goods are bad for the vicious.
- (3) Conventional evils are good for the vicious.
- (4) Conventional evils are bad for the virtuous.
- (5) The longer the vicious have conventional goods, the worse it is for them.

The view is as elegant as it is radical. Because it is so radical—especially the claim that conventional evils harm the virtuous—Annas has suggested, plausibly, that the best explanation for it may be “simply that Plato has been led away into saying something careless and misleading by the neat structure of an antithetical sentence” (forthcoming, typescript p. 19). While it is true that Plato does not always express himself as clearly as we would like, I shall argue that there are resources in the *Laws* for a better explanation of the Athenian's view. The explanation will remove some of the view's elegance, but it will explain how conventional goods and evils help or harm us.

2.4 PLEASURE AND INTELLIGENCE

Inelegance is introduced by the fact that no one, or almost no one, is either fully virtuous or fully vicious. As we saw in chapter 1, Plato thinks that devoting a lifetime of effort to becoming virtuous will not produce full virtue. He might think that vice is more common than virtue, but few are so depraved that they have lost all touch with justice, goodness, and beauty. Hence, we should interpret the Athenian's claims without the assumption that the virtuous and the vicious are jointly exhaustive groups. In order to include the vast majority of human beings, we should interpret claims (1)-(5) as including not only those who are virtuous or vicious, but also those progressing toward virtue or declining toward vice.¹⁷

The argument which follows the Athenian's statement in Book II unfortunately amounts only to a defense of claim (2). It is nonetheless helpful in constructing an explanation of all five claims. When the Athenian is finished, Clinias says that he only partially agrees with the Athenian's view. The Athenian does not ask which part Clinias disagrees with; he assumes that Clinias does not agree that the unjust person with every conventional good is unhappy (661d-e). Clinias confirms this assumption and the Athenian then argues that the unjust person's life is not only shameful (something Clinias agrees with), but also unpleasant (something Clinias disagrees with; 661e ff.). Two reasons are offered. First, the Athenian and Clinias agree that not doing and not suffering injustice is pleasant, and that doing and suffering injustice is unpleasant (663a). Second,

¹⁷ The Stoics held that one can make progress toward virtue, but that one is vicious until virtue is achieved. See, e.g., von Arnim (1903-5) III.510, III.539. Plato also had high standards for virtue, but he seems willing to call virtuous those who have not yet achieved the highest levels of understanding.

they agree that while unjust things appear pleasant to the unjust and just things appear pleasant to the just, the judgment of the just is more authoritative because the just have better souls (663b-c). The Athenian later concludes that “when we claim that the same life is said by the gods to be both the most pleasant and the best [i.e. most virtuous], we are saying what is most true” (664b7-c1). Clinias agrees, thereby reversing his initial position.

This appeal to pleasure assumes that if a life can be shown to be without pleasure or positively unpleasant, it would not be a serious candidate for the happy life. The arguments do not pretend to show that the vicious life has no pleasures, though; only that the virtuous life is more pleasant. Indeed, the surrounding passages indicate that pleasure can be found in the lives of both the just and the unjust, but that only the just find pleasure in the right things. Going for the right pleasures nonetheless allows the just to escape painful side effects that seem to attach themselves especially to incorrect pleasures, thus making more plausible the Athenian’s claim that the virtuous life is more pleasant than the vicious.¹⁸

Pleasure and pain have a prominent role in the ethical psychology of this passage and of the *Laws* as a whole. Understanding this role will help us see Plato’s reasons for asserting (1)-(5). The first mention of pleasure in the *Laws* follows the Athenian’s statement on divine and human goods in Book I. Shortly after insisting that the citizens should be guided by intelligence, the Athenian says,

¹⁸ The Athenian claims that the temperate life is more pleasant *overall* than the intemperate life (734a-b).

One should see to it that in all of their social interactions one watches over and closely guards their pains and pleasures, their desires and the exertions of all their erotic passions, correctly blaming and praising by means of the laws themselves. (631e3-632a3)

Thus, pleasure and pain are thought to be psychological forces akin to desire and sexual attraction. Indeed, the Athenian at one point mentions *only* pleasure and pain as motivating forces. He says, “These two springs flow forth by nature, and the one who draws where, when, and in the amount one should is happy” (636d7-e1). Thus, pleasure and pain are psychological givens—“two opposed and stupid [êfrone] counselors” in each of us (644c6-7)—and their correct regulation suffices for happiness. We have already seen the claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Because the correct regulation of pleasure and pain makes one happy, it must be the same as virtue.

It is said that law should regulate pleasure and pain. Law is characterized as a calculation (logismòw) of the good and the bad in anticipated pleasures and pains, a force that works like a supple, gentle cord in the soul (644c-645a). Elsewhere, the properly ruling element in the soul is characterized as reason (lògow, 653b4), correct reason (ÙryÚw lògow, 696c9-10), wisdom (fròhnsiw, 653a7), knowledge (§pistÆmh, 689b2), firm true belief (élhyØw dÒja b°baiow, 653a8), rational belief (≤ katå lÒgon dÒja, 689a8), belief (dÒja, 688b3), and intelligence (noËw, 688b3). Plato seems intent on keeping the discussion at a non-technical level, but what is emphasized repeatedly is

that pleasure, pain, and other affections of the soul should be ruled by reason. For example, in Book III, the Athenian says that the greatest ignorance (\leq megēsth émayēa) is the hatred of what one thinks good and fine, and the love of what one thinks wicked and unjust (689a). The Athenian continues:

I say that this disagreement of pain and pleasure with rational belief is the ultimate and greatest ignorance because it belongs to the largest part [toË plēyouw] of the soul. For the part of it that is pained and pleased is like the populace [dōmow] and the majority [plōyow] of a city. So whenever the soul is opposed by knowledge or opinion or reason—those things which are rulers by nature—I call this a lack of intelligence [ēnoian]. And in a city, whenever the majority does not obey rulers and laws, the same. (689a7-b5)

In contrast, the harmony (sumfvnēa) of reason with pleasure and pain, liking and disliking, is called the greatest wisdom (megēsth sofēa, 689d7; 696c8) or complete virtue (sēmpasa éretē, 653b6). The one who has it, and all the goods that come with it, is called a complete human being (tōleow ênyrvpow, 653a-b). It is with this in mind that the Athenian proposes the educational use of supervised drinking parties. Wine weakens one's resistance to pleasure, so the Athenian thinks that moderate intoxication can be used to test and strengthen one's superiority over pleasure just as other, more familiar kinds of endurance tests can be used to strengthen one's resistance to pain.

But wine is not the only intoxicant. In a revealing comment at the end of Book I, the Athenian says that wealth, beauty, and strength—three of the four human goods mentioned earlier—are among the things that “make one lose one’s wits [parãfronaw] through the intoxication of pleasure” (649d6-7). Moreover, while mere health is not usually thought of as something which drives one mad with pleasure, being healthy allows the unjust to pursue their vicious ends with less hindrance. This provides the resources to explain thesis (2): conventional goods are bad for the vicious because they encourage and reinforce the dominance of pleasure in souls where it already has sway.

Consider a similar passage in the *Republic*. Socrates says someone with a virtuous disposition can be corrupted by the flattery of his friends and fellow citizens, especially if he is wealthy, blue-blooded, good-looking, and tall (494a-c). He will think himself capable of ruling the Greeks along with the barbarians, and will find it hard to listen to someone who points out his lack of intelligence (noËw, 494d). Socrates concludes that “the parts of the philosophic nature themselves, when they arise in a bad learning environment, are in a way the causes of his falling away from the proper course—along with the so-called goods: wealth and every other such provision” (495a5-8). Thus, not only can conventional goods be harmful to those filled with misguided ambition, so can an undeveloped aptitude for virtue. Socrates does not say here that it is pleasure which prevents intelligence from taking its place as leader in the soul, but the thought is nonetheless like that of *Laws* II: possessing conventional goods in the absence of virtue conduces to psychic malfunction.

To explain thesis (3), we need only notice that conventional evils such as poverty, ugliness, weakness, sickness, and the loss of senses such as sight and hearing are not conducive to pleasure. Hence, conventional evils benefit the vicious insofar as they do not further entrench pleasure's rule in the vicious soul, thereby making it easier for correct education to strengthen the force of reason. We can explain thesis (5) along similar lines: the longer pleasure dominates in the soul, the harder it is for intelligence ever to take its natural place. This explanation gains plausibility when we consider the lifetime of work required to bring the soul into proper order. As the Athenian says at the beginning of Book II, "As for wisdom and firm true beliefs, fortunate is the one in whom they have come to maturity even in old age" (653a7-9).

Explaining claims (1) and (4) is more difficult. In view of the Athenian's ethical psychology, why would he consider conventional goods to be good for the virtuous, and conventional evils to be bad? The virtuous soul is already ruled by intelligence, or at least by true belief. To find an answer, let us briefly consider the important discussion of the representational arts in the part of Book II immediately preceding the Athenian's statement of (1)-(5). The Athenian's main point throughout this discussion is that artistic representations in song and dance should be of actions, characters, postures, and sentiments that are truly fine. In this way, citizens learn to be pleased by fine things and to be pained by shameful things, and thereby bring the affective elements in their souls into accord with correct judgments of the good and the bad. Whether in real life or in make-believe, the Athenian says it is not merely likely, but

necessary that the one who delights become like the things in which he delights, even if he is ashamed to praise them. What greater good or evil than this might we say arises for us so inevitably? (656b4-7)

Necessarily, then, a person becomes like the things that please her, whether or not her pleasures accord with her judgments of what is fine. This is a great good for us if we delight in things that are fine and are pained by things that are shameful, for then our affections come into accord with reason. But it is a great evil for us if we delight in bad things and are pained by fine things, for then the affections conflict with reason.

How does this help in understanding the value of conventional goods and the disvalue of conventional evils for the virtuous? A reasonable hypothesis is that conventional goods provide the means for experiencing correct pleasures in various contexts. A sighted person can view the performance of a fine tragedy, or a wealthy person can take pleasure in financing a public monument, to give two examples. On the other hand, conventional evils limit the range of activities in which the virtuous can engage and thus limit the range of pleasures that may accompany those activities. This is a harm to the virtuous person in the sense that her affections experience less reinforcement than they would if she were able to delight in a variety of virtuous activities. Hence, the virtuous but sick never delight in what is shameful, but they does not easily delight in beautiful things either. Moreover, reinforcement of virtuous affections is important even for the most virtuous among us. Plato thinks that the passions of human nature tend to make us love ourselves more than what is just, good, and fine. Without taking pleasure in virtuous

activities, the tendencies of human nature could turn our affections away from those things intelligence would have us love.

One might argue, however, that those who have achieved the highest level of virtue do not benefit from virtuous pleasures, for their affections never deviate from the judgments of intelligence. In response, we should emphasize that Plato seems to think that while the immortal soul is conjoined with the mortal soul and the body, even the most virtuous human beings are capable of being affected by forces that conflict with intelligence.¹⁹ Hence, a good insurance policy, even for the best of us, is ongoing training of the affections with virtuous pleasures.

Where does this leave the hard line Sufficiency Thesis of Book II? If the virtuous are harmed by conventional evils, how can they be happy when conventional evils displace all their conventional goods? Two responses come to mind. First, it seems possible that the most virtuous person can squeeze virtuous pleasures from difficult circumstances—if only the pleasure of knowing that one has chosen rightly. This would help the right affections in a struggle against pains caused by conventional evils. Second, our hypothesis includes as harm not only the degeneration of virtuous affections, but also a relative lack of opportunities for their vivid reinforcement. Although conventional evils can play a causal role in the development of misguided affections, they need not do so in everyone. The most virtuous may with effort be able to respond to conventional evils in ways that keep correct judgments and affection intact. Hence, virtue suffices for their happiness, but virtue would be easier without conventional evils.

¹⁹ See chapter 3 for discussion of this psychology.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This hypothesis maintains that conventional goods are means to happiness by being means to virtue. They are not always means to virtue, however, for they may also facilitate the incorrect pleasures of the vicious. When used virtuously, though, conventional goods contribute to happiness in a way that preserves the Sufficiency Thesis.

Alcinous invokes both the *Euthydemus* and the *Laws* to support his claims about virtue's value. In conclusion, I note some of the similarities and differences between the *Laws* and the *Euthydemus* on the relation of virtue to conventional goods and evils. There are at least two important similarities. First, both dialogues hold that conventional goods are good for an agent only if held or used virtuously.²⁰ Second, both dialogues hold that such possession or use contributes to the agent's happiness. The dialogues differ, however, on several key points. First, the *Euthydemus* requires wisdom for the beneficial use of conventional goods. The *Laws* seems to require only true belief, thereby putting the beneficial use of conventional goods within the reach of more people. Second, the *Euthydemus* seems to claim that conventional evils can be used beneficially by the virtuous, though not as beneficially as conventional goods. The *Laws*, on the other hand, claims outright that conventional evils are bad for the virtuous. Third, the *Euthydemus* does not explain how the virtuous use of conventional goods benefits the

²⁰ For the thought that the virtuous use of conventional goods is good *for the agent* in the *Euthydemus*, see 280c1.

agent. In the *Laws*, this is explained by the role of virtuous pleasures in reinforcing or developing correct affections. Finally, unlike the *Laws*, the *Euthydemus* does not claim that the virtuous person with conventional evils but without conventional goods is happy. Hence, although the *Euthydemus* claims that only virtue makes the human being happy (282c8-d1), the *Euthydemus* does not make it clear that virtue has this power when it has no conventional goods to use.²¹

In sum, both the *Euthydemus* and the *Laws* champion virtue as the good that makes other possessions beneficial, but only the *Laws* takes a hard line on the Sufficiency Thesis. For this reason, Alcinous would be advised to use the *Laws*, especially Book II, to argue that Plato is the ancient world's champion of virtue.

²¹ Cf. 280e where it is claimed that it is the correct possession and use of conventional goods that is sufficient for happiness.

CHAPTER 3

GODLIKENESS

3.1 PLATONISTS AND SCHOLARS

In the first two chapters, I have explained Plato's justification of social institutions, and his view of virtue's relation to conventional goods. Both chapters have leaned heavily upon the idea that intelligence is the source of correct value judgments, whether for the construction of institutions or for the guidance of personal choice on a smaller scale. This chapter, too, puts intelligence at center stage. In it I argue that for Plato God is intelligence, and that becoming virtuous is the same as becoming like God. Because virtue suffices for happiness, Plato's imperatives to become like God are instructions on the requirements of happiness.

Whether becoming like God would make us happy depends on the nature of God, the nature of happiness, and whether we have the ability to become like God. If God is the ideal hedonist—as the Epicureans thought the gods were¹—and happiness consists in enjoyment, then we will be happy insofar as we follow God in obtaining pleasure. On the other hand, if God is ideally wise, and happiness consists of wisdom, then we will be

¹ Understanding pleasure as freedom from pain and anxiety. See Epicurus *Letter to Menoeceus* 123-4 and Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* VI.68-78.

happy insofar as we follow God in obtaining wisdom. Hence, for godlikeness to make us happy, God must be happy, our beliefs about what makes God happy must be at least roughly correct, and we must be able to live in accordance with those beliefs so as to instantiate God's happy-making feature or features.

While the ideal of godlikeness may sound outlandish today, it was not uncommon in antiquity. Ancient Platonists, for example, took Plato to hold that happiness comes from becoming like a god that is pure rationality. In the first century B.C., when Platonism reemerged as a school of systematic philosophy after two centuries of Academic skepticism, Platonists began to articulate Plato's doctrines within the three-part framework of logic, physics, and ethics that had been developed by the Stoics.² In stating Plato's ethical views, the Middle Platonists, as we now call them, commonly held that the final end for a human being—the achievement of which brings happiness—is *imōēvsiw ye*“ *katā tū dunatōn* or “becoming like God so far as is possible.”³ One of them, Alcinous, fills out the view by claiming that Plato “placed our good in the knowledge and contemplation of the primary good, which one may call God and the primary intelligence,” and that “the only things in us that aim at likeness with it are intelligence

² Xenocrates, the third head of the Academy (339-314 B.C.), was perhaps the first to propose this three part schema. Although contemporary evidence suggests that Plato held doctrines, it seems that the work of presenting Plato's thought in a systematic way did not begin until Xenocrates. See Diogenes Laertius IV.6-15 and Dillon (1993) p. xxvii.

³ See this reference to *Theaetetus* 176b1 in, for example, Alcinous' *Didaskalikos* 181.19-20 (Whittaker 1990). For discussion of *imōēvsiw ye*“ as the specification of the Platonic end among Middle Platonists, see Dillon (1993) pp. 171-2.

and reason.”⁴ This presents intellectual virtue as the dominant, if not the only, component of our final end. How civic virtue fit into the picture was a matter of some disagreement among Middle Platonists, and a matter of some unclarity in Alcinous himself.⁵ In the third century A.D., however, Plotinus sealed the victory for intellectual virtue as the principal feature of “becoming like God” (cf. *Ennead* I.2, 7), thus associating intelligence or *nous* with the divine in a way that would feature prominently in Platonic ethics of late antiquity and in early Christian thought.⁶

Scholarship on Plato today rarely mentions godlikeness. For example, two recent books in which we might expect to find treatment of the subject—one on Plato’s ethics, the other on Plato’s religious views—give it no explicit discussion.⁷ Indeed, it seems that the most recent monograph devoted to the concept of godlikeness in Plato, as opposed to godlikeness in later Platonists, was published in 1946. For more than fifty years since only one philosophy article appeared on the topic.⁸ This prompts the question: Is

⁴ *Didaskalikos* 179.39-42, 180.5-7. In the *Alcibiades*, Socrates says that the part of the soul in which understanding (*sofēa*) occurs is the “most divine” part and is “like god” (133b7-c6; cf. 134e9). If intelligence *is* god (as I shall later argue), then it makes more sense to think of a soul’s likeness to god than of intelligence’s likeness to god.

⁵ For instance, in chapter 28 Alcinous says that we should become like the God *in* the heavens (the intellect of the world soul?), not the God *above* the heavens who is superior to virtue. But the referent of “the primary intelligence” which he says we should contemplate in chapter 27 would seem to be the highest god, that is, the one above the heavens. See Dillon (1993) pp. 173-4 for discussion.

⁶ See Dillon (1990) on Plotinus on the levels of virtue, and Merki (1952) on godlikeness in the theology of Gregory of Nyssa.

⁷ Irwin (1995) and Morgan (1990).

⁸ Rutenber (1946) and Duerlinger (1985). These judgments are based on an August 1997 computer search of the *Philosopher’s Index* delimited by “Plato and God.” For

godlikeness central to Plato's ethics or not? If not, then ancient Platonists were deeply misguided in their interpretation of Plato's conception of the final end. But if it is central, then contemporary scholarship has left us with a severe blindspot in our understanding of Plato.

I side with the ancient Platonists in holding that godlikeness is an important feature of Plato's ethical views, and of a piece with his thought overall. Indeed, I hope to show that understanding Plato's conception of godlikeness requires some understanding of Plato's epistemology and metaphysics. As I understand him, Plato did not think that the branches of philosophical inquiry could be readily separated from each other: one's epistemological views have implications for one's metaphysical views (for example, Protagorean relativism entails Heraclitean flux in the *Theaetetus*) and one's metaphysical views have implications for one's ethical views (hence the ethical importance of refuting the atheist in *Laws X*). Hence, we should expect that a proper understanding of Plato on godlikeness requires a general view of the entire Platonic forest, and not just of one of the more interesting trees.

Although work on godlikeness in Plato is rare, Julia Annas and David Sedley have begun to shift scholarly attention back to the topic. Each has a new essay on godlikeness in Plato, especially with regard to the *Theaetetus* (Annas) and *Timaeus* (Sedley).⁹ These

other scholarship in which discussion of godlikeness appears, see Rist (1964) and Passmore (1970).

⁹ Although Annas (1998, ch. 3) and Sedley (unpublished) discuss many other sources too, e.g., *Phaedo*, *Alcibiades*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Laws*, Middle Platonists, Plotinus, and Aristotle. When I began researching this topic in 1996, I did not know that Professor Annas had been working on it as part of her 1997 Townsend Lectures. I was

and other dialogues will be discussed here, too, but with an eye to the significance of godlikeness in Plato's last work, the *Laws*. To begin, I discuss the way that the traditional gods were often viewed as examples of permissible or exemplary behavior in the *Laws* and other sources, and show how Plato turns this common attitude to his advantage. I then examine Plato's identification of "true virtue" with the godlikeness of a philosopher in the *Theaetetus*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*. After these dialogues, Plato begins to take seriously a conception of God as *nous* or "intelligence." By examining the properties of intelligence in the *Philebus* and *Timaeus*, I show how the ideal of godlikeness in the late dialogues has become more determinate in content and more meaningful as a conception of the final end. Finally, I return to the *Laws* and argue that godlikeness is advanced there as a realistic ideal for ordinary citizens—even while Plato holds on to the more demanding ideal of the godlike philosopher.

3.2 MYTH AND EXCUSE

Appeals to, and remarks about, the divine are very common in the *Laws*. There are the famous arguments in *Laws X* designed to refute various forms of impiety, but there are also several invocations of divine help as the interlocutors pronounce laws for the future Cretan colony, and many other statements to the effect that God is guiding their

therefore delighted when she gave me a manuscript copy of the lectures in May 1997 and informed me that Professor Sedley had also been writing on the subject independently.

conversation.¹⁰ But even on the first page of the dialogue—indeed, even with the first word of the text, *theos*—we see emphasis placed on the divine. The dialogue’s first topic of discussion is the origin of the law codes of Crete and Sparta. We find that Crete’s came from Zeus through his son, Minos, and Sparta’s came from Apollo (624a-b). This casts the two minor interlocutors, Clinias and Megillus, in an initially favorable light, for they have been raised under these law codes. Although they have thus been indirectly influenced by the divine, it later becomes clear that these interlocutors do not accurately grasp the intention of the gods for Cretan and Spartan law. As the Athenian begins to make their misunderstanding apparent in argument, Clinias, intending a compliment, addresses his traveling partner as “Athenian Visitor” and explains that “you seem to me rather worthy of being called by the name of a god [i.e. Athena]” (626d3-5). Each of the three interlocutors are thereby associated with a major divinity. Combine this with the fact that they are together walking to a sacred cave of Zeus on Crete’s Mt. Ida where tradition tells of Zeus tutoring Minos in legal matters, and it seems apparent that Plato intends to associate the forthcoming conversation with the divine in some way, though at the beginning it is not clear how to interpret this association.

At several points in the *Laws*, the Athenian reveals his view that, in most cases, the way people think about the divine is connected to their values and desires.¹¹ In *Laws X*, he gives arguments against three false beliefs about the gods: that they do not exist, that

¹⁰ For reference to divine invocation or guidance, see, for example, 712b, 722c, 893b, 968b10. See also *Philebus* 16c-e, 18b, 19b, 23c, 25b.

¹¹ Some people, however, have naturally just dispositions in spite of mistaken beliefs about the gods (908b ff.).

they do not care about human beings, and that they are easily persuaded by prayers and sacrifices (885b). One reason for refuting these beliefs is that those who hold them think themselves free to act according to their distorted conception of the gods (907c2-4). The third belief is especially harmful in this respect, for it implies that the gods are bribable and it gives the vicious reason to think that their own immorality is justified (cf. 910b). That the traditional conception of the gods was susceptible to being used as an excuse for vice is illustrated in the *Republic* by Glaucon's implicit beliefs. After he recounts the myth of Gyges in Book II, Glaucon says that no one is so incorruptible that he would not—"like a god among humans [ἄνθρωπος ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις]"—choose to steal, plunder, seduce, and kill if he could get away with it (360b ff.; cf. 568b). Hence, according to Glaucon's conception, the gods can do whatever they want, whenever they want, without regard for justice.

Dissatisfaction with the morality of the Olympians, at least as they were portrayed in the body of Greek myth, was of course not new with Plato. More than a century earlier, Xenophanes complained that "both Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all things that are reproachful and worthy of blame among human beings: stealing, committing adultery, and deceiving one another."¹² Closer to Plato's time, Democritus implies that he rejects the possibility of divine immorality when he says, "They alone are loved by the gods to whom injustice is hateful."¹³

¹² Diels-Kranz 21B11. Heraclitus too declared that "Homer deserves to be thrown out of the contests and beaten with a stick" (22B42), but his grounds may be broader than moral, e.g., Diogenes Laertius quotes B40 and B41 alongside B42 (IX.1). Cf. A22.

¹³ DK 68B217; cf. B175.

The injustice of the Olympians is a common theme in fifth century Athenian tragedy. Consider the response of one of Euripides' characters to the news that a woman had been raped by Apollo and then, after keeping her pregnancy secret, had left the newborn exposed in a cave. The character, a servant of Apollo at the time, addresses Apollo with these words:

If a mortal is bad, the gods punish him. How then is it just for you, who have composed laws for mortals, to be guilty of lawlessness [ένομέαν]? But if (for I'll suppose what is not the case for the sake of argument) you issued punishments for your violent nuptials with human beings—you and Poseidon and Zeus who rules heaven—you would empty the temples by paying the fines. You do wrong by pursuing pleasures without forethought. It's not right to say that humans act badly if we are only copying the "fine deeds" of the gods. You are our teachers. (*Ion* 440-51)

Although it was a common belief that aspiring to be like the gods is *hubris*, Ion indicates here that the Greeks would nevertheless compare their own behavior with that of the gods. If the gods act unjustly, then the gods cannot with integrity condemn the injustice of humans. In effect, there was a tendency to look for the real standards of conduct in the deeds of the gods as opposed to their words. Hence, if the gods pursue pleasure unjustly, so can humans. However, as in the Presocratics, we also find the positive side of the critique in Euripides. In the *Heracles*, the title character claims (paradoxically when considering the context) that the stories about divine jealousy are "the wretched tales of

the poets,” and that “God, if he is truly God, lacks nothing” and is thus incapable of jealousy (1345-6).¹⁴

In *Laws I*, the Athenian implies that it is not the gods who pursue pleasure without regard for justice, but humans who make up compromising stories about the gods in order to justify their own pleasures. He says, for example, that the boldness of the first people to engage in male-male or female-female sex “seems to be on account of an incontinence regarding pleasure [di’ ékrâteian ≤don∞w]” (636c5-7), and that, to justify their own participation in the practice, the Cretans invented the myth of the gods’ abduction of the handsome Ganymede.¹⁵ The Athenian explains that “since their laws were believed to have come from Zeus, [the Cretans] added this myth about Zeus so that, by following the god, they could enjoy this pleasure” (636d1-4).¹⁶ Thus, the Cretans apparently thought that to justify certain of their desires, they had to find them in Zeus also. Adjusting their notion of Zeus allowed them to “follow the god” and thereby to think that their actions were not blameworthy.

Plato could have responded to this sort of appeal in one of two ways. On the one hand, he could have questioned the need to appeal to the gods at all.¹⁷ Regardless of how the gods are, he might say, the standards of virtue remain the same. Vice leads to

¹⁴ See Bond (1981) pp. 399-400 for discussion of the context of these famous lines.

¹⁵ Cf. Hom. *Il.* XX.231 ff. For more of Plato’s criticisms of traditional myths, see *Lg.* 672b, 941b; *R.* 378d, 383a-b, 390b ff.

¹⁶ For Plato’s view on homosexuality, this passage should not be read in isolation from dialogues such as the *Lysis*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus*, and from general Platonic concerns about pleasure in the *Laws*. See Nussbaum (1994) for discussion.

¹⁷ Cf. *Euthphr.* 10a ff.

unhappiness, so following the gods would make one miserable if it should justify moral license. Plato does not choose this option. Instead, he adopts a conception of the gods which has them acting in accordance with only the strictest standards of justice. By piously following these gods, one lives a moral life. As virtues, piety and justice at least imply each other, and they may be identical.¹⁸ Why Plato takes this option can be explained by the role of the divine in his thought as whole. This role will become clear as we now examine the kind of godlikeness that Plato endorses.

3.3 TRUE VIRTUE

A passage in the *Theaetetus* was the primary proof text among later Platonists for godlikeness as an ideal. In it Socrates is responding to those who think that matters of prudence are more factual than matters of morality. Some people admit that there are experts who can instruct a city on what will be to its advantage, thereby admitting that judgments about self-interest might be mistaken. But on moral matters, they think that what *seems* just, fine, and pious to a city *is* just, fine, and pious for that city (172a-b). That is, Socrates is setting up for refutation the view that nothing about justice and piety “exists by nature [ἴσῃ]” or “has an essence [οὐσία] of its own,” but that “that which seems to people collectively becomes truth at that time— whenever it should seem and for

¹⁸ In the *Protagoras*, Socrates, in an argument about the unity of virtue, expresses his own view when he says that “either justice is the same as piety or they are as similar as possible, and, most of all, that justice is of the same sort as piety, and piety of the same sort as justice” (331b4-6).

as long as it seems” (172b2-6). Part of the concern here is that someone who takes this metaethical stance will not think herself constrained by moral norms as she goes about pursuing her own interests. Plato does not give an extended argument against this view in the *Theaetetus*; that is found in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. Instead, he has Socrates briefly describe the lives of the just and the unjust and then give criteria for the godlike life.¹⁹

He chooses as an example of the unjust someone who spends his days bustling around law courts making speeches to please popular juries. His practice of flattery, unchecked by considerations of justice, makes his soul “small and warped” (173a3). In contrast, the just life is exemplified by the philosopher who, rather unlike Socrates, does not know his way around the market or the courts. He does not care about reputation or social status, and does not even know that he does not know about these things. His body lives in the city, but his thought wings its way around the universe examining the earth and the heavens by means of geometry and astronomy, “investigating in every way the entire nature of each whole among the things that are” (173e6-174a1).

These two lives are no doubt meant as approximations of the two paradigms which Socrates says are set up in reality (176e). One is divine and most happy (ye ou e daimonest tou). The other is without divinity and most miserable ( y ou  ylvit tou). To become like the divine paradigm, one must “flee as swiftly as possible” from this world and from mortal nature where evils “wander about by necessity” to a place among the gods where no evil resides (176a7-9). The flight is identified with “becoming like

¹⁹ My interpretation is influenced by Burnyeat (1990) pp. 31-9.

God so far as is possible [ἰμοῦνσιw yeḡ katὰ tÚ dunatÒn],” and this, Socrates says, amounts to becoming “just and pious with wisdom [dÉkaion kaˆ ~sion metὰ fronÆsevw]” (176a9-b2). Appending wisdom to justice and piety in this way suggests that Socrates is not talking about conventional forms of virtue, but of the sort which comes only with genuine understanding. Godlikeness, then, is the same as complete virtue.

The philosopher is indeed unconventional. As Socrates describes him, the philosopher is so caught up with questions such as ‘What is a human being?’ that he does not notice the people next door (174b). The philosopher described in the *Phaedo* is similar. There Socrates says that “those who engage in philosophy are practicing nothing other than dying and being dead” (64a4-6), by which he means that they are concerned with purifying their souls from the influence of the body. Philosophers seek wisdom, which is the knowledge of “what is pure, ever existing, immortal, and changeless”—the Forms (79d1-2).²⁰ Wisdom, moreover, comes only when one ceases to care about the pleasures of the body and stops relying on the faulty information provided by the senses (64c ff.). Those who purify themselves turn out to be more temperate and courageous than ordinary people because they remain relatively unaffected by bodily desires and do not fear death (68c-d). Some non-philosophers have a kind of naive temperance (εἰἘÆyη svfrosÊnhn) which keeps them from being mastered by some pleasures, but only because they are mastered by other pleasures (68e). Instead of exchanging pleasures for

²⁰ “Wisdom” here translates frÒnhsiw (79d7). Alcinous seems to quote from this passage when he writes, “The soul engaged in contemplation of the divine and the thoughts of the divine is said to be in a good state, and this state of the soul is called

pleasures, however, the philosopher gives up pleasures for wisdom. Exchanging pleasures and fears for wisdom, Socrates says, “in reality is courage and temperance and justice and, in short, true virtue with wisdom” (69b1-5). If one practices philosophy in the right way, after death one’s soul “arrives at that which is invisible, which is similar to it, and that which is divine and immortal and wise, and arriving there it falls to it to be happy ... [and] truly to spend the rest of time with gods” (81a). The happiest of the non-philosophers, however, practice “popular and political virtue [dēmōtikōn kaì politikōn éretōn], which they call temperance and justice, having arisen from habit and practice without philosophy and intelligence [noē]” and are reincarnated into “a political and tame group, either of bees or wasps or ants” (82a11-b7).²¹

The *Phaedo* doctrine finds an echo even in the *Laws* when the Athenian remarks that soldiers should not fear Pluto, god of the underworld, but “should honor him as being in reality always the best for the human race. As I would assert in all seriousness, communion is in no way better for soul and body than separation” (828d3-6). Though we are left with only this brief remark, it would seem that becoming free from the influence of the body is given a nod even in the most practical of Plato’s dialogues. As I shall argue later, however, the ideal of godlikeness in the *Laws* is much different from that of

‘wisdom [frōnhsiw]’, which may be asserted to be no other than likeness to the divine [tōw prōw tū yeōn imoi≈sew]” (*Didaskalikos* 153.5-9, Dillon trans.).

²¹ *Euthydemus* 280e-281e implies that some virtues, in particular temperance and courage, can be had with or without wisdom, and that independent of wisdom or ignorance they are value neutral. *Meno* 87e-89a too suggests that the value of temperance and courage is extrinsic.

the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus* with respect to flight from the world of change. The reason is that God comes to be thought of as the organizing intelligence of this world.

In the *Republic*, the divine appears as an ideal for human beings in Book II. When assessing the poetry that will be used in the education of the guardians, Socrates says that “if our guardians are destined to become god-revering and divine—so far as is possible for a human being” (383c3-5)—stories of gods telling lies must be strictly prohibited.²² Later, in Book VI, we find Socrates turning from a concern that the guardians conceive of the Olympians as morally upright individuals to a concern that the guardians become divine through contemplation of the Forms. He says,

Surely it’s not the case, Adeimantus, that the one who has his thought turned to the things that truly are has the leisure to look below at affairs of human beings and, by contending with them, to be filled with jealousy and ill-will. Rather, by viewing and contemplating the things that are ordered and always the same, which neither commit nor suffer injustice at each other’s hands in virtue of being all in order and in accordance with reason, he imitates them and becomes like them so far as is possible. ... Indeed, by consorting with what is divine and ordered, the philosopher becomes as ordered and divine as is possible for a human being. (500b8-d1)

²² That the guardians should become both *yeosebe>w* and *ye>oi* should not be thought incoherent, for their divinity seems to consist of knowing and becoming like the Forms while having an attitude of reverence for them.

As in the *Phaedo*, becoming divine in the *Republic* involves the knowledge of Forms and an accompanying attitude that ordinary human affairs are trivial. Also, it would seem that divinization is available to only the few who are capable of such knowledge, that is, to philosophers. At the end of Book IX, non-philosophers are said have souls in which appetite, represented as a multiform beast, drags along the other parts of the soul, forcing them to serve and to flatter it. At first, Socrates characterizes the reasoning part of the soul—the part which should rule the beast as a farmer tames his animals—as a human being. But soon he suggests that this part is not human but divine. He says that fine institutions are those which “subject the bestial parts of our nature to the human—or better, perhaps, to the divine” (589c8-d2), and that anyone who “without mercy enslaves his most divine part to the most godless and disgusting part” cannot fail to be miserable (589e4-5). The non-philosopher’s misery can be abated, however. Socrates says,

In order that such a person be ruled by something similar to that which rules in the best person, we say that he ought to be a slave of that best person who has in himself the divine ruler. We do not think the slave should be ruled to bring him harm. That’s what Thrasymachus thought about those who are the ruled. Rather, it is because it’s better for everyone to be ruled by divine wisdom. Ideally one has one’s own within oneself, but if not, it can be imposed from the outside in order that so far as possible we might all be alike and friends in virtue of being governed by the same thing. (590c8-d6)

As we shall see, Plato uses a similar principle of surrogate reason in the *Laws* to facilitate the virtue of non-philosophers, with the difference that divine reason is not applied by a philosopher-king, but through the rule of law.

After he has shown that “justice is the best thing for the soul itself” (612b3), in Book X Socrates mentions divine favor as one of virtue’s good consequences. The language he uses strongly suggests that Plato thinks becoming virtuous is the same as becoming like God. Socrates says that, either in this life or another, the gods make things come out right for the virtuous who are struck by poverty or disease or some other apparent evil. “For the gods never neglect someone who eagerly wishes to become just and, by pursuing virtue, to become like God [ἰμοιοῦσθαι θεῷ] to the degree possible for a human being” (613a7-b1). What kind of compensation do the gods give the virtuous who are deprived of conventional goods? Do they restore wealth and health or does Plato have something else in mind? Unfortunately, the passage provides no clear answer. If it is conventional goods that the gods disperse, then the general point of the *Republic*—that virtue suffices for happiness—seems at least partially undermined unless, as I argue in chapter 2, conventional goods are thought to make some contribution to virtue. In the *Republic*, though, Plato does not suggest this approach. On the other hand, the text does say that the gods will make things right either during life or *death* (613a7), suggesting that whatever compensation they provide will be good for the virtuous at a time when money, good looks, strength, and bodily health are either irrelevant or impossible. When we return to the *Laws*, we will see that divine compensation is rendered only through reinforcing goods of the soul. Whether the *Republic* has the gods restoring conventional

goods or not, however, it is at least clear that the *Republic* identifies the pursuit of virtue with becoming like God.

But there are questions about this ideal as it has been presented thus far. First, what is the nature of the divine ideal to which the philosopher is to become similar? In the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, it is sometimes spoken of as a morally upright “god” or “gods,” but at other times as the eternal and immutable Forms—especially those of justice, beauty, and the good (cf. *Phd.* 65d). In the *Theaetetus*, however, only God is mentioned as an ideal. As for his qualities, Socrates says, “God is never and in no way unjust, but is as just as possible” (176b8-c1). If we take the target of assimilation to be God, then it seems to be God’s justice that makes him worthy of imitation. But there are difficulties with thinking of God as just. As Aristotle asked, “What sort of actions ought we to assign to [the gods]? Should they be just actions? Or will they appear ridiculous entering into contracts, returning deposits and such things?” (*EN* 1178b10-12). A natural Platonic response would be that justice for any being, including God, is harmony of soul caused by the rule of reason, not the keeping of contracts. But we do not know whether God in the *Theaetetus* even has a soul. Also, if harmony of soul requires that the soul have parts or different motivational elements, then justice is impossible for God if God’s soul is non-complex. Although the Forms may seem too impersonal to be the target of assimilation, at least they can be said “neither [to] commit nor suffer injustice at each other’s hands” (500c3-5). The Forms have relations with each other that can be thought

of in terms of justice.²³ If God is simple, then, whether a soul or not, it would seem improper to think of God as just.

A similar problem arises for justice in the philosophers. In the *Phaedo*, philosophers are said to be just as well as temperate and brave, but only temperance and courage are explained in any detail (68b-69b). Indeed, given the emphasis on the simplicity of the soul in the *Phaedo*, it would seem that, in this dialogue at least, defining justice as harmony of the soul is not an option. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates says that “there is nothing more similar to [God] than the one among us who has become as just as possible,” again placing all the emphasis on justice (176c1-2). The philosopher, however, is an aloof fellow who has little interaction with others and whose ultimate virtue seems to consist not in harmony among parts of the soul, but in the knowledge that God is supremely just. “The grasp of this,” Socrates explains, “is understanding [σοφεία] and true virtue [ἐρετὸ ἐλθύνειν]” (176c3-4). Perhaps Plato is suggesting that justice does not, after all, consist in harmony among parts of the soul, but in having a kind of knowledge. That is, instead of thinking of each part of the soul doing its own job under the direction of a knowledgeable reasoning part, Plato might think that having knowledge of justice, beauty, or the good, is itself sufficient for true virtue. Consequently, it may be that justice can be properly ascribed to the philosophers without reference to anything but the content of their thoughts. Even at the end of the *Republic*—after all that argument about justice in a tripartite soul—Socrates suggests that the soul in its true nature, when it

²³ If saying that the Forms are just seems strange, compare Socrates’ claim that the Form of the Good is the most happy of beings (*R.* 526e).

is separated from the body, might be simple, and that its justice might consist in knowledge of Forms (611b-612a).²⁴ If this explains the justice of the philosopher, perhaps it explains the justice of God in the *Theaetetus*, too.

But now we raise perhaps the most difficult question for interpreting Plato's position on godlikeness: What difference does it make whether one assimilates oneself to God or to the good? If it is knowledge of the good (or justice or beauty) which makes God worthy of imitation, why not bypass God altogether and imitate the Forms directly? If this is possible, then the relevance of God to the good life fades, and godlikeness becomes superfluous to the interpretation of Plato's conception of the final end. Indeed, this may be why recent scholarship on godlikeness in Plato is so scant: becoming like God seems redundant within a Platonic conception of things. We can see that *Aristotle* kept godlikeness in the picture by *identifying* God with the good.²⁵ In Plato, however, the two seem nonidentical.²⁶ In the next section, I argue that, although the precise relation between God and the good in Plato is unclear, it is nonetheless evident that there is a relation, and that it has the resources for explaining why it would be a mistake to bypass God in an effort to assimilate oneself to the good. Once understood, this relation can be

²⁴ In the *Timaeus*, only the rational part of the soul is immortal, the other parts are mortal (69c-d).

²⁵ See Menn (1992).

²⁶ See Benitez (1995) who argues that although god (the Demiurge) and the good seem to be identical in the *Timaeus*, in the *Philebus* god (*nous*) and the good (limit) have different explanatory roles—one efficient, one formal—and are thus nonidentical.

seen to have deep significance not only for Plato's ethics, but for how the ethics fits within Plato's thought as a whole.²⁷

3.4 GOD AS INTELLIGENCE

Stephen Menn (1995) has recently argued that Plato's conception of God, as it is found in the *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*, is that of God as *nous*.²⁸ Menn claims that *nous* is a virtue and not a mind or special kind of soul as many scholars have thought. One reason of his reasons is that Plato often mentions *nous* alongside wisdom ($\text{fr}\acute{\omicron}\text{nhsiw}$), understanding ($\text{sof}\epsilon\alpha$), and other cognitive virtues as if they all denote the same thing or the same sort of thing.²⁹ I agree with Menn that Plato identifies God with *nous* in these dialogues, and I think that Menn is right to notice the way that Plato uses *nous* to denote a virtue, but I shall refrain from holding that this is the only sense in which *nous* appears in the dialogues. Accordingly, I shall translate *nous* as "intelligence" so as to emphasize its primary sense as a virtue without completely removing the ambiguity that is sometimes present in Plato's usage.³⁰

²⁷ See Doherty (1956) and (1960), and Rutenber (1946) ch. 1 for further discussion of god's relation to the good.

²⁸ It is, however, unclear and controversial as to whether *nous* is the highest god in Plato.

²⁹ Cf. *Phlb.* 13e4, 21d9-10, 28a4, 28c3, 28d8, 30c6, 30c9, 55c5, 59b7, 59d1, 63c5-7, 66b5-6; *Ti.* 34a2; *Lg.* 963a6-9, 965d2.

³⁰ For example, in the common phrase $\text{pr}\acute{\omicron}\text{sexe t}\acute{\cup}\text{n no}\acute{\epsilon}\text{n}$ (*Plt.* 259d10, 268e4, 306c3), $\text{no}\acute{\epsilon}\text{w}$ seems to be a faculty for thinking rather than a cognitive excellence. See DeFilippo (1997) for further discussion.

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates tells of the hope he once had for intelligence as cause of generation and destruction (95e ff.).³¹ He says that as a youth he was interested in natural philosophy, and that he once heard someone reading a book by Anaxagoras, saying that “intelligence is the orderer [1 diakosm«n] and the cause of everything” (97c1-2). Socrates says he was intrigued by this idea, for if it were true, then “the directing intelligence would order and arrange each thing in the way that was best” (97c4-6). Thus, Socrates took it to be constitutive of the causal nature of intelligence that, if it is a cause, it causes for the best. By studying Anaxagoras, he hoped to find out how intelligence orders the natural world for the best.

Upon reading Anaxagoras’ book, however, Socrates found that Anaxagoras did not appeal to intelligence, but to “air and ether and water and many other strange things” as explanatory principles (98c1-2). As a counterexample to this appeal to material causes, Socrates offers as an explanandum the fact that he is sitting in prison waiting to be executed. He says,

If someone should say that without having such things—bones and sinews and whatever else—I would not be able to do the things that have seemed [best] to me, he would be speaking the truth. However, to say that I do what I do on account of these things—while I’m acting intelligently [n“]—but not on account of choosing the best, would be to give a very long and careless explanation indeed. (99a5-b2)

³¹ My thoughts on this passage have been influenced by Graham (1997).

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates does not presume to know how things are arranged for the best, and he says that he would gladly become the student of one who has this knowledge (99c). As a second-best theory of causation, Socrates proposes the existence of Forms, the participation in which explains how something becomes beautiful or good or big. Participation in Forms is an unsatisfactory kind of explanation, however, for it does not explain why it is *best* for something to become beautiful or good or big at a particular time and place.

In the *Philebus*, we again find discussion of intelligence as the cause of things happening for the best, but instead of giving up on the idea, Socrates posits intelligence as one of four categories of being. Socrates takes this position in the course of his and Protarchus' search for the cause of the goodness of the mixed life—the life containing both intelligence and pleasure (22d). The four kinds of being are limit, unlimited, that which results from the mixture of limit and unlimited, and the cause of the mixture (23c-d). The category of the unlimited includes all that admits of “the more and the less,” for example, hot and cold, strong and mild, high and low, fast and slow (24a-e, 26a). The category of the limit includes all that does not admit of the more and the less, for example, the equal, the double, and “all that is number related to number or measure related to measure” (25a-b). When measure or number is imposed on unlimited and opposing qualities in the right way, harmonious and well-proportioned products are generated, for example, the most perfect forms of music, the seasons, health in the body,

and virtues in the soul (25d-26b). Pleasure is itself something unlimited, and so needs law and order to limit it and thus to make it something good (26b-c, 27e-28a).

In order to have generated products, however, Socrates and Protarchus agree that there must be a cause. The sort of cause they have in mind has “the nature of that which makes” (26e6), i.e., the sort of cause that fills the explanatory role of Aristotle’s efficient cause. They call this cause “the thing that constructs or fashions” (τὸ δημιουργῶν, 27b1), a description applied in the *Timeaus* to that which orders the universe. But the cause cannot be just any efficient cause, for it is not enough that limit be imposed on the unlimited. It must be imposed in the right way. Otherwise, Socrates argues, we cannot explain the regularity, order, and beauty of the resulting mixtures, especially as observed in the movements of the sun, moon, and stars (28d-e). Socrates proposes two alternatives: either the world is ruled by chance, or it is ruled by intelligence. Protarchus says that only the ordering activity of intelligence could explain what we see in the heavens (28d-e). Thus, as in the *Phaedo*, it is taken as constitutive of the causal nature of intelligence that it orders things for the best. Socrates then argues that the wisdom and intelligence we use to produce health and other forms of order on a small scale are but part of the wisdom and intelligence which orders the universe as a whole (30a-c). This large-scale intelligence, says Socrates, is the intelligence that the ancients have said is the ruler and king of the universe (28c, 30d).

Socrates and Protarchus have now discovered that intelligence rather than pleasure is the feature of the mixed life that makes it good. Indeed, as the dialogue proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that pleasure has a very restricted role in the good human life.

The strongest and most intense pleasures are excluded as components of the human good since they can harm the development of intelligence in the soul and impede understanding of “what is naturally good in a human being and in the universe and ... what is the form [of the good] itself” (64a1-3). On the other hand, Socrates and Protarchus choose to include pleasures that are “pure and true” in the good life (63e). Pure pleasures are those that fill painless needs. True pleasures are those that involve the appreciation of beautiful and pure shapes, colors, sounds, scents and other perceptible objects (51a ff.).³² Although pure and true pleasures are included in the human good, Socrates claims that the life of intelligence in which there are no pleasures or pains is the most divine of lives (yeiÒtatow, 33b7), thereby casting some doubt on the importance of even pure and true pleasures. Indeed, in the *Philebus*’ final ranking of goods, pure and true pleasures are ranked as only the fifth of five items (66c).³³

Having agreed upon the components of the human good, Socrates declares that they seem to have hit upon “a certain incorporeal order which rules beautifully over an ensouled body,” thus identifying the good with a kind of order (64b6-8). Indeed, when Socrates and Protarchus look for the ingredient in the mixed life that makes it attractive, Socrates says that everyone knows it is “measure and the nature of proportion” (64d9). Socrates then associates these qualities with “the nature of the beautiful” and with truth

³² He also includes pleasures of health and of temperance, but only insofar as they follow virtue (63e).

³³ It is not clear what causes the “imperceptible and painless needs” (51b5-6) of which the pure and true pleasures are supposed to be fulfillments. Since they do not cause pain, they would seem also not to cause a disintegration of our nature (42c9-d3).

(64e), and declares that beauty, proportion, and truth should be treated as a unity and held responsible for the goodness of the mixed life (65a). This is perhaps as near as Plato ever comes to identifying the nature of the good itself in the dialogues.³⁴ At the end of the *Philebus*, Socrates and Protarchus agree that “intelligence and wisdom [νόησις καὶ φρόνησις]” possess far more truth, measure, and beauty than pleasure does (65c-e), and in the final ranking of goods, “that associated with measure” tops the list, followed by the well-proportioned, and then intelligence and wisdom (66a-b). This raises the question again, though: If God is intelligence, but intelligence is not the same as the highest good (understood as that associated with measure), then why should one try to become like God when one might try to become like the good directly by assimilating oneself to measure, beauty, and truth?

The answer, though not explicit, must have to do with our nature as agents, and thus as causes of change.³⁵ Like God, we are efficient causes. Unlike God, however, we can be more or less intelligent, and thus more or less effective at creating order in ourselves and in the world. To become like God, then, is not only to have measure, beauty, and truth feature more prominently in our own souls. It is to be effective at creating appropriate order in the world of change. Thus, godlikeness is the appropriate final end for us because we, like God, are efficient causes, and because God is the exemplary

This may indicate a weakness in the view that pleasure is always a process of restoration to a natural state.

³⁴ Although the Stranger in the *Statesman* says that it is “the nature of measure” that distinguishes the good from the bad in people and in their words and deeds (283e).

³⁵ See *Ti.* 89a.

efficient cause.³⁶ If this is right, and if it is God's nature to impose limit on the unlimited in the right way and thus to generate products instantiating harmony, proportion, and other good qualities, then we can see that becoming like the God of the *Philebus* does not necessarily involve a flight from the world. As with the ideal of divine assimilation in the *Theaetetus*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*, godlikeness in the *Philebus* involves knowledge of the good itself, but unlike that ideal, the good human life in the *Philebus* seems to involve the application of intelligence to the world of change.³⁷ In general, our godlikeness consists in causing goodness to come about in the world.

In the *Timaeus*, we find further characterization of the divine intelligence that orders the universe and of its relation to our souls. As in the *Philebus*, God is identified with creative activity and called a demiurge (1 dhmiourgŪw, 28a6). Timaeus says,

Everything that comes to be arises necessarily by the agency of some cause, for it is impossible for anything to be generated without a cause. So whenever the demiurge looks at that which is always the same, using it as a kind of paradigm, he reproduces its form and quality, and in this way everything he produces is necessarily beautiful. (28a4-b1)

³⁶ This hypothesis is supported by the view that the applied sciences, in order to be included in the good human life, must be directed by the divine sciences, e.g., knowledge of justice itself (62a-d).

³⁷ It might be objected that the philosopher in the *Republic* applies his knowledge of the good to the political realm, and so the difference between the *Republic* and *Philebus* on this issue is not great. We should note, however, that in the *Philebus* there is no hint that the one with divine knowledge must be forced, unlike the *Republic*'s philosopher, to apply his knowledge to the world of becoming.

Like Protarchus, Timaeus holds that the cosmos is the most beautiful of things that have come to be, and so its cause must be a good demiurge, that is, wisdom or intelligence (29a, 46e, 48a). Indeed, it is in virtue of his own goodness that the demiurge wished that everything become as much like himself as possible, and therefore brought order to an otherwise almost completely chaotic world (29e-30a, 69b). To do this, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, thus making it possible for intelligence to order the perceptible world through the agency of the world soul (30b).³⁸

As for us, the demiurge created the immortal part of our souls out of a mixture that was somewhat less pure than that used to make the world soul, and he charged the generated gods with creating our mortal parts—our bodies and the two lower parts of the soul (41a-d, 69c-71e; cf. *Phlb.* 30a). Timaeus' description of the creation of the immortal part of our souls underscores the demiurge's initial impartiality towards us. After mixing this soul-stuff together,

[the demiurge] divided the mixture into a number of souls equal to the number of the stars and assigned each soul to a star. He mounted each soul in a carriage, as it were, and showed it the nature of the universe [τὸν τοῦ παντὸς κόσμον]. He described to them the laws that had been foreordained: They would all be assigned one and the same initial birth, so that none would be less well treated by him than any other.

³⁸ For arguments against the view that *nous* exists, as opposed to comes-to-be, only in soul, see Menn (1995) ch. 4 and Mohr (1985).

Then he would sow each of the souls into that instrument of time suitable to it, where they were to acquire the nature of being the most god-fearing [tÚ yeoseb°staton] of living things. (41d4-42a1, Zeyl trans.)

The nature of the universe which we viewed in our pre-mortal lives is likely the soul of the universe mentioned only a few lines earlier (tØn toË pantÚw cuxØn, 41d4-5). What we should have noticed about this soul is that its outermost movement is uniformly circular and unvarying. Timaeus calls this the movement of the Same (36c). The movements of seven inner circles, on which were placed the sun, moon, and five planets, we likely noticed to be moving somewhat differently than the outermost circle and thus to be affected by contrary movement of the Different (36c-d). At one point, Timaeus calls the movement of the Same the “wisdom [frØnhsin] of the dominant circle” (40a5) and says that this, along with “rotation, an unvarying movement in the same place, by which the god would always think [dianooum°nf] the same thoughts about the same things” (40a8-b1, Zeyl trans.), are the only motions in which the astral gods participate.

When our souls became embodied, however, we became subject to other motions which arise from causes such as sense perception, fear, anger, and love mixed with pleasure and pain (42a, 69b-d). The natural motions of the immortal soul are circular, but the motions of corporeal nature are rectilinear and can be very disruptive to the movement of wisdom (43a-b). Timaeus says,

They [the rectilinear motions] mutilated and disfigured the circles in every possible way so that the circles barely held together and though they remained in motion, they moved without rhyme or reason [ἐλόγως], sometimes in the opposite direction, sometimes sideways and sometimes upside down—like a man upside down, head propped against the ground and holding his feet up against something. . . . All these disturbances are no doubt the reason why even today and not only at the beginning, whenever a soul is bound within a mortal body, it at first lacks intelligence [ἐνούω]. But as the stream that brings growth and nourishment diminishes and the soul’s orbits regain their composure, resume their proper courses and establish themselves more and more with the passage of time, their revolutions are set straight, to conform to the configuration each of the circles takes in its natural course. (43d7-e6, 44a7-b6, Zeyl trans.)

However, it is not easy for the immortal soul to recover its natural condition. For this we need a good upbringing under a good political constitution so that we come to find pleasure and pain in the right things and so that both our bodies and our souls become coordinated and disciplined (44b, 86b-89c). In addition, we need to engage in certain theoretical studies that are appropriate to the most sovereign part of the soul—what Timaeus calls our “daimon” (90a3-4). For this to happen, we should not become preoccupied with thoughts of how to satisfy our appetites or ambitions, thus catering to the mortal parts of the soul, but should become devoted “to the love of learning and to true wisdom [τῶν ἐλθιῶν φρονεσιῶν]” (90b6-7). If our thoughts then hit upon the truth,

Timaeus says that human nature will, to the extent that it can, participate in immortality and we will be exceptionally happy (diaferòntvw eÈda€mona, 90c2-6). As Timaeus explains,

We should redirect the revolutions in our heads that were thrown off course at our birth, by coming to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the universe, and so assimilate [§jomoi«sai] with its objects our faculty of understanding, as it was in its original condition. And when this assimilation is complete [ımoi≈santa], we shall have achieved our final end [t°low]: that most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore. (90d1-7, modified Zeyl trans.)

Those who do not achieve this state are reincarnated as lower forms of life, including birds, snakes, and fish, and the only way for them to make progress and eventually to escape the cycle of reincarnation is to recover fully the intelligence they once had (92c).

Conceiving of godlikeness as the instantiation of thoughts that go round and round inside the cranium is, of course, very strange. But it goes to show just how far Plato is willing to take godlikeness as a conception of our final end. We, or at least the immortal part of us, should quite literally become like the intelligence that moves the heavens by reproducing its motion within ourselves. But of what practical help is this? A conception of the final end is supposed to tell us how to act, think, and feel. Being told that the natural motion of one's thoughts is circular does not give this guidance. We need to

know what the content of our thoughts should be, not what geometrical shape they should take.

Though the *Timaeus* emphasizes the shape of our thoughts, it also gives some information about their content, and seems to suggest that our thoughts have the shapes they do *because* of their content. For example, in the above passage it is because we come “to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the universe” that our thoughts return to their natural shape. Harmonies and the movement of the Same as found in the visible cosmos are the effects of the activity of intelligence as it orders the world of becoming to be like the world of being, i.e., the world of Forms. That there are Forms and that they are the objects of intelligence only, and not of mere true belief, are points made with clarity and force near the center of the dialogue (51c-e). Timaeus argues that if intelligence and true belief were the same, then the things we perceive with our senses would be the most stable things there are. But we know that intelligence and true belief are not the same because we can have one without the other, because intelligence comes through instruction and true belief through persuasion, because intelligence always involves a true account and true belief lacks an account, because persuasion does not affect intelligence while it does affect true belief, and because everyone has a share of true belief, while only the gods and, to a small extent (braxÊ ti), the human race have a share of intelligence. Thus, if our thoughts are to *move* intelligently, they must be *about* objects more stable than generated objects. They must be about the Forms. As Socrates puts it in the *Philebus*, intelligence and wisdom (noËw and frÏnhsiw) are names most

appropriately and accurately applied to “thoughts about what truly is [τὰν περὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν ἀληθειῶν]” (59d1-5).

Although intelligence proper is about the Forms only, it seems that the study of number also has good effects on the quality of our thought. Timaeus says that the demiurge gave us vision so that we could see the changes of day to night and thereby invent number to calculate months, years, equinoxes and solstices. With number we are able to inquire into the thing we came to know when the demiurge assigned each of us to a star, that is, the nature of the universe (47a-b). Familiarity with number is therefore an important instrument in the recovery of our former intelligence. The Athenian of the *Epinomis* agrees: “If number should ever be taken away from human nature, we would never become wise in anything” (977c1-3). The idea seems to be that without number, we would not understand limit or quantity, and without this we would not understand measure and proportion and, hence, the good. Thus, a grasp of mathematics puts us on the road to genuine intelligence and godlikeness. If this is right, it affects the prospects that an ordinary citizen has of becoming like God in the *Laws*.

3.5 GOD AND THE CITIZEN

Of all the dialogues, the *Laws* may be the most down to earth. It is about the institutions of a prospective colony in southern Crete. To give some indication of the work's attention to practical detail, about one third of the book is devoted to the actual laws of the city.³⁹ The laws and other institutions have the city's happiness as their goal, and the Athenian holds that virtue of the citizens is a necessary means to this goal. But what is required for virtue? If in the *Laws* virtue requires knowledge of the Forms and of the way that intelligence orders the world for the best, is virtue possible for most citizens?

As in the other dialogues we have examined, godlikeness is put forward as a normative ideal in the *Laws*, and the Athenian seems sometimes even to assume that godlikeness is what people in fact desire. For example, as a general piece of advice on the place of pleasure and pain in the good life, the Athenian says that "the one intending to become divine" should not recklessly pursue pleasures with the belief that this will make one free from pain (792d4-7). The ideal is also present at the end of the work where the Athenian says that no one should be appointed as a guardian of the laws who is not divine and has not labored over the arguments concerning the existence and nature of the gods (966c-d). Therefore, godlikeness is the ideal even for citizens in the *Laws*.

Moreover, it would seem that Plato has not weakened the ideal in any way. In addition to having knowledge about the gods, the guardians are expected both to know how virtue, the beautiful, and the good are each one and many, and to be able to

³⁹ See England (1921) vol. 1, p. 1, for this estimate.

demonstrate this in argument (965c-966b). The Athenian says, “Those who are to be real [^ntvw] guardians of the laws must truly [^ntvw] understand the things concerning the truth of [all serious matters], and must be capable of interpreting it in speech and of following it in deed” (966b5-7). Understanding, articulating, and acting according to the truth about virtue, the beautiful, and the good are, of course, extremely high standards, and may even surpass the requirements of true virtue as found in the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus* where it seems that the articulation and application of one’s knowledge are not expected.

In a nearby passage strongly suggestive of the *Timaeus*, the Athenian, as he describes two courses of study that conduce to belief in the gods, gives further detail on what the guardians are expected to know:

One is what we said about soul [in Book X], that it is the oldest and most divine of all the things which motion, after coming to be, has given an everlasting existence. The other is that concerning the motion of the stars—that it is orderly—and of all other things of which intelligence [noËw] is master, having set in order the entire universe. (966d9-e4)

The Athenian says that if one studies astronomy in the right way, one will see that the heavens are ordered “by the thoughts of a plan concerning the fulfillment of good things” (967a5), and that the heavens could not be susceptible to such precise calculations unless

soul and intelligence were present (967b). Then, to emphasize the application of these theoretical studies to personal and social life, the Athenian says,

It is impossible for a mortal human to become firmly god-fearing if he does not grasp the two things just mentioned: (1) that soul is the oldest of all the things to have partaken of generation, is immortal, and rules all bodies; and, in addition to these things, that which has now been said many times, (2) that the intelligence of things that are is the leader among the stars and of those necessary studies which take place before these. After he has considered the way in which these matters relate to the arts [tŌn moËsan], he should apply them harmoniously to customs and to the practices of character. He should be able to give an account of as many of these customs and practices as have an account. The one who is unable to acquire this understanding in addition to the popular virtues [dhmosfaiw éreta>w] would hardly ever become a capable ruler of an entire city, but would be an assistant to other rulers. (967d4-968a4)

Thus the Athenian emphasizes the practical application of the guardians' knowledge. In the *Philebus*, there is reason to take the ideal of godlikeness as including the application of knowledge of the good to what lacks order. If Plato's expectations of the guardians in the *Laws* are part of the godlikeness ideal as he now understands it, then becoming like God—at least for those of advanced understanding—now includes the ordering of the social sphere. That is, for a human being, likeness to God does not stop with virtue of

character or with contemplation of intelligence's role in the universe, but extends to the application of the highest forms of knowledge to the philosophical defense and institutional maintenance of good social practices. If this is right, we can now explain why there is no hint that the guardians in the *Laws*, unlike the guardians in the *Republic*, must be forced to involve themselves in politics: the God to which the guardians are assimilating themselves is a God that is involved in, and not transcendent of, the world of change.

But with standards so high, can anyone but the guardians become like God? To answer this question, let us first turn to Book IV where it has just been announced that one of the interlocutors, Clinias, is on the planning committee of the future Cretan colony. The Athenian invokes the help of God as they now begin to discuss how this colony and its laws should be set up (712b), and then asks the interlocutors what sort of constitution the colony will have. The Athenian says that tyranny, democracy, aristocracy, and kingship are not genuine constitutions because they each involve the enslaving of one part of the city to another (712d-e). If one must name the city after that which *ought* to enslave the people, then, according to the Athenian, “[O]ne must use the name of the God who rules as a despot over those who truly possess intelligence”—a hint that intelligence itself should be the ruler (713a2-5). Clinias asks for the identity of this God, and in response the Athenian delivers a myth about the ancient and “most happy” rule of Cronos, of which the best constitution today is but an imitation (713b). According to the myth, the cause of the blissful life that existed under Cronos was the rule of human beings by members of a “more divine and better species”—the daimons (daēmonew,

713c8-d2). The reason the daimons were necessary is that human nature (ἐνὶ φύσει) is not capable of ruling human affairs without becoming swollen with insolence and injustice (713c). Hence the daimons ruled us as we presently rule herds of domestic animals (714d). It is highly significant that it is human *nature* that is singled out as incapable of ruling human affairs and not the whole human person. Interpreters often identify the two, but this leads to a misunderstanding of the myth, as I shall now explain.

The point of the myth, the Athenian says, is that

in those cities where a mortal rules and not a god, there is no escape from evils and toil. However, the myth holds that we by every means should imitate the life said to exist under Cronos, and insofar as there is something of immortality in us, by obeying this in public and in private we should arrange our homes and our cities, calling the distribution of intelligence “law” [τὸν νόμον διανομόντων καὶ νόμον]. But if a single human being, or an oligarchy, or even a democracy—having a soul that reaches out for pleasures and desires, and needs to be filled with them, retaining nothing but being afflicted with an endless and insatiable evil disease—if such a thing shall rule over a city or a private individual by trampling on the laws, there is, as we just said, no means of salvation. (713e4-714a8)

Thus, there is something of immortality in us which the Athenian associates with “the distribution of intelligence” and with the law that should rule over pleasure and desire.

This suggests that the human nature which Cronos did not allow to rule over human affairs is different from that feature of us which partakes of immortality and intelligence.

It is tempting to conclude that the Athenian's conception of the human soul is the same as that of Timaeus: the mortal parts of the soul are the seats of emotion and appetite, while the immortal part, when functioning properly, is the home of intelligence and wisdom. The temptation should be resisted only in part, if at all. At other places in the *Laws*, the Athenian makes it quite clear what human nature consists in. In Book V he says, "By nature, the human consists most of all in pleasures and pains and desires" (732e4-5). In Book VI he says that "for human beings everything depends on a threefold need and desire" for food, drink, and sex, and that "fear, law, and true reason" should be used to hold them in check (782d10-b1).⁴⁰ In Book XI, justice is spoken of as something which "has civilized all the human things" (937d8-e2). And in Book XII, displaying "human nature" is tantamount to becoming vicious (kakÚw, 947e7-8). Therefore, becoming virtuous—becoming like God—is not the fulfillment of human nature, but the subduing of human nature to the divine, whether in the form of the personal rule by a daimon, or through the rule of surrogate reason in the form of the rule of good law.

It is also tempting to interpret the rule of the daimons in the myth of Cronos to be the rule of intelligence in the souls of individuals. Plato often gives non-allegorical interpretations of myths (cf. *Tht.* 152e, 153c-d, 194c) and once suggests that only a youth would always take myths literally (*R.* 378d). The myth of Cronos begs for non-allegorical interpretation, and for those familiar with Timaeus' claim that "one ought to

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ti.* 70d-71e.

consider the most sovereign part of our soul to be a daimon, given to each person by God” (*Ti.* 90a2-4), the most obvious interpretation is that human beings cannot be trusted to have the immortal part of their souls, the daimon, always in command of the mortal parts. Given this understanding of what a daimon is, happiness (*eudaimonia*) would entail the possession of a well-functioning immortal part of the soul.⁴¹

But to return to the Book IV passage, one lesson is that the rule of intelligent law is not partial to the interests of this or that group of citizens. The Athenian uses this fact to reject the views of those who think that, according to nature, those laws are just which aim at maintaining the rule of those in power (714b-715b). He says, rather, that correct laws aim at the common good, and offices should be given not to those who are the most wealthy, strong, or blue-blooded, but to those who obey the laws. Indeed, the most obedient of the citizens should be given “the service of the gods” (715c3-4). As the Athenian explains, “[F]or the good person, to sacrifice and always to converse with the gods in prayers, votive offerings, and in complete service to the gods is exceptionally beautiful, excellent, and conducive to the happy life and is very appropriate” (716d6-e1). These are, of course, rather traditional religious practices, quite unlike the ecstasy of communing with the good itself or the beautiful itself after rigorous training in philosophy. Moreover, the gods to whom the supremely obedient citizen gets to pray and sacrifice are the Olympians, the gods of the underworld, and the gods who possess the city. After these one should honor daimons, heroes, ancestral gods, and one’s living

⁴¹ Democritus, too, claimed that our daimon dwells in our souls, and he associates this with happiness (Diels-Kranz 68B171).

parents (717a-b). For a philosopher who shows little hesitation in rethinking traditional practices when they can be made to suit his philosophical purposes, Plato seems here to be unjustifiably conservative and inexplicably lacking in imagination. As Glenn Morrow put it, “If ... Plato had thought that the old Greek religion was dead, here was a chance for him to propose a new form of worship for his colonists at the beginning of their political life” (1966, p. 124). Instead, Plato liberally incorporates the traditional deities into the law code by making them the patrons of various games, festivals, and dances, as well as of more formal religious observances in local temples. Moreover, each of the twelve tribes of the city has one of the twelve gods as its special patron. Hence we should not think that awarding the service to the gods to the most obedient citizens indicates a lapse of scrutiny on Plato’s part. The gods are everywhere in the city. How is this obvious fact to be reconciled with the conception of God as intelligence—a conception we have already seen to be employed at the end of the dialogue—and with the imperative that the citizens become like God?⁴²

In response, we should first notice that the citizens’ conception of the Olympians and of other deities will have been deeply influenced by an education in which there is no trace of divine immorality. All stories about the gods and all portrayals of them in song and dance will have been carefully examined for hints of divine impropriety. Becoming like these gods, then, will at least make one more just, even if it does not give one knowledge of the good itself and of intelligence’s role in the cosmos. Second, we should

⁴² Even in the *Republic*, though, the Delphic Apollo is the one who enacts religious law (427b-c).

consider a point made by Morrow that even in traditional Greek religion there was some distance between the practices of a particular cult and the transformation of the myths about the god of the cult. As Morrow says,

[T]he heart of Greek religion was not in mythology, but in worship, in the observance of the practices of the cult, as they had been established by long tradition.... Such worship implied, of course, an acknowledgement of the deities to whom sacrifices, prayers, and dedications were offered, and an acknowledgement of their authority over the lives of men, ... [b]ut there is no evidence that religious law required any but the most general beliefs about the nature and history of these divine sponsors of the moral law. (1966, p. 130)

In the *Laws*, Plato requires that the citizens' beliefs about the gods fit within general parameters, but seems to allow different specific conceptions so long as they satisfy those parameters. In Book X, the Athenian merely insists that citizens believe that the gods exist, that they care about human affairs, and that they are incorruptible. If the citizens should study the Athenian's arguments for these general beliefs, they would discover a metaphysics and theology that fits closely with the *Timaeus*, including the claims that soul, including the world soul, is causally prior to body, and when soul is combined with intelligence it guides all things for the best (897b). Hence, Plato must have thought that the ordinary citizen's participation in the practices of the cult were conducive to the virtue of her character and, perhaps, to her grasp of the way that intelligence orders the

cosmos as a whole. Just how this advanced understanding would affect her conception of the traditional gods is an interesting issue, but one which Plato unfortunately does not address.⁴³

In the middle of his account of service to the gods, the Athenian imagines that the future citizens are all present and begins to address them with words that will constitute the opening of the law code's preamble. As it happens, these words also will be frequently cited in later antiquity as evidence of the godlikeness ideal in Plato.⁴⁴ He says,

[T]he God, just as the ancient saying goes, holding the beginning, the end, and the middle of all things, accomplishes his end in an undeviating course by revolving according to nature [εὐκταῖς περὶ κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος]. Justice follows him always, avenger of those who abandon the divine law. The one intending to be happy follows her [Justice] with deference and order. But anyone who is puffed up by arrogance, or exalted by money, honors or a nice shape of the body together with youthful impetuosity and a lack of intelligence, his soul inflamed with insolence, thinking that he needs neither a ruler nor some other leader but is capable of leading others, he is forsaken, bereft of God [ἄρhmωσθεῖ]. (715e7-716b1)

⁴³ Plato's ambivalence toward the traditional gods may have come from Socrates, who, if he is portrayed with some accuracy in the *Apology*, failed to convince the majority of jurors that he in fact believed in the city's gods. See Burnyeat (1997).

The Scholiast says that here “God is clearly the demiurge,” presumably of the *Timaeus*.⁴⁵ But that is not so clear. The demiurge of the *Timaeus* puts intelligence into the world soul and therefore seems to be different from the world soul and the intelligence that comes to be in the world soul. In this passage, however, God seems to be the outermost sphere of the world soul as it moves in a perfect circle. The difference is ethically significant because this God is a soul in the world of change, and is in that respect like us.

Alcinous seems to capture this point when he says that the final end is assimilation to the God *in* the heavens, not the God *above* the heavens.⁴⁶ Alcinous’ reason is that the God above the heavens does not have virtue, but is superior to virtue. If Alcinous means complete virtue, including courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom, then it is hard to see how virtue could be a property of even the God *in* the heavens. Why would the outer sphere of world soul need courage or temperance? On the other hand, Alcinous could be identifying virtue with wisdom and intelligence, in which case his claim makes more sense. The world soul *possesses* intelligence, but the God above the heavens *is* intelligence, and so is better than anything that would need to *have* intelligence in order to be good. The latter interpretation is confirmed to some extent by Alcinous’ further explanation: “Hence one would correctly say that unhappiness [kakodaimonēan] is a bad condition of one’s daimon, while happiness [eùdaimonēan] is a good condition of one’s

⁴⁴ See Alcinous (*Didaskalikos* 181.37-9) who, presumably assuming the utter familiarity of this passage to his readers, does not even manage to complete the opening line before writing καὶ τὰ τοῦτοiw •j∞w, i.e., “etc.”

⁴⁵ Greene (1937) p. 317.

⁴⁶ *Didaskalikos* 181.42-5.

daimon.”⁴⁷ If the daimon is the immortal part of the soul, then the virtue Alcinous’ speaks of here would be the virtue of the immortal part, i.e., intelligence or wisdom. Hence, we follow the God in the heavens by acquiring intelligence.

But that cannot be the full story. The Book IV passage emphasizes justice—the virtue that entails not only wisdom, but also courage and temperance (cf. *Lg.* 631c-d). Justice is said to follow the God, and anyone wanting to be happy must follow Justice (here personified as a goddess) with deference and order. Recall that in the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus* we had difficulty interpreting what the justice of God and the philosopher amounts to since they have little interaction with other people, and since the soul, at least in the *Phaedo*, is non-complex. In *Laws IV*, however, God is not said to be just, but to be followed by justice, thus eliminating the problem of needing to explain the justice of the revolving stellar sphere or its intelligence. Still, personifying justice as a goddess following God leaves the nature of their relationship rather vague. What is clear, however, is that justice is necessary for godlikeness, that the unjust soul is ruled by misguided passion, and that unjust souls are “bereft of God”—presumably meaning that they are devoid of intelligence. In the *Timaeus*, the mastery of one’s passions is said to be necessary and sufficient for justice (42b) and, in the *Laws*, justice is often described as the intelligent mastery of pleasures, pains, and desires (631b-632a; 644c ff.). The general picture seems to be, then, that misguided affections can prevent intelligence from taking its natural place in the soul (cf. 653a ff.; 672c), and that justice consists of having affections which readily follow right judgment about the good.

⁴⁷ *Didaskalikos* 181.45-182.2.

After the Athenian finishes his initial statement, Clinias declares, “One thing is clear: all men ought to think hard about how they will be among the followers of God” (716b8-9), thereby showing that the Athenian has made his point. The Athenian then explains what it is that makes us like God, emphasizing, as Socrates does in the *Philebus*, the prominent place of measure in the good life:

What action is dear to and follows the God? One, as one ancient saying has it: ‘If it is measured, like is dear to like’; but unmeasured things are dear neither to each other nor to the measured. For us, the God would be the measure of all things, and much more so than any, as they say, human being. The one who would be dear to such a being must himself do everything in his power to become like that being. According to our argument, the temperate person among us is dear to God, for he is similar. The intemperate person, on the other hand, is dissimilar and different, and is unjust.

(716c1-d3)

The claim here is not that temperance and justice make us like God because God is temperate and just, but that we become like God by becoming measured, and that for creatures like us becoming measured causes us to become temperate and just. God, and not a human being as Protagoras thought, serves as the measure of all things for us because God is the perfect instantiation of measure in the world of change. If measure is the good, then the point is simply that we become like God as we instantiate the good.

If the idea is simple, its implementation is not—especially in the absence of a god or an extraordinary human being to function as a divinely intelligent king. Hence, to make justice and godlikeness possible for the ordinary citizen, the citizen must have some other means of acquiring good judgment. This is where the Athenian’s conception of law becomes important. If law is to rule in the city and obedience to law is to make citizens just and godlike, the law itself must embody right judgment about the good. The Athenian seems confident that this is the case, for he says that enslavement to the laws is really enslavement to the gods (762e) and that law is the offspring of intelligence (890d). He also says that “of all branches of study, the most important for making the student better would be those concerning the laws, if they are established correctly. Otherwise it’s in vain that our divine and marvelous law [*nomos*] has a name akin to intelligence [*nous*]” (957c3-7). Hence, obeying the law and studying the law both help to make us better. Obeying the law has this effect because, if it is correct, it praises and blames the right sorts of action and character, especially as portrayed in drama, song, and dance, thereby controlling and correctly guiding our pleasures and pains (cf. 653a ff.). Studying the law, however, would not alter or reinforce our affections so much as help us better understand the law’s conception and valuation of virtue.

Along with obeying and studying the law, the Athenian recommends that ordinary citizens study mathematics and astronomy to some extent. As for general education in mathematics, the Athenian says that

with respect to household management, political order, and all the arts, no single branch of learning has so great a power as the study of numbers. But the greatest thing is that it arouses the one who is by nature sleepy and unlearned, and produces quickness in learning, a good memory, and sharpness of mind, thus enabling him to surpass his own nature by a divine skill. (747b1-6)

In another passage, the Minister of Education is urged to have everyone educated in

arithmetical calculations—about which we declared everyone must grasp as much as is necessary for war, household management, and the management of the city. Moreover, they should learn whatever is useful, for these same purposes, of what pertains to the revolutions of the divine things, the stars and the sun and the moon: they should learn about the arrangements every city needs to make in respect to these things. But just what are we referring to? What we mean is the ordering of the days into the revolutions of the months, and the months in each year, so that each of the seasons, sacrifices, and festivals will receive its due for itself according to the sequence of nature, will keep the city alive and awake, will render honors to the gods, and will make the humans more prudent in these matters. (809c-d, Pangle trans.)

The study of mathematics is extended to astronomy, but not, it would seem, for the purpose of appreciating the beauty of the heavens. As the Athenian says later, the precise

understanding of mathematics and astronomy which results in the understanding of the intelligent movement of the heavens will be left to members of the Nocturnal Council (817e-818a). Still, it would seem that general familiarity with these things does help the citizen in some way to become like God, for the Athenian says,

A human being would fall far short of becoming divine if he were capable of knowing neither one nor two nor three nor in general the even and the odd, or if he knew nothing about counting, or if he were incapable of numbering the nights and the days, and were inexperienced with the orbits of the moon, sun, and the other stars. (818c3-8)

The study of mathematics and astronomy is thus presented as instrumental to becoming divine. Most citizens do not proceed to a full understanding of these subjects, but that does not prevent their studies from arousing their minds and increasing their learning capacities. To import a view from the *Timaeus*, even if a full recovery of the intelligence we once had is not within the reach of most citizens in this lifetime, we can still progress toward godlikeness by ordering our souls in accordance with the laws, and by engaging in studies of law, mathematics, and astronomy.

Still, ordinary virtue and understanding are not the same as divine virtue and understanding. Does Plato's view offer consolation to the good but not especially talented citizen? According to what the Athenian calls "the justice of the gods," there is reason to think so (904e). In Book X, the Athenian claims that the kind of individual we

become depends on what we wish and desire to be (904c). Delighting in vice will make us more vicious and will result in our associating with the vicious both in this life and the next. On the other hand, loving virtue will make us more virtuous and will result in our associating with the virtuous. In this way, the justice of the gods makes virtue and vice their own reward (904d-e). According to the Athenian, this principle applies across different lifetimes and is without exception (905a; cf. 906b). There is no suggestion here, as there might be in *Republic X*, that divine compensation for losses in conventional goods results in restoration of those goods, as if this would restore happiness. In *Laws X*, divine justice seems unconcerned with bodily and external goods. The only suggestion otherwise is that each soul comes to associate with other souls like it. As a concession to an external good, this seems quite innocent, for all the emphasis is still upon virtue, and the ordinary citizen is given reason to care not only about her own virtue, but about that of her fellow-citizens. Regarding citizens of extraordinary virtue, however, the Athenian suggests that an even greater good awaits, for they will be transported to another, better place—presumably to dwell with the astral gods and to escape mortal things forever (904d6-e1).

3.6 CONCLUSION

Not everything relevant to godlikeness in Plato has been discussed here. For instance, I have not discussed the desire for immortality and the vision of the beautiful itself in the *Symposium*, or the *Phaedrus* myth about the tripartite soul struggling to follow the twelve

Olympians around the rim of heaven. I have also not discussed possible relations between Plato's conception of godlikeness and the initiatory practices of some Greek cults. I hope that these omissions will be excused, however, for my purpose has been to explain what can reasonably be called Plato's considered view of godlikeness as our final end. I call it his "considered" view not only because it likely the one he held in his later years, but because he had philosophical reasons for seeing it as an improvement over his views in the middle dialogues. First, the conception of God as intelligence in the late dialogues fills a gap which Plato knew to exist in the explanatory principles of the middle dialogues. That is, it provides a the kind of efficient cause that fits nicely within the scheme of formal and final causes already developed. Second, making intelligence the leading virtue for human beings puts the conception of God at the center of Plato's ethics and unifies the ethics with the metaphysics in a deep and elegant way (cf. *Lg.* 631c-d). Third, by conceiving of God as intelligence alone, Plato does not attribute to God properties such as justice in a way that creates difficulties for explaining on the one hand how God could have those properties, and on the other hand how God remains relevant as an ideal when it is God's *properties* that seem to be the real objects of admiration.

That said, Plato does not always hold up intelligence itself as the God to which we should be assimilating ourselves. He seems happy to commend morally upright Olympians as the objects of worship for most citizens, presumably because assimilation to these gods would order human passion under the direction of the intelligence that is embodied in the law. The most virtuous citizens, however, are said to become divine as they grasp the nature of virtue, the good, and the beautiful themselves, see how

intelligence orders the cosmos for the best, and apply their understanding to social practices. Whether these citizens take the supreme object of admiration to be intelligence itself or intelligence as it comes to be in the cosmos, especially as it obtains in the soul of the stellar sphere, is not clear. What is clear, however, is that Plato wishes the citizens to recover the natural, intelligent state of their immortal souls to the greatest degree possible in this lifetime. The extent to which they accomplish this is the degree to which they become like God. For that reason, it seems safe to conclude that godlikeness is central to Plato's ethics.

CHAPTER 4

RATIONAL PERSUASION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the *Laws*, Plato tries to persuade Magnesia's citizens that their institutions are correct. This chapter examines how and why he does this. Our two main questions will concern whether Plato uses rational means to persuade the citizens, and, if so, why he thinks rational means should be used. I shall argue that Plato does try to persuade the citizens rationally in the *Laws*, and that a concern for the happiness of the citizens and the city motivates the attempt. That is, Plato thinks that the more a citizen comprehends the reasons for the city's institutions, the closer he or she comes to wisdom or intelligence—the leading component of complete virtue. The more virtuous a citizen becomes, moreover, the more happy he or she becomes, and, because citizens are the city's parts, the more happy the city becomes.¹

To provide some background to *Laws*' treatment of these issues, let's sample the *Republic* and *Statesman* on persuasion. At the end of *Republic* III, Socrates says that, if possible, all citizens should be persuaded that they are siblings sprung from the same mother earth, and that the god mixed gold into the rulers, silver into the auxiliaries, and

iron and bronze into the workers as a sign of who is most honorable. Socrates admits that the rulers might not believe the noble lie, but if not, they apparently will not discourage other citizens from accepting it. In the *Statesman*, the Eleatic Visitor says that a doctor may contravene any prior instructions he may have given in order to force patients to do what promotes their health—even after persuasion has failed (296a-297b). He says a statesman similarly may force citizens to break with their traditional practices in order to make them follow a better course, even if the statesman’s effort to persuade them has failed. Hence, before the *Laws*, Plato condones the use of force and lies to promote the good of the city and its citizens.

Some have said that the trend continues in the *Laws*. Karl Popper notes correctly that Plato advocates both persuasion and force in the *Laws*, but says that the persuasion consists largely of “lying propaganda” or “rhetorical propaganda.”² Laszlo Versényi says that the preludes attached to Magnesia’s laws “consist almost entirely of non-rational persuasive material rather than reasoning” and that education in Magnesia “is enchantment rather than enlightenment, incantation and training in orthodoxy (literally, correct belief) rather than a leading of men out of darkness to light.”³ R.F. Stalley, too, says that the *Laws* offers “the kind of persuasion effected by rhetoric, which results

¹ In chapter 1 I defend this chain of justification.

² Popper (1962) p. 270 n.5, p. 271 n.10. For Plato’s advocacy of force along with persuasion in the *Laws*, see, for example, 660a, 661c, 662b, 711c, 718b, 721e, 722b, 753a, 783d, and 862d.

³ Versényi (1961) p. 70.

merely in belief,” rather than “the kind which produces genuine knowledge.”⁴ Glenn Morrow is more sympathetic. He says, “We cannot in truth condemn Plato’s methods as unfair means of persuasion without at the same time condemning most of what has ever taken place under the guise of moral instruction.”⁵ But even Morrow concedes that the *Laws* shows “the victory of morality and the suppression of reason,” and that Magnesian public education reveals Plato’s “concern lest character be corrupted by too much knowledge.”⁶ If these criticisms are correct, then not only has the trend continued, knowledge itself has become dangerous!

More favorable assessments are offered by Christopher Bobonich and Terence Irwin. Bobonich argues that “when Plato in the *Laws* insists that the laws try to persuade the citizens what he has in mind is rational persuasion: the citizens are to be given good epistemic reasons for the true beliefs that they are to adopt and for the course of action they are to follow.”⁷ Irwin says, “[The city] persuades and educates the citizens by explaining to them why a particular law is reasonable,” and that this provides “a level of understanding that goes beyond mere acceptance of what one is told.”⁸ For Bobonich and Irwin, the *Laws* differs significantly from the *Republic*: the city and its laws explain and justify to the ordinary citizen the laws he or she should obey, and thereby improve the citizen’s understanding of the city’s institutional structure.

⁴ Stalley (1983) p. 43.

⁵ Morrow (1953) p. 244.

⁶ Ibid. p. 244, p. 246.

⁷ Bobonich (1991) p. 369.

⁸ Irwin (1995) p. 352.

So does Plato use rational persuasion in the *Laws* or not? As it happens, the answer depends on how we define rational persuasion. Plato often contrasts persuasion with compulsion in the *Laws*, and he advocates both to make citizens obey the law, but he never calls some kinds of persuasion “rational” and other kinds “nonrational.” Is our question therefore misplaced? Perhaps we should consider what motivates the interest in it.

Popper started the debate, and he states his motive in the Preface to the first edition of *The Open Society and Its Enemies*: “[I]f our civilization is to survive, we must break with the habit of deference to great men. ... [S]ome of the greatest leaders of the past supported the perennial attack on freedom and reason.”⁹ Since half of Popper’s book is a critique of Plato’s political thought, we can assume that he thinks Plato was an enemy of freedom and reason. Popper wrote his book when the outcome of the Second World War was in doubt, and he admits in retrospect that this partly explains the harshness of his

⁹ Popper (1962) p. vii. Although Popper started the debate in the twentieth century, the prominent nineteenth century English liberal and classicist, George Grote, expressed similar sentiments: “Plato begins his career with the confessed ignorance and philosophical negative of Sokrates: he closes it [in the *Laws*] with the peremptory, dictatorial, affirmative of Lykurgus” (1965, vol. 1., p. xi). Grote says that the Sokrates of the *Republic* “is no longer a dissenter amidst a community of fixed, inherited, convictions. He is himself in the throne of King Nomos: the infallible authority, temporal as well as spiritual, from whom all public sentiment emanates, and by whom orthodoxy is determined” (vol. 3, p. 240). “As for the Sokratic Elenchus [in the *Laws*],” Grote says later, “it is not merely not commended, but it is even proscribed and denounced by implication, since free speech and criticism generally is barred out by the rigorous Platonic censorship” (vol. 3, p. 304). As I argue below, however, the elenchus is present in the *Laws*. It is true, though, that Plato does not commend its use to just anyone. And for good reason: if used by someone uncommitted to virtue, it can dislodge such commitment in the one examined instead of creating in him a desire to become a better human being (cf. *R.* 538c-539a).

criticisms—presumably because he thought he saw remnants of Plato in Nazism.¹⁰ Morrow sought to defend Plato from Popper’s attack, pointing out that Plato, too, was influenced by historical conditions: “Plato had a particular horror of the factional violence between democrats and oligarchs with which the Greek cities of the late fifth and early fourth centuries were sadly familiar.”¹¹ Morrow could have supported this claim with evidence of Plato’s concern for political unity in the *Republic*, *Statesman*, and *Laws*. Instead, he criticizes the *Laws* by appealing to a roughhewn liberal ideal: “[Plato] deprived himself of the sole means of correction, viz., the free play of individual criticism.”¹² Versényi, in a review of Morrow’s book on the *Laws*,¹³ continues to stoke the fire of liberal indignation: “[E]ducation in the *Laws* boils down to nothing but simple habituation, indoctrination, and non-rational persuasion of the citizens.”¹⁴ For his part, Stalley worries whether in Magnesia “the individual is free to choose his own way of life” and whether there is “room for self-expression on the part of the citizens.”¹⁵

If left with this, we could complain that the standards used to criticize Plato are themselves left undefended and largely undefined. Morrow and Versényi express preferences for Socratic styles of inquiry, claiming that Socrates had “the spirit of genuine persuasion, the willingness to be persuaded as well as to persuade,” and that in

¹⁰ Ibid. p. viii.

¹¹ Morrow (1953) p. 234.

¹² Ibid. (1953) p. 250.

¹³ Morrow (1960).

¹⁴ Versényi (1961) p. 68.

¹⁵ Stalley (1983) pp. 43-4.

the *Laws* “there is obviously no question of dialectic or anything resembling maieutic questioning.”¹⁶ This gives us some idea of what the critics mean by “reason” when they say or imply that the *Laws* does not display it. The critic with the most extensive account of rational persuasion, however, is Stalley. In an article responding to Bobonich’s defense of the rationality of the persuasion in the *Laws*, Stalley writes,

[G]enuinely rational persuasion must present those to whom it is addressed with reasons about which they can make up their own minds. It must treat them in other words as beings capable of exercising rational choice. This means, for example, that alternatives must be set out in a genuinely impartial way and that clear distinctions must be drawn between what is proved and what is merely taken for granted. ... Except possibly in the case of his proofs of the existence and care of the gods [in *Laws X*], [the Athenian] does not set out alternatives in anything like an impartial way and relies heavily on assumptions that are taken for granted. ... There is no suggestion that the individual citizen should develop his or her own morality in the sense of being able to choose his or her own moral code.¹⁷

¹⁶ Morrow (1953) p. 250, Versényi (1961) p. 74. Although I shall not argue the case here, I think the first claim is false: the Socrates of the early dialogues, like Plato throughout his career, never suggests that he is willing to be persuaded that virtue is not the most important good in a person’s life. I think the second claim is also false. As I shall argue below, the Athenian uses an argument resembling the elenchus to refute the view of his interlocutors that the purpose of the lawgiver is victory in war.

¹⁷ Stalley (1994) pp. 175-6.

The idea of impartially setting out alternative moral codes and of carefully distinguishing the content of those codes from the considerations in their favor may be attractive to some. Such an idea does indeed require faith in the rationality of the chooser, since a rational choice would seem depend on the chooser's ability to detect the truth of premise and conclusion, and the strength of the logical connection between them.¹⁸ It also has high expectations of the impartiality of the persuader—an impartiality even the most indifferent debater may not attain. Plato is capable of presenting a sophisticated and subtle account of an opponent's position; witness the reconstruction of Protagorean relativism in the *Theaetetus*, for example. But Plato is no indifferent debater: he is solidly committed to the importance of virtue for the happiness of citizen and city, and he has a particular view of what virtue is. Should we therefore conclude that he cannot rationally persuade the citizens that their institutions are correct? I shall argue that we should not. I shall also argue that more is at stake here than whether Plato satisfies a liberal standard of persuasion. Rational persuasion is a necessary means to Plato's own aim in the *Laws*: the virtue of city and citizen.

4.2 DEFINING RATIONAL PERSUASION

Since part of our goal is the discovery of whether in the *Laws* Plato tries to persuade the citizens rationally, and since Plato does not give his own account of rational persuasion,

¹⁸ Both here and throughout this chapter, when I speak of logical connections, a premise's support for a conclusion, logical relevance, and the like, I mean to include deductive, inductive, and abductive forms of inference.

we need to define rational persuasion. Our definition should be true to important contours of our own concept of rational persuasion, and it should be appropriate for an evaluation of persuasion in the *Laws*.

Let's begin with some distinctions. First, we should distinguish persuasion from other forms of discussion. If Ann is trying to persuade Bill, Ann is trying to convince Bill of a view that Ann thinks Bill should accept. Persuasion is therefore different from forms of discussion in which neither party has in mind a view of which she hopes to convince the other. Discussions aimed only at exploring an issue or a theory can be like this. Persuasion is also different from discussions in which one party is trying to help the other come to a view, but does not have in mind a particular view which she thinks the other should accept. Discussions aimed at helping someone decide on a career path can be like this.

Second, we should make explicit a basic ambiguity in the phrase "Ann is rationally persuading Bill." On the one hand, this phrase could concern the way in which Ann is *presenting* an argument to Bill and thereby connote that the presentation satisfies norms of rationality. On the other hand, the phrase could concern the way in which Bill is *receiving* Ann's argument and thereby connote that the acceptance satisfies norms of rationality. Although these connotations are not mutually exclusive, our interest is primarily in the rational presentation of an argument. We aim to discover whether Plato tries to present the citizens with good reasons for their laws, or whether he tries to persuade them by nonrational means. By "rational persuasion" we will therefore mean the presentation of an argument in a way that satisfies norms of rationality. Norms of

rational acceptance are not irrelevant to rational persuasion in this sense, however. The goal of rational persuasion is not just the production of a certain belief in the other, but the other's acceptance of that belief on the basis of his or her grasp of good reasons for it. For Plato this is particularly important, for he aims to increase the citizens' understanding of what justifies their laws.

In order to develop a definition of rational persuasion in this sense, let's consider the following case:

Case 1: Ann says to Bill, "You should run for city council because you would be a good city councilor."

Is this an example of rational persuasion? Before answering, we should isolate at least these five factors:

- (1) Is the conclusion true? (Should Bill run for city council?)
- (2) Is the premise true? (Would Bill be a good city councilor?)
- (3) Does the persuader accept the premise as decisive support for the conclusion?
- (4) Is the persuader justified in accepting the premise as decisive support for the conclusion?
- (5) Is the persuader justified in believing the target (Bill) capable of understanding the argument?

By answering these questions in different ways for Case 1, perhaps we can decide what conditions are necessary and sufficient for rational persuasion.

To start, let's assume that in Case 1 the answers to (1)-(5) are all affirmative: (1) Bill should run for city council, (2) Bill would be a good city councilor, (3) Ann accepts the premise as decisive support for the conclusion, (4) Ann is justified in her acceptance, and (5) Ann is justified in believing that Bill is capable of understanding the argument. This seems to be a clear case of rational persuasion: Ann is ingenuously trying to get Bill to accept a view on the basis of his own grasp of a decisive argument. Affirmative answers to (1)-(5) seem to suffice for rational persuasion.

Although rational persuasion aims at the target's rational acceptance of the conclusion, failure to achieve rational acceptance does not disqualify persuasion from being rational. If Bill understands Ann's argument, but thinks falsely that the argument is indecisive (whether because he is being overly skeptical, or falsely thinks that there are more important reasons not to run for city council, or for some other reason), his failure to be convinced by Ann does not diminish the rational quality of her attempt to persuade him.

Decisive arguments, we should clarify, include not only deductively sound arguments, i.e. those in which true premises entail a true conclusion. They also include strong inductive arguments, i.e. those in which the truth of the premises makes the truth of the conclusion likely (in some suitable sense of likelihood), as well as strong abductive arguments, i.e. those in which the conclusion is a good explanation of the truth of a premise (in a suitable sense of good explanation). In short, decisive arguments include

good defeasible arguments as well as sound indefeasible arguments. Also, it is possible that there be more than one decisive argument for the same conclusion.

Let's examine whether rational persuasion requires affirmative answers to all (1)-(5). First, we can see that a version of Case 1 in which the answer to (1) is negative, but the answers to (2)-(5) are affirmative, can be an example of rational persuasion. Perhaps Bill would not be able to feed his children on a councilor's salary, and this fact is more important than his service as a city councilor. In such conditions, Ann can still aim ingenuously for Bill's rational acceptance of the conclusion, for Ann's unawareness of the inadequate salary may be nonculpable. Hence, an affirmative answer to (1) is not necessary for rational persuasion.

What if neither premise nor conclusion is true, but Ann is unaware of this? What if Bill would be a lousy city councilor—lining his pockets with public funds and not caring about the common good—and so should not run for office, but Ann, having seen Bill's excellent service on the school board, thinks that Bill would be a good city councilor and consequently thinks that he should run for office? It seems that Ann can be mistaken about the premise without undermining her justification for accepting it. If there is evidence that Bill would turn out to be a lousy councilor, but Ann is nonculpably unaware of this evidence, she can still be aiming for Bill's rational acceptance of the conclusion. Hence, an affirmative answer to (2) is not necessary for rational persuasion.

What if the answer to (3) is negative? If Ann does not believe that the argument is decisive, her persuasion is disingenuous. Disingenuous persuasion is always nonrational persuasion because it never aims at rational acceptance. Disingenuous persuasion comes

in at least three forms. First, Ann could think the conclusion is true, but regard the premise as a nondecisive reason to accept the conclusion. In such a case, Ann is pretending that the premise is stronger support for the conclusion than she thinks it really is. For example, she might think that Bill would be a good councilor, but that her friend Connie would be a better one and that Bill would provide little challenge to Connie in an election. If Ann then encouraged Bill to run for office by saying only that he would be a good councilor, she would be persuading disingenuously. Second, Ann could think that the conclusion is true, but not regard the premise as offering even a nondecisive reason to accept the conclusion, let alone a decisive reason. In that case, Ann is hoping that Bill will be convinced by a premise to which she lends no credence whatsoever. For example, she might not think that Bill would be a good councilor, but nevertheless think that he should run because she believes that Connie would handle him easily in an election. Third, Ann could think the conclusion is false, but think that Bill should accept it anyway, and so offer Bill a premise that she hopes will convince him, but which she cannot herself regard as a decisive reason.¹⁹ For example, Ann might want Bill to think that he should run for office so that in preparing for the race he will meet Connie, the two will fall in love, and they will drop their campaign plans for wedding plans. For each form of disingenuity, the answer to (3) is negative.

The *Republic*'s noble lie exhibits that last two kinds of disingenuity. Socrates wants to convince the citizens that they are siblings and that some citizens are more worthy of

¹⁹ I am assume that one cannot regard as a decisive reason a consideration that logically supports a conclusion one thinks is false.

honor than others, but the myth with which he tries to persuade them is one that he does not himself accept as true and, hence, could not accept as offering a decisive reason.²⁰ Moreover, Plato seems to have different attitudes towards the two parts of the conclusion: he believes that some citizens really are more virtuous than others and so are more worthy of honor, but does not believe that the citizens are actual siblings. He would prefer that the citizens think that they are siblings, however, for this supposedly would make them less partial to their biological kin and more loyal to the city as a whole. Plato's intent is not malicious; he thinks that the effects of identifying with the city as a whole are good for city and citizen alike. The question, though, is whether disingenuity—even if benevolent—undermines persuasion's rationality.

Consider the following variation on Case 1:

Case 2: Ann thinks that Bill should run for city council and knows that Bill takes astrology seriously, and so says to him, "You should run for city council because the horoscope says that local politics is in your future."

Is this persuasion disingenuous? It is if Ann rejects astrology, or if she accepts astrology but does not think that an astrological consideration decides this issue, or if she thinks the conclusion is false but thinks that Bill should accept it anyway. Whether the persuasion is rational, though, is the more difficult question. What if astrology is true, the horoscope

²⁰ This is compatible with Plato's considering the myth a merely verbal lie. For an insightful discussion of verbal vs. real lies in the *Republic*, see Reeve (1988) pp. 208-13.

is a reliable guide to astrological predictions, one should always pursue what astrology predicts, but Ann is nevertheless being disingenuous? In that case, Bill is being given a decisive argument in spite of Ann's dissimulation. This sort of case indicates that rational persuasion consists not just of an argument, but of the persuader's attitude toward the argument. She must accept it as decisive. Hence, an affirmative answer to (3) is necessary for rational persuasion.

One might object by saying that sometimes there are decisive reasons to dissimulate when persuading. Suppose Ann knows that now the best career move for Bill is to run for city council, but she knows that Connie is the only one who could persuade him of this. Ann tries, then, to persuade Bill to meet Connie, but does not say why she really thinks such a meeting is important. Isn't such persuasion rational?

In response, we should observe that Ann's argument is for a conclusion different from the view that she wants Bill ultimately to hold. If Ann does persuade Bill to meet Connie, and Connie does succeed in persuading Bill to run for council, the relation between Ann's argument and Bill's belief that he should run for council is merely causal. For Ann to persuade Bill rationally that he should run for office, her argument must provide logical support for the view that she wants him ultimately to adopt. Otherwise the connection between argument and conclusion is merely explanatory and not justificatory. This does not mean that Ann's attempt to persuade Bill to meet Connie was unjustified. There may be a decisive reason for Ann to dissimulate in such a case. We should not call such persuasion rational, though, for this suggests that a logical connection obtains between premise and conclusion. We might say, "It was rational for

Ann to persuade Bill” to indicate that we think that Ann acted for a decisive reason, but not, “Ann persuaded Bill rationally,” for this indicates that Ann tried to get Bill to act from his own acceptance of a decisive reason.

An affirmative answers to (4) and (5) are also necessary for rational persuasion. Rational persuasion aims at rational acceptance. If the target is to accept rationally the argument of the persuader, the persuader must be prepared to defend the argument against challenges, and the target must be able to understand the argument. If the persuader’s acceptance of the argument as decisive is unjustified, she has overestimated the inferential import of the premise and her argument may not survive the target’s scrutiny. To avoid this, the persuader should carefully observe rules of logical inference and assessment of evidence as she arrives at beliefs that will be used in further inferences. Moreover, if the target interprets the argument in a way different from the way the persuader intends it, it is possible that the target’s acceptance of the conclusion is rational, but it is not the case that the persuader rationally persuaded him of it. For the latter to occur, the target must accept the conclusion for the persuader’s reasons. Hence, for the persuader to make a rational presentation of her argument, she must have reason to believe that the target is capable of understanding the argument. Otherwise the ingenuity of the presentation is undermined.

We have decided that affirmative answers to (1) and (2) are not necessary for rational persuasion, but that affirmative answers to (3)-(5) are necessary. Before concluding that affirmative answers to (3)-(5) are jointly sufficient for rational persuasion, though, we should consider the following two cases:

Case 3: Ann says to Bill, “If you do not run for city council, I will harm your cat.”

Case 4: Ann says to Bill, “If you run for city council, I will give you one million dollars to spend as you please.”

Threats and offers are forms of nonrational persuasion. Why are they nonrational? In suitably constructed circumstances, Cases 3 and 4 would seem to portray Ann as offering Bill premises that she accepts as decisive support for the conclusion. Moreover, they seem to portray Ann as reasonably believing Bill capable of understanding the argument. What, then, makes threats and offers nonrational forms of persuasion?

One suggestion is that the persuader control’s over the conditions mentioned in threats and offers makes such persuasion nonrational. As one political philosopher puts it, rational persuasion must “appeal to facts, values, or ideas independent of our discussion and over which [the persuader has] no control.”²¹ Another suggestion, though, is that threats and offers have an *ad hominem* character: they appeal to the target’s beliefs without requiring that the persuader share those beliefs. For example, Ann must believe that Bill believes that harming his cat would be a bad thing, or that Bill believes that his receiving one million dollars would be a good thing. But Ann herself need not

²¹ Christiano (1996, p. 117). Christiano contrasts this with “bargaining, which involves the creation of reasons in discussion by the making of threats and offers.” It seems, though, that the persuader’s control over the conditions of the threat or offer is more significant than that the reasons are created in the process of discussion. For example, Ann could threaten Bill by telling him that she will harm his cat if he does not run for office, or Ann could create the same reason for Bill to run by forming the same intention to harm his cat, but without telling Bill that this is her intention.

believe that harming Bill's cat is bad or that Bill's receiving one million dollars is good (except, in the latter case, as a means to Bill's running for office). The *ad hominem* character of threats and offers therefore violates the requirement that the persuader accept the premise as decisive support for the conclusion. It requires only the target's acceptance of the argument. In order to account for the nonrational nature of threats and offers, then, we need not add further necessary conditions to our list. Affirmative answers to (3)-(5) seem jointly sufficient for rational persuasion.

There might be other subtleties for which we should account in our definition, but the definition does seem to capture several important features of rational persuasion. We shall assume that such remaining subtleties, if they exist, pose no great problems to our account. Before applying our definition to the *Laws*, though, let's evaluate the conditions that Stalley suggests are necessary for rational persuasion. Assessing his conception of rational persuasion will enable us to judge whether it is an appropriate standard for critiquing the persuasion of the *Laws*. We can list Stalley's conditions as follows. First, rational persuasion, at least with respect to moral codes, must impartially present those to whom it is addressed with reasons for at least two different views. Second, the targets of the persuasion must be able to make up their own minds about which reasons are best, or they must be treated as if they have this ability.²² Third, the persuader must present the premises in such a way that it is clear which are assumed and which have been proven.

²² Stalley does not say that rational choice entails choosing in accordance with the *best* reasons, but I assume that this is what he means by the "reasons about which [the targets] can make up their own minds" when they act "as beings capable of exercising rational choice" (1994, pp. 175-6). Otherwise, choosing in accordance with lesser reasons would suffice for rational choice.

As an initial response, we note that it is unclear whether Stalley is in fact describing a kind of persuasion. Persuasion is an attempt to get someone to accept a certain view or to take a certain course of action. What Stalley seems to have in mind is the presenting of conclusions and premises without a bias on the presenter's part as to which view the person should choose. Or when there is such bias (as there is in every kind of persuasion), one should conceal it so as not to show favor towards one view rather than another. Otherwise the impartiality of the presentation is compromised. Hence, if Stalley's is an account of persuasion, it would seem to require that the persuader be disingenuous.

In response to the first condition, we might wonder why at least two different views must be presented. This requirement implies that one cannot rationally persuade another by presenting only one view, even if it is the true view, all reasons presented for it are decisive, and the persuader is not being disingenuous. Presenting more than one view is justified, however, when the persuader is unjustified in thinking that she has a decisive argument for a conclusion. But in such conditions, the persuader should probably not be trying to persuade the target, but rather helping him to sort through different arguments for different views as Stalley suggests. This kind of discussion is not persuasion, though. Hence, the first condition is unnecessary.

In response to the second condition, it is unclear whether Stalley thinks that the target of persuasion must actually be capable of choosing in accordance with best reasons, or whether he thinks he must be treated by the persuader as so capable, or both. Our account accepts the latter condition but not the former. The reason the former is too

strong is that rational persuasion is compatible with the persuader having a justified false belief about the target's ability to understand the argument. So long as the persuader has a good reason to believe that the target is capable of grasping the argument, she can proceed with the argument in an ingenuous manner. If it turns out that the person cannot grasp the argument, the presentation was nonetheless rational since it justifiedly aimed at the target's rational acceptance.

The third condition seems unobjectionable since drawing clear distinctions between what has been assumed and what has been proven is a general ideal of argumentation. It is unclear, though, whether Stalley permits defeasible as well as indefeasible proof. If only the latter, then this condition is too strong, especially with respect to arguments for moral codes.

We seem justified in concluding, then, that the standard of rational persuasion suggested by Stalley is in some places too strong, in others too vague. Failing to measure up to it should not disqualify persuasion from counting as rational, including the persuasion found in the *Laws*. Let's now consider whether the *Laws*' persuasion measures up to our standard.

4.3 PERSUASION IN THE *LAWS*

A natural place to begin an examination of persuasion in the *Laws* is Book IV. At this point in the dialogue, Clinias has announced that he is on the planning committee for the new colony and has requested the assistance of the Athenian and Megillus in

constructing Magnesia's law code. As usual, the Athenian leads the discussion. He imagines that Magnesia's future citizens are present, and addresses them first with an exhortation to follow God and to fulfill their duties towards gods, daimons, heroes, ancestral gods, and parents (715e-718a). Duties to offspring, relatives, friends, fellow citizens, and strangers are to follow, but the Athenian decides that there first needs to be agreement among the interlocutors on the form that the laws should take. This discussion begins with the following brief but revealing remark about the goal of the laws and the means of achieving the goal:

The detailed account of the laws themselves will, if the gods go along, make our city blessed and happy — sometimes by persuading [πειϋουσα], other times by punishing with force and justice when dispositions do not yield to persuasion [μὸ Ἰπεκονταπειϋοῦ τῶν ἀϋκῶν καὶ δεικῶν κολᾶζουσα]. (718b2-5)

According to this passage, the goal of the laws is the happiness of the city. To achieve this, the laws will use both persuasion and punishment to secure the citizens' compliance with the laws. The passage implies that the Athenian prefers persuasion to punishment as a means of securing compliance, but nothing is said as to why this preference exists. As our examination proceeds, we will see that the preference is explained by Plato's concern for the virtue of the citizens. Before considering what is special about persuasion, though, we should see what it has in common with compulsion.

If we step back from Book IV momentarily to survey the *Laws* as a whole, we can see from Plato's use of the verb *persuade* (peϵyein) that persuasion, like compulsion, is thought to be a means of securing the citizens' compliance with the laws. The verb appears in the *Laws* 120 times including participles and one verbal adjective. Over half of these appearances are in the middle or passive voice. Of the middle and passive appearances, only one in four is best rendered simply as "persuaded."²³ Sometimes the middle or passive can be rendered as "believe," indicating that the target believes that of which he has been persuaded.²⁴ On one occasion the passive connotes seduction and denotes the beloved who has given way to the lover (836d6). However, in nearly three of four appearances of the middle and passive, and in the lone appearance of the verbal adjective, the verb most strongly connotes obedience.²⁵ This indicates that successful persuasion results in the target's behavioral compliance with a directive, not just his verbal acceptance of the directive. Further indications that compliance is a goal are found when examining instances of the verb's negation, εpeiyen. It appears twenty-six times in the *Laws*, all but two of which strongly connote disobedience.²⁶ Moreover, the

²³ E.g. 659d6, 663b4, 801b5, 804c8, 804e5, 836d8, 870d7, 885e5, 888c9, 899c9, 906e6, 941c2, 959a4, 965e3, 886d7.

²⁴ E.g. 870e4, 887d2, 913c1.

²⁵ E.g. 648c2, 671d9, 679c4, 689b4, 700c3, 711c2, 713e8, 714b1, 714b2, 721c8, 721d1, 741d5, 756c4, 774a3, 774d1-2, 775a2, 775b2, 790a6, 800a8, 810a4, 822e7, 823a1, 823c6, 839c5, 843a6, 844d3, 845c7, 854c7, 866a2, 868a6, 907d7, 917b7, 917d1, 925e2, 927c7, 932a5, 938a5, 938a6, 949d3, 952c7, 955d2, 955d3, 960a6; 634c9 (peist^oon).

²⁶ 671e3, 684b10, 741b7, 741d3, 745a3, 775b2, 854c8, 866a5, 868d5, 868e5, 868e12, 871a1, 880c8, 881e4, 914b6, 915c3, 917c4, 917c7, 926b4, 935e6, 938a7, 949c6, 949d5, 949d8, 956d6, 960a7. The connotation of disobedience is less strong at 871a1 and

noun *épeiyÆw* occurs twice and both times connotes disobedience (927d1, 936b2). The prevalence of these connotations is not the only evidence in the *Laws* of what Plato aims to achieve with persuasion. We have already seen that obeying the law is thought to contribute to the happiness of the city, for example. However, the manner in which Plato uses these key terms is strong evidence that, even if there are further aims, persuasion at least aims at behavioral conformity.

Let's return to Book IV. As we further examine the character of persuasion there, we are looking for evidence of how Plato thinks persuasion secures the citizens' compliance with the laws. Since we are interested in rational persuasion in particular, we are looking specifically for evidence that Plato aims not just at outer conformity with the law, but also at understanding the reasons for the law.

A few lines after the passage quoted above, the Athenian says the following about the means to achieve the compliance of the citizens:

I would wish that the citizens be as readily persuadable as possible with respect to virtue [...w eÈpeiyestâtouw prÚw éretØn], and clearly the lawgiver will try to accomplish this in every aspect of his legislation. ... The things just said [i.e. the exhortation to follow God and to fulfill one's duties to gods, daimons, heroes, ancestral gods, and parents] seemed to me to be useful for making one listen to the lawgiver's advice in a gentler and more agreeable mood since the advice would not

956d6. Prepositional compounds of *peËyein* in the *Laws* include *énapeËyein* (886d7, 941b6), *parapeËyein* (892d3), and *sumpeËyein* (720d7).

address a soul that was wholly unprepared. So we should be quite satisfied if the lawgiver makes the one who hears his advice even a little bit more ready to learn [ἐμᾶστερον] by making him more agreeable. For there is no great plenty or abundance of people eager to become as virtuous as possible as quickly as possible. (718c8-e1)

The Athenian then quotes Hesiod on how difficult it is to become virtuous, thus making it even more clear that the lawgiver aims to make the citizens virtuous. Implicit here is that receiving and living in accordance with the lawgiver's advice, i.e., the laws, is instrumental to personal virtue. If we conjoin this with the thought of the previous passage, we see that Plato must think that the virtue of the citizens is at least partly constituted by their obedience to the laws, and that their virtue contributes to the happiness of the city. We thus have some indication as to why Plato believes it important that the lawgiver take steps to make the citizens receptive to his laws. The passage suggests that if the lawgiver did not take such steps, that is, if he were to issue orders without supplementing them with some kind of persuasion, the citizens would be unreceptive and hostile. This is not a profound point; Plato is merely observing that most people do not like to be ordered around, especially if there is no indication of the reason behind the order. Adding persuasion does not guarantee that the citizens will be receptive, but it makes it more likely.

Our question, though, is whether the persuasion is rational. The Athenian says that the lawgiver should try to make the citizens more gentle and agreeable so that they will

be more receptive to the law. Plato could use various rhetorical devices to make the citizens feel more warmly towards the lawgiver's advice without disclosing what he considers to be reasons for accepting his directive. If this is the strategy, then the persuasion is nonrational. This is not to say that such persuasion would be malicious in intent or that accepting the advice would not produce good effects. Rather, it means that the persuasion would not contain what Plato considers to be decisive reasons and so would be disingenuous.

In order to properly assess the content of the persuasion to which the Athenian is referring in this passage, we should consider Plato's conception of virtue. As we have just seen, the professed point of making the citizens agreeable with persuasion is to help them become virtuous. In the *Laws*, virtue involves both properly trained affections (or passions) and true beliefs. With respect to affections, Plato thinks that we have affection for those things that give us pleasure and that we are averse to those things that give us pain. In order for the affective side of virtue to take shape, we need to be pleased by things that are just, fine, or good, and pained by things that are unjust, shameful, or bad. For most people this requires extensive training and habituation from an early age; very few are born with passions that need only slight modification. On the belief side, virtue requires that we at least have true beliefs about what is just, fine, or good and their opposites, and perhaps also that we have some understanding of why our beliefs are true. The additional understanding helps not only to make true beliefs more firmly entrenched in the soul. It also helps to make one a better judge of what actions are appropriate in particular circumstances. The completely virtuous soul is the one in which the passions

accord perfectly with true evaluative beliefs, and the beliefs are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of their justification—an understanding that includes knowledge of the just, the fine, and the good themselves (cf. 965b-966b). Lesser forms of virtue can involve a lesser degree understanding of the reasons for one's beliefs, a lesser degree of harmony between one's passions and one's beliefs, or lesser degrees of both understanding and harmony. In the *Laws*, Plato thinks of Magnesia's laws as containing the best guidance that intelligence can provide in the absence of the personal rule of a divine being. That is, the laws are thought to embody correct judgments of what is just, fine, and good, and so are thought able to serve as standards for the citizens to use in improving their passions and beliefs.

With this conception of virtue and of the law's role in the acquisition of virtue, we can better understand what Plato means by making the citizens both "as readily persuadable as possible with respect to virtue" and "more ready to learn." The first imperative implies that the lawgiver should try to make the citizens receptive to the right beliefs and passions. It is unclear whether persuasion must be rational for this to happen; in children, at least, beliefs and passions can be inculcated through edifying but false myths. The second imperative, however, may be suggesting that the lawgiver should prepare the citizens not only to adopt the correct passions and beliefs, but also to learn something of their justification. Indeed, if we consider the content of the Athenian's exhortation to follow God—the passage to which the Athenian is referring with the phrase "the things just said"—we find several suggestions of Platonic doctrine. One is the account of God as moving in "an undeviating course by revolving according to nature

[ἐπειὲς περαίνει κατὰ φύσιν περιπορευόμενος]” (716a1-2)—a description that fits the movement of the Same in the *Timaeus* (36c2-3). Another is the claim that we become virtuous or “like God” insofar as we possess “measure [μέτρον]” (716c1-d4)—a property of first rank in the final account of the good in the *Philebus* (66a6). We can see, then, that even at the beginning of the law code the Athenian is putting forward a conception of value and of reality that Plato himself seems to accept.

This is a major contribution to the rationality of the persuasion. The citizens know that the lawgiver aims to make them virtuous with his legislation. The emphasis on justice, temperance, and piety in the exhortation of Book IV, as well as the lawgiver’s counsel on caring for one’s soul at the start of Book V, make this abundantly clear at the law code’s outset. Plato surely thinks that there is decisive reason to adopt a law if it helps produce virtue, so the persuasion passes the ingenuity test. It may be, though, that some citizens are unconvinced by the appeal to virtue. If this lack of conviction is caused by a lack of understanding of what virtue is, Plato makes helpful suggestions as to the nature of God and the good to help provide that understanding. Plato is willing, then, to supplement his justification with explanation. Whether the considerations that Plato is offering the citizens are decisive reasons for them to accept the laws depends on the justification of Plato’s conception of what virtue is and of his estimation of its comparatively high worth. Even though an evaluation of Plato’s conception of virtue is relevant to a full determination of whether the persuasion offered the citizens in the *Laws* is rational, making this evaluation would involve us in the sort of detailed examination of

Plato's metaphysics for which there is no space here.²⁷ We have seen already, though, that Plato aims to produce in the citizens an understanding of the reasons for their laws. This is enough to refute a critic's suggestion that Plato is an enemy of reason who does not try to lead the citizens "out of darkness to light."

There is yet more evidence of Plato's intention to persuade rationally in the *Laws*. It concerns the famous comparison of lawgiving to the practice of medicine in Books IV and IX, and the equally famous prelude to the law against impiety in Book X.

The medical analogy first appears shortly after the passage in Book IV we have been discussing. Before the analogy begins, the Athenian says that a law should not only prescribe what the appropriate or "measured [m^otrion]" action is for a certain type of circumstance, it should also give an account of what "the measured" is, and of how much it is (719e). That is, the law not only should prescribe the appropriate action, but should also give an account of why it is appropriate. The Athenian then asks,

Should the one appointed over our laws preface them with no such statement, but instead declare at once what must or must not be done and, after attaching a threat of punishment for disobedience, turn to another law without adding to the statutes a single bit of encouragement or persuasion? (719e7-720a2)

²⁷ Chapter 3 contains a fuller discussion of the theological element in Plato's ethics, however. For an argument that Plato's ethical views do not rely on his metaphysical views, see Annas (1998) ch. 5.

Of course, the answer is negative. Though it seems obvious that laws should have persuasive preludes, the Athenian says that no lawgiver has considered it before (722b4-6, e1-4). A law without a persuasive prelude, he says, is like the blunt prescription of a slave doctor, whereas a law with a persuasive prelude is like the more gentle prescription of a free doctor (722e-723a). The slave doctor, who cares mostly for slaves, acts as if he has a precise knowledge of medicine, but his understanding derives only from following his master's orders and from observation and experience, but not from an acquaintance with the nature of the body and disease.²⁸ When treating a patient, the slave doctor neither gives nor receives an account of the illness afflicting the patient, but issues prescriptions like a stubborn tyrant.

By contrast, the free doctor has the medical knowledge that the slave doctor lacks, and treats his patients more gently (720a-b). The details of the free doctor's practice are important for assessing the nature of persuasion in the *Laws*, so I quote the Athenian's description of it in full:

The free doctor for the most part treats and oversees the diseases of the free. As he closely examines these diseases from their beginning and according to nature, and as he consults with both the patient himself and his friends, he learns something himself from the sick and, so far as he can, teaches the one who is ill. He does not give a prescription until he has in some way assisted in persuading [p' sumpeēs'], and then,

²⁸ katá fêsin dç mÆ, 720b4.

as he continues to make the ill person gentle with persuasion, he tries to lead him back to health. (720d1-e2)

The free doctor learns what he can about the patient's condition from the patient and from those close to him. This may be part of what makes free doctor's practice persuasive, for the patient will gain confidence that the doctor understands his condition and will consequently be more receptive to the prescription. The doctor also educates the patient about his condition "so far as he can," implying perhaps that the doctor's time with the patient is limited, or perhaps that the patient has limited ability to grasp the medical details. Whatever education is attained, though, it is likely to make the patient more comfortable with the doctor's prescription.

The free doctor continues to persuade throughout the treatment, and he apparently succeeds in making the patient more receptive to his advice, but the Athenian stops short of saying that the doctor does not give a prescription until after the patient is convinced that the prescription is correct. Some have interpreted the text this way, however. For example, R.G. Bury, A.E. Taylor, and Trevor Saunders indicate in their translations that the doctor prescribes a treatment only after the patient has given his consent.²⁹ However, the phrase in question—*p' sumpefs'*—in its context implies that the doctor has made an effort to persuade the patient, but need not imply that the patient has been convinced that the prescription is correct. To convey clearly that the patient is convinced before the

²⁹ Bury (1926), Taylor (1934), and Saunders (1975) *ad loc.* I assume that the translators take consent to imply conviction. To suggest either consent or conviction, Plato could use a middle or passive form of *peeyein*.

prescription is delivered, Plato could have used a verb in the middle or passive voice. This is not to say that the active verb cannot possibly mean that the doctor always prevails upon the patient with his persuasion before proceeding with treatment. If one insists on taking the verb this way, though, one should note that, according to the passage, persuasion's immediate goal is the taming of the patient. The educational discussion can have this mollifying effect without resulting in the patient's conviction that the doctor is prescribing the right course. There is no question that persuasion is here given a more important role in medical practice than it is in the *Statesman*, but it would nonetheless be a mistake to conclude that Plato in the *Laws* requires that such practice include not only persuasion but also consent.³⁰

One's interpretation of the medical analogy has implications for one's understanding of lawgiving. If the free doctor waits for consent, then by analogy so does the lawgiver. We can see, though, that the immediate goal of persuasion in lawgiving is not consent but mollification. Two pages after the passage last quoted, the Athenian reflects upon the point of persuasion in lawgiving with these words:

It became clear to me that this entire account, which the speaker delivers as he is persuading, is spoken for the following reason: that the one to whom the lawgiver is

³⁰ In reference to the medical analogy of the *Laws*, Julia Annas says, "Citizens are entitled to demand that they be persuaded of the goodness of a course of action, however expert the ruler" (1995, p. 62 n.58). If "being persuaded" implies that the citizens must give their consent before the lawgiver may set down a law, this claim is too strong. The idea that citizens are *entitled* to persuasion from the lawgiver is also foreign to the analogy (see Conclusion).

addressing the law might welcome the order—that is, the law—more agreeably and, on account of being more agreeable, be more apt to learn [ἐμὰ ὅστρον]. (723a4-7)

This drives home the point already suggested by the description of the free doctor: persuasion aims first at putting the target in a frame of mind conducive to learning. This does not mean that such persuasion is nonrational, especially if what is to be learned is that there is decisive reason to act as the law prescribes, and if grasping that reason is what makes one more agreeable. Grasping the reason might require substantial background information, i.e., an explanation of the view behind the law. When the target understands this explanation, it seems reasonable for Plato to expect the target to be less hostile to being told how to act.

There is another reason not to attribute a consent requirement to Plato. The Athenian says often that those who disobey the law should be punished. Disobedience often implies a failure to be convinced that one should obey the law, i.e., a lack of consent.³¹ If consent were required for legislation to be binding, then the laws could not be legitimately enforced on those who remain unconvinced. Charity requires that we interpret Plato as holding coherent views where we can, and a consent requirement on the enforceability of law would render him incoherent.

³¹ One might argue that failure to be convinced does not imply a lack of consent; a consent condition could be weaker than a conviction condition. As I understand Plato's concept of persuasion, though, giving consent and being convinced are both indicated by obedience, i.e., that one has "been persuaded."

One might think that finding a consent requirement in Plato would be advantageous to our claim that Plato tries to use rational persuasion in the *Laws*. If Plato endorses such a requirement, the endorsement might be seen as evidence that Plato thinks that the citizens are entitled to rational persuasion because they are rational. However, this thought makes the controversial and vague assumption that the citizens are, in fact, rational. Plato's concern is to enable the citizens to comprehend what he takes to be the reasons for their laws. We might say that he wants the citizens to become rational, but by this we mean that he wants the citizens to understand what reasons there are. If "rational consent" means that one accepts a conclusion because one understands the reasons for it, then rational consent is indeed what Plato aims at. It would be a mistake, though, to hold that persuasion is rational only if it achieves the target's rational consent, for rational persuasion, as I have argued above, does not depend on actually convincing the target.

In Book IX, the Athenian describes further the free doctor's activities and emphasizes something that raises a question about the appropriateness of the analogy to lawgiving:

We did not make a bad comparison when we compared everyone living under laws today to slaves who are under the medical care of slaves. For one should know this well, that if any of the doctors who practice medicine on the basis of their experiences but without theory [êneu lÒgou] should ever encounter a free doctor in discussion [dialegÒmenon] with a free patient as he uses explanations that come close to philosophizing—tracing the disease from its source and surveying the whole nature of bodies—he would immediately give a hard laugh and say nothing other than what

always comes to the mouths of most so-called “doctors” about such things, namely, “What a fool! You’re not doctoring the patient but virtually educating him, as if what he needed was to become a doctor rather than healthy!” (857c4-e1)

We saw before that the free doctor consults with the patient and his friends. Here the emphasis on discussion is even more pronounced. Indeed, the slave doctor contrasts the free doctor’s practice with his own by saying that the free doctor’s consultations come close to philosophizing and resemble medical education. This indicates that Plato considers the rational quality of the persuasive preludes to be quite high. As we compare this description of the free doctor to the lawgiver’s practice, though, an important question comes to mind: How can the citizens of Magnesia have a discussion with their lawgiver, i.e., the Athenian, when the Athenian will not be living among them? The lawgiver aims to make the citizens virtuous, but if he is not around, how can he persuasively instruct them on what is required to become virtuous? The analogy seems to break down.

Saving the analogy is important, for its failure on this point would mean that the citizens do not have a source for understanding what is good for their souls in the way that the free patient has a source for understanding what is good for his body. No analogy is perfect, so perhaps we should not expect it to deliver on this point. I think we can, however, see a way for the analogy to work even here. Although the Athenian will not be a Magnesian, his views are represented extensively in the laws and their preludes, and in the rest of the *Laws*. If the citizens can be instructed in these views without the

Athenian's physical presence, this would go a long way to preserving the analogy and, more importantly, to enabling the citizens to comprehend more fully how they should live.

As it turns out, the Athenian recommends in Book VII that the *Laws* itself be used as a school text.³² He says that of all the speeches in poetry or prose with which he is acquainted, the speeches of the *Laws*—or at least those delivered to this point in Book VII—seem “the most well-measured and appropriate for the young to hear” (811d2-5). These speeches and those of similar quality should be written down and school teachers should learn and praise them (811d-e). The Athenian does not say explicitly that the young should themselves read these speeches, but there is strong contextual evidence that they should not only read them but commit them to memory. The Athenian's recommendation that the *Laws* be used as a school text arises because he needs to replace the morally dubious poems and anthologies that children had traditionally learned by

³² Bobonich (1996) discusses an apparent tension between requiring the citizens to read the *Laws* and expecting the citizens to converge on the same true beliefs. Bobonich's worry seems to be that (1) reading the *Laws* will encourage the citizens to reflect on their ethical beliefs and thus to find and appreciate reasons for those beliefs, (2) such ethical reflection requires exposure to false beliefs, and (3) such exposure risks undermining the commitment of at least some citizens to at least some of their true ethical beliefs. In response, we can say that it seems clear that the citizens are to appreciate what the Athenian considers genuine reasons for the laws and are thus to reflect on the grounds for their laws. It is not so clear, however, that such reflection requires exposure to false beliefs, and I find no evidence in the *Laws* suggesting that such exposure is necessary for finding and appreciating genuine reasons—unless the false beliefs are one's own, in which case it helps to become aware of them so that they can be rejected. By identifying with Clinias and Megillus, the citizens are likely to have some of their false beliefs exposed and criticized as the Athenian engages them in various arguments. This kind of exposure seems different from the sort of broader exposure that Bobonich seems to have in mind, however. Hence, I do not find in the requirement to read the *Laws* the tension that Bobonich describes.

heart as part of their overall education. There is no indication, moreover, that Magnesia's children are to be less familiar with the *Laws* than other children are with traditional poetry (810e ff.). The impact of this policy extends beyond children, though, for the text of the *Laws* would displace traditional poetry from center of Magnesian culture. That fact, and the fact that the *Laws* is pitched at an adult level, suggest that Magnesia's adult citizens will also be well acquainted with the *Laws*.

How, then, might the text of the *Laws* educate the citizens as a free doctor educates his patients? I suggest that it does so by inviting the citizens to identify with the Athenian's interlocutors, and thus to see themselves as engaged in conversation with their lawgiver as he prescribes what would be best for them and their city. We know, for example, that most of Magnesia's citizen population will be drawn from Crete and the Peloponnesus, both of which were inhabited mostly by Dorians (708a). We also know that, when the city is founded, the pool of those wishing to become citizens will be culled so that the good remain but the bad, especially those dominated by avarice, are sent away (735a7-737b9). The typical Magnesian citizen, then, is just the sort of person that can be expected to identify with the Athenian's interlocutors: two respectable Dorian gentlemen—one from Crete, one from Sparta—both proud of their native institutions and values.

Plato does not think that this pride is entirely unfounded. The dialogues say many complimentary things about Crete and Sparta. The personified laws of the *Crito*, for example, claim that Socrates "is always saying that [Crete and Sparta] are well-governed [ἐὐνομήσται]" (52e5-53a1). In the *Hippias Major*, Socrates suggests that Sparta is well-

governed because it highly values virtue, for “virtue,” he says, “is the most prized thing in well-governed cities [ταῦτα εὖ ἄνθρωποι πόλειςιν]” (283e9-284a2).³³ Moreover, Socrates in the *Minos* says that the laws which King Minos received from his father Zeus were divine, and that they made Crete, and then Sparta, “happy for all time” (320b5-7).³⁴ We have already seen that the virtue of the citizens and the happiness of the city are aims of the lawgiver in the *Laws*, so if Crete and Sparta had indeed made much progress on these fronts, Plato would naturally want to draw upon this progress when founding Magnesia.

Plato did not think that Crete and Sparta were perfect, though. In *Republic VIII*, the constitution of Crete or Sparta is the first step down from the ideal constitution. Signs of decline are that the citizens consider victory in war an end in itself rather than a means to peace (544c ff.). When this happens, one’s conception and valuation of virtue change. Virtue comes to be seen as a means to successful warfare and as constituted mostly by the qualities of a valiant soldier rather than mostly by the qualities of a good citizen in general.

The distorted conception and valuation of virtue existed at least as early as Sparta’s patron poet, Tyrtaeus. In the mid-seventh century, Tyrtaeus encouraged Spartan troops to conquer and enslave neighboring Messenians with lines such as these:

For a man is not good in war unless he has endured while beholding bloody
slaughter, and assailed the enemy when positioned nearby. This is virtue [ἐρέτῃ];

³³ Cf. *Alc.* I 122c, *Prt.* 342a-343b; Thucydides I.84; Aristotle *EN* 1102a7-11, 1180a24-29 (Homer *Od.* IX.112-15).

this is the best and finest prize for a young man to carry off among humans. It is a good common to the city and to the entire *dêmos* when a man plants himself in the front lines and remains without pause, and forgets completely about shame and flight, being fixed steadfast in heart and soul, and encourages with words the man standing next to him. This is the man who is good in war. (fr. 12.10-14, West 1992)

Tyrtaeus identifies virtue with courage in battle. Plato thinks that this is a mistake, one that Magnesia's citizens ought not share. Indeed, Plato considers this mistake so serious that he makes its correction the first order of business in the *Laws*.

The opening exchange of the *Laws* is a good example of the Athenian caring for the souls of his interlocutors as a free doctor cares for the bodies of his patients. If our hypothesis regarding the sympathy that Magnesia's citizens will feel for Clinias and Megillus is correct, the opening exchange is also an example of the lawgiver treating the citizens for their shortcomings in virtue. The first topic of discussion is the purpose of Cretan and Spartan institutions, especially the Cretan practices of communal meals and of running with light arms over Crete's rugged terrain (625c-e). Clinias and Megillus both affirm that their laws are of divine origin, and the Athenian assumes that the gods who delivered these laws had the correct purpose for them in mind. Hence, when the Athenian asks Clinias and Megillus about the purpose of their institutions, he wants to know how well they understand what that purpose is.

³⁴ Cf. *Min.* 319b ff., *Lg.* 624b; Homer *Od.* XIX.178-79.

Clinias says that the Cretans, like the Spartans, seek to justify their institutions by appealing to their value in preparing for military victory. He explains that “unless one conquers in war, nothing is beneficial [^fellow], whether possessions or institutions” (626b1-3). This states a kind of dependency thesis, namely, that whether one’s possessions and institutions are beneficial to one depends on whether one conquers in war. Unless this happens, they do one no good. Clinias assumes that cities are in an ongoing state of war with each other, and that being conquered by other cities entails being killed or enslaved by them. The suggestion is that in either circumstance one loses one’s possessions and institutions, and so cannot be benefitted by them.

This informs the Athenian of his interlocutors’ understanding of their institutions, and he thinks that this understanding is mistaken in an important way. He does not tell them so at first, however. Rather, he solicits their views on a further matter. He asks about conflict between the better and worse parts of a city, a neighborhood, a household, and an individual. Clinias declares that the victory of the better part over the worse part is the best of all victories (626e), implying that the “victory” or rule of a city’s more virtuous citizens over its less virtuous citizens is better than a city’s victory over other cities. This reveals just how much Clinias’ beliefs about ends are tied to thoughts about victory, war, conflict, and the like. With these beliefs in the open, the Athenian argues that the correct purpose of institutions is not victory in internal or external war (cf. 627d1-4). Everyone aims at the best when institutions are established, he says, but a lawgiver aiming at victory and the things of war aims not at what is best, but only at what is necessary. He is like a doctor who focuses on treating disease rather than on the condition of a body that

never needs treatment (628d2-4). That is, focusing too much on a means can lead one to think mistakenly of the means as an end in itself. The correct aim of the lawgiver, the Athenian suggests, is the happiness of the city and the citizen (πόλιων εὐδαιμονίαν μὲν καὶ φιλίᾳ, 628d5), and one does not achieve this unless one legislates “the things of war for the sake of peace rather than the things of peace for those of war” (628d8-e1). That is, to achieve the proper goal of city institutions, the lawgiver must not confuse means with ends, but must have a clear and accurate conception of the proper end. The Athenian suggests that Clinias and Megillus have misunderstood the end that the gods had in mind when they set down Cretan and Spartan law, and through their discussion the Athenian has brought Clinias and Megillus to see that this is the case.

This recognition is important because thinking that one’s institutions aim at victory in external war affects one’s conception and valuation of virtue. As we saw in the quotation from Tyrtaeus, valuing victory in external war above all else tends to limit one’s conception of virtue to courage. Complete virtue, however, includes temperance, justice, and wisdom along with courage. The Athenian is quite willing to tell Clinias and Megillus—and thus the citizens of Magnesia—that complete virtue involves all four virtues, and that nothing is good for one unless one has complete virtue. And he does so in very clear terms as the opening exchange comes to a close (631b-d). Instead of merely telling them, however, the Athenian also shows how his correct conception of virtue is implied by beliefs that Clinias and Megillus already hold.

The argument is as follows. The interlocutors agree that there are two kinds of war, external and civil, and that civil war the most harsh (ἡλεπῆτατον, 629d2). Those who

excel in civil war, the Athenian explains, are better than the those who excel in external war “nearly to the same degree that justice, temperance, and wisdom coming together with courage in the same man are better than courage itself alone. For one couldn’t ever be trustworthy and sound in civil wars without the whole of virtue” (630a6-b3).

Mercenaries can have the courage to fight in external wars, the Athenian says, but their courage is compatible with most vices (630b3-8). If the lawgivers of Crete and Sparta had aimed only at victory in external wars, they would have needed to develop only mercenary courage in their citizens. The Athenian contends that Minos and Zeus would not have had such a limited aim for Crete’s institutions. Any good lawgiver, he says, “will always establish laws while looking most of all to the greatest virtue. ... This is trustworthiness in dangers [πίστωθω ἢ τὸν δεινὸν]—what one might call complete justice [δικαίος ἔσθ’ ἂν]” (630c1-6). Because they have assumed that victory in external war is the lawgiver’s aim, Tyrtaeus, Clinias, and Megillus all have held mistaken conceptions of virtue. Courage, the Athenian asserts, is only fourth in rank behind wisdom, temperance, and justice (630c7-d1; 631c-d). By appealing to his interlocutors’ beliefs about the comparative harshness of civil war, the Athenian gets Clinias and Megillus to see that they already believe that complete virtue is better than courage alone. Clinias and Megillus do not explicitly assent to the claim that excellence in civil war requires complete virtue, but when Clinias asks the Athenian what he and Megillus should have said, such assent is implied (630d8).

The argumentative strategy here is like that of the free doctor.³⁵ Just as the doctor seeks to learn about the condition of the patient, the Athenian seeks to understand the mistaken beliefs that his interlocutors have about virtue. Such beliefs are analogous to illness in the body because they can prevent a soul from progressing to full health, i.e., complete virtue. To correct the problem, the Athenian discusses with Clinias and Megillus their beliefs and shows them how these beliefs imply a correct conception of virtue. Appealing to his interlocutors' beliefs does not commit the Athenian to the truth of those beliefs, however. Although we can be confident that Plato does think that courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom together constitute complete virtue, we should not think that such virtue has value only as an instrument to excelling in civil war. Nowhere else in the *Laws* does Plato explain virtue's value in this way. Rather, we should see this as an *ad hominem* appeal designed to bring Clinias, Megillus, and Magnesia's citizens to a correct conception of virtue from beliefs they already hold. Once they have the correct conception, the Athenian can explain further what the different virtues are in terms of his ethical psychology. This explanation occupies most of Books I and II. He can also explain to them why virtue is good for its own sake and thereby appeal to virtue to justify the city's institutions. Such explanations need not be comprehensive in scope, however. Plato seems to think that for the purpose of ordinary citizenship, a correct but rough understanding of virtue and its value is sufficient.

We should note again that Plato is trying to persuade rationally the citizens of Magnesia of their institutions. That is, he is ingenuously appealing to the citizens' virtue

³⁵ Cp. *Phdr.* 270b.

as something that justifies their institutions, and he is trying through the *dramatis personae* to educate them as to what virtue is and why it is good. The particular *ad hominem* argument described above is disingenuous, so as a piece of persuasion it is nonrational. Its effect, however, enables Plato thereafter to engage in rational persuasion by allowing him to appeal to, and to elucidate, the citizens' true beliefs about virtue.

Some citizens require more than a rough understanding of virtue, however. Most prominent among these are the members of the Nocturnal Council. They must know exactly how the four virtues are one, as well as how the many fine things are one, and how the many good things are one (965c ff.). The Athenian also insists that Councilors go beyond a conventional understanding of the gods to grasp every proof concerning the gods. Very little is mentioned in the *Laws* concerning the unity of virtue, and nothing is mentioned concerning the unity of the fine or the good. The nature of these unities the Councilors must apparently work out for themselves. Proofs concerning the gods, however, are elaborated in the great prelude to the impiety law in Book X. Although Councilors must master these proofs as part of their development in virtue, the proofs are originally given in response to Magnesians who might hold one or more of three impious beliefs. These beliefs are that the gods do not exist, that the gods do not care about human affairs, and that the gods are persuaded with sacrifices and prayers. Plato thinks that these beliefs either can have a harmful effect on one's conception and valuation of virtue, or are caused by a faulty conception or valuation of virtue. Correcting these beliefs, then, prevents a harmful effect, reforms a harmful cause, or both.

This is easiest to see with respect to the second two beliefs. If one believes that the gods can be persuaded with sacrifices and prayers not to punish injustice, then one must think either that the gods do not value virtue most highly, or that they do value it highly but suffer from *akrasia*. Plato fears that one might use the alleged weakness or faulty attitudes of the gods as an excuse for one's own weakness or faulty attitudes (cf. 636b-d). This, in turn, would encourage vice rather than virtue. As for the second belief, Plato thinks that its cause is the belief that virtue is unnecessary for happiness. Some see or hear stories of the wicked growing rich or powerful and think falsely that wealth and power constitute happiness. They believe that the gods value virtue, but do not see them preventing the wicked from achieving happiness, and so conclude that the gods do not care about human affairs. Plato thinks that if one believes such things about the gods and happiness, one is more likely to commit injustice oneself. This, again, would not conduce to virtue.

It is more difficult to see how the first belief is harmful, for Plato admits that some atheists have just dispositions by nature and so are not inclined to commit injustice (908b). He must think that this kind of atheist poses some threat, however, for he is to be jailed for at least five years. During this time the atheist is to be visited only by members of the Nocturnal Council who converse with him “for the purpose of admonition and the preservation of his soul [ἵνα μὴ ἀποψύχῃ]” (909a4-5). From this we can see that Plato thinks that atheism even in a person with just dispositions is harmful to that person. This suggests that these just dispositions do not amount to the full virtue of justice, for if this were present, the soul would be preserved. Rather, Plato

must think that just dispositions should be guided by at least a rough understanding of the way things really are. The degree to which this comprehension is present is the degree to which one has intelligence or νόησις. Perhaps this explains why the Athenian says that a lack of intelligence (ἄνοητα) has caused the atheist with just dispositions to deny the existence of the gods (908e5-6).

To gain this intelligence, the atheist must learn that the astral bodies are not just lumps of earth and stone as proponents of the new learning claim (886d). Rather, these bodies are what the children's stories and most people say they are: gods (887d-e). The atheist rejects these accounts, however. To change the atheist's mind, the Athenian cannot merely reassert the same stories. He must offer a different argument for the same conclusion. The Athenian does deliver a sophisticated argument for this purpose, one that appeals to philosophical conceptions of soul, intelligence, elements, and principles of change that fit well with what Plato maintains in the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*. We can be confident, then, that Plato himself accepts the argument as decisive.

Further evidence that Plato considers the argument to be rational persuasion is the way it is introduced. At the beginning of Book X, the holders of the impious beliefs are represented as saying,

We now demand, just as you demanded concerning the laws, that before you harshly threaten us, you try to persuade and teach that there are gods by offering sufficient proofs [τεκμήρια λόγων ἡμῶν], and that they are too good to be beguiled by certain gifts and turned away from what is just. ... From lawgivers who claim to be

gentle rather than savage, we demand that persuasion be used on us first. If you do not speak a great deal better than the others about the existence of gods, but at least speak better with respect to truth [prÚw éLÆyeian], perhaps we would nonetheless be persuaded by you. (885c8-e5)

The others with whom the Athenian and his interlocutors are being compared are those reputed to be the best poets, orators, prophets, priests, and others who give accounts of the gods (885d4-7). The challenge is to offer a better account than the ones they offer. The superiority of the account is not to be judged by eloquence or rhetorical flourish, but by the quality of the arguments regarding the truth. The challenge, then, is to use rational persuasion: the Athenian must consider the arguments decisive, and he must educate the targets to the degree that he is justified in believing that they can grasp the arguments. As before, we cannot conclude that the persuasion of Book X is rational without determining whether the Athenian is justified in accepting the premises as decisive. This is the task of another work. We can say, however, that Plato thought the Athenian justified in accepting the arguments as decisive, and so can conclude that the great prelude to the impiety law, just as many other passages in the *Laws*, was thought by Plato to embody rational persuasion.

4.4 OBJECTIONS

Before we conclude with a discussion of what Plato thinks justifies the use of rational persuasion in the *Laws*, let's consider some objections to our claim that Plato tries to persuade the citizens rationally. First, it might be objected that however much Plato tries to justify and explain the laws to the citizens, the fact that he threatens to punish those who remain unconvinced undermines the rationality of the persuasion. That is, Plato commits the informal fallacy of *argumentum ad baculum*.

In response, we can say that Plato adds persuasion to the laws so that threats will not be the only considerations offered to the citizens as reasons for them to obey the laws. As Plato sees it, all other lawgivers add only threats to their laws but no persuasion. The fact that Plato sees the addition of persuasion as an innovation in lawgiving shows that he thinks the considerations offered in the persuasion are different from those offered in the threat of punishment. As different considerations, they can be separately evaluated for their rationality. In effect, supplementing threat with persuasion doubles the number of arguments for the law. Citizens can accept laws for what Plato believes to be decisive reasons, or they can accept them because they do not want to be punished, or both. Thus, instead of seeing the persuasion as joining the threat to become a single argument, Plato sees the persuasion as providing a separate argument to be evaluated on its own merit. A charitable interpretation would separate persuasion in the same way.

A second objection is that, even apart from threats, Plato's means of persuasion are not always rational. In addition to rational persuasion, he also uses myths (804e5, 887d2, 913c1, 927c7), incantations (773d6, 837e6, 903b1), honor and dishonor (648c2, 711c2), and other such devices to effect the correct mental states in the citizens. This, the

objection continues, shows that Plato's commitment to rational persuasion is not as strong as has been suggested.

In response, we should not assume that myth, incantation, honor, and other devices are nonrational means of persuasion simply because Plato does not call them *lógoi*. Indeed, we cannot infer from the mere use of the word *lógow* that Plato intends an argument rather than a fable or some other nonargumentative kind of speech. Rather, each case of persuasion should be assessed according to the criteria we have set out. Only then can we conclude that the persuasion is either rational or nonrational. If the persuasion suggests considerations which Plato thinks are decisive reasons for the law in question, or if it helps explain why the considerations are decisive reasons, then it may be part of an attempt to persuade rationally.

Let's consider some appeals to myths. In Book VII, the Athenian says that he is persuaded by ancient myths that tell of women trained to handle horses, bows, and other weapons (804d ff.). He uses these myths as evidence that the current practice of not training women and men equally is unintelligent and prevents a city from achieving its full potential. In Book X, the Athenian chastises the impious for not believing the myths about the gods that they were taught as children. These myths claim that the sun and moon are gods—something which Plato himself believes (887c ff.). In Book XI, the Athenian says that one ought to believe the myths that say that stealing property or treasure is not advantageous to one's descendants (913a ff.).³⁶ The Athenian does not explicitly say that he believes this myth, but we know from the context that he thinks that

³⁶ See England (1921) on *Lg.* 913c2.

stealing harms the thief's character, and we can reasonably suppose that having a worse character makes one a worse parent, and so less advantageous to one's children. Finally, later in Book XI, the Athenian says that someone given charge of an orphan should be persuaded by the myth which says that the gods and the souls of the deceased parents care about the welfare of orphans and, presumably, will punish those who do not fulfill their duties towards orphans (927e9 ff.). The Athenian insists that the myth is true (927a3). Moreover, the idea that the gods care about the smallest details of human life is argued for extensively in Book X. Hence, it would seem that using myths to persuade the citizens is not always disingenuous on Plato's part. As for whether he considers them to contain decisive reasons for their conclusions, it seems that he sometimes thinks they do, and he is willing to supplement them with non-mythological evidence to support the same conclusions. It seems, then, that Plato often considers an appeal to myth to be part of an overall attempt to persuade the citizens rationally.

The case seems different with incantation. The very word suggests nonrational trickery.³⁷ In two of the passages where the Athenian suggests that incantation be used, it is meant to correct a wayward desire that resists rational persuasion. In Book VI, Plato assumes that a young man will be tempted to marry into a rich family or, if he is undisciplined, that he will want to avoid marrying into an orderly family (772e7 ff.). Marrying a spouse of similar temperament or marrying for money may please the young man, but such unions, the Athenian says, are not in the city's interest. Rather, he should marry someone with whom he can have children that will not contribute to a

³⁷ Cf. Bobonich (1991) p. 374.

temperamental imbalance in the city, and this requires parents that are not both rich or lazy or zealous. Most people would think such a law ridiculous, however, so the Athenian suggests that the policy be carried out not through law but through persuading with an enchanting song (§pñdonta, 773d6). That is, considerations of the city's interest would not move most people to adopt this particular policy as law, so some form of enchantment must be used to reform the obstructing desires. In Book VIII, the Athenian says that the law should forbid a man from desiring the body of a young man, but permit a man to desire that the young man's soul be as good as possible. While Megillus agrees with the recommendation, Clinias remains silent. The Athenian consequently suggests that he try to persuade Clinias with an incantation, though at a later point (§pñdvn, 837e6). From these two examples, it is not clear exactly what the Athenian considers an incantation. He might mean a moving song or a gripping oration—something designed to soften the recalcitrant desire and to redirect it to the appropriate object. If it is either of these likely candidates, however, the possibility remains that the incantation is a part of rational persuasion.

Consider, for example, the argument in Book X that the gods care about human affairs. After arguing that the gods are attentive to the smallest details under their care, including human affairs, the Athenian says that the one accusing the gods of neglect

is forced with arguments [to>w lÒgoiw] to agree that he does not speak correctly.

Still, it seems to me that there is need of some mythic incantations in addition

[§pfd«n ... mÊyvn ¶ti tin«n]. ... Let's persuade the young man with arguments [to>w lÒgoiw] that (903a10-b4)

The Athenian proceeds to say, among other things, that God cares for the preservation and virtue of the universe, that each human being is created for the sake of the universe's happiness, and that each of us should strive for virtue (903b4-905d1). That Plato calls his incantations lÒgoi does not, of course, entail that they contain arguments. As it turns out, however, these lÒgoi do contain considerations that Plato takes to be decisive reasons for being virtuous and for not believing that the wicked are happy. Hence, they supplement the Athenian's earlier argument that the gods care for human affairs with a refutation of the idea that virtue is not necessary for happiness. The supplement is important because the belief that one can be unjust and happy underlies the thought that the gods do not care for human affairs.

If, however, these arguments are part of an attempt to persuade the young man rationally, why does Plato call them "incantations"? I suggest that there are two reasons. First, the solemn tone of the passage has an emotional effect different from the more lively exchange that immediately precedes it. Although Clinias does interject several questions, the Athenian's delivery invites readers to listen as he tells them the way things really are. Second, there is discussion of reincarnation and the principle used to determine whether a parted soul should proceed to a better or a worse existence. Plato does not argue that reincarnation occurs, but describes only how it occurs. This is not to say that Plato does not believe in reincarnation, for it seems clear that he does. Rather,

reincarnation is usually the subject of mythic poetry, and so a discussion of reincarnation is naturally called a “mythic incantation.”

This account of the way in which myths and incantations can be parts of rational persuasion is not meant to suggest that Plato uses nonrational persuasion only rarely. Indeed, he seems quite willing to use it. For example, using honor or dishonor to persuade citizens might suggest that being honored is more important than being virtuous (648c2, 711c2). Plato surely does not believe that honor is more important than the virtue, so to suggest otherwise would make such persuasion disingenuous. If Plato is sometimes disingenuous, however, it is nonetheless because he aims at the citizens’ virtue. Virtue requires not only that one have true beliefs about what is good, fine, and just, and that one have some understanding of why those beliefs are true. It also requires that one’s affections be in accord with one’s true beliefs so that one is pleased by good, fine, and just things and pained by bad, shameful, and unjust things. The Athenian consequently makes heavy use of the lawgiver’s praise and blame so as to inform the citizens of the kinds of character and action that they should love or hate. The citizens may come to value or disvalue these things because they are praised or blamed by the lawgiver, but Plato’s hope is that this slight misconception of what makes things good or bad will be corrected by a better understanding after the affections have generally been habituated correctly (cf. 653a-c). In sum, Plato will often use nonrational means to effect the correct affections in the citizens because having these affections is necessary for virtue.

The best example of Plato’s endorsement of nonrational persuasion in the *Laws* is in Book IX. The Athenian distinguishes injuries caused by unjust dispositions from those

not so caused, and says that only the former should be considered injustices. As for the one who commits an injustice, the Athenian says that

the law will teach and compel him either never at all to dare voluntarily to do such a thing again or to do it very much less often, in addition to making reparation for the injury. To effect these things by deeds or words, with pleasures or pains, honors or dishonors, even by fines or gifts, or generally in whatever manner one can make him hate injustice and cherish, or at least not hate, justice—this is the task of the finest laws. (862d1-e1)

The laws, then, may use any means necessary to bring those who can be cured of unjust desires to love justice.³⁸ The reform process may involve *ad hominem* appeals to the unjust person's love of pleasure, honor, or money, or to his hatred of pain, dishonor, or fines.³⁹ We can be confident, however, that Plato does not want the reform process to end in a love of justice and a hatred of injustice that are based on misconceptions of their value. The subject of reform should eventually accept that justice is not to be valued as a means to pleasure, honor, or money, but for its own sake. In the meantime, however, Plato is willing to appeal to the unjust person's misguided desires and beliefs to cause a

³⁸ Saunders (1991) ch. 5 gives a valuable account of punishment's curative function in the *Laws*.

³⁹ This passage would therefore seem to be in tension with Bobonich's claim that "Plato never suggests that the laws should offer bad but plausible arguments to the citizens" (1991, p. 373).

change for the better in the person's affections. Such a persuasion may be benevolent, but by our definition, it is nonrational.

The third and final objection is that, in Book II, the Athenian suggests that he is willing to lie to the citizens. The context is as follows. The Athenian has just claimed that someone with wealth, health, power, beauty, strength, keen senses, immortality, and courage, but without justice, lives unpleasantly and in a way that is not beneficial to himself (661a ff.). Clinias finds the claim hard to believe (662a8). In response, the Athenian says,

To me these things appear so necessary that it is not as clear, my dear Clinias, that Crete is an island. If I were a lawgiver I would try to compel the poets and everyone in the city to speak in this way. I would impose all but the greatest penalty on anyone in the land who should say that some human beings are wicked but live pleasantly, or that some things are profitable and gainful, but others more just. (662b2-c2)

The Athenian thinks that virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness. He is concerned, though, that others will not share this belief because they think both that the happy life is pleasant and that the just life is less pleasant than the unjust life. If the citizens were to believe that the just life is more pleasant than the unjust life, there would be one less obstacle to their becoming virtuous and thus truly happy. But as the Athenian himself says, "No one would voluntarily wish to be persuaded to do something that does

not bring more pleasure than pain” (663b4-6). The task, then, is to convince the citizens that the just life is both more pleasant than painful and more pleasant than the unjust life.

To this end, the Athenian produces two arguments. The first is that the life of neither doing nor suffering injustice is more pleasant than the life of both doing and suffering injustice. So the just life is more pleasant than the unjust life (663a). The Athenian gives less than a ringing endorsement of this argument, though, saying that “[it] is, if nothing else, persuasive in making one wish to live the pious and just life” (663b1-2). The argument’s shortcoming is that it compares the life of *both* doing and suffering injustice with the life of *neither* doing nor suffering injustice. To show that the just life is always more pleasant than the unjust life, one needs to compare the life that does no injustice but suffers at least some injustice with the life that does injustice but suffers none. Hence, the failure of the premise to entail the conclusion may explain the Athenian’s hesitation . It would still seem to be a good inductive argument, however, for it is likely that one who commits injustice will also suffer some injustice, and that the one who commits no injustice will suffer less than the one who makes enemies by committing it. Hence, Plato may still consider this argument as decisive for accepting the conclusion.

As for the second argument, Plato surely does think that it contains a decisive reason (663c-d). The Athenian says that to the unjust person, unjust things appear pleasant and just things appear unpleasant. To the just person, on the other hand, just things appear pleasant and unjust things unpleasant. The person with the better soul, i.e., the just person, is the better of judge of the truth, so in reality the just life is pleasant but the unjust life unpleasant. This is exactly the kind of argument we would expect from Plato:

one that distinguishes appearance from reality, and that privileges the judgments of the virtuous over those of the vicious. Moreover, we can see that he is offering it ingenuously, for not only does he think that the argument contains a decisive reason, the previous pages of Book II are an attempt to teach the citizens that the pleasures of the virtuous are correct but those of the vicious are incorrect.

After delivering the second argument, the Athenian mentions the infamous lie:

Even if the case were not as the argument has just proved it to be, if a lawgiver of even the slightest worth were ever to lie—if he dared to lie in some way or other to the young for a good cause—is there a lie more profitable or more able to make all people do all just things voluntarily, rather than by force, than this one? (663d-e)

As the passage continues, the Athenian says that the lawgiver should use every means to instill beliefs that do the city the greatest good (663e3 ff.). These beliefs include those which affirm that virtue is pleasant. Is the Athenian therefore recommending that the lawgiver claim disingenuously that the just live pleasantly? Clearly not. The conditional is contrary-to-fact.⁴⁰ If virtue were not pleasant, however, the Athenian suggests that the lawgiver use songs, myths, and speeches to convince the young that it is pleasant. In this hypothetical circumstance, the lawgiver's persuasion would be disingenuous, for even if the songs, myths, and speeches were all true, the lawgiver would know that the conclusion for which they are invoked as support is false.

⁴⁰ Cf. England (1921) ad loc.

How damaging is this hypothetical claim to the rationality of persuasion in the *Laws*? In formulating an answer, we should bear in mind two points. First, the lie would be directed at the young, presumably in the form of a myth. The Athenian suggests that adults, too, will be influenced by it, but this would seem to be because the affection for justice developed when young stays with a person as she grows older. The Athenian clearly suggests that it is the young who are credulous, not their elders (664a1). Second, this passage may well be a part of the *Laws* that all Magnesian citizens study as part of their education. If so, and if Plato is trying to be deceitful, the attempt is a miserable failure. If the citizens do study this passage, they would likely find the Athenian remarkably frank rather than deceptive, and may consequently take more interest in the arguments since it would be clear that he thinks the matter highly important. In response to the question, then, the passage suggests no disingenuity except to children in a counterfactual circumstance, and it may even be a gesture of Plato's ingenuity.

4.5 CONCLUSION

I have argued that Plato tries to use rational persuasion to convince Magnesia's citizens that their laws are correct. I have also argued that he uses nonrational persuasion, too. Both rational persuasion and nonrational persuasion include methods to reorient misdirected affections and methods to correct false evaluative beliefs. Among the methods of nonrational persuasion used to correct false beliefs are *ad hominem* arguments similar to those used by the Socrates of the early dialogues. This is further

indication that Plato's critics, especially those who prefer Socratic styles of inquiry, need to be clearer as to what they mean by reason in general, and by rational persuasion in particular.

As for why Plato uses rational persuasion instead of only nonrational persuasion, we have seen evidence that Plato's aims to produce the virtue of the citizens and the happiness of the city. Virtue requires, among other things, that one at least have true beliefs about what is just, fine, good and their opposites. The laws themselves supply many of these beliefs, but Plato suggests that citizens should gain further understanding of why their laws are correct by attending to what the lawgiver thinks justifies them (822e-823a). The only access that the citizens have to these thoughts is the text of the *Laws*, including its persuasive preludes. Hence, Plato encourages the citizens to study the *Laws* so that they can progress in understanding and thus in virtue. The virtue of the citizens, moreover, contributes to the happiness of the city. The city is happy when it is unified under the rule of intelligence. Intelligence, the Athenian suggests, is embodied in Magnesia's laws. The citizens are the city's parts, so unifying the city entails unifying the citizens. This occurs as the citizens converge on the true beliefs embodied in their laws and acquire a correct understanding of their justification. Hence, perfecting the city's parts conduces to the happiness of the city as a whole.

Bobonich (1991) also thinks that Plato tries to use rational persuasion in the *Laws*. There are important differences between his account and the one I have offered, however. The most important concerns the justification of Plato's use of rational persuasion. I have argued that Plato thinks rational persuasion is necessary for the virtue of the

citizens, and that such virtue is necessary for the happiness of the city as a whole.

Bobonich, too, thinks that Plato sees rational persuasion as necessary for the virtue, and hence the happiness, of the citizens, but he takes Plato's concern for the happiness of the city to indicate no more than a concern for the happiness of the citizens.⁴¹ Instead of interpreting Plato's concern for the virtue of the citizens as further grounded in a concern for the happiness of the city, Bobonich supplements the appeal to virtue with an appeal to the citizens' status as free human beings. In a discussion of the medical analogy, Bobonich places great weight on the political status of the patient. He writes that "because of the patient's status as a free man, he deserves to be rationally persuaded and he is better off after being rationally persuaded than he would otherwise be" (p. 386).⁴² Hence, rational persuasion is justified not only because it tends to make a citizen better off, i.e. more virtuous, but also because the citizen is free, and free human beings *deserve* to be rationally persuaded.⁴³

⁴¹ For example, in his discussion of the hypothetical lie in Book II, Bobonich says that "lying would, in this case, bring about the 'greatest good for the city' (664a3), i.e. it would bring about the greatest happiness of the citizens" (1991, p. 382). Bobonich must gloss all of Plato's numerous appeals to the happiness of the city in this way, for he holds that "the ultimate end of every law and social institution is the production of the greatest possible happiness for the citizens" (p. 380). My account holds that the happiness of the citizens is an end of Magnesia's laws and institutions, but not the ultimate end. For evidence that Plato considers the end at which the lawgiver (or statesman) aims to be the happiness of the city as a whole (of which the citizens are parts), consider, for example, *Laws* 902d-e and 903b-d.

⁴² Bobonich offers this as an explanation of why "rational justification is necessary for virtue" (1991, p. 386). Rather than being such an explanation, though, it seems in fact to be an additional argument for the use of rational persuasion.

⁴³ Ernest Barker also appeals to freedom to justify the persuasive prelude: "Law ... must respect freedom" (1959, p. 189). Barker thinks that freedom must be respected,

Is this the right reading of the medical analogy? The claim that rational persuasion is meant to make a citizen more virtuous seems to be one of its clear implications, but it is less clear that Plato is claiming that the citizen's status as a free human being justifies the use of rational persuasion. We have read the relevant passages. In one, the free doctor is said to care for free patients "for the most part," i.e. the free doctor also treats slaves on occasion (720d1-2). Are we to think that the free doctor does not discuss the disease with the slave and his friends before prescribing a treatment? Nothing in the text suggests that the free doctor would truncate his usual practice in this way. Indeed, the relevant passages draw more attention to the differences in knowledge and practice between the two kinds of doctors than to the political status of their patients. It is because the free doctor knows what he is doing that he offers rational persuasion. There is no claim, nor I think even suggestion, in the relevant texts that free patients should be offered rational persuasion because they are free.⁴⁴ Rather, the thought is that engaging in rational persuasion with a patient is a part of good medical practice. Instead of suggesting grounds for desert or entitlement on the part of the patient, the analogy suggests a justification of rational persuasion that is continuous with Plato's usual thoughts on what is proper to the exercise of a skill: caring for the good of one's subject. In the case of a lawgiver, that good is the happiness of the city, and the happiness of the city requires the virtue of the citizens. Hence, the imperative requiring the lawgiver to use rational

though, because a mixed constitution balances freedom with tyranny. He does not claim, as Bobonich does, that persuasion is due to the citizens in virtue of being free.

persuasion originates not in response to what a free human being deserves, but in response to the lawgiver's overall aim.

⁴⁴ This is not to say that freedom plays no important role in Plato's ethical and political thought. Indeed, Plato thinks that only the just soul is truly free. Cf. Stalley (1998).

EPILOGUE

Plato is committed to producing virtue in Magnesia's citizens. Their virtue contributes to the rule of intelligence in the city as a whole, and thereby makes it happy. For the citizens to become virtuous, they must learn that virtue is the only good that makes the possession of other things beneficial. Plato thinks that as citizens acquire this understanding, they become like God: their souls become ordered and they learn to order properly other entities that are or might come under their control.

The idea that becoming like God involves caring for the world's order might explain why Plato wrote the *Laws*. Among the many hypotheses that can be offered concerning the *Laws*' production, this one assumes that Plato was motivated by his own ethical and political theory. Perhaps Plato saw Magnesia, or a colony like Magnesia, as his best chance of effecting social order. If Plato was justified in thinking that there was such a chance, and if he was justified in thinking that his understanding of social order was at least roughly correct, then his own theory, as it had been affected by late changes in his theology, would condemn him if he did not try to produce that order. Hence, Magnesia is not a city laid up in heaven for only the philosopher to inhabit, but place that would contribute to the order of this world.

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